



Royal Conservatoire  
of Scotland



Scottish  
Opera

PRESS RELEASE

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26 October 2017

## SCOTTISH OPERA AND THE ROYAL CONSERVATOIRE OF SCOTLAND COLLABORATE ON PROKOFIEV'S *THE FIERY ANGEL*

Scottish Opera's The Sunday Series: Opera in Concert continues on 3 December at 3pm in City Halls Glasgow with Sergei Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel*, in a collaboration with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Scottish Opera's Music Director **Stuart Stratford** has curated The Sunday Series concerts which focus this Season on his love of, and expertise in, Russian music.

**Mikhail Agrest**, resident for many years at the Mariinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg, conducts **Evez Abdulla** and **Svetlana Sozdateleva** in the lead roles of Ruprecht and Renata. Also in the cast are soloists **Dmitry Golovnin**, **Maria Maksakova**, **Agnieszka Rehlis** and **Alexei Tanovitski**. They are joined by singers from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's opera course and instrumentalists from Scotland's national conservatoire who will have the opportunity to play side by side with The Orchestra of Scottish Opera.

A story of masochistic obsession, black magic, demons and exorcism, Prokofiev's seething opera is based on a novel by Valery Bryusov. With a doomed love triangle at its heart, *The Fiery Angel* was composed in the 1920s but never performed in Prokofiev's lifetime. This concert is Scottish Opera's first performance of the daring opera.

**Mikhail Agrest** said: 'A masterpiece, or rather a fireball of an opera thriller, written between 1919 and 1927, *The Fiery Angel* must have been inspired by the tumultuous times in Prokofiev's own life. The colourful story features cabalistic rituals, cannibalism, sexual hysteria, an orgy in a convent and an exorcism, providing the composer with a chance to show off his mastery of the 'orchestral theatre', with highly

evocative music keeping the listeners and performers on the edges of their seats. This is Prokofiev at his best.'

**Stuart Stratford** said: '*The Fiery Angel* is an amazing piece. As you'd expect from Prokofiev, the music at times is very violent and incredibly visceral. It's a huge canvas, concentrating on the two protagonists, but with many characters, which is why we are collaborating with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. It's a wonderful opportunity for them to learn about this fabulous piece alongside our musicians, and for us to perform it with such huge forces.'

Two further concerts are planned for this Season's Sunday Series. At the Theatre Royal Glasgow in February, *From Russia With Love* features singers from the National Opera Studio — the UK's leading training programme for young opera professionals which is celebrating its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. This semi-staged performance features a variety of Russian-themed repertoire.

The Sunday Series 2017/18 closes in May with a concert featuring two works by Rachmaninov: *Aleko* and *Francesca da Rimini*. Adapted from a poem by Pushkin, *Aleko* was Rachmaninov's first opera. This will be Scottish Opera's first ever performance of Rachmaninov and the Scottish premiere of *Francesca da Rimini*, a little-known opera telling a story of love and death with a plot drawn from Dante's *Inferno*.

-ENDS-

**[www.scottishopera.org.uk](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk)**

### Cast and Creative Team

<b>Conductor</b>	Mikhail Agrest
<b>Assistant Conductor</b>	Derek Clark
<b>Director</b>	Max Hoehn
<b>Ruprecht</b>	Evez Abdulla
<b>Hostess of the Inn /The Abbess</b>	Maria Maksakova
<b>Renata</b>	Svetlana Sozdateleva
<b>Labourer</b>	Mark Nathan (RCS)
<b>Fortune Teller</b>	Agnieszka Rehlis
<b>Jacob Glock</b>	Thomas Kinch (RCS)
<b>Agrippa van Nettelsheim</b>	Dmitry Golovnin
<b>Matthew</b>	Colin Murray (RCS)
<b>The Doctor</b>	Alex Bevan (RCS)
<b>Mephistopheles</b>	Luke Sinclair
<b>Faust</b>	Jerome Knox (RCS)
<b>The Innkeeper at Cologne</b>	Frank Church

<b>Inquisitor</b>	Alexei Tanovitski
<b>Two Young Nuns</b>	Emma Mockett, Julia Daramy-Williams (all RCS)
<b>Three skeletons</b>	Thomas Kinch, Colin Murray, Pedro Ometo (all RCS)
<b>Three neighbours</b>	Colin Murray, Pedro Ometo, Rhys Thomas (all RCS)
<b>Nuns</b>	Rose Stachniewska, Stephanie Stanway, Emma Mockett, Julia Daramy-Williams, Joanna Harries, Fiona Joice (all RCS)

### Performance Diary for The Sunday Series: Opera in Concert

Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*  
 29 Oct 2017, 3pm  
 Theatre Royal Glasgow

Prokofiev's *The Fiery Angel*  
 3 Dec 2017, 3pm  
 City Halls Glasgow

National Opera Studio: *From Russia with Love*  
 25 Feb 2018, 3pm  
 Theatre Royal Glasgow

Rachmaninov's *Aleko* and *Francesca da Rimini*  
 6 May, 3pm  
 Theatre Royal Glasgow

### Notes to Editors

#### **Mikhail Agrest's biography:**

Scion of the great Russian conducting tradition, Mikhail Agrest has honed his craft at the Mariinsky Theatre for over a decade, acquiring a considerable body of operatic and symphonic repertoire and gaining crucial insights into orchestra development and artistic leadership. Simultaneously, he forged meaningful artistic relationships with a number of the world's premiere ensembles.

In the 2017-18 season, Mikhail Agrest returns to the London Philharmonic Orchestra with a *Russian Epics* programme featuring music by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Khachaturian, and continues his long-standing collaborations with the Semperoper Dresden, Opernhaus Zurich and Teatro San Carlo di Napoli. He looks forward to his debuts with the Seoul Philharmonic and Bruckner Orchestra Linz, where he will conduct Scriabin's Symphony No. 3 "*The Divine Poem*", among other repertoire.

During the previous season, Mikhail Agrest made his Canadian debut with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and returned to Seattle Symphony, Bremer Philharmoniker and Sudwestdeutsche Philharmonie Konstanz in Germany. His opera projects included *La traviata* and Weinberger's *Švanda dudák* at Semperoper Dresden. After his triumph with *La bohème* at the Finnish National Opera, he was invited to lead a new production of *Eugene Onegin*, directed by Marco Arturo Marelli and described by *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* as "a rare union of music and theatre, owing mostly to the sophistication of the conductor, who has this music in his blood. A student of [Mariss] Jansons, he led the orchestra without missing a single voice, and the musicians faithfully followed every well-considered gesture."

Mr. Agrest's appearance at the Metropolitan Opera in 2003 conducting the Mariinsky Theatre in Rimsky-Korsakov's *The Legend of the Invisible City of Kitezh* sparked keen interest within the global opera community. He went on to lead a production of *Tosca* at the Swedish National Opera, *Don Giovanni* at Opera Australia, as well as the award-winning new production of *Jenůfa* at English National Opera, directed by David Alden.

The following passage from *The Herald* offers a good summary of his reviews by the UK critics: "Agrest conducted a concert that progressed from intriguing to alluring to utterly gripping... the sheer musical tension was riveting. More of Mikhail Agrest, please." His collaboration with the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden has so far consisted of three well-received productions: *Le Sacre du Printemps*, *Les Noces*, and *Romeo and Juliette*. His work with the BBC Symphony dates back to 2007 and includes a Gubaidulina Festival at the Barbican as well as a recording of Rodion Shchedrin's *Concerto Parlando*.

Following the success of a Shostakovich, Prokofiev and Richard Strauss programme with Staatskapelle Dresden in 2013, Mr. Agrest was invited to lead a new production of Shostakovich's *Moscow-Cheryomushki*, directed by Christiane Mielitz. "Nobody left the performance without having a tune stuck in their head," reported *Neue Musikzeitung*. His Seattle Symphony debut was praised by *The Seattle Times*: "[The] program's real surprise, however, was Agrest's conducting – a performance of such inspired passion that the players were practically jolted out of their chairs. He conducted like a man possessed, as if lives depended on the outcome, and the energy and commitment of his music-making were positively operatic."

Born and raised in St. Petersburg, Mr. Agrest immigrated to the United States with his family as a teenager and received a degree in violin performance from the Indiana University (Bloomington). He then followed his true passion back to St. Petersburg to study conducting from the legendary Ilya Musin, whose other alumni include Valery Gergiev, Yuri Temirkanov, and Semyon Bychkov.

### **Royal Conservatoire of Scotland biography:**

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is one of the world's top three performing arts education institutions (QS World Rankings 2017) and is ranked number one in Scotland for graduate employability, endorsing its status as a national and international centre of excellence for the performing arts.

The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is celebrating its 170th anniversary in 2017. During its existence, it has built on its roots as a national academy of music to become one of Europe's most multi-disciplinary performing arts higher education institutions, offering specialised teaching across music, drama, dance,

production, film and education. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is encouraging trans-disciplinary learning throughout its innovative curriculum.

More than 1100 students are currently pursuing degrees at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland across its specialisms. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland works in partnership with the national companies, including the National Theatre of Scotland, Scottish Opera, BBC Scotland and Scottish Ballet, to provide students with the very best learning experiences the Scottish landscape has to offer.

Based in the heart of Glasgow, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is also a busy performing arts venue; it hosts more than 500 public performances each year and issues around 50,000 tickets from its box office annually. Additionally, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland teaches over 3000 part-time learners every year through its Junior Conservatoire and Lifelong Learning departments.

### **Scottish Opera biography:**

Scottish Opera is Scotland's national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in Scotland. It was founded by Alexander Gibson in 1962 and was inaugurated with a production of *Madama Butterfly* at the King's Theatre in Glasgow.

Notable achievements include the world premiere of James MacMillan's *Inés de Castro* at the 1996 Edinburgh International Festival and complete Ring cycles at the 2003 Edinburgh International Festival, which won the 2004 South Bank Show Award for Best Opera Production. Recent commissions include *Five:15 Operas Made in Scotland* (2008-10); *The Lady from the Sea*, *Clemency*, the double bill of *In the Locked Room* and *Ghost Patrol* (winner of a South Bank Sky Arts Award) which premiered at the 2012 Edinburgh International Festival and 2016's *The Devil Inside* by Stuart MacRae and Louise Welsh.

Scottish Opera is committed to bringing the widest possible range of opera, performed to the highest possible standards, to the maximum audience throughout Scotland and the UK. Each year it performs in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Inverness, as well as smaller theatres, village halls and community centres throughout the country.

Scottish Opera's Education and Outreach Department was the first of its kind of any opera company in Europe. It operates an extensive programme which involves over 8,000 primary school children every year as well as many other activities including adult learning and *Unwrapped* taster sessions.

Scottish Opera is supported by the Scottish Government.

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