

19 January 2018

NEW PRODUCTION OF RICHARD STRAUSS'S PLAYFUL OPERA *ARIADNE AUF NAXOS* COMES TO GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH

Following his critically acclaimed *Rusalka* in 2016, director and designer **Antony McDonald** returns to Scottish Opera with Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, a new co-production with Investec Opera Holland Park.

Brad Cohen, Artistic Director of West Australian Opera, conducts a wealth of international talent. Making her UK debut is American soprano **Mardi Byers** as Prima Donna/Ariadne. She is joined by Dutch tenor **Kor-Jan Dusseljee** as Tenor/Bacchus and award-winning Swedish soprano **Julia Sporsén** as The Composer.

Former Scottish Opera Emerging Artist **Jennifer France** (*Flight* 2018) returns as Zerbinetta, and is joined by British opera legend **Sir Thomas Allen** as The Professor of Composition (Music Master), in his first singing role with Scottish Opera since 1981. BBC Radio Scotland's **Jamie MacDougall**, recently Sir Harry Lauder in the Company's special production of the musical play *Lauder*, is The Producer (Dancing Master). Three Scottish Opera Emerging Artists also feature in this impressive cast: **Alex Otterburn** (*Greek* 2017) as Harlequin, **Laura Zigmantaite** (*La traviata* 2017) as Dryad and **Alexey Gusev** (*Iolanta* 2017) as The Wig Master.

Audiences also have the chance to see renowned actress **Eleanor Bron** – rumoured to be the inspiration for The Beatles' classic 'Eleanor Rigby' – playing The Party Planner (Major Domo). Star of stage and screen, Bron had roles in *Absolutely Fabulous* and *Alfie* and has also regularly appeared on hit BBC Radio 4 drama *The Archers*.

Set in a large country house, *Ariadne auf Naxos* tells the story of two troupes of performers who collide in an unfortunate double booking – opera versus burlesque, high ideals against a more 'carefree' approach. In

the midst of the backstage chaos, the two performing ensembles get some surprising news – to save time the two shows must be performed simultaneously.

Bursting with life, McDonald's production of Strauss' playful opera promises plenty of style – and plenty of fun. The Prologue will be sung in English, in a new translation by Helen Cooper, and the Opera sung in the original German.

Antony McDonald said: '*Ariadne auf Naxos* offers audiences so much. In the Prologue, the backstage rivalry between the world of 'serious' opera and the world of burlesque and cabaret is brilliantly observed, and the painful process of bringing a new creation into the world is brought to life. Then, in the Opera itself, we see an examination of relationships: the tragic despair of the abandoned Ariadne contrasted with the practical reality of Zerbinetta's approach to love.'

Brad Cohen said: 'I am thrilled to be conducting *Ariadne auf Naxos* for my debut with Scottish Opera – I have wanted to conduct it for 25 years, and my opportunity has come along at last! *Ariadne* has so much to give us, and works on many levels at once. Apart from the fabulous music, the magnificent set-piece for high soprano, and the subtle comedy, there are deeper themes at play. Underneath everything, it is a portrait of life in an opera house, written by a composer and librettist who were steeped in the skulduggery of Viennese operatic politics. *Ariadne* is an opera *about* opera, combining sublime music and wry perception.'

Audiences coming to see *Ariadne auf Naxos* have the opportunity to enjoy a 15 minute specially composed piece by Samuel Bordoli, Scottish Opera's Composer in Residence, based on the final pages of Bernard MacLaverty's novel *Grace Notes*. With a libretto by MacLaverty himself, *Grace Notes* will be performed in the Upper Circle Foyer of Theatre Royal, Glasgow at 6.30pm before each performance of *Ariadne auf Naxos*. Bernard has worked with Scottish Opera twice, on *Five:15 – Operas Made in Scotland* and on *The Elephant Angel* with Gareth Williams. Robertson Trust Emerging Artist Catherine Backhouse will sing accompanied by an ensemble of instrumentalists from The Orchestra of Scottish Opera, conducted by Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Emerging Artist répétiteur Patrick Milne.

Audiences also have the chance to attend *Ariadne auf Naxos Unwrapped*, a one-hour taster delving further in to the show and how it was created. Those who are visually impaired can enjoy the full opera experience at audio-described performances, which have live commentary that describes the action on stage without compromising the music.

A new co-production with Investec Opera Holland Park. This production is supported by The Scottish Opera Syndicate.

Cast List

Prima Donna/Ariadne

Mardi Byers

The Tenor/Bacchus	Kor-Jan Dusseljee
The Composer	Julia Sporsén
Zerbinetta	Jennifer France
Harlequin	Alex Otterburn*
Naiad	Elizabeth Cragg
Dryad	Laura Zigmantaite*
Echo	Lucy Hall
The Professor of Composition (Music Master)	Sir Thomas Allen
Butler (Lackey)	Simon Hannigan
The Producer (Dancing Master)	Jamie MacDougall & Alasdair Elliott (7 April only)
Brighella	Elgan Llŷr Thomas
Scaramuccio	Daniel Norman
Truffaldino	John Molloy
Officer	Richard Shaffrey
The Wig Master (Wig Maker)	Alexey Gusev*
The Party Planner (Major Domo)	Eleanor Bron

*Scottish Opera Emerging Artist

Creative Team

Conductor	Brad Cohen
Director and Designer	Antony McDonald
Lighting Designer	Wolfgang Göbbel
Movement Director	Lucy Burge
Assistant Movement Director	Martin Lindinger
Circus Skills Director	Joe Dieffenbacher

Performance Diary

Theatre Royal Glasgow, 282 Hope Street, Glasgow G2 3QA

Thu 22 Mar, 7.15pm (*Grace Notes* – 6.30pm)

Sat 24 Mar, 7.15pm (*Grace Notes* – 6.30pm)

Wed 28 Mar, 7.15pm (*Grace Notes* – 6.30pm)

Ariadne auf Naxos Unwrapped

Mon 26 Mar, 6pm

Ariadne auf Naxos Pre-show Talk

Sat 24 Mar, 6pm

Ariadne auf Naxos Touch Tour

Wed 28 Mar, 6pm

Ariadne auf Naxos Audio-described performance

Wed 28 Mar, 7.15pm

Festival Theatre, 13–29 Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9FT

Thu 5 Apr, 7.15pm

Sat 7 Apr, 7.15pm

Ariadne auf Naxos Unwrapped

Fri 6 Apr, 6pm

Ariadne auf Naxos Pre-show Talk

Sat 7 Apr, 6pm

Ariadne auf Naxos Touch Tour

Sat 7 Apr, 6pm

Ariadne auf Naxos Audio-described performance

Sat 7 Apr, 7.15pm

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www.scottishopera.org.uk

Notes to Editors

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; complete Ring cycles at the 2003 Edinburgh International Festival, which won the 2004 South Bank Show Award for Best Opera Production; and the Achievement in Opera Award at the 2017 UK Theatre Awards for Sir David McVicar's production of Debussy's *Pelléas and Mélisande*. 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.



For additional press details please contact:

Emily Henderson, Press Manager, 0141 242 0511, emily.henderson@scottishopera.org.uk

Daisy Bartlett, Press Officer, 0141 242 0552, daisy.bartlett@scottishopera.org.uk