



PRESS RELEASE

14 February 2018

SCOTTISH OPERA'S CONNECT COMPANY PERFORMS WORKS BY OPERA SPARKS COMPETITION WINNERS

Three 15-minute operas, composed by the winners of *Opera Sparks* – the competition launched in 2016 to find Scotland's most talented young composers and writers – are being performed by Scottish Opera's Connect Company in April in celebration of its 10th anniversary, and as part of the Year of Young People 2018.

Connect, Scottish Opera's youth company for 16 to 21 year old singers, instrumentalists and stage managers, joined by professional soloists **Lise Christensen** and **Hazel McBain**, will take to the stage on Saturday 7 April, at 2pm and 7pm, to perform *Maud* by composer/librettist **Henry McPherson**; *Little Black Lies* by composer/librettist team **Matthew Whiteside** and **Helene Grøn**; and *Then To The Elements* by **Lewis Murphy** and **Laura Attridge**. **Olivia Fuchs** directs, with designer **Karen Tennent** transforming SWG3's newest venue, Galvanizers, a 6000 square foot warehouse into an exciting performance space.

The winners, announced in January 2017, were awarded a commissioning fee of £3,500 and receive mentoring support throughout the creative process.

Maud by **Henry McPherson**, founding member of Glasgow-based artists' collective EAST, is a modern retelling of a traditional folk tale. *Little Black Lies*, composed by Glasgow-based **Matthew Whiteside**, explores the stories we tell ourselves in order to cope better with reality, and has a libretto by Danish playwright and poet, **Helene Grøn**. *Then To The Elements* takes its inspiration from *Frankenstein*, and is a modern tale of parenthood written by **Lewis Murphy**, graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and a Glyndebourne Young Composer in Residence, and **Laura Attridge**, a director and writer from Glasgow.

Open to young composers who are Scottish or based in Scotland, the Opera Sparks entries were judged by a panel consisting of **Derek Clark** (Scottish Opera's Head of Music), **Olivia Fuchs** (Opera Director), **Christopher Gray** (Director of Scottish Opera's Connect Company) and **Stuart Stratford** (Scottish Opera's Music Director), with Scottish Opera's General Director, **Alex Reedijk**, as convener.

Jane Davidson, Scottish Opera's Director of Outreach and Education, said: 'It is very exciting for Connect to be able to celebrate its 10th anniversary in April, coinciding with the 2018 Year of Young People, with three new commissions by talented young composers and librettists. Over the past 10 years, we have invited over 500 young people from all over Scotland to experience being part of Scotland's only opera programme for young people, as part of our commitment to creating a lasting legacy for the future of the artform.

'The *Opera Sparks* trilogy will be the last conducting role for Connect's outgoing director Chris Gray. He has spent the past 10 years nurturing, inspiring and challenging young musicians to achieve the best possible results in a learning environment that perfectly balances minimum levels of pretension with maximum levels of fun and enjoyment - all underpinned by a great deal of hard work and commitment.'

Olivia Fuchs said: '*Opera Sparks* is made up of three little gems, all very different and written in diverse musical languages. A common thread links them thematically, however, as they explore the psychological journeys of individuals having to deal with the complexities of our contemporary world.

Performed by a talented group of young people, audiences will be immersed in a magical world of storytelling in the atmospheric Galvanizers warehouse.'

The Year of Young People 2018 is a year-long programme of events, activities and ideas to celebrate the young talents, personalities and achievements of those aged eight to 26.

-ENDS-

www.scottishopera.org.uk

You can follow Scottish Opera on Twitter and Instagram @**ScottishOpera**

Cast and Creative Team

Conductor	Chris Gray
Director	Olivia Fuchs
Designer	Karen Tennent
Lighting Designer	Simon Wilkinson

Performance Diary

Galvanizers, SWG3, 100 Eastvale Place, Glasgow G3 8QG

Saturday 7 April, 2pm and 7pm

Tickets are available through TicketWeb

Online: <https://www.ticketweb.co.uk/search/?keyword=Opera+Sparks>

By phone: 0844 477 1000

Notes to editors

Winners' biographies:

Matthew Whiteside is a composer based in Glasgow, winner of 'One to Watch' in the Sunday Herald's Culture Awards 2017. He writes music for concert, film and collaborative installations. Originally from Lisburn in Northern Ireland, his work has been performed all over the world, including in Dublin's National Concert Hall, Glasgow City Halls, Salem Artworks in New York and Belfast International Festival. Matthew's recent work includes *Entangled*, his 4th string

quartet commissioned by the Institute of Physics for the 2018 NI Science Festival and he is currently working with filmmaker/choreographer Marisa Zanotti developing a new installation piece with Magnetic North. He composed the music for *Michael Palin's Quest for Artemisia*, broadcast on BBC4, and scored the feature film *Anna Unbound*. Matthew is a member of the Contemporary Music Centre in Dublin, where all his music is housed, and programmes and produces 'The Night With...' series of classical music concerts.

Helene Grøn is a playwright, poet and librettist from Denmark, living in Scotland. She is currently undertaking a practice-as-research PhD at the University of Glasgow, exploring how we can still think of home and belonging in a globalised world where many people are displaced, and how theatre and storytelling can reshape these themes. Helene co-founded Leylines, a cross-cultural theatre company bringing to the Scottish stage stories of home and homelessness. Writing credits include: *Always Ever Unknowable* (The Cottier Chamber Project. The Cloisters, June 2016); *The Giant and Her Daughter* (Leylines. Scottish Refugee Festival, June 2016, Southside Fringe, May 2016 and Govanhill Baths, November 2015); *Roots: Rehearsed Reading* (Scratch Night. The Arches, May 2014), *Three Lives: Rehearsed Reading* (University of Edinburgh and Playwrights' Studio Scotland, Traverse Theatre, August 2013); *Elf Mound* (University of Edinburgh and Cursive Productions, Scottish Storytelling Centre, April 2013).

Composer **Lewis Murphy** began his training at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland before moving to London to continue his studies with Mark-Anthony Turnage at the Royal College of Music. He has recently completed three years as Young Composer-in-Residence at Glyndebourne. Recent successes include the world premieres of *Belongings* (Glyndebourne Youth Opera), *First Date* (Sound Festival) and *Snow: Act 1, The Three Ravens* (The Opera Story), which was praised by the press for its 'subtle and delicate beauty' and 'magical textures'.

Glasgow-born librettist **Laura Attridge** works across opera, theatre and poetry, with a particular focus on creative collaboration. Notably, Laura's ongoing creative partnership with composer Lewis Murphy has thus far produced numerous works for the stage: *Now* (2014, Royal College of Music/Tête-à-Tête Festival), *Damsel/Wife/Witch* (2015, And So Forth), *First Date* (2017, Sound Festival), and *Belongings* (2017, Glyndebourne). In addition, Laura's song cycles have been premiered at Glyndebourne, the Royal College of Music, the National Gallery and Bard College (New York). She has had poetry published in prestigious magazines and zines including

The Rialto and *Mslexia*, and is featured in the new anthology *Introduction X: The Poetry Business Book of New Poets*. Alongside her writing, Laura works as a director and facilitator. She is also Artistic Director of opera and theatre company And So Forth.

Composer/librettist **Henry McPherson** is originally from Herefordshire but now lives in Glasgow. His current work involves mixed-media score-production, devising, improvisation, and interdisciplinary practice, through which he explores personal and collective identities, and musical tradition. He is a founding member of Glasgow's mixed-arts collective EAST, and is one third of the chamber trio Savage Parade. In recent years Henry's work has been performed by ensembles such as the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, RedNote ensemble, The Glasgow New Music Expedition, and Germany's Ensemble Modern. He is a graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and is an award holder of the Patron's Prize for Composition, and the Harriet Cohen Memorial Music Award.

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; 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.



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