

7 October 2019

## OPERA IN CONCERT SERIES CONTINUES WITH SCOTTISH OPERA PREMIERE OF MASCAGNI'S *IRIS*

The Scottish Opera premiere of Pietro Mascagni's *Iris*, a gripping tale of innocence lost, takes place on 1 December at City Halls, Glasgow.

Conducted by Scottish Opera Music Director **Stuart Stratford**, **Roxana Haines** (*Opera Highlights* 2019) directs this semi-staged work, featuring soloists **Helena Dix**, **Ric Furman** (*Kátya Kabanová* 2019) and **Roland Wood** (*Pelléas and Mélisande* 2017). They are joined by The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and a 40-strong chorus.

Set in Japan, *Iris* tells the story of a naïve young girl who is blissfully unaware of life's darker side. When she is tempted from her home, she suffers a brutal crash course on how cruel the world can be. An opera full of colour and vibrancy it features 'Hymn to the Sun', which is often hailed as Mascagni's finest work.

Scottish Opera Music Director **Stuart Stratford** said: '*Iris* is, in many ways, Mascagni's greatest opera. Composed six years before Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, it too looks to Japan for inspiration. The opening 'Hymn to the Sun' is one of the most spectacular depictions of a sunrise in music, starting from the murky depths of a solo double bass playing a quasi tone-row, later swelled by the rest of the strings, glittering horn calls and just when you think it can't get any louder the full chorus join in to reach a tremendous climax. The drama is brutal and uncompromising, with some of the most alluring music given to the most desperate and appalling situations which creates a huge sense of unease in the listener.'

The Opera in Concert series continues in May 2020 with the passionate and lyrical *Cavalleria rusticana* by Mascagni. Performed at the Usher Hall, Edinburgh, it tells the tale of a young Sicilian villager who returns from war to find his fiancée has married someone else. Conductor **Stuart Stratford** has chosen to pair it with Leoncavallo's lesser-known work *Zingari*, another Scottish Opera premiere. With a parallel narrative that sees another love triangle go disastrously wrong, *Zingari* is based on Pushkin's *The Gypsies*. **Orpha Phelan** directs soloists including **Evez Abdulla**, **Justina Gringyte** and **Julia Sporsén**.

The Opera in Concert series concludes with a semi-staged performance of *Utopia, Limited*. A new co-production with D'Oyly Carte Opera and State Opera South Australia, this Scottish Opera premiere will be performed with an updated libretto by director **Stuart Maunder**, and a revised musical version by Scottish Opera's Head of Music, **Derek Clark**, who also conducts. Wittily satirising the British Empire's politics, monarchy and press, Gilbert & Sullivan's penultimate opera is performed by the cast of *The Gondoliers*, and designed by **Dick Bird**. *Utopia, Limited* tours to Glasgow, Edinburgh and Hackney Empire in London.

Opera in Concert is supported by Scottish Endowment Trust and Friends of Scottish Opera.

### Iris Creative Team

Conductor	<b>Stuart Stratford</b>
Director	<b>Roxana Haines</b>

### Iris cast

Iris	<b>Helena Dix</b>
Il Cieco	<b>James Creswell</b>
Osaka	<b>Ric Furman</b>
Kyoto	<b>Roland Wood</b>
Dhia (Un Guecha)	<b>Charlie Drummond*</b>
Il Cenciaiuolo	<b>Aled Hall</b>
Due Cenciaiuole	<b>Fraser Simpson &amp; Arthur Bruce**</b>

\*Scottish Opera Emerging Artist 2019/20

\*\*The Robertson Trust Scottish Opera Emerging Artist 2019/20

### Performance Diary

Mascagni's *Iris*

1 December 2019, 3pm

City Halls, Glasgow

Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* & Leoncavallo's *Zingari*

2 May 2020, 7.30pm

Usher Hall Edinburgh

Gilbert & Sullivan's *Utopia, Limited*

21 May 2020, 7.15pm

Theatre Royal Glasgow

12 Jun 2020, 7.15pm

Festival Theatre Edinburgh

17 July 2020, 7.30pm

Hackney Empire, London

-ENDS-

**[www.scottishopera.org.uk](http://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. In 1974 Scottish Opera purchased the Theatre Royal Glasgow, which reopened in 1975 as Scotland's first national opera house. The Orchestra of Scottish Opera was founded in 1980.

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*; and a Herald Angel for the European premiere of Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves* at the 2019 Edinburgh International Festival.

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* (premiered at the 2012 Edinburgh International Festival), 2016's *The Devil Inside*, with which Scottish Opera made its North American debut in Toronto, and 2019's *Anthropocene*. *Ghost Patrol* won a South Bank Sky Arts Award, and *In the Locked Room* and *Ghost Patrol* were nominated for an Olivier Award. Last year the company made its US debut with *Bambino* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and returned to the city's Brooklyn Academy of Music with Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Greek* in December.

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 and dozens of other theatres, village halls and community centres. It also operates an extensive programme of outreach and education work which involves over 9,000 primary school children every year, as well as many other activities including adult learning and *Unwrapped* taster sessions. Scottish Opera receives core funding from the Scottish Government, as well as income from box office, and private and commercial support.



**For additional press details please contact:**

Emily Henderson, Press Manager, 0141 242 0511, [emily.henderson@scottishopera.org.uk](mailto:emily.henderson@scottishopera.org.uk)

Emma Ainley-Walker, Press Officer, 0141 242 0552, [emily.ainley-walker@scottishopera.org.uk](mailto:emily.ainley-walker@scottishopera.org.uk)