

13 January 2020

SCOTTISH OPERA YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS STEPHEN SONDHEIM'S *THE FROGS*

Scottish Opera Young Company brings **Stephen Sondheim's** zany and rambunctious musical comedy *The Frogs* to Glasgow for two performances this Spring at the Royal Concert Hall's New Auditorium, on the 8 and 9 of April. This is the first time the company has taken on a piece from the world of music theatre.

Glasgow's much-loved writer, director and pantomime dame **Johnny McKnight** (*Last One Out*, 2013) directs Sondheim's rarely performed screwball musical, with **Jonathon Swinard**, Young Company's Artistic Director, conducting the young performers, who are aged 17 to 23. The Young Company, which staged Gluck's *Orfeo & Euridice* in 2019 to great acclaim, is joined by professional musical theatre performers **Darren Brownlie** and **Neil Thomas**. Scottish Opera Scenic Artist **Neil Haynes** provides the set design with costumes by **Aileen Sherry**.

Adapted by Burt Shevelove from the one act comedy by Aristophanes, with music and lyrics by Sondheim, the composer of *Sweeney Todd* and *Into the Woods*, *The Frogs* tells the tale of the Greek God of music and wine, Dionysus. He has had enough, and the political landscape is torturous, with fake news giving him fatigue. The people have stopped believing in beauty and truth, but he is convinced he can change things, embarking on a treacherous journey to the Underworld to bring back George Bernard Shaw from the dead and save civilisation through the power of art. Will he overcome his fear of syncopated singing frogs to reach his final destination? Will William Shakespeare out-poet Shaw? And will Dionysus ever pull off that faux-fur outfit given to him by his step-brother Herakles?

Director **Johnny McKnight** said: '*The Frogs* is a real treasure amidst the catalogue of the genius that is Stephen Sondheim. The music is deceptively complex and couched within a script that borrows from Comedia dell'arte, traditional music hall and farce. It seeks to entertain through the surreal and mischievous whilst also hiding underneath the narrative something very prescient for our time - when

our leaders are failing us and hiding the truth who will speak to and for us? It's a brilliantly funny book with hilarious lyrics, and I think it will offer not only a great night's entertainment but a fantastic challenge for our Scottish Opera Young Company to sink their teeth into.'

Scottish Opera Young Company Artistic Director **Jonathon Swinard**, said: 'Sondheim's music for *The Frogs* is amphibiously ambitious and toad-tappingly catchy – Scottish Opera Young Company's staging of this sophisticated score is smarter than even the most excessive sibilance can express!'

The Frogs is supported by the Gordon Fraser Charitable Trust, James Wood Bequest Fund, The W.A. Cargill Fund, The William Syson Charitable Foundation, The Jennie S Gordon Memorial Trust, The Dunclay Charitable Trust and Scottish Opera's Education Angels.

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Cast and Creative Team

Conductor	Jonathon Swinard
Director	Johnny McKnight
Set Designer	Neil Haynes
Costume designer	Aileen Sherry
Choreographer	Karen Martin
Lighting Designer	Grant Anderson

Performance diary

New Auditorium, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall
8 & 9 Apr, 7pm

Tickets £12/£5 (Under 26s)

0141 353 8000

glasgowconcerthalls.com

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.



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