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##### Press Release

12 January 2022

**Scottish Opera BRINGS hit productions of Gilbert & Sullivan’s *The Gondoliers* AND *Utopia, Limited* to HACKNEY EMPIRE IN london**

A new Scottish Opera production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Gondoliers* opens at London’s Hackney Empire on Wednesday 30 March, following a successful run in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Inverness in 2021. This co-production with D'Oyly Carte Opera and State Opera South Australia also includes the chance to catch G&S’s rarely seen *Utopia, Limited* in a semi-staged concert performance on Friday 1 April.

The productions mark Scottish Opera’s return to Hackney Empire for the first time since 2019 when the Company toured with *Anthropocene* and *The* *Magic Flute.* Praised by critics, The Times applauded *The Gondoliers* as a‘bona fide great night out’, and The Stage called the production ‘gleeful and deliciously frivolous’. This double helping of G&S gives audiences the opportunity to experience some of their most joyful music and librettos, using their sparkling humour and glorious lyrics to poke fun at the idea of monarchy, along with the press and politics of their day.

Directed by **Stuart Maunder**, Artistic Director at State Opera South Australia, this joyous production of *The Gondoliers* satirises the ruling classes and their position within society, with the tale of two happy-go-lucky gondoliers who discover that one of them is the heir to the throne of a distant kingdom. In a show packed full of fun, they set off to rule with an idealistic – if somewhat chaotic – plan. Set and Costume Designer **Dick Bird** embraces the absurdity of Gilbert’s libretto by bringing the story to life with fabulously inventive props – which are never quite what they seem – and exquisitely detailed costumes to transport audiences to Venice’s Grand Canal.

Conducted by Scottish Opera’s Head of Music **Derek Clark**, *The Gondoliers* is packed with favourites including the ‘Regular Royal Queen’ quartet, ‘Take a pair of sparkling eyes’ and ‘Dance a Cachucha’. The ensemble cast includes ENO Harewood Artist **William Morgan**(*The Magic Flute*2019), former Scottish Opera Emerging Artists **Mark Nathan** (*Opera Highlights* 2019), **Charlie Drummond** (*Hansel and Gretel* 2021),**Ben McAteer** (*The Mikado* 2016), **Sioned Gwen Davies** (*Falstaff* 2021*)* and**Arthur Bruce** (*L’elisir d’amore* 2021)as well as G&S favourites **Yvonne Howard** and **Richard Suart** (*The Mikado*2016).

Also in the cast is 2021/22 Emerging Artist **Catriona Hewitson** (*L’elisir d’amore* 2021), along with **Dan Shelvey**.

Performed by most of the cast of *The Gondoliers*, *Utopia, Limited* is similarly true to the Victorian style, mocking the British Empire and politics at the time of its creation. Set on the fictional island of Utopia, King Paramount’s dream of ‘civilising’ his people by adopting English ways backfires spectacularly, making way for a show packed with Gilbert’s rhyming dexterity and some of Sullivan’s most rewarding yet neglected music.

With only a handful of professional performances of *Utopia, Limited* since its original staging in 1893, this is an almost unique opportunity to experience live this rarity in the G&S canon. **Stuart Maunder** has adapted the libretto, along with a revised musical version by **Derek Clark**.

Director **Stuart Maunder** said ‘After a glorious tour of Scotland we’re finally back in London, ready, willing and champing at the bit to deliver these great pieces to a whole new audience. *The Gondoliers* is a brilliant romp, with glorious music, a sumptuous design and a cast to die for. The G&S phenomenon has been part of the basic language of performing in the English speaking world for more than 150 years and *The Gondoliers* fusion of infectious melody, topsy-turvy wit and heartfelt sentiment is a combination that never ages – indeed, perhaps it’s something we need now more than ever.’

Conductor and Scottish Opera’s Head of Music, **Derek Clark**, said: ‘*The Gondoliers* is like a breath of Italian summer air. Gilbert’s witty book and lyrics show him at the top of his game and Sullivan, inspired by the Venetian setting, produced his sunniest score, with one lilting melody after another – all guaranteed to make you leave the theatre with a smile on your face. It’s pure joy from start to finish.’

*The Gondoliers* and *Utopia, Limited* are supported by Scottish Opera’s ‘Play a Supporting Role’ Appeal and the recordings are supported by Garfield Weston Foundation (Weston Culture Fund).

Tickets for *The Gondoliers* and *Utopia, Limited* are on sale now. For more information visit [www.scottishopera.org.uk](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk)

***The Gondoliers* Press**

‘A bona fide great night out’ The Times ★★★★

‘Gleeful and deliciously frivolous’ The Stage ★★★★

‘There are no weak links in this cast and the production’s triumph is as an ensemble piece, where no-one puts a foot wrong.’ The Herald ★★★★

‘The orchestra and chorus, under conductor Derek Clark’s no-nonsense direction, are colourful and responsive.’ The Scotsman ★★★★

***Utopia, Limited* Press**

‘Joyful’ The Scotsman ★★★★

‘A rare chance to discover a wonderful score sung and delivered with panache.’ Bachtrack ★★★★

*The Gondoliers* cast list

Marco Palmieri **William Morgan**

Giuseppe Palmieri **Mark Nathan**

Gianetta **Charlie Drummond**

Tessa **Sioned Gwen Davies**

The Duchess of Plaza-Toro **Yvonne Howard**

The Duke of Plaza-Toro **Richard Suart**

Don Alhambra del Bolero **Ben McAteer**

(The Grand Inquisitor)

Casilda **Catriona Hewitson\***

Antonio **Arthur Bruce**

Luiz  **Dan Shelvey**

Inez **Cheryl Forbes**

Giorgio **Oskar McCarthy**

Fiametta **Zoe Drummond**

Vittoria **Flora Macdonald**

Giulia **Grace Wain**

Francesco **Osian Wyn Bowen**

\* Scottish Opera Emerging Artist 2021/22

*The Gondoliers* Creative Team

Conductor **Derek Clark**

Director **Stuart Maunder**

Set and Costume Designer **Dick Bird**

Lighting Designer **Paul Keogan**

Choreographer **Isabel Baquero**

Assistant Choreographer **Lucy Burns**

Performance Diary

***The Gondoliers***

Wednesday 30 March 2022, 7.30pm, Hackney Empire, London

Thursday 31 March 2022, 2.30pm and 7.30pm, Hackney Empire, London

Saturday 2 April 2022, 2.30pm and 7.30pm, Hackney Empire, London

***Utopia, Limited***

Friday 1 April 2022, 7.30pm, Hackney Empire, London

-ENDS-

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

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

Notes to Editors

All productions are created and performed in line with Scottish Government guidelines.

The Company’s Opera on Screen productions are available to watch at: www.scottishopera.org.uk/what-s-on/opera-on-screen/.

The collection includes Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore*, Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel*, Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, *Opera Highlights*, Janáček’s *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, Menotti’s *The Telephone* and Samuel Bordoli and Jenni Fagan’s *The Narcissistic Fish*.  
Scottish Opera is Scotland’s national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in Scotland.

The Company's performance repertoire ranges across five centuries, from the earliest operas to newly-commissioned world premieres, working in collaboration with the world's finest singers and creatives, alongside The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and choruses. Recent accolades include a South Bank Sky Arts Award, a Scottish Award for New Music, Sunday Herald Culture Awards and a Herald Angel, as well as a 2020 RPS Award. In 2021 the Company returned to live audiences with Sir David McVicar’s new production of Verdi’s *Falstaff* performed in Glasgow and at Edinburgh International Festival.

The Company tours extensively across Scotland, from the largest-scale theatres to the smallest of rural venues, to ensure we are within reach of as many of our country's very dispersed population as possible. Our specially-adapted 40-foot long trailer brings ‘Pop-up Opera’ performances to thousands of people each year in a range of inspiring and unexpected community locations. In the summer of 2021 the Company performed nearly 200 shows of its Pop-up Opera Roadshow, to socially distanced audiences of 11,014 people. This is one of the most extensive touring programmes of any European opera company and a much-valued contribution to Scotland’s cultural and artistic life, particularly in remote and island communities.

The Company’s Education and Outreach programme, which celebrates 50 years in 2021, includes an annual Primary Schools Tour, bringing upper primary-aged children the opportunity to perform their own specially-commissioned piece, alongside three professional singers. Around 120 schools and 9,000 pupils take part each year.

Scottish Opera aims to be inclusive and affordable through availability of free and cheap tickets, as well as performances offering audio description, and specially-devised shorter access performances.

Scottish Opera is core funded by The Scottish Government

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