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**Press Release**

8 June 2022

**SCOTTISH OPERA YOUNG COMPANY PRESENTS THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *RUBBLE* THIS JULY**

The world premiere of *Rubble*, a new piece from acclaimed composer **Gareth Williams** and director and pantomime legend **Johnny McKnight**, takes place this summer in Glasgow.

Members of Scottish Opera Young Company, who are aged 17 to 23, are joined by professional soprano **Shuna Scott Sendall** (*The Tsar Has His Photograph Taken* 2021), to tell this searingly honest, at times darkly comedic, story. **Roxana Haines** (*L’elisir d’amore* 2021 and *La bohème* 2020) directs and **Chris Gray**, Scottish Opera Young Company Artistic Director, is the conductor.

Four performances of this new work, written in Scots dialect and originally commissioned as part of the Scottish Opera Outreach and Education Programme’s 50th anniversary celebrations in 2021, will be staged at the Company’s Elmbank Crescent premises on 30 and 31 July.

This is Gareth Williamsand Johnny McKnight’sthird collaboration for Scottish Opera, having previously worked on *The Last One Out* (2012) and *Hand* for the 2013 *Opera Highlights* tour. Gareth is also one of the leads on *Breath Cycle*, the free online project designed to benefit those suffering from a range of conditions affecting lung health, in particular long Covid.

Inspired by English writer Graham Greene’s short story *The Destructors, Rubble is* set in both the 1980s and present day Glasgow, andtells a harrowing yet inspiring tale of surviving trauma and the power of vulnerability. This part horror, part black comedy follows a group of young people as stand they amongst the debris of Findenterran Farm, until recently a children’s care home for those abandoned and forgotten in a broken system. As they pick through the shattered fragments of their childhood, they speak of what really went on in that largely ignored property on the outskirts of town. Bold, moving and only too close to real life events, *Rubble* gives a voice to those who were ignored and overlooked by society while their youth was quietly stolen from them.

Composer **Gareth Williams** said: ‘I initially found inspiration for *Rubble* in Graham Greene’s short story *The Destructors*. It’s got young people with agency, and they’re quite dark, scary creatures in a way. There is an ethically grey world that you don’t normally get when talking about teenagers. And, I know whatever I bring to the table, McKnight will do something completely different with it. It’s our job to make sure as many people as possible can access work like this, as both participants and as audience. Programmes like the Young Company are what will keep the doors open and the lights on for years to come.’

Librettist **Johnny McKnight** said: ‘I’d never seen young people be allowed to speak up on stage on behalf of another generation of young people and their trauma. Now this generation is holding people accountable for things that have gone on too long – like #MeToo – there’s a resurgence of young folk claiming authority. We still try to keep a humorous lens – I think that’s how Irish and Scottish nationalities delve into this type of thing, where there’s real darkness there’s also real humour. And, the rehearsal room is joyful – the darker the material, the more joyful the room needs to be. It’s exciting to be working with young artists at the start of their professional careers to be able to tell this kind of story.’

Director **Roxana Haines** said: ‘*Rubble* is a fast-paced ensemble piece performed by our Young Company with stylised movement and physical theatre, so you are never sure if you’re seeing memories, dreams or nightmares. Prepare for the dizzying heights of teenage love, the resilience of young people in care, and a hope-filled journey towards healing.’

Due to the difficult nature of this show, the cast and creative team have worked with ARTiculate Art Therapy, which uses art to improve emotional well-being, to bring this world safely to life. This production deals with themes of child abuse and child sexual assault within the care system and as such has an age recommendation of 14+.

Scottish Opera Young Company offers young singers and stage managers a unique and practical introduction to the world of opera. Rehearsing throughout the year, they work with a range of opera professionals to hone their skills, culminating in their own performance.

*Rubble* is supported by **Scottish Opera’s Education Angels,** **Scottish Opera’s New Commissions Circle** and **The Leverhulme Trust Arts Scholarship Grant**.

Tickets for *Rubble* are available to buy now from [www.scottishopera.org.uk/shows/rubble/](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk/shows/rubble/)

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

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

Creatives

Conductor **Chris Gray**

Director **Roxana Haines**

Set Designer **Karen Tennent**

Costume Designer **Jessica Brettle**

Lighting Designer **Emma Jones**

Associate Director **Flora Emily Thomson**

Performance diary

Scottish Opera, 39 Elmbank Crescent, Glasgow, G2 4PT

30, 31 July, 2pm & 7pm

Notes to Editors

Scottish Opera is Scotland’s national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in Scotland. The 2022/23 season marks its 60th Anniversary.

The Company’s performance repertoire ranges across five centuries, from the earliest operas to newly-commissioned world premieres. Scottish Opera collaborates with the world’s finest singers and creatives, together with The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and choruses for each opera. Recent accolades include a South Bank Sky Arts Award, a Scottish Award for New Music, Sunday Herald Culture Awards, a Herald Angel, and 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 the Edinburgh International Festival.

The Company tours extensively across Scotland to ensure performances are within reach of as many of the country’s very dispersed population as possible. Specially-adapted 40-foot long trailers bring Pop-up Opera performances to thousands of people each year. In 2021, the Company performed nearly 200 performances 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 & Outreach programme, which celebrated 50 years in 2021, includes an annual Primary Schools Tour, bringing children the opportunity to perform their own specially commissioned piece alongside 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.

The Company’s Opera on Screen productions are available to watch at: [www.scottishopera.org.uk/what-s-on/opera-on-screen](http://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*, Menotti’s *The Telephone*, and Samuel Bordoli and Jenni Fagan’s *The Narcissistic Fish*. The Company’s 2021 production of *The Gondoliers*, filmed live at Festival Theatre Edinburgh, is available on BBC iPlayer.

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