

Opera Highlights Autumn 2025

Workplace drama on an operatic scale

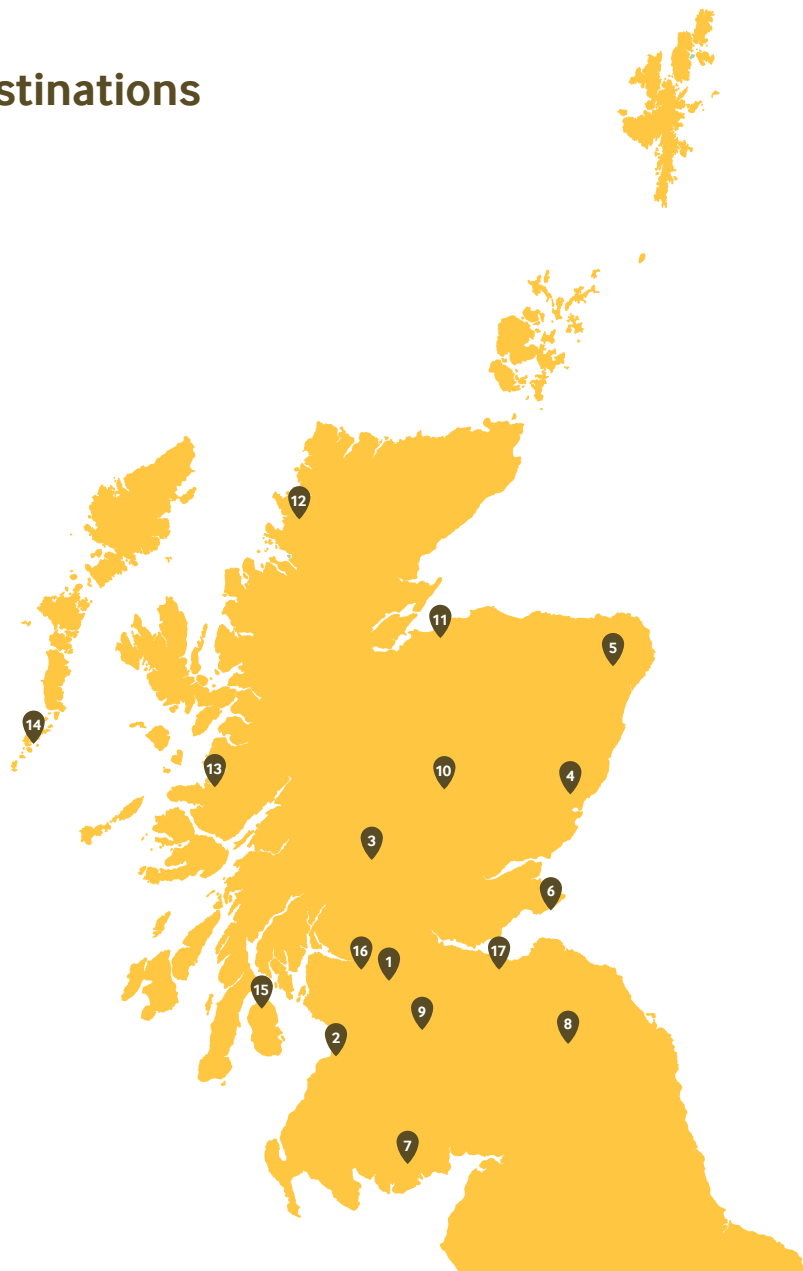


Scottish
Opera



Supported by
Friends of Scottish Opera
JTH Charitable Trust
The Scottish Opera Endowment Trust

Destinations



1 East Kilbride Village Theatre
Thursday 2 October

2 The Gaiety Theatre, Ayr
Saturday 4 October

3 Gartmore Village Hall
Tuesday 7 October

4 Brechin City Hall
Thursday 9 October

5 Haddo House, Ellon
Saturday 11 October

6 Crail Community Centre
Tuesday 14 October

**7 The Fullarton Theatre,
Castle Douglas**
Saturday 25 October

8 Melrose Corn Exchange
Tuesday 28 October

9 Crawfordjohn Hall
Thursday 30 October

10 Birnam Arts
Saturday 1 November

11 Nairn Community Centre
Tuesday 4 November

12 Lochinver Village Hall
Thursday 6 November

13 Glenuig Hall
Saturday 8 November

14 Castlebay School Theatre
Tuesday 11 November

15 Lochranza Village Hall
Tuesday 18 November

16 Johnstone Town Hall
Thursday 20 November

17 Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh
Saturday 22 November

The 2 October performance is supported by Maida Gibson

The 22 November performance is supported by Walter & Norma Nimmo



Welcome to *Opera Highlights*. It is a delight to present a new tour for the 2025/26 Season, making 35 stops – 17 on this autumn leg and 18 next spring – across Scotland from the Borders to the Islands.

Alongside these performances is a series of free hands-on workshops that share the secrets behind putting a production such as *Opera Highlights* on stage. Suitable for anyone interested in amateur dramatics or music, or those simply curious about live performance, any space in any community in Scotland can become a world-class opera house with a little imagination and creativity!

You might see familiar scenarios onstage today, and not just in a favourite aria. Working from extracts selected by our Head of Music Fiona MacSherry, Director Emma Doherty (Assistant Director on *Oedipus Rex* and *Marx in London!*, both 2024) and Designer Kenneth MacLeod (*L'heure espagnole* / *The Bear* 2025) have envisioned an office leaving party and love quadrangle with all the complicated relationships, emotions, and negotiations of these everyday situations. It's your favourite workplace dramedy, set to an operatic soundtrack!

Tonight is a wonderful chance to see young talent on stage bringing an original narrative to life. This tour's Music Director is Meghan Rhoades, one of our returning 2024–26 Emerging Artists, who evokes the sound worlds of Gounod, Handel, Strauss II, and Barber from the piano every performance. Two fellow Emerging Artists – mezzo-soprano Chloe Harris and tenor Luvo Maranti – perform onstage alongside soprano Ceferina Penny and baritone James Geidt.

Elsewhere at Scottish Opera, we present Ravel's *L'heure espagnole* and Walton's *The Bear* in Glasgow and Edinburgh, where you can see Chloe and Luvo in very different roles. Puccini's *La bohème* – presented in Barbe & Doucet's magical jazz-age production – tours to Glasgow, Inverness, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh, where its tour ends the same night *Opera Highlights* does. *Tchaikovsky's Heroines & Heroes*, a concert of operatic selections, finishes 2025. In 2026 we present the hugely exciting world premiere of Dai Fujikura and Harry Ross' *The Great Wave*, an opera exploring the life of Hokusai. Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* in concert and Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* returning in Sir Thomas Allen's beautiful production conclude our Season.

Scottish Opera remains immensely grateful to the Scottish Government for ongoing core funding. I would particularly like to thank Friends of Scottish Opera, JTH Charitable Trust, and The Scottish Opera Endowment Trust for their continued and enthusiastic support of *Opera Highlights*. I hope you enjoy this evening's spirited performance.

Alex Reedijk OBE FRC
General Director, Scottish Opera

Opera Highlights

Meghan Rhoades
Music Director / Pianist

Kenneth MacLeod
Designer

Emma Doherty
Director

Barry McDonald
Lighting Designer

Ceferina Penny Soprano

Chloe Harris** Mezzo-soprano

Luvo Maranti* Tenor

James Geidt Baritone

Musical programme devised by **Fiona MacSherry**

The performance lasts approximately two hours,
including a 20-minute interval

*Scottish Opera Emerging Artist 2025/26

**Scottish Opera Emerging Artist 2024–26

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Memo to all staff, from company exec, Re: Nedda's leaving party

Dear Team,

As many of you already know, Nedda will soon be leaving our office to return home and support her family, as her mother is unwell. While we're truly sorry to see her go, we want to take the opportunity to come together and thank her for everything she's brought to the company.

Please join us for a farewell party to celebrate Nedda's time with us and all the wonderful contributions in her role as Regional Manager at Pritchett & Sons.

Let's make it a memorable send off!

Warm regards,

Mr Pritchett
CEO, Pritchett & Sons

Welcome to the party!

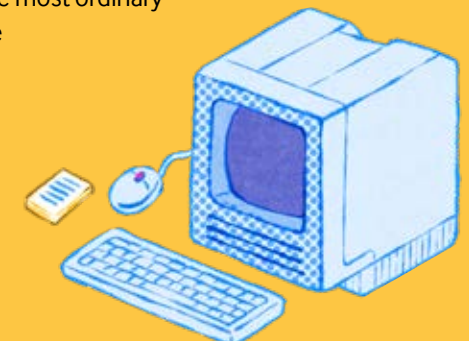
It's a privilege to be directing Scottish Opera's much loved *Opera Highlights* for the 2025/26 Season and to be working with such a talented team of artists.

As I began shaping the repertoire, three recurring themes stood out: forbidden love, celebration and revelry, and a deep desire to escape the monotony of everyday life. The space where all three intersected – perhaps unexpectedly – was the office party. Our story follows four colleagues navigating complex, messy, and at times questionable relationships. Amidst the whirl of the photocopier and the clatter of keyboards, their professionalism slowly unravels. We watch as they compete, flirt, betray, fall in love and have their hearts broken – culminating in a chaotic and explosive leaving do where tensions boil over and true colours are revealed.

Tonight's office party reminds us that, even in the most ordinary places, real human drama thrives and behind the routine, there is always a story worth telling.

I hope you enjoy the show!

Emma Doherty
Director



Programme

Prologue *Pagliacci*

Ruggero Leoncavallo

Selections from *Roméo et Juliette*

Charles Gounod

Juliette's Waltz

Stéphano's Aria

Roméo's Aria

The Balcony Scene

Letter Scene *Werther*

Jules Massenet

Selections from Act I *Pagliacci*

Ruggero Leoncavallo

Nedda's Aria

Duet: 'Nedda! 'Silvio, here so early!'

Canio's Aria

INTERVAL

A Hand of Bridge

Samuel Barber

'He bewilders my affections' *Alcina*

George Frideric Handel

Selections from *Die Fledermaus*

Johann Strauss II

Duet: 'It's the Talk of the Town'

Aria: 'Chacun à son gout'

Duet: 'What a tonic! What a beauty!'

Aria: Csárdás 'Songs of my homeland'

Champagne Song



These performances of *A Hand of Bridge* are by arrangement with Chester Music Ltd trading as G Schirmer on behalf of G Schirmer Inc.

Programme Notes

This evening's performance has a narrative and character of its own. However, for those who wish to know more, these notes explain the original operatic context of the pieces you will hear.

Prologue from *Pagliacci* (1892)

Text: Ruggero Leoncavallo

English Translation: Bill Bankes-Jones

Music: Ruggero Leoncavallo

Tonio: James Geidt

Leoncavallo based his tale of adultery and bloody vengeance within a travelling commedia dell'arte troupe on a real murder trial that he witnessed as a child. At the start of *Pagliacci*, Tonio – one of the clowns – addresses the audience directly: what they are about to see is pure drama, but each one of these players has a human heart that they should not ignore amidst the fancy. The stage is set for the show to begin.

Selections from *Roméo et Juliette* (1867)

Juliette's Waltz

Stéphano's Aria

Roméo's Aria

The Balcony Scene

Text: Jules Barbier and Michel Carré, after Shakespeare's 1597 play

English Translation: Edmund Tracey

Music: Charles Gounod

Juliette: Ceferina Penny

Stéphano / Gertrude: Chloe Harris

Roméo: Luvo Maranti

While taking full advantage of the romance and grandeur of 19th century French opera conventions, Gounod's adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* is very faithful to Shakespeare's tale of star-crossed lovers from quarrelling families. In Act I, Juliette is intoxicated by the heady atmosphere of Capulet's ball even before she meets Roméo. She wants to capture that feeling and hold it close to her forever in her joyous waltz.

The next selection takes place in Act III, after Roméo and Juliette have met, fallen in love, and married. Stéphano, Roméo's page, taunts the Capulets into a brawl with a saucy song that hints at his master's forbidden romance.

The second two extracts go back to the play's and opera's most famous moment: the Act II balcony scene. Roméo, watching from below Juliette's window, ardently implores his love to appear like a pure and radiant star to banish night's darkness. Getting rid of her nurse Gertrude, Juliette comes out to her balcony to meet him, and the pair sing a rapturous duet pledging their devotion. Fearing someone should catch them, they promise to meet again tomorrow.

Letter Scene from *Werther* (1892)

Text: Édouard Blau, Paul Milliet, and Georges Hartmann, after Goethe's 1774 novel

English Translation: Norman Tucker

Music: Jules Massenet

Charlotte: Chloe Harris

Sophie: Ceferina Penny

Many composers have adapted Goethe's epistolary novel for the operatic stage after it sparked possibly the world's first case of literary celebrity. Massenet's version, however, is the only one that has survived to the present day, possibly in part due to the astute psychological characterisation of Charlotte. Werther fell madly in love with her when he escorted her to a dance many months ago, not knowing she was engaged to Albert. When Werther's passion grew more worrying, Charlotte forbade him from visiting until Christmas. Now, on Christmas Eve, she reads over the many letters he sent her during their separation, confused by her own feelings and worried that they foretell some tragedy when he arrives – or if he does not. When her younger sister Sophie comes to see her, she cannot hide her distress.

Act I selections from *Pagliacci* (1892)

Nedda's Aria

Duet: 'Nedda!' 'Silvio, here so early!'

Canio's Aria

Text: Ruggero Leoncavallo

English Translation: Bill Bankes-Jones

Music: Ruggero Leoncavallo

Nedda: Ceferina Penny

Silvio: James Geidt

Canio: Luvo Maranti

The play Tonio introduced is well underway, and the travelling troupe of players have arrived in a new town to set up a performance that very night. Nedda is married to Canio, the troupe's leader, but she is restless. Their marriage has not been happy, and she has fallen in love with Silvio, a villager who promises a new kind of life. She imagines herself as free as the birds. During a clandestine meeting with Silvio, he begs her to run away with him, and she eventually agrees. Unfortunately, Tonio overhears the adulterous lovers and brings Canio to witness his wife's betrayal. Canio, furious and heartbroken, must still put on his makeup and play the cuckolded husband for the paying crowd.

INTERVAL

***A Hand of Bridge* (1959)**

Text: Gian Carlo Menotti

Music: Samuel Barber

Bill: Luvo Maranti

Geraldine: Ceferina Penny

David: James Geidt

Sally: Chloe Harris

Clocking in around nine minutes, *A Hand of Bridge* is the shortest regularly performed opera. Written by the real-life couple Samuel Barber and Gian Carlo Menotti, its interwoven ariettas expose the inmost, deeply unfulfilled desires of four unhappily married characters – Bill to Sally, Geraldine to David – after Bill plays a five of hearts and starts a new hand. Bill is worried his recent infidelities will be discovered, wondering about his mistress' whereabouts while he is stuck around the card table. Geraldine wonders why Bill seems so distant despite their past flirtation, lamenting that her husband, son, and dying mother are slipping away just as she is learning to love. David is furious at his stalled professional position, cursing his boss Mr Pritchett and his fate while fantasising about sexual adventures. Sally, despite her husband's suspicions, is mainly frustrated at having to play 'dummy' again; she fixates on and frets over buying a peacock feather hat.

'He bewilders my affections' from *Alcina* (1735)

Text: Attributed to Antonio Fanzaglia, originally written as *L'isola di Alcina*

English Translation: Amanda Holden

Music: George Frideric Handel

Ruggiero: Chloe Harris

Handel's opera is one of three he based on the epic poem *Orlando furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto. The knight Ruggiero (a role written for a castrato, now usually taken by a mezzo-soprano) is beset by a series of fantastical adventures – now, he is marooned on Alcina's enchanted island, where she turns her lovers into animals and plants when she is bored of them. Ruggiero has remained in Alcina's favours and escaped this fate, but his betrothed Bradamante has arrived disguised as a man to rescue him. After all these magical deceptions and human disguises, Ruggiero is bewildered when 'Ricciardo' reveals himself as Bradamante. As much as he wants to believe his beloved is once again with him, he must be careful and not let his guard down lest he too finds himself joining the local wildlife.

Selections from *Die Fledermaus* (1874)

Duet: 'It's the Talk of the Town'

Aria: 'Chacun à son gout'

Duet: 'What a tonic! What a beauty!'

Aria: Csárdás 'Songs of my homeland'

Champagne Song

Text: Karl Haffner and Richard Genée, based on the farce *Das Gefängnis* (*The Prison*), by Julius Roderich Benedix

English Translations: Leonard Hancock and David Poutney

Music: Johann Strauss II

Doctor Falke: James Geidt

Gabriel von Eisenstein: Luvo Maranti

Count Orlofsky: Chloe Harris

Rosalinde: Ceferina Penny

Die Fledermaus is the quintessential operetta: the entire plot revolves around one harebrained scheme to attend a party before Gabriel von Eisenstein must spend eight days in jail for insulting an official; disguises, deception, and good-hearted japes abound. Doctor Falke, Eisenstein's friend, convinces Eisenstein to report for his sentence a day late and join him for a night of revels at Count Orlofsky's. Falke, of course, has ulterior motives of petty revenge, hoping to pay Eisenstein back for abandoning him drunk in the city centre after a costume ball. To this end, Falke invites Eisenstein's wife Rosalinde to Orlofsky's to witness her husband's drunken exploits.

Orlofsky welcomes everyone to his lavish party, exhorting them to partake in food, drink, and merriment – the only boring people are the ones who do not partake of life's pleasures. Here, Eisenstein sees a beautiful, masked 'Hungarian' lady (Rosalinde in disguise). As he tries to woo her, she takes his watch as proof of his affection – and indiscretion. She sings a traditional Hungarian csárdás to keep up her ruse.

But all ends happily ever after – as long as champagne is involved, and lots of it, everything is forgiven.

Programme notes by **Carmen Paddock**, Publications Editor at Scottish Opera

Biographies



Emma Doherty – Director

Emma is a dynamic stage director and musician whose work spans professional, educational, and community settings – from national opera houses to prisons, homelessness hostels, and schools. Passionate about the transformative power of creativity, Emma champions its role in empowerment, wellbeing, and fostering community cohesion. Emma holds a first class degree in Music from the University of Manchester where she regularly performed as a soprano. She co-founded The Opera Shack, a collective bringing interdisciplinary opera into unusual settings for which she was Artistic Director. She is a Create and Sing Artist with the Royal Ballet and Opera and specialises in youth engagement, having frequently directed the Royal Opera and Opera North Youth Company. Upcoming projects include directing *Balls* at the Royal Festival Hall with the London Philharmonia Orchestra under the baton of Marin Alsop, followed by an assistant director role to Natalie Abrahami on *The Turn of the Screw* at The Linbury Theatre, Royal Ballet and Opera.

For Scottish Opera: Director *The Giant's Harp*; Assistant Director *Oedipus Rex* and *Marx in London!*.

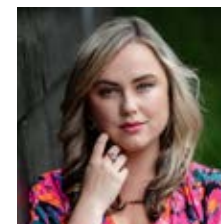


James Geidt – Baritone

Scottish Opera debut

James is a recent graduate of the Royal Academy of Music Opera Course. He was a Choral Scholar in the choir of New College, Oxford. James has worked as a Garsington Opera Alvarez Emerging Artist across multiple seasons and was awarded the Simon Sandbach Award for achievements across the 2024 Season. In 2023, James joined the Vokalensemble at the Staatsoper Hamburg for Sciarrino's *Venere e Adone*, conducted by Kent Nagano. Concert performances include Handel's *Messiah* (Smith Square Hall), Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* (Barnes Music Festival), Bach's B minor Mass (North London Chorus), and Handel's *Israel in Egypt* (Semana de Musica Religiosa, Cuenca).

Operatic engagements include: Pluton *La descente d'Orphée aux enfers* (Buxton); Schaunard *La bohème* (Devon Opera); Demetrius *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Garsington); Hunter *Rusalka* (Garsington at EIF); Sorceress *Dido and Aeneas* (Vache Baroque Festival); Papageno *Die Zauberflöte*, Le Comte *Chérubin*, Forester *The Cunning Little Vixen*, L'horloge comtoise and Le chat *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (RAM).



Chloe Harris – Mezzo-soprano

Scottish Opera Emerging Artist 2024-26

Chloe is a graduate of the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and the RAM Opera School. Roles include Nancy *Albert Herring*, Baba the Turk *The Rake's Progress*, Marcellina *Le nozze di Figaro*, Clarina *Il cambiale di matrimonio*, Public Opinion *Orphée aux enfers*, and The Second Fairy *The Selfish Giant* (world premiere). In Australia, Chloe is an Associate Artist through Melbourne Opera's Richard Divali Emerging Artists Programme and was a Melba Opera Trust Artist. In 2023, she received the Opera Foundation for young Australians Lady Gallegan London Award and Help Musicians Sybil Tutton Opera Award. Chloe was a 2024 Garsington Opera Alvarez Young Artist, performing in the chorus and covering Marcellina *Le nozze di Figaro* and covering Moon Queen *A Trip to the Moon*.

Scottish Opera appearances: Yelena Ivanovna Popova *The Bear*, Counsel for the Plaintiff *Trial by Jury*, Cherry Penistone *A Matter of Misconduct!* (world premiere), *Opera Highlights* Spring 2025, Nancy.

Future engagements include: Koto *The Great Wave*, Cherubino *The Marriage of Figaro* (Scottish Opera).



Kenneth MacLeod — Designer

For Scottish Opera: *L'heure espagnole* / *The Bear*, *Opera Highlights* Spring 2025.

Theatre design credits include: *Dracula: Mina's Reckoning* (NTS, UK Theatre Awards 2024 Best Design winner), *Maggie & Me* (NTS, WhatsOnStage Awards Best Design 2024 nominee); *Spring Awakening*, *Chess*, *Cabaret*, *West Side Story* (RCS); *The Cook*, *The Thief, His Wife & Her Lover* (Faena Miami / Unigram); *Cinderella*, *Oor Wullie*, *The Yellow On The Broom*, *The Maids*, *Cinderella* (Dundee Rep); *Spin!*, *The Metamorphosis* (Vanishing Point, CATS 2020 nominee); *The Dark Carnival* (Vanishing Point / Citizens Theatre, CATS 2019 nominee); *The Stamping Ground* (Raw Material / Eden Court); *Money Makes The World Go Round*, *Echoes In The Night*, *The Outsider* (Carnival / Cunard); *Don't. Make. Tea.* (Birds of Paradise); *Bright Young Things*, *Time & Motion* (National Youth Ballet); *Kes* (Perth Theatre); *In The Weeds* (Mull Theatre / Made In Scotland); *Falstaff*, *Tosca* (Opera Bohemia).

Associate Design work includes: Disney's *Bedknobs & Broomsticks* (Michael Harrison / UK Tour); *Flight* (Vox Motus / EIF). Kenneth is a graduate of the RCS and The California Institute of the Arts. kenneth-macleod.com



Luvo Maranti — Tenor

Scottish Opera Emerging Artist 2025/26

Luvo Maranti is a South African tenor whose career highlights include appearances in Cape Town Opera productions, winning first prize in the Voices of South Africa International Competition, reaching the quarterfinals of the 2023 Operalia Competition, and performing leading roles in Europe and the USA. A 2024/25 National Opera Studio alumnus and founder of the Luvo Maranti Arts Scholarship in 2022, he holds a Diploma in Music Performance from the University of Cape Town and is a recipient of The Drake Calleja Scholarship.

Scottish Opera appearances: Gonzalve *L'heure espagnole*.

Operatic engagements include: chorus *Macbeth* and *Don Pasquale* (West Green Opera); Hoffmann *Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Opera UCT, International Lyric Academy / Opera Carolina); Ildamaro *Dalinda* (world premiere), Hendrik Cesars *Sara Baartman* (UCT); Rinuccio *Gianni Schicchi* (International Lyric Academy); Gherardo *Gianni Schicchi* (Operatunity South Africa).

Future engagements include: Hokusai's Grandson *The Great Wave*, Don Basilio / Don Curzio *The Marriage of Figaro* (Scottish Opera).



Barry McDonald — Lighting Designer

Barry McDonald has worked as a Lighting Supervisor and Chargehand at Scottish Opera for 14 years, delivering high-quality support for lighting designers for a wide range of productions. He has also undertaken Associate Lighting Design work, overseeing teams and ensuring smooth delivery from rehearsal to performance. Known for his calm approach, technical skill, and attention to detail, Barry enjoys collaborating to create the right atmosphere for every moment on stage. *Opera Highlights* 2025/26 marks his debut as Lighting Designer at Scottish Opera.



Ceferina Penny — Soprano

Scottish Opera debut

Ceferina completed the NOS Young Artist Programme, where she was a Sybil Tutton Award holder. She undertook undergraduate and graduate studies at the RCM under Janis Kelly and made her professional debut at ENO in 2018 as Slave *Salome*. In 2023, Ceferina performed Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro* (Westminster Opera Company). At NOS, scenes included Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Giulietta (*I Capuleti e i Montecchi*), the Governess (*The Turn of the Screw*), Musetta (*La bohème*) and Poppea (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*). Recent concert work includes Mozart's *Exsultate, jubilate* (Westminster Opera Company) and Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle* (Woodbridge Choral Society). In June 2024, she performed Solveig in excerpts from *Peer Gynt* (RPO). As a 2024 Britten Pears Young Artist, Ceferina won the Elizabeth Harwood Memorial Award and received coaching on French *mélodie* from Véronique Gens, Susan Manoff, and Audrey Hyland. Ceferina returned to Britten Pears Arts this summer to give a recital of *mélodie* and *lieder* as part of the Aldeburgh Festival.



Meghan Rhoades — Music Director / Pianist

Scottish Opera Emerging Artist 2024-26

Meghan is a second-year Emerging Artist at Scottish Opera, where they have served as a répétiteur and coach on the Company's 2025/26 Autumn Double Bill (*L'heure espagnole* / *The Bear*) and 2024/25 productions including *The Puccini Collection*, *The Makropulos Affair*, *The Strauss Collection*, *Trial by Jury*, and *A Matter of Misconduct!* (world premiere). Prior to arriving at Scottish Opera, Meghan was a GSMD Opera Studies student where they served as a rehearsal pianist and vocal coach for *Alcina*, *A Star Next to the Moon*, and Opera Scenes showcases. Meghan served as répétiteur for *La bohème* (Music Academy of the West) and *A Little Night Music* (Louisiana State University), Music Director for *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (Music On Site), and rehearsal pianist / vocal coach for *Die Zauberflöte* (Trentino Music Festival). As an LSU Graduate Assistant, Meghan worked with vocalists and instrumentalists in lessons, studio classes, recitals, and recordings and served as pianist for LSU's Contemporary New Music Ensemble, which performed at Carnegie Hall in April 2022.

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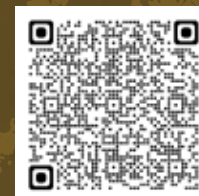
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The Friends of Scottish Opera play a crucial role in taking this tour out on the road each year. **Thank you to our Friends for making this evening's performance possible.**

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To join over the phone or find out more, contact Sarah McBryant on Sarah.McBryant@scottishopera.org.uk or **0141 242 0596**.

'This was a splendid evening. The singers and pianist gave 1000%, at times had us rolling on the floor as we laughed, at times had us near in tears. This was a treat. Please, please come again'

Audience member in Tarbert, Isle of Harris

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