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##### Press Release

6 August 2025

**SCOTTISH OPERA PRESENTS DOUBLE BILL OF RAVEL’S *L’HEURE ESPAGNOLE* & WALTON’S**

***THE BEAR* AT LAMMERMUIR FESTIVAL, AND IN**

**GLASGOW AND EDINBURGH**

On 4 September, Scottish Opera’s 2025/26 Season opens at Lammermuir Festival in East Lothian with a performance of two caustic comedies of infidelity: Maurice Ravel’s *L’heure espagnole* (marking 150 years since the composer’s birth) and William Walton’s *The Bear*.

This irresistible evening of musical mischief takes place at St Mary’s Parish Church in Haddington and is conducted by French opera expert **Alexandra Cravero** (*Thérèse* 2022.) **Jacopo Spirei**, who worked extensively with renowned opera director Sir Graham Vick, directs this new concert staging, reimagining these operas as short, comic television episodes.

Designs are by the award-winning **Kenneth MacLeod**, who is also working with the Company this Season on *Opera Highlights*.

This concert continues Scottish Opera’s long-running partnership with Lammermuir Festival and demonstrates its commitment to exploring and championing lesser-known pieces by great composers.

There are further opportunities to see Ravel's and Walton’s mini masterpieces at Theatre Royal Glasgow in October and Festival Theatre Edinburghin November.

These performances, supported by**The Scottish Opera Endowment Trust**,feature former Emerging and Associate Artist and Education Artist-in-Residence **Lea Shaw**; **Chloe Harris** and **Edward Jowle**, returning as 2025/26 Emerging Artists; Company favourite **Jamie MacDougall**; and 2025/26 Emerging Artists **Daniel Barrett** and **Luvo Maranti**. They are accompanied by **The Orchestra of Scottish Opera**.

Ravel’s Spanish-influenced *L’heure espagnole* sees a turn from melodramatic to farcical. A clockmaker’s serially unfaithful wife must come up with increasingly creative ways to hide her lovers over 21 fast-paced scenes.

*The Bear*, a witty one-act opera by English composer William Walton based on a Chekhov play, finds a widow confronting her late husband’s legacy — and serial adultery — when a creditor comes knocking.

While the two composers’ sound worlds are unique, they both examine the workings of imperfect human hearts with wry empathy.

**Jacopo Spirei** said: ‘I wanted to explore how two women, one trapped in time, the other in mourning, fight to reclaim control of their own narratives. *L’heure espagnole* and *The Bear* may be comedies, but beneath the farce lies a sharp, emotional truth about independence, desire, and transformation.

‘By reframing *L’heure espagnole* and *The Bear* as if they were episodes in your Netflix queue, we hold up a screen to modern life, where emotions are edited, stories are bingeable, and even grief gets a promo. But what happens when women stop playing the roles they’ve been given?’

**Alexandra Cravero** said: ‘*L’heure espagnole* and *The Bear* are both about women in love and highlight the differences between Ravel’s French style and the British style of Walton. The French style invites us to savour the sensuality of orchestral colour, enhanced with a touch of Spanish elegance. In contrast, the British style surprises with its rhythmic intensity. Though composed 60 years apart, these two works humorously explore the complexities of love, across centuries and civilisations.’

**James Waters**, co-director of Lammermuir Festival said: ‘Over the last 8 years, our partnership with Scottish Opera has brought festival goers a fantastic variety of works and is always a much talked about highlight of the festival. This year, as the centrepiece of our tribute to Ravel in his 150th anniversary year, Scottish Opera’s concert staging of his one-act opera *L’heure espagnole* is certain to be a huge hit. In addition, this double bill promises more with Walton’s one-act chamber opera, *The Bear*. It’s a great programme, a night of operatic comedy and ravishing music and we look forward to being entertained and wowed once again.’

At the Glasgow and Edinburgh performances of the double bill, tickets start from just £23, and with 50% of seats on sale priced under £40, Scottish Opera ensures world-class opera remains accessible to everyone across Scotland. In addition,£15 are tickets available for under-26s and students at every performance. Over 800 free tickets have been provided to schools since 2022, often introducing pupils to live opera for the first time, and over 1,600 free tickets have been distributed to New Scots communities across the Glasgow, Aberdeen, Inverness and Edinburgh. Free tickets are also available for schools, colleges, and community groups, with travel subsidies where needed.

In December, Scottish Opera’s Opera is Concert series continues at Usher Hall Edinburgh with *Tchaikovsky’s Heroines & Heroes.* This featuresselections from *Eugene Onegin, Iolanta*, and *The Maid of Orleans* conducted byScottish Opera Music Director **Stuart Stratford**.

With a cast including **Lauren Fagan** (*Ainadamar* 2022), **Josef Jeongmeen Ahn** (*Don Pasquale* 2024), and **Natalia Kutateladze** and **Robert Lewis** in their Company debuts, this concert features extended excerpts from three of the iconic Russian composer’s best works, which all centre complex and richly drawn women.

*Eugene Onegin* is a deeply moving tale of unrequited love and high society life; *The Maid of Orleans* is a romantic retelling of the story of Joan of Arc; and *Iolanta,* the last opera Tchaikovsky composed, is a dreamlike fairy tale of a blind princess discovering the world outside her isolated garden home. Allowing audiences to discover his music **—** which blended French and German influences with Russian traditions **—** beyond *The Nutcracker*, this is the perfect winter night out.

*L’heure espagnole* & *The Bear* and *Tchaikovsky’s Heroines & Heroes* are supported by **The Scottish Opera Endowment Trust** and **Friends of Scottish Opera**.

Tickets for *L’heure espagnole* & *The Bear*, and *Tchaikovsky’s Heroines & Heroes* are available from [www.scottishopera.org.uk](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk)

Double bill creative team

Conductor **Alexandra Cravero**

Concert Staging **Jacopo Spirei**

Designer  **Kenneth MacLeod**

Lighting Designer **Andrew Burnside**

Cast of *L’heure espagnole*

Concepción **Lea Shaw**Torquemada  **Jamie MacDougall**Ramiro  **Daniel Barrett\***Don Iñigo Gomez **Edward Jowle\***Gonzalve  **Luvo Maranti\***

Cast of *The Bear*

Yelena Ivanovna Popova  **Chloe Harris\***

Grigory Stepanovich Smirnov **Daniel Barrett\***Luka  **Edward Jowle\***

\*Scottish Opera Emerging Artist 2025/26

Performance Diary

**Lammermuir Festival**

**St Mary’s Church, Haddington**

4 September 7.30pm

**Theatre Royal Glasgow**

18 & 22 October 7.15pm

**Festival Theatre Edinburgh**

15 November 7.15pm

Pre-show talks

22 October & 15 November

Audio description / Touch Tours

22 October & 15 November

-ENDS-

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

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Notes to Editors

Lammermuir Festival

The Lammermuir Festival, established in 2010, has carved out an enviable reputation for a distinctive and carefully curated programme of rare gems and fresh takes on popular works which attracts some of the world’s finest musicians to East Lothian each September.

Its range of historic venues and intimate surroundings heightens the atmosphere, offering audiences a richly immersive experience whether they be new to classical music or life-long fans.

After a successful pilot in 2024, Lammermuir Festival builds on Front Row to offer even more 12 to 18-year-olds opportunities to attend rehearsals, meet artists and enjoy the best free front row seats. Free tickets are also available for school students attending certain concerts with an adult.

The Festival has had a long association with BBC Radio 3 and the partnership continues in 2025 with the broadcast of three concerts.

The festival programme is brought together by co-artistic directors James Waters and Hugh Macdonald and its patron is Steven Osborne. It is supported by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland.

Scottish Opera

Scottish Opera is Scotland’s national opera company and largest performing arts organisation. The Company was founded in 1962 by Sir Alexander Gibson ‘to lay the treasures of opera at the feet of the people of Scotland’. Repertoire ranges across five centuries, from the earliest operas to newly commissioned world premieres. For mainstage and concert productions, the Company collaborates with the world’s finest singers and creatives, The Orchestra of Scottish Opera, and choruses for each opera and co-produces work with opera companies around the world. Recent accolades include a South Bank Sky Arts Award, Scottish Award for New Music, Sunday Herald Culture Awards, 2017 UK Theatre Award, 2020 RPS Award, 2023 International Opera Award nomination, and 2023 Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera.

The Company produces world-class work at every scale. Scottish Opera is a trailblazer in community arts, including ‘community opera’ combining chorus members of all backgrounds with a professional chorus, soloists, and The Orchestra of Scottish Opera. Productions include *Pagliacci* in Paisley (2018), *Candide* in Glasgow (2022), and *Oedipus Rex* at the Edinburgh International Festival (2024). The extensive touring programme ensures performances of Pop-up Opera and *Opera Highlights* are within reach of as many of Scotland’s dispersed population as possible.

The Company’s Outreach & Education programme, the longest running in Europe, includes in-person and digital Primary Schools Tours, enabling children to perform their own specially commissioned piece. Around 120 schools and 12,000 pupils take part in the live tour each year. The Emerging Artist programme gives early-career professionals comprehensive training for today’s opera industry. The groundbreaking Breath Cycle project for those living with lung conditions won the 2025 Classical:NEXT Innovation Award. Scottish Opera aims to be inclusive through the availability of free and subsidised tickets, audio-described performances, and Access performances with Dementia Friendly values at their core.

Scottish Opera is committed to presenting opera at the highest possible standards across Scotland and worldwide. Recent recordings featuring The Orchestra of Scottish Opera include *Utopia, Limited* (NAXOS 2025), *The Seal Woman* (Retrospect Opera 2025), and *Shamus O’Brien* (Retrospect Opera 2024). The Company’s 2021 production of *The Gondoliers* is available on BBC iPlayer, and the 2025 production of *Trial by Jury* / *A Matter of Misconduct!* is free to view on OperaVision worldwide (both productions filmed live at Edinburgh’s Festival Theatre). *Josefine*, by Samuel Bordoli and Antonia Bain, is the UK’s first newly commissioned opera for animation and has won numerous awards at international film festivals since its world premiere in July 2024.

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