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##### Press Release

14 February 2024

**SCOTTISH OPERA PRESENTS**

***THE FRENCH COLLECTION* IN DUNDEE AND GLASGOW THIS MARCH**

To conclude Scottish Opera’s Opera in Concert series this Season, Music Director **Stuart Stratford** conducts *The French Collection* at Dundee’s Caird Hall and the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall on March 1 and 3.

In this gala performance, The Orchestra of Scottish Opera captures the vivacity and grandeur of this uniquely brilliant musical epoch, accompanying a first-rate group of singers. This includes Scottish mezzo-soprano **Catriona Morison**(winner of BBC Cardiff Singer of the World 2017) who was last with the Company at the 50th Perth Festival of the Arts opening gala concert in 2022, and known for her French repertoire performances. Joining her is tenor **Alok Kumar**who was Don José in Scottish Opera’s 2023 production of Bizet's Carmen, and soprano **Alexandra Lowe** and bass-baritone **Callum Thorpe** making their Company debuts.

Few cities saw as much innovation and creative output in opera as Paris did during the19th century. With three major opera houses and composers from France and further abroad vying for a coveted premiere at one (or more) of them, French opera contains a vast variety of musical and dramatic styles as its artists pushed boundaries on stage and in the pit.

Leaning heavily into French lyric opera, a character and drama-focused subgenre that dominated Paris’ stages during the last half of the 1800s, *The French Collection* includes excerpts from some of the era’s grandest and most beloved operas as well as its rarer gems that deserve a second hearing. These include the famous tenor and baritone duet in *Les pêcheurs de perles* by Georges Bizet, Charles Gounod’s dynamic, devilish *Faust*, and a Bacchanale from *Samson et Dalila* by Camille Saint-Saëns, depicting a wild, drunken party. In Massenet’s *Werther*, audiences can hear the plaintive sounds of a saxophone accompaniment, a rare occurrence in a 19th-century opera.

*The French Collection*, supported by **Friends of Scottish Opera** and **The Scottish Opera Endowment Trust**, will be a night of romance, drama, and beautiful music, and rounds off Scottish Opera’s Opera in Concert series for the 2023/24 Season, which also included much-praised performances of Richard Strauss’ *Daphne*.

**Stuart Stratford,** who curated the programme with Scottish Opera’s Head of Music, **Fiona MacSherry**, said: ‘These concerts embrace the perfume, powder and poetry of French Grand Opera. Experience the heady aroma of Bizet's exotic *The Pearl Fishers*, sumptuous sheen of Gounod's *Faust* and be closeted in a steamy domestic drama of Massenet's *Werther*. With a fabulous international cast and the virtuosic orchestra of Scottish Opera, I promise you an outstanding evening to remember.’

To book your tickets, visit www.scottishopera.org.uk/shows/the-french-collection/

*The French Collection* cast and creative team

Conductor **Stuart Stratford**

Soprano **Alexandra Lowe**

Mezzo-soprano **Catriona Morison**

Tenor  **Alok Kumar**

Bass-baritone **Callum Thorpe**

Performance Diary

**Caird Hall, Dundee**

1 March 2024, 7.30pm

**Glasgow Royal Concert Hall**

3 March 2024, 3pm

-ENDS-

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

You can follow Scottish Opera on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, You Tube and Tik-Tok **@ScottishOpera**

Notes to Editors

Scottish Opera is Scotland’s national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in Scotland. The Company was founded in 1962 by Sir Alexander Gibson with the goal ‘to lay the treasures of opera at the feet of the people of Scotland’, opening with performances of *Madama Butterfly* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*. The 2022/23 season marked its 60th Anniversary.

Scottish Opera’s performance repertoire ranges across five centuries, from the earliest operas to newly commissioned world premieres, balancing favourites with under-explored works. The Company 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 2017 UK Theatre Award, and a 2020 RPS Award. The Company took operas to Brooklyn in 2017 and Adelaide in 2020, and the 2022/23 season saw productions first staged at Scottish Opera appearing in Santa Fe, Madrid, Toulouse, and Los Angeles. The 60th Anniversary Season included the UK fully staged premiere of Osvaldo Golijov’s *Ainadamar* and the Company premiere of Puccini’s *Il trittico*.

The Company tours extensively across Scotland to ensure performances are within reach of as many of the country’s dispersed population as possible. 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, the oldest in Europe, includes an annual in-person and digital 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.

Scottish Opera is committed to making opera for all, presenting opera at the highest possible standards in theatres across the country, outdoors on tour, and digital audiences around the world. The Company’s 2021 production of *The Gondoliers*, filmed live at Festival Theatre Edinburgh, is available on BBC iPlayer. Scottish Opera’s 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*, Menotti’s *The Telephone*, *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, *Mister MacNeep Has Lost His Sheep*, and Samuel Bordoli and Jenni Fagan’s *The Narcissistic Fish*.

Renowned for their flexibility and craftsmanship, Scottish Opera productions are frequently presented by opera houses across the globe. Two of our 60th Anniversary productions are presented by Welsh National Opera: Osvaldo Golijov’s *Ainadamar* is in Cardiff, Llandudno, Bristol, Plymouth, Birmingham, Milton Keynes and Southampton from September to November 2023. Puccini’s *Il trittico* can be seen in Cardiff in June 2024.

Following on from a run at the Opera Comique in Paris, Detroit Opera perform our 2019 production of Missy Mazzoli’s *Breaking the Waves* in April 2024 (having just presented *Ainadamar).* In addition, our 2014 production of Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale* is performed twice in Canada: at Vancouver Opera in February 2024, and at Canadian Opera Company in Toronto in April and May 2024.

Scottish Opera is supported by the Scottish Government.

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