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##### Press Release

30 October 2023

**SCOTTISH OPERA WELCOMES SIX EMERGING ARTISTS FOR THE 2023/24 SEASON**

A talented group of Emerging Artists joins Scottish Opera for the 2023/24 Season: baritone **Ross Cumming**, soprano **Inna Husieva**, tenor **Monwabisi Lindi**, costume trainee **Lovisa Litsgard**, returning mezzo-soprano **Lea Shaw** (as Associate Artist), and repetiteur **José** **Javier Ucendo.**

The Scottish Opera Emerging Artistsprogramme, which was launched in 2009, offers young talent a period of full-time work with the Company to help launch their careers. They have opportunities to perform with Scottish Opera in live productions throughout the Season as well as work in-house with staff and visiting coaches to develop their skills. The Emerging Artists singers perform in a number of this season’s productions and tours, and in recitals at the University of Glasgow and Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. They are supported by **Scottish Opera’s Emerging Artist Benefactors** and **Elizabeth Salvesen**.

Initially set up to nurture outstanding young singers, the programme now also includes positions for a repetiteur and costume trainee. Previous Emerging Artists include soprano Jennifer France, baritone Ben McAteer, repetiteur Jonathon Swinard, and composers Gareth Williams and Lliam Paterson.

**Sarah-Jane Davies**,Head of Casting at Scottish Opera said: ‘I am delighted to welcome Ross Cumming, Inna Husieva, Monwabisi Lindi, and José Javier Ucendoto our Emerging Artist programme, along withLea Shawwho is returning this Season as an Associate Artist.This 2023/24 Season they have many exciting projects ahead of them. The singers are involved in our productions of *The Barber of Seville* and *La traviata* in principal or covering roles. For our concert performances of *Hansel & Gretel* in December, Ross, Inna and Lea will be joining two recent Emerging Artist graduates, before all four singers embark on the Spring *Opera Highlights* tour. The singers and repetiteur will also be performing in recitals at the RCS and University of Glasgow.’

**Lorna Price**, Head of Costume at Scottish Opera said: ‘Lovisa Litsgard was the successful candidate for the Elizabeth Salvesen Costume Trainee role this year. At interview, Lovisa came across as being well -suited to all aspects of the departmental roles that she will be tasked with; her sewing test was undoubtedly one of the best of all who were interviewed. We believe that Lovisa is very talented, will excel in all areas of the department and become a popular member amongst our existing team. ‘

**Biographies**

Scottish baritone **Ross Cumming** graduated with a First Class Honours degree in Music from University of Aberdeen, and then went on to complete his MMus in Performance with Distinction at the Royal Northern College of Music, and an MMus in Opera at the Alexander Gibson Opera School, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Ross has performed lead roles in college opera productions as well as in the Young Artist Programme at the Buxton International Festival Opera, Opera Festival Scotland and Cumbria Opera and more recently with Grange Park Opera. He has been a VOCES8 Scholar, a Dunedin Consort Young Artist and a member of Genesis Sixteen. In 2023, he won the Basil Turner Prize and the Bessie Cronshaw First Brownson Song Cycle Competition in 2021, having previously won the Ogston Music Prize. Alongside his operatic career, Ross is a keen concert soloist and has regularly performed in opera galas and recitals across the UK. This Season at Scottish Opera, Ross is appearing in *The Barber of Seville* as Fiorello, *Hansel & Gretel* as Peter (Father), *La traviata* as Marchese D’Obigny, *Daphne* asone of the Shepherds and in the Spring *Opera Highlights* tour.

London-based Ukrainian soprano **Inna Husieva** graduated from P.I.Tchaikovsky National Academy of Music in Kyiv, Ukraine. She is a National Opera Studio 2021/22 alumnus, during which time she performed on the stages of Scottish Opera, WNO, Opera North, ENO and Cadogan Hall. She has appeared in recitals at Wigmore Hall, Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, Buxton International Festival, LSO St Luke's, and with the Orchestra of Opera North in Leeds. In late 2022, Inna worked as a soloist with Opera Rara, Two Moors Festival and sang Haydn's Creation in St. Alban’s Abbey.

Operatic roles include Pamina *Die Zauberflöte*, Violetta *La traviata*, Micaëla *Carmen*, Cupid *Orfeo*, title role *Iolanta*, Silvana *A Flourish of Green,* Dido *Dido and Aeneas*, and Galatea *Acis and Galatea*. Concert performances include Handel Messiah, Bach Magnificat, Mendelssohn Symphony No.2 ‘Lobgesang’, Dan Forrest Requiem for the Living, and Larry Nickel Requiem for Peace. In April, Inna made her debut at the Tiroler Festspiele Erl in Austria, performing the role of Seraph in Beethoven's oratorio ‘Christ on the Mount of Olives’, conducted by Erik Nielsen.

Inna won Best Contemporary Aria, Silver Victoria, and Orchestra’s Prize at the International Debut Singing Competition in Weikersheim, Germany. In June, she won Second Prize and the Audience Choice Award at the Elizabeth Connell Prize Dramatic Sopranos International Singing Competition at Wigmore Hall in London.

Hailing from Donetsk, occupied by Russia since 2014, Inna lost her parents and home four years ago. She has worked since 2014 to raise awareness of the war and funds for its victims. Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Inna has participated in more than 10 fundraising concerts in the UK including a Concert for Ukraine at Glyndebourne with the LPO conducted by Robin Ticciati. Operatic engagements include cover Eurydice *Orpheus* (Opera North); Orazio *Muzio Scevola* (Il Gusto Barocco Orchestra).

This Season at Scottish Opera, Inna is appearing in *The Barber of Seville* as Berta, *Hansel & Gretel* as The Dew Fairy/The Sandman, *Daphne* as Second Maid, in the Spring *Opera Highlights* tour and as Violetta in Access Performances of *La traviata* in Glasgow and Edinburgh (also covering Violetta for the whole production).

**Monwabisi Lindi** was born in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, and studied at Tshwane University, before becoming a Young Artist with Cape Town Opera. He has been in the UK for three years under the Global Talent Visa system, first studying at the National Opera Studio before making appearances with Scottish Opera in Candide in 2022, Wexford Festival Opera in The Spectre Knight, and English Touring Opera in Viaggio a Reims and Lucrezia Borgia. He has also covered in Blue at English National Opera and performed the role of Elvino for the Buxton International Opera Festival. In 2019, Monwabisi made his debut in the role of Rodolfo in a new production of *La bohème* for HGO (Hampstead Garden Opera) by award-winning director Daisy Evans. He was a prize winner in the tenor section of the Voices of South Africa singing competition. This Season at Scottish Opera, Monwabisi is covering the role of Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* and performing in the Access performances of the production. He is also one of the Shepherds in *Daphne*, sings the role of Gastone in *La traviata* and goes on the road with the Spring *Opera Highlights* tour next year.

**Lea Shaw**returns as an Associate Artist, having been an Emerging Artist for two seasons previously. She has performed in Scottish Opera’s productions of *Carmen*, *Il trittico*, *Ainadamar*, *Candide*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Don Giovanni*, *Opera Highlights, Mavra* and in the chorus of *The Fiery Angel.*Leais an award-winning Black/BIPOC mezzo-soprano from Colorado, who studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland where she received her Masters of Music, and a Masters of Opera from the Alexander Gibson Opera School, with the guidance of Helen Lawson, Susan Bullock, Karen Cargill, and Rachel Nicholls. Lea is the inaugral winner of the Northern Aldborough Festival's 'New Voices' Competition.

Lea is the founder of ‘The Small Magician’, a trauma-aware, inclusive, accessible vocal education resource which enables participants to healthily challenge and build their vocal technique and knowledge, from the comfort of their own home or chosen space. With guidance that draws on classic pedagogy, scientific research, and Yoga and embodiment practices, the aim of the project is to empower participants to embrace their voice and their practice as part of a wider sense of well-being and an awareness of their mental/physical health. This Season, audiences can see Lea as Hansel in the Company’s concert performances of *Hansel & Gretel*, the Spring Tour of *Opera Highlights* and as Flora in the revival production of *La traviata.*

Costume trainee **Lovisa Litsgard** graduated in 2021 from Edinburgh College of Artwith a BA (Hons) in Performance Costume. She designs, makes, organises and dresses costumes, for both stage and screen, striving to help tell compelling stories and support the performer in their role, and is also an artist and illustrator. Her experience includes working as a costume trainee with *Outlander* Season 7, dressing on *The Lion King* musical and costume designing and supervising the short film *Love Like Salt*, with Lung Ha Theatre Company.

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**José****Javier Ucendo** is a recent graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Opera School and the Estonian Music Academy and a Britten-Pears Young Artist 2022/23. He combines his work as accompanist and coach at the RCS with a busy freelance schedule, including Grange Park Opera (*Falstaff*, *Otello*, and *Werther* in 2023) and the Royal Danish National Opera (*La bohème*, *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *Don Giovanni* in the 2021/22 season) among others. As a collaborative pianist, he has also participated in Oxford Lieder, Westbourne Concert Series, the National Youth Choir of Scotland and Scottish Opera showcases. He was recognised as a student with the Elgar-Spedding Lieder Prize together with Lauren Young, the EMTA song prize with Héloïse Bernard, the Sam Hutchings Accompanist Fellowship, the Alex Menzies Accompanist Prize and James Geddes Bursary for Répétiteurs.

Performance Diary

**University of Glasgow,** **Concert Hall**

30 November 2023, 1.10pm

(Tickets are free and do not need to be booked, but it is recommended those attending arrive at 12.45pm)

**Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Stevenson Hall**

8 December 2023, 1pm

Tickets available to purchase from [www.rcs.ac.uk/box-office/event/fridays-at-one-scottish-opera-emerging-artists-371806/](http://www.rcs.ac.uk/box-office/event/fridays-at-one-scottish-opera-emerging-artists-371806/)

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

**PHOTO:** Scottish Opera Emerging Artists (l to r) Monwabisi Lindi, Lovisa Litsgard, Lea Shaw, Ross Cumming, Inna Husieva and José Javier Ucendo. Credit Christina Riley.

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, Toulouse, and Los Angeles. The 60th Anniversary Season included the UK fully staged premiere of Osvaldo Golijov’s *Ainadamar* (a co-production with Opera Ventures, Detroit Opera, The Metropolitan Opera and Welsh National Opera) and the Company premiere of Puccini’s *Il trittico*, which is shortlisted in the New Production category at the International Opera Awards 2023.

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 a run at the Opera Comique in Paris earlier in 2023, Detroit Opera perform our 2019 production of Missy Mazzoli’s *Breaking the Waves* (co-presented by Opera Ventures, Scottish Opera and Edinburgh International Festival, in a co-production with Houston Grand Opera, in association with Bristol Old Vic),

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.

**For additional press details please contact:**

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