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##### Press Release

28 September 2023

**SCOTTISH OPERA Presents two performanceS of humperdinck’s *hansel & GRETEL* AT PAISLEY TOWN HALL THIS DECEMBER**

**This December 14 and 16 at Paisley Town Hall, Scottish Opera is presenting** Engelbert **Humperdinck's magical fairy tale, *Hansel & Gretel*, in a bright and vivid new concert staging.** These concert performances help celebrate the reopening of the iconic 19th-century architectural gem which has undergone a multimillion-pound transformation.

Scottish Opera Music Director **Stuart Stratford** conducts The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and a cast thatincludes the Company’s Associate Artist **Lea Shaw** (*Carmen* 2023) as Hansel and former Emerging Artist **Catriona Hewitson** (*Daphne* 2023) as Gretel, with former Associate Artist **Heather Ireson** (*Il trittico* 2023) in the dual role of the Mother and the Witch. Current Scottish Opera Emerging Artists **Ross Cumming** and **Inna Husieva** (both seen in this year’s *Daphne*) appear as the Father and The Sandman and The Dew Fairy respectively, along with a children’s chorus. **Roxana Haines** (*Rubble* 2022) stages this English translation by **David Pountney**.

After being banished from home by their exasperated mother, Hansel and Gretel plunge deep into the forest on a grand adventure. But not everything is as it seems in this enchanted wood. The young pair will need every ounce of courage, cleverness, and hope if they're to escape the lure of the Witch and her gingerbread hut. The classic fairy tale’s world of magic, fireflies, and fairies comes to life through Humperdinck’s lush and majestic score, which has something for every listener – from the beautiful ‘Evening Prayer’ to enchanting folk-inspired melodies.

Scottish Opera General Director, **Alex Reedijk** said: ‘Here at Scottish Opera, we have a great affection for Paisley, having had the warmest of welcomes when we opened our orchestra rehearsal rooms in Hillington in 2017 and brought our 2018 production of *Pagliacci* to Seedhill Playing Fields, as well as our collaboration with Disney in Schools to pupils at Todholm Primary in Paisley, St James’ Primary in Renfrew, and St Anthony’s Primary in Johnstone in recent years. The Orchestra of Scottish Opera is also supporting the upcoming production of *Macbeth* by our friends at Paisley Opera, which was founded by Simon Hannigan who worked with us regularly over the years.

‘It’s a thrill to be staging *Hansel & Gretel* at Paisley Town Hall — recently transformed into a landmark entertainment venue — in December for two very special performances, so we hope you can join us!’

Director **Roxana Haines** said: ‘Follow Hansel and Gretel into an enchanted world though the doors of Paisley Town Hall, for an immersive, magic-filled journey deep into the woods. Sprinkled with joy and generosity, this fairy tale is dedicated to our children and our childhood selves, for all their courage, resilience and perspective.’

Councillor **Lisa Marie Hughes**, Chair of OneRen, the charitable trust which operates Paisley Town Hall, said: ‘We’re delighted to welcome back Scottish Opera to Paisley Town Hall. The venue has undergone an incredible £22 million refurbishment, creating one of Scotland’s finest performance venues. We can’t wait to welcome families to enjoy a festive performance of Hansel & Gretel from the wonderfully talented Scottish Opera team. It promises to be an amazing show on Paisley’s ‘new’ big stage.’

Book now at [www.scottishopera.org.uk](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.scottishopera.org.uk%2F&data=05%7C01%7CEmily.Henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7Ca275719bcf3b475864bf08dbbf5d4996%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638314179602433988%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=4ZWGdetLPbN94pX8BRmpNkAPXUspGy%2FsnOciULu%2BqOM%3D&reserved=0)

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**Cast**

Hansel **Lea Shaw\***

Gretel  **Catriona Hewitson**

Mother and The Witch  **Heather Ireson**

Father **Ross Cumming**\*

The Sandman and The Dew Fairy **Inna Husieva\***

\*Scottish Opera Associate and Emerging Artists 2023/24

**Creatives**

Concert Staging **Roxana Haines**

Conductor **Stuart Stratford**

**Performance diary**

Paisley Town Hall, Abbey Close, Paisley, Renfrewshire, PA1 1JF

Thursday 14 December 2023, 7.15pm

Saturday 16 December 2023, 3pm

**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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