

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

Opera that *moves*



HANDEL

A U T U M N 2 0 2 2

OTTONE ♦ AGRIPPINA
TAMERLANO



FOYLE FOUNDATION



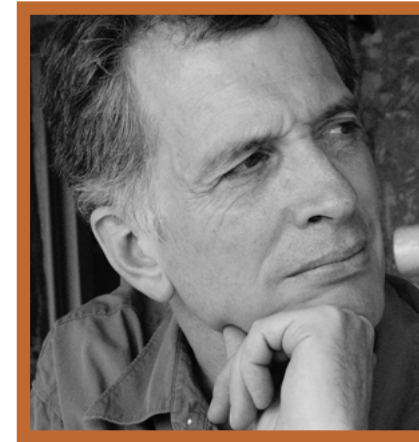
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WELCOME



Welcome to this festival of operas by George Frideric Handel.

Why a Handelfest? When Handel was writing his operas in the 1720s and 30s, it was the only time that London was the most important a creative centre for opera production in Europe. Certainly those decades were the high point of opera creation in this country. A Saxon composing operas in Italian for the most celebrated singers in Europe, Handel was a dedicated immigrant, acclaimed in his lifetime, and still a very popular composer.

What I hope these three productions will show is that Handel was also a skilled and innovative dramatist. His early opera *Agrippina*, written in the style of Venetian

opera to a racy libretto by a Catholic cardinal, already shows assurance in stage craft. As he continued for decades as a composer for the theatre, he was increasingly concerned with shaping the text for his operas, as well as the music. *Tamerlano*, for example, was re-shaped by Handel, so that his characters are very unlike the many others coming from the same source material; he ruthlessly pruned many beautiful arias to make sure that the drama drove forward. His extraordinary craft as a composer was at the service of drama for most of his working life.

I also find the psychology of Handel's characters especially interesting. Just think of the mothers and sons in *Agrippina* and *Ottone* – vivid and unsettling, for sure – and the father/daughter relationship in *Tamerlano*. Handel's women pass every contemporary test – powerful, multi-dimensional, acting without reference to men! There is no moment in any of these three operas in which motivation is not compelling, desire is not clear, and complexity is not suggested.

These three productions originated as collaborations with conductor and singer Jonathan Peter Kenny, and with three exceptional designers – Samal Blak, takis, and Rebecca van Beeck. In this season, all three are lit by Tim van't Hof. Freelance artists make the theatre and opera you love. Producing companies are there to serve the artists, the art form, and the audience: that at least has been the premise of my work with English Touring Opera.

Many, many thanks to the small group of donors, friends all, who have so kindly supported this project – the Handelfest syndicate. Thanks to a generous grant from the Foyle Foundation, it is truly a festival, with recitals and masterclasses in the daytime to complement these opera productions.

This is my last new production as English Touring Opera's Artistic Director, after 20 years of happy, hard work with excellent, skilled colleagues – and I have surely made it with those colleagues for the attentive, discerning, open hearted audience I have met all over the country. I respect and honour you, and thank you for the inquiring minds and goodwill you bring to our performances.

James Conway, Artistic Director

THE OLD STREET BAND

ETO's orchestra this season, the Old Street Band, was formed in 2011.

Members of the orchestra include experienced players from some of the finest period instrument orchestras and chamber groups, as well as highly talented emerging artists.

The Old Street Band has a special interest in theatre music.

Violins

Jean Paterson (*Leader, Ottone*)
Guy Button (*Leader, Agrippina*)
George Clifford (*Leader, Tamerlano*)
Theresa Caudle
Will McGahon
William Harvey
Mark Seow
Polly Smith
John Smart

Violas

Joanne Miller
Joanna Patrick
Thomas Kettle (*Cover*)

Cellos

Gavin Kibble
Kate Conway
Lucia Capellaro (*Cover*)

Bass

Carina Cosgrave
Dawn Baker (*Cover*)

Harpsichord

Satoko Doi-Luck

Oboes and Recorders

Leo Duarte
Bethan White
James Eastaway (*Agrippina only*)
Joel Raymond (*Cover*)

Bassoon

Philip Turbett
Catriona McDermid

Theorbo

Toby Carr

Orchestra Manager

Philip Turbett

PRODUCTION TEAM

Production Manager

Deputy Production Manager (Rehearsals)

Company Stage Manager

Deputy Stage Managers

Deputy Stage Manager (Rehearsal)

Assistant Stage Manager/Book Cover

Technical Manager

Assistant Technical Stage Managers

Production Electrician

Touring Electrician/LX #2

Lighting Programmer

Costume Supervisor

Assistant Costume Supervisor

Head of Wardrobe

Costume Pattern Drafter

Costume Makers

Props Supervisor

Production Photography

Health & Safety Consultant

Draughtsman

Scenery Construction & Painting

Drapery Supplied by

Rigging Equipment Supplied by

Lighting Equipment Supplied by

Additional Effects Supplied by

Audio Visual Equipment Supplied by

Rehearsal Transport & Stores Logistics

Transport Supplied by

Additional music coaches/Répétiteurs

With thanks to:

Brenda Hurley, Abigail Ellison, Joe Crossley, Seb Soper, Di Wilmott, Ruari Cormack, Richard Beale at RB Health & Safety Ltd, Pirate Crew, Affinity Crew, Flints Theatrical Chandlers, Workwear Express, St Gabriel's Halls, Churchill Hall, the team at BH Live - Fairfield Halls, Croydon, Backstage Warehouse, Luckings, BDM Transport, London Venue Transfer.

Phil Bentley

Drew Turner

Ben Cook

Hannah Williams

Gusta Matthews

Anna Diamond

Sophie Alice Cooper

Drew Turner

Ben Turnbull

Anna Diamond

Joe Kirk

Alex Walton

Rohan McDermott

Cristiano Casimiro

Sanya Torkmorad-Jozavi

Izzie Byers

Matthieu Nunes

Matthieu Nunes

Paulina Knol

Sanya Torkmorad-Jozavi

Ingrid Shiel

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Howard Eaton Lighting Ltd

Stage Sound Services

Adam Pearson

Southern Van Lines

Chad Vindin

John Cuthbert

Sergey Rybin



OTTONE

Music by George Frideric Handel
Libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym
English translation by Andrew Porter and James Conway
Performing edition by Peter Jones
Singers' ornamentation by Jonathan Peter Kenny

First performed on 12 January 1723 at the King's Theatre, London

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Gismonda

widow of Berengario, former ruler of Italy
Elizabeth Karani

Adelberto

Gismonda's son
Kieron-Connor Valentine

Ottone

Saxon king, new Emperor of the West
James Hall

Matilda

Ottone's sister, engaged to Adelberto
Lauren Young

Teofane

Byzantine princess, engaged to Ottone
Nazan Fikret

Emireno

Teofane's brother, living as a pirate
Edward Jowle

Conductor

Gerry Cornelius

Assistant Conductor

Alexander Robinson

Director

James Conway

Staff Director

Katie Blackwell

Set & Costumes designed by

takis

Répétiteur

Frances Hills

Revival Director

Christopher Moon-Little

Lighting Designer

Tim van 't Hof

SYNOPSIS

Ottone, German king and now Holy Roman Emperor, is about to marry a Byzantine princess. When the ship carrying her to Italy is attacked by 'Saracen' pirates, he pursues them and takes their leader prisoner. His promised bride, Teofane, proceeds unmolested to meet Ottone in Rome.

In Rome a rival prince (Adelberto) and his powerful mother (Gismonda) stage a coup d'etat. Adelberto claims the throne, and tries to claim Ottone's bride as well. Teofane is confused: this man does not resemble the man in the portrait sent to her.

Ottone's defiant prisoner refuses to disclose his name, or show obedience. Matilda, Ottone's sister, arrives at camp and reveals to him Gismonda's seizure of Rome; although betrothed to Adelberto, Matilda knows that he has used and rejected her, so she undertakes to lead an army against him. Ottone praises her loyalty.

At court, Teofane is baffled by the tough-minded Gismonda (who pretends to be the mother of Ottone, rather than a rebel); as her marriage to 'Ottone' is about to take place, the real Ottone storms the city, and Adelberto rushes to defend himself. Teofane is left in lonely confusion.

Ottone returns to court with two captives: the silent pirate Emireno and the defiant Adelberto, who complains that he has not enjoyed Teofane before death.

Confronting Adelberto with his treachery – both personal and political – Matilda's infatuation overwhelms her. She confers with Gismonda, who rejects any idea of begging Ottone for mercy – though the mother's belligerence cools as she thinks of the fate of her son.

INTERVAL

Just as Ottone and Teofane are at last to meet, Matilda intervenes; she pleads for mercy for Adelberto. Ottone consoles her with an embrace, but rejects her plea – and this is observed by Teofane, who misinterprets their intimacy. As Matilda leaves with a curse, Teofane also flees.

Emireno and Adelberto have escaped prison

by Matilda's contrivance. In a cave by the sea at night they prepare to flee. There Teofane by chance has strayed, yearning to return to the east. Adelberto abducts her, and Emireno makes good their escape.

Gismonda, concealed, has witnessed their flight. Matilda arrives moments too late. Together they call for night to hide their deed, and the desperate fugitives. Matilda hurries back to court when Ottone too is drawn to this sea cave, in search of Teofane.

Gismonda taunts Ottone: his rival Adelberto is free, has taken Teofane, and will return with an army.

A storm has forced the escaping party to land on a desolate shore. When Adelberto goes to reconnoitre, Teofane claims that either Ottone or her brother, a Byzantine prince, will avenge her abduction. Questioned, she reveals that her brother was ousted by a usurper, but as the usurper has now been defeated she expects her brother's return. Emireno recognises his lost sister, and goes to embrace her – which she first interprets as an assault. On Adelberto's return, Emireno overwhelms him and pledges to return to Rome with his captive and his sister.

Learning that Adelberto has taken Teofane with him, Matilda is furious. Gismonda exults in revealing to Ottone that Matilda was complicit in the escape – so that he is surrounded by betrayal. Matilda swears to make amends by killing Adelberto.

Emireno returns with the captive Adelberto. Matilda is about to kill him when Adelberto's miserable confession softens her heart. Gismonda scorns her weakness, takes the dagger, and makes to kill herself. Teofane stops this, calling for clemency.

Startled by love, Ottone agrees – just as Adelberto, wakened by Matilda's compassion, vows to love her.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

James Conway, Artistic Director

By any reckoning, I have been phenomenally lucky; as Artistic Director of English Touring Opera I have been able to work closely on ten operas by George Frideric Handel, and even to mount five of those in one season (the Handelfest of 2009, which is the season of which I am in ways most proud). In my last job I was able to give the first *Tamerlano* in Ireland, followed by *Flavio*, *Amadigi*, *Rodelinda* and *Ariodante*, all of which toured internationally with surprising distinction (though to be honest I was more excited that they were esteemed in Mullingar and Skibbereen).

These astonishing operas have been a treasure to me, and I feel that through them I have been able to communicate what I feel is valuable about opera. Happily, they have also made me many friends; I will not forget pre-performance talks around the country, especially a damp night in Malvern before a performance of *Tolomeo* where it all came right, lean, true and heartfelt – and the rich correspondence that followed with many who were there.

Academics – even famous champions – have not been kind to *Ottone*, despite its extraordinary success in Handel's day. I had to remind myself that they may not know an opera's real power in the theatre, and if they do see a performance they may struggle to unburden themselves of opinion and knowledge at the door.

I wanted to live with *Ottone*, and to do my best to bring what is complex and compelling and strange about it to you, because it is an uneasy piece: it agitates, somehow, and threatens to spin off into brilliant solitudes, rather than a drama. More particularly, I was drawn to this opera because of its compelling relationships, and its extraordinary psychological landscape.

Having dwelt a while with Agrippina and her son Nero (our music editor Peter Jones,

copying in my translation, ironically called them "that lovely family"), it has been like growing up to turn to Gismonda and her son Adalberto. All the dangers of mothers and sons are explored in this relationship: I saw quickly that they not only get great music (especially in the version where Handel gives Adalberto 'Pupille sdegnose' instead of 'Ad innalzar I flauti', as we have done), but that they are roles for real actors.

Then we have two pairs of near-relations – two brothers and sisters in our version, though Matilda and Ottone are called cousins in the libretto. Siblings who look like lovers, or who are mistaken for assailants, or who are separated by war or infatuation, have exciting possibilities on stage. At first oppressed by the fairytale foolishness of the pirate/prince who turns out to be the brother of the friendless princess, I came to view their awful solitudes as an opportunity to explore how one finds out who one really is, and what relation really means. Fairytales are never foolish, I should have known – they just cut to what is important in a dreamlike way.

Matilda has the brilliance of Handel's best characters, who are corrupted by infatuation, starved by it as we all have been at some stage, driven to feel what is bad about themselves in their effort to be seen, recognised, loved by someone who is indifferent – or by a harsher judge, the self. Even within individual arias she shows how her passions devour her 'finer' instincts. She is the perfect foil to the apparent hero, Ottone, just as Dardano is the unstable reflection of Amadigi (in Handel's 1715 opera *Amadigi di Gaula*), or as Polinesso might have been in *Ariodante*, had he been loved (it's not just in fairy tales that beasts are sometimes tamed by affection!).

Ottone hasn't Emireno's rough charm or Adalberto's pathetic appeal; he doesn't really know what's wrong, but something surely is if you are victorious in war and



Above: Lauren Young (Matilda) and James Hall (Ottone) in rehearsal, September 2022. Credit: Craig Fuller

policy and yet so conspicuously alone and uninformed. His motivation was the least clear – but I think I found it in the insecurity he feels with respect to Teofane, the lover who eludes him, who seems to choose the dark, interesting side (Adalberto), and in so doing seems to say to him: you are not worthy of a Byzantine princess, you are a jumped-up Saxon savage, you have power but you have no idea what to do with it. Of course, this is the way he might think of himself, in an unguarded moment.

With Teofane the objective is to avoid moaning, I thought. On the other hand, there is an invitation to dissect a child-bride who may wear rich garments, but has lost all her rich association, all comfort and power – someone truly alone, having to decide whether to give up when her illusions are lost, or to be strong enough to make the best of a world without illusions. Like so many of Handel's heroines, she does far more than warble: she discovers loss, isolation, impurity, and she is stronger than the fighting men around her. Like Ginevra

(*Ariodante*), Seleuce (*Tolomeo*), Emilia (*Flavio*), Asteria (*Tamerlano*), Rodelinda, she walks forward, tries to heal the loved and unloved, calls for a humble future and trusting, unstarry bonds.

And apart from all this opportunity to find depth of character in restlessly inventive music and noble text, who could look away from an opera set where sea meets land unhospitably, where civilization and the unconscious clash. The scene that first drew me to Ottone was the one set in a cave by the sea at night, where all the characters assemble and do not find each other, where prisoners escape, women call out for more darkness to hide their thoughts and loves, and where hero and heroine lose all confidence in who they are. In that setting, Adalberto, hitherto at least as sympathetic as his rival Ottone, reveals his essential corruption: each in turn becomes more truly who they are, even though it feels as if they are losing who they have been.

Left: *Sea Cave* by Dorothy Cross. Courtesy of the Artist and Frith Street Gallery

HANDEL'S ORIGINAL SINGERS

Jonathan Peter Kenny, Conductor

The sensational premiere of *Agrippina* in Venice on 26 December 1709 marked Handel's meeting with several notable singers who were to recur in his operatic career.

Entrusted with the wonderful title role was the soprano **Margherita Durastanti**, who probably enjoyed a longer personal association with Handel than any other musician. After renewing their acquaintance ten years later in Dresden, she joined him in London in 1720 and over the next five years performed in 19 operas as a stalwart member of the Royal Academy, her gifts as an actress allowing her to appear in both male and female roles. A royal favourite, George I and the Princess Royal were named as godparents at the birth of her daughter in 1721. As well as creating the possessive Gismonda in *Ottone*, in 1723 she was the first Sesto in *Giulio Cesare* in 1724. She departed London shortly afterwards, returning in 1733 for a revival of *Ottone* and secondary roles in new operas.



Also dazzling the audience at the premiere of *Agrippina* was the soprano castrato **Valeriano Pellegrini** as Nerone. A singer of considerable ability, Pellegrini followed Handel to London in 1712 to appear as Mirtillo in *Il pastor Fido* and in the title role of *Teseo* (produced by ETO in 2007). He retired in 1728 to become a priest, in common with many castrati.

The noble Ottone and the slippery Pallante were sung by husband and wife **Francesca Vanni-Boschi** and **Giuseppe Maria Boschi**. They reappeared in London for the premiere of *Rinaldo* in 1711, returning in 1720 to stay for 8 years. Francesca had retired from the stage but Giuseppe appeared in an astonishing 32 operas, including 13 by Handel. As a high baritone with a long voice, he excelled as villains and tyrants, his role as the ultimately sympathetic Emireno in *Ottone* being perhaps untypical. Despite her shorter career, Francesca was known as a specialist in male roles, and praised for her ability to "introduce graces [ornaments] without transgressing against time."



The brilliant cast assembled for *Ottone* in 1723 was led by the alto castrato Francesco Bernardini, known as Senesino. Born in Siena a year after Handel, Senesino had been eagerly pursued by the Royal Academy before making his delayed debut in the revival of *Radamisto* in 1720. One of the greatest singers in Europe, over the next 16 years he created 17 roles in opera and oratorio for Handel despite their fractious and difficult relationship. He died in his home town in 1758, the year before Handel, in a large house filled with English furniture. His singing was described eloquently by the flautist Quantz: "... he had a powerful, clear and sweet contralto voice, a perfect intonation and an excellent shake [trill]. His manner of singing was masterly, his elocution unrivalled...he sang allegros with great fire".



Making her debut opposite Senesino in *Ottone* was the celebrated soprano Francesca Cuzzoni. Born in Parma in 1696, Cuzzoni made her debut at the age of 18, her fame spreading quickly through Italy. The Royal Academy, scouring Europe for the best singers, offered her a lucrative contract in 1722 and publicised her imminent arrival: "... Seignora Cuzzoni is expected here with much impatience for the improvement of our opera performances". She scored a sensational success and remained to create nine roles for Handel including Cleopatra in *Giulio Cesare* and the title role in *Rodelinda*, where she caused a scandal, wearing a brown dress trimmed with silver. She defected to the rival 'Opera of the Nobility' in the 1730s before departing for Italy, returning only to perform

benefit concerts to pay her debts. She died in poverty in 1778, a button maker in Bologna (a grim lesson to all). Her unique ability in pathetic expression is beautifully exploited in her two first arias in *Ottone* (although possibly not originally conceived with her in mind). Her famous rejection of the aria 'Falsa immagine' ('Image clear and bright') and Handel's threat to defenestrate her is better understood rather as an understandable anxiety about a first utterance before an expectant public than the arrogance of a diva. She came to appreciate its exquisite virtues, singing the aria through her career.



Completing the cast alongside Durastanti and Boschi was Anastasia Robinson (Matilda). Making her debut with Handel in 1714 as a soprano (creating incidentally the role of Oriana in *Amadigi*, performed last year by ETO), a serious illness pushed her voice down to contralto. She continued to perform with success however, most notably as Cornelia in *Giulio Cesare*. A society darling, she retired from the stage shortly after *Giulio Cesare*, secretly marrying the Earl of Peterborough. She is buried somewhere in Bath Abbey, her actual grave being unknown. She was noted as a considerable actress with a sweet, gracious voice rather than a virtuoso. Her correspondence on the role of Matilda expresses her anxieties about her suitability to play a fiery character rather than the 'peaceable creature' she claimed to be.

Handel's fruitful musical relationship with Senesino and Cuzzoni continued in the premiere of *Tamerlano* on 31 October 1724 (coincidentally Senesino's 38th birthday). Joining them were Andrea Pacini as Tamerlano, Anna Vincenza Dotti as Irene and most interestingly the tenor Francesco Borosini as Bajazet.

Born in Lucca in 1690 and engaged for many years as virtuoso to the Prince of Parma, Pacini had appeared in Italy in operas by many celebrated composers, including Scarlatti, Vivaldi, Porpora, Vinci and Hasse. Engaged as *secondo uomo* to Senesino in 1724, he made an impressive debut as Tamerlano, his astonishing technique inspiring Handel to write one of his demanding arias, the dazzling Act 3 'A dispetto d'un volto ingrato'. Despite his success he departed London a year later and on his eventual retirement became a notable musical figure in his native Lucca, and of course a priest.

Anna Vincenza Dotti (Irene) had a successful career in northern Italy and Naples before her engagement with the Royal Academy in 1724. Despite having already written her arias, Handel recomposed them on her arrival to suit her talents and her lower compass. She remained for three seasons only, departing for Brussels in 1727 where she achieved considerable success.

The most surprising debut at the premiere of *Tamerlano* however, belonged to the tenor Francesco Borosini as Bajazet, leading male roles at this time being usually composed for sopranos and altos. Borosini had form with this character however, having sung the role of Bajazet in two separate versions by Francesco Gasparini in 1712 and 1719. Discovering that he had a lower *tessitura* (range) than envisaged, Handel recomposed for him too. Borosini seems also to have brought with him a copy of the libretto for the 1719 version containing significant dramatic alterations to this existing libretto, some written by Borosini himself. Impressed by the changes, Handel commenced a wholesale revision and rewrote the opening five times, adjusted the end of Act 2, the beginning of Act 3, and ruthlessly altered the end of his opera, in the process removing some astonishing music.



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LOOKING AHEAD



It's an honour and a pleasure to be joining English Touring Opera as General Director, following James Conway's remarkable achievements in the role.

ETO has been part of my life for twenty years – I started my career in the arts as Marketing & Press Officer at ETO in 2003, and as I built a career as a freelance opera director I returned to the company many times, working on productions including Janacek's *Katya Kabanova*, Johann Strauss' *Wiener Blut* and Handel's *Ariodante*. When I founded an opera company myself, my love and respect for ETO's commitment to bringing exceptional opera to

the widest possible audience was at the front of my mind. It is a joy to have the opportunity to lead the team of artists and staff at this extraordinary company to ensure we carry on doing just that, and taking opera in new directions and to new people and places.

I am passionate about work with young people and communities, and it is at the heart of ETO's programme, so I'm delighted that my first artistic contribution as General Director has been writing the libretto of our new opera for schools, with music by Rosabella Gregory, *Tutankhamun's Shoes* (there's more about that and our wider Learning & Participation programme on page 46).

We're also busy casting for Autumn 2023, a season showing how love makes fools of all of us – in two very different operatic styles.

ETO has a well-deserved reputation for the operas of the Baroque era (as Handelfest demonstrates) and earlier which I'm keen to continue, so we'll be staging Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea*, with its deliciously devious coterie of characters. Although it was written 70 years earlier, narratively it's something of a sequel to this season's *Agrippina*, so if you'd like to see what Nero, Poppea and Ottone got up to next (clue: nothing good), come along. Alongside *Poppea* will be a much less morally dubious celebration of Cupid's mischief – Donizetti's sparkling romantic comedy, *The Elixir of Love*.

Before that, in Spring 2023, we have more two more operas of plotting and political intrigue (clearly a rich vein of operatic material) with Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* and Handel's *Giulio Cesare*, alongside Rossini's comedy of lost luggage and love rivals set in a spa resort, *Il viaggio a Reims*.

I'll be trying to meet as many of you as possible as we travel the country over the coming months, so please come and say hello at the theatre or drop us a line at the office. I know ETO means as much to so many of you, our audience, as it does to me, and I'm looking forward to getting to know you and sharing some wonderful nights at the opera with you.

Robin Norton-Hale, General Director

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

Opera that *moves*

A woman in a blue and gold Baroque opera costume is singing dramatically with her mouth wide open. She is wearing a large, ornate dress with a full skirt and lace details. The background is dark with some stage lighting.

HANDEL
GIULIO CESARE
DONIZETTI
LUCREZIA BORGIA
ROSSINI
IL VIAGGIO A REIMS
SPRING 2023

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

AGRIPPINA

Music by George Frideric Handel
Libretto by Cardinal Vincenzo Grimani
English translation by James Conway
Performing edition by Peter Jones

First performed at the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo, Venice, on 26
December 1709, as part of the 1709-10 Carnival season.

Claudio
emperor
Edward Hawkins
Vitor Bispo (Cover)

Agrippina
empress
Paula Sides

Nerone
her son
Esme Bronwen-Smith
Clara Orif (Cover)

Ottone
general
Tim Morgan
Tom Lilburn (Cover)

Poppea
Hilary Cronin

Narciso
courtier, ecclesiastical
Matt Paine
Tom Lilburn (Cover)

Pallante
courtier, martial
Jerome Knox

Lesbo
servant of Claudio
Edward Jowle

Conductor
Leo Duarte

Director
James Conway

Original Set & Costumes
Samal Blak

Revival Curator
Rebecca van Beeck

Revival Director
Bradley Travis

Lighting Designer
Tim van 't Hof

Assistant Conductor
Alexander Robinson

Staff Director
Katie Blackwell

Répétiteur
David Gerrard

Choreographer
Julie Osman

SYNOPSIS

Part I

When Agrippina receives pleasing confirmation of the death of her husband Claudio in a British naval battle, she sets about securing Claudio's throne for Nerone, her son by a previous marriage. She sends separately for two influential leaders, Pallante and Narciso, to secure their support for Nerone, promising each that in return she will return their passion, and raise them to power.

Just as Nerone's acclamation is achieved, Claudio's servant Lesbo announces that the emperor's life has been saved by Ottone, the commander of the army. Consternation is general, but suppressed. On arrival Ottone declares that Claudio has rewarded his bravery by nominating him as his successor. Incautiously, Ottone reveals to Agrippina that he loves Poppea more than the throne, and accepts her offer to speak to Poppea on his behalf.

Agrippina is poised to renew her strategy for Nerone's advancement — and her own. Aware that Claudio fancies Poppea, Agrippina tells Poppea that Ottone has betrayed her by yielding her to Claudio in exchange for the throne.

Agrippina suggests that to avenge herself Poppea must make Claudio jealous and incriminate Ottone (by suggesting that he has made unwanted advances, and threatened her with violence if she sees Claudio). This she does with alacrity, once she secures a guarantee of Agrippina's support.

Discovering Agrippina has deceived them both, Pallante and Narciso form an alliance.

At a public audience, Claudio accuses the unsuspecting Ottone of treachery, and rejects him. Claudio turns to his erstwhile friends and supporters, and his beloved Poppea, but each scorns him.

Interval

Part II

Poppea begins to doubt Ottone's guilt. Pretending to doze, she tests him. When he indignantly asserts his innocence, she relates what Agrippina told her. Realising that she has been a pawn in Agrippina's plans, Poppea plans revenge.

Agrippina broods: she is out on a dangerous limb, having confided in Narciso and Pallante, and played with Poppea and Ottone. Impetuously, she entices Pallante to murder Ottone and Narciso; and then she asks Narciso to murder Ottone and Pallante. She warns Claudio that an offended Ottone is a dangerous and popular threat — and persuades him to pre-empt any rebellion by declaring Nerone his heir. Impatient to be with Poppea, Claudio agrees.

Poppea hides Ottone, telling him not to be jealous because of anything he overhears as she sets out to trap Nerone, and embarrass Agrippina.

Nerone arrives, eager to make love to Poppea; she pretends that Agrippina is expected at any moment and he hides. Claudio enters, and Poppea complains that he does not love her. She says that she is still harassed by an unwanted suitor. Claudio reminds her that he has punished Ottone. At this Poppea claims he misunderstood her: it was Nerone, not Ottone, who bothered her. Concealing Claudio, Poppea summons Nerone, who resumes his courtship. In jealous fury, Claudio interrupts. Poppea frees herself of Claudio, and she and Ottone renew their fond pledges.

Shame-faced, Nerone begs Agrippina to protect him from Claudio. She makes him swear to stop courting Poppea.

Frightened and cornered, Pallante and Narciso reveal to Claudio their part in Agrippina's conspiracy during his absence. Confronted by Claudio, Agrippina realises the game is up; she claims plausibly that she acted only to preserve Claudio's authority. Coolly she also complains of his attention to Poppea, and strikes against any new accusations by revealing Ottone's love for Poppea.

Astonishingly, Claudio orders Nerone to marry Poppea, and names Ottone as his successor. Nerone is unenthusiastic, and Ottone declines, claiming Poppea. Endorsing this exchange — and satisfied to extract himself from a compromising affair — Claudio nominates Nerone as his heir, and urges each couple to retire to the appropriate bed.

THE LIFE OF AGRIPPINA

Mary Beard

Agrippina's main claim to fame is now her concoction of poisoned mushrooms. It was with this potentially fatal recipe that she tried to do away with her husband, the elderly emperor Claudius. Rumours had reached her in 54 AD that Claudius was considering divorce, so — it was said — she decided to strike first, with a draft of poison sprinkled on his favourite food. But in the dysfunctional world of the Roman imperial family, even murder did not go smoothly: Claudius' age, drunkenness or sluggish digestion softened the effects of the venom, and he had to be finished off by a tame doctor. The feather that tickled the old man's throat to help him vomit had itself been coated in poison.

Agrippina was probably the best connected woman that the Roman world ever saw, and a key figure in the first imperial dynasty at Rome. She was grand-daughter of Augustus, the founder of the Roman empire; sister of the mad emperor Caligula, killed in a palace coup in 41; wife of his successor, Claudius; and, by her first husband, the mother of Nero, whose reign brought the dynasty to a particularly colourful, or disgraceful, end.

It was these blue-blooded connections that made her an attractive wife for Claudius in 49 AD— though Roman historians mutter also about her dangerously seductive charms, as well as about in-fighting among the palace advisers, each backing rival candidates for the royal marriage. The emperor had just had his third wife, Messalina, put to death, after a particularly flagrant display of adultery (she had actually gone through a lavish mock-marriage ceremony with her lover). Agrippina must have looked a relatively safe choice. Her second husband had recently died, so there was no divorce to be arranged — and she was, after all, already part of the “firm”. Rather too much so, in the eyes of some. Weighty speeches in the senate had to be



Above: Portrait of Agrippina with Germanicus by Peter Paul Rubens

hastily scripted, justifying the awkward fact that Claudius was actually Agrippina's uncle, the brother of her father Germanicus. This made it an irregular union, even by Roman standards.

But the imperial ménage turned out to be irregular in other ways too. Claudius himself was a contradictory figure. Limping and stuttering, and more interested in scholarly research than in the cut-and-thrust of politics, he had come to the throne only when the army had to find a candidate quickly after the murder of Caligula (the story was that he was discovered hiding behind a curtain in the palace and hailed emperor on the spot). Once emperor, he took considerable trouble to re-invent himself, carefully remaking his image. He proved tough (not to say murderous) to the aristocracy. But pride of place went to the launch of a successful invasion of Britain. How much of the fighting Claudius actually saw is a moot point; he seems to have turned up (like many leaders since) only in the final stages to announce “mission accomplished”. But, all the same, the campaign served to identify him as a glorious conqueror in the best (or the worst) Roman tradition.

Agrippina, however, was more than a match for this chameleon. Her main aim, once married, was to push the claims of her son Nero to be Claudius' successor. He was adopted by Claudius, consistently promoted above Claudius' natural son, Britannicus (named after the newly conquered province) and married off to Claudius' daughter Octavia. He was in short being groomed for the throne. Agrippina's motives in murdering her husband were largely her fears for Nero: if she were to lose her hold on Claudius, then Nero's chances of succession were finished. Her plan worked.

Nero was neatly manoeuvred into power in 54, aged 17. According to many accounts, whatever the lurid excesses of his final years, the first years of the reign were rosy — at least in the sense that government and political business appeared to proceed with all due propriety, in the traditions established by Augustus. This may have had more to do with the efforts of Nero's advisers than the instincts of Nero himself. Seneca — Stoic philosopher, playwright and usurer — was one of the powers behind the throne. So too (and sometimes more in front of the throne than behind) was Agrippina.

No woman ever enjoyed such semi-official, public prominence in this period of the Roman empire as she did. In fact, on some of the coins of the early years of the reign, Agrippina's head appears side by side with, or facing, her son, almost as if to suggest that they were co-rulers. She is also supposed to have made her views on policy matters well known, and was apparently not beyond attempting to take her place on the imperial dais next to her son and to give audience to visiting ambassadors. There were, however, limits: the senate would be summoned to meet in the palace, so that Agrippina could listen to their deliberations, but she was only allowed to do this from behind a curtain so that she could not be seen.

Predictably enough Nero soon tried to escape his mother's grip (and possibly also, so ancient rumours went, her incestuous embrace). One major cause of friction was other women — and, in particular, Nero's infatuation with Poppaea, who was then married to a man called Otho, one of Nero's friends who would himself become emperor for a few brief months in the civil wars that followed Nero's death in 68. Different versions of the affair are told: some ancient writers suggest that Nero stole his friend's wife; others think that Nero found Poppaea first and merely “parked” her with Otho until he could divorce Octavia.

The signs of Agrippina's fall from grace were at first subtle. Nero engineered the dismissal of one of her greatest allies at court, the ex-slave bureaucrat Pallas — who almost ten years earlier had been one of those who persuaded Claudius to choose Agrippina out of the possible candidates for marriage. But it did not stop there. By 59, Nero had made up his mind to have her killed. It was another of those bungled murders. One ingenious scheme was to send her out to sea in a collapsible boat, and to pass off her drowning as a tragic accident — which might have worked, had she not managed to swim ashore. In the end, Nero had to resort to more conventional means. He sent some thugs from the navy to do the job properly: she is said to have died directing the assassin's sword at her stomach, telling him to strike the womb that bore Nero.

How much of this extraordinary story of Agrippina's life is “true” is now hard to assess and the answer very much depends on what we mean by “true”. All the lurid details are certainly recounted by one or other of our main sources for the reigns of Claudius and Nero: the chatty biographer Suetonius, the dyspeptic political analyst Tacitus or the third-century historian Dio Cassius. But it seems very likely that plenty



of unsubstantiated gossip and innuendo has crept into their accounts. We cannot even be sure that Claudius was poisoned, let alone that it was administered on mushrooms or by a corrupt doctor with a feather. After all, there is nothing easier than to explain unexplained deaths by allegations of malpractice — particularly when (as in the case of Claudius) there were some obvious beneficiaries of his demise.

Even more to the point, the picture of Agrippina and her blighted family relations derives in part from a series of ancient stereotypes about women, corruption and power. One of the ways Roman writers had of making sense of the dysfunction of imperial politics at the highest level was to see it in terms of the unnatural behaviour of the female sex: women getting above themselves and usurping the power that rightly belonged to men was both a symbol of, and an explanation for, what was the matter at the top of Roman society. The “truth” for Roman writers was that corruption was channelled through women, and it was encapsulated in the act of poisoning — a particularly deceitful and quintessentially female crime, perverting the role of provider of sustenance into the bringer of death.

Handel’s plot takes us, at first sight, even further from historical reality. Set in 43 at the time of Claudius’ conquest of Britain, it throws up all kinds of chronological impossibilities; for instance, Agrippina was not even married to Claudius at that point, and Nero would have been only six.

Yet the opera is cleverer in its manipulation of the ancient world than these “mistakes” might imply. What is on show here is a marvellously inventive (and invented) flashback, a retrojection to the reign of Claudius of many of those iconic moments that took place, so Roman writers said, in the reign of Nero. That shipwreck of Claudius which launches the whole plot is

a clever prequel of the boating accident of Agrippina — both Claudius and Agrippina, significantly survive. When Agrippina hides behind the screen, while Poppaea (Poppea) meets Claudius (Claudio) alone in his apartment, it looks forward to Agrippina concealed behind the curtain, while the senate meet in the palace. And, of course, albeit in very different circumstances, Otho (Ottone) in the end really does become emperor.

Handel’s opera is a cunning variation on the ancient story of Agrippina, transposing the events of the reign of Nero back into the reign of Claudius, and weaving brilliant farce. Whether this bore any resemblance to the real-life mother of Nero, and wife of his step-father, we shall never know.

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CHARACTER OPERA

A DIRECTOR/TRANSLATOR'S NOTE ON *AGRIPPINA*

James Conway, Artistic Director

At its first performance at the San Giovanni Grisostomo theatre in Venice on 23 December 1709, *Agrippina* was acclaimed a dazzling success. After 27 performances in Venice, it was revived (with customary faithlessness) in other great capitals of opera: Naples, Hamburg and Vienna. The musical invention and sharp characterisation are always much praised — so that now *Agrippina* is one of Handel's operas that is esteemed by many (not just Handel nuts like me), and often performed.

As a director, things I love about Handel's operas — apart from the music, which drives everything — are the sure sense of characterization, the masterly pacing, the precise crystallization of those moments in which moral and political choices shape destiny. Rarely am I so convinced by love (between spouses, parents and children, siblings) and passion (especially unrequited) as in its musical and dramatic embodiment in his operas.

Something I also love in the Royal Academy operas — that extraordinary sequence of operas (including *Ottone*, *Tamerlano* and *Giulio Cesare*, among many others) written for performance in London, unequalled in brilliance and profligacy in this country — is what I call their spaciousness. They are full of meaning and richness (something we might not associate with 'commercial' art now), but that is realized differently in every performance. Even better, the audience does not necessarily come to a show with very fixed expectations, limiting the outcome of the evening to a meeting of expectations, or a failure to do so — nothing is so lean and unrewarding!

Agrippina is particular, and particularly challenging. It is as near as you can get to perfectly shaped, dramatically. A first

scene focuses on Agrippina and the men she enthralls, culminating with her gleeful declaration of strategy; disappointed, she recoils in the second scene, and attention shifts to the blameless hero, Ottone — her polar opposite in the piece — who has inconvenienced her.

Agrippina's foil, Poppea, hosts the next scene. She manipulates men like Agrippina does, but she is in turn manipulated by Agrippina. Agrippina's new strategy looks robust, although she is exposed on a number of fronts.

In the first half of the second act — in this production, the last scene of the first half — Ottone becomes the sort of negative image of Agrippina; just as her guileful promises won all to her, his innocent trust is rewarded by desertion from every friend. There is a perfect symmetry in the first half of the opera, which is then taken apart in the delicate bedroom farce hosted by Poppea in the second half.

This is Venetian Handel, accommodating carefully the taste of his patron — and librettist — the governor cardinal Grimani, who placed himself on the opposite side of the bloody War of Spanish Succession from his Pope, and reflecting the taste for demystification and light eroticism of the paying public. It is hard to imagine a more different context than Hanoverian London — and this seems to me reflected in his remarkably various, less 'perfect' operas, more spacious operas for London?

I don't mean to say Agrippina is a sort of clean, well-made-*opera*. The title character may seem canny and blithe, but what a stroke of genius to show us her deep unease in the broken aria I have translated as 'Foreboding', and her ability to simulate simplicity in her last aria. In her rival, Poppea, who might be classed as a



Venus at her Mirror, Diego Velázquez

sensualist opportunist, Handel creates a woman who knows she is not deep, and who is used to trading in the currency of her charm — but who is genuinely, erotically receptive to the integrity and urgency of top-drawer (but only one drawer, sadly) Ottone. The supporting characters are drawn with wit and precision — Pallante, Narciso and Lesbo are as sharp and specific as can be. Being a hero is tough, but just as Monteverdi did, Handel creates in Ottone at once a moral compass and a breathing, suffering lover, bewildered by the degradation love brings to him. Even Claudio, who has his measure of Venetian buffoonery, has a lecher's wisdom in the end.

In translating the sharp Italian original, I looked for inspiration to razor-like English writers for the theatre, Congreve and Wycherley, and to Millamant's 'natural, easy Suckling'. I set out (at least) to match the Italian, rhyme for rhyme, despite the preponderance of feminine endings. I also indulged in two exercises in reference, the respectful practice of Handel's day: the Act

2 finale, 'Sailing Homeward', paraphrases Anne Ridler's estimable translation for Kent Opera (a model company it makes much sense of us to quote!), and Narciso's first aria, 'Pleasure's gentle zephyr playing' quotes an air in one of Handel's cantatas written by Thomas Morell.

It's amazing good fortune to translate and direct a piece like *Agrippina* — and to find every day in rehearsing music and text good humour, good judgment, and instinctive psychology — the sure sign in his youthful work of the dedicated, profound composer of opera that was Handel.

SUPPORT OUR WORK



Martha Jones as Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (2020). Laura Attridge (Director), Oliver Townsend (Designer), Mark Howland (Lighting Designer). Credit: Richard Hubert Smith

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HANDEL'S CHANGING FORTUNES

Jonathan Keates

The fortunes of Handel opera are the stuff of fairy tales. Once upon a time there lived a beautiful princess called *Opera Seria*. Everybody courted and loved her, kings and dukes cast their wealth at her feet, rivals fought for her favours, crowds flocked to hear her wondrous songs. Then, with a dreadful suddenness, she found herself despised and rejected as absurdly old-fashioned, silly and grotesque. Two evil fairies, Phoney Good Taste and Lazy Critical Orthodoxy, condemned the poor wretch to an oblivion lasting nearly two hundred years. Until one day along came the handsome prince Early Music Revival, gave her a kiss, roused the lovely girl from her long slumber and brought her back again to enrapture and amaze the world.

Or something along those lines. This awakening was well underway when, at university, I saw my first Handel opera in the shape of *Giustino*, given by the enterprising team of Alan and Frances Kitching as part of their memorable series of revivals at the Unicorn Theatre in Abingdon during the 1960s. Cast and orchestra were mostly student musicians from nearby Oxford, the staging, though skilful, was clearly managed on a shoestring, yet the conviction behind the whole project made it genuinely exhilarating. *Giustino*, a sort of Dick Whittington story minus the pantomime cat, may not be everyone's favourite Handel opera, but the verve and charm of the whole piece meant I was hooked and wanted more.

Thank goodness there were suddenly lots more to be had. Annual performances at Sadler's Wells by the Handel Opera Society were an ideal training ground for young singers gaining theatrical experience. Commercial recordings appeared,

meanwhile, of *Rodelinda*, *Sosarme* and *Ariodante*, this last, under Raymond Leppard's baton, focused on a vocally stunning Janet Baker. In the title role of *Julius Caesar* at English National Opera, opposite Valerie Masterson's Cleopatra, she made an irresistible case for the stageworthiness of Handel's exuberant score. Soon enough the Coliseum followed this up with Nicholas Hytner's production of *Xerxes*, highlighting the composer's sophisticated sense of humour in a show which remained a favourite in the company's repertoire over many later seasons.

Look back, for a moment, to the days when the distinguished conductor Sir George Macfarren, in a *Musical Times* article of 1869, entitled "The Italian Language: Its Evil Influence Upon Music", thundered against *opera seria* as "a form that limited the workings of the mighty genius of the master and allowed no play to its higher attributes," damning the operas as "obsolete and lost to the world for ever." They were based, according to Macfarren's pitiless verdict, "upon subjects that are entirely unsympathetic to our times and



Right: Valerie Masterson and Janet Baker in *Julius Caesar* at English National Opera



Above: Susanna Hurrell in *Giulio Cesare* (2020). James Conway (Director), Cordelia Chisholm (Designer), Mark Howland (Lighting Designer). Credit: Jane Hobson

constructed upon principles that are totally uncongenial to our stage."

That was then, this is now. The whirligig of Time, Shakespeare reminds us, brings in their revenges. Today the repertoire of no self-respecting modern opera house is complete without *Rodelinda*, *Giulio Cesare* and *Tamerlano*. An entire new generation of international countertenors have cut their teeth on *Rinaldo*, *Radamisto*, *Serse* and *Flavio*, while every single one of the composer's lyric dramas, including that masterly third act he contributed to Muzio Scevola, has been given a commercial recording.

Why does our age reach out so eagerly to experience Handel opera? Cynics may say that its appeal, in an age of cost-cutting and recession, is purely financial, with its tiny casts, no chorus, minimal stage requirements and a small pit band. Others, though unable to deny Handel's inexhaustible gift for fine-spun aria writing, may dismiss these pieces as mere fodder for camp canary-fanciers, marking a vogue doomed to fade as surely as it vanished during the decades following the composer's death. Ironically however, it is

Handel opera's very artificiality which can perhaps best explain its dramatic impact on modern audiences. Those closed forms of recitative dialogue and the *da capo* aria, with its orchestral introduction, the mood swing in its middle section and a final ornamented reprise, set up a continuously enriching tension between the music's structure and the emotion it sets free. We may not be kings, warriors or princesses, blessed with names like Radamisto, Arsamene, Teofane or Romilda, but we acknowledge all too readily the authenticity of those individual feelings with which they challenge us. Handel's wisdom probes the truth of their fears and jealousies, their triumphs and obsessions, their vulnerability to the tricks and shocks of destiny. His world embraces us all.

Jonathan Keates is a writer, biographer, novelist and former chairman of the Venice in Peril Fund. His books on Handel include *Handel: The Man and his Music* and *Messiah*.

STAY IN TOUCH



Francesca Chiejina in *Armadig* (2021). James Conway (Director), Neil Irish (Designer), Rory Beaton (Lighting Designer). Credit: Richard Hubert Smith

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THE SHAPE OF A HANDEL ARIA

Jonathan Peter Kenny, Conductor

Opera seria, the generic title of the Italian form in which Handel composed his stage works, consists of an alternation of recitative (conversation) and aria (song); arias being composed, in general in *da capo* form. Handel enjoyed this framework since it offered balance and continuity, yet gave scope for contrast.

A standard *da capo* aria can be illustrated as follows:

First section

Ritornello (introduction): a recurring passage interspersed with contrasting episodes.

Second section

Usually voice and continuo (harpsichord and cello) alone.

Da capo

Reprise of the first section with vocal ornamentation ('from the head').

Handel did not follow this pattern slavishly but found ways to colour his arias to give them dramatic validity. He could vary them in terms of their dimensions: Teofane's 'Affanni del pensier' ('Alone, in lonely grief') is followed by Adelberto's short phrased 'Tu puoi straziarmi' ('Though I'm defeated'). Or the vocal entry might employ contrasting though related material to the orchestral ritornello: 'Tanti affanni' begins with a sinuous violin outlining long, surprising chromatic lines, Ottone enters with his own motive bringing the music to a halt, a counterpoint to the violin theme, forcing them eventually to respond directly to his music. In the duet 'Notte cara' ('Darkness falling') the orchestra's strange, almost jaunty theme is ignored by the voices singing longer, more legato lines. Similarly, the second section might surprise by using completely contrasting material as in Matilda's 'Diresti poi così?' ('But could I be so cruel?') where the music jerks into G major

and the time signature changes from 3/4 to 3/8. At other times, for dramatic effect the ritornello may be omitted completely, as in Matilda's 'All' orror d'un duolo eterno' ('You condemn my heart to suffering').

In the alternation of recitative and aria, Handel's methods were in tune with the artistic conversations of the time – the doctrine of affects wherein a particular passion is explored to its limits in one statement. A character reveals one aspect of himself in an aria, a different aspect in the next, and so on. By the end, the character often exits after an aria: having thoroughly explored an emotion, to remain would only weaken the impression. Vocal ornamentation is crucial to the performance of a *da capo* aria – not an optional extra but rather the filling of the space that the composer has left for the taste, talents and abilities of the singer to be displayed, and for the music and the drama to be furthered.

In *Ottone*, uniquely, contemporaneous ornamentation, possibly in Handel's hand, exists for some Teofane arias, most expansively in 'Affanni del pensier' ('Alone in lonely grief'). They were written for an unknown, possibly private performance and transposed down a fourth into a key more suitable for a mezzo soprano. Scribbled into the score around the original line in exactly the way that singers today would write their ornamentation, opinions inevitably differ as to how to interpret them. The ornaments expand the range of the arias only slightly and whilst extravagant and demanding, are a virtuosic elaboration of the line rather than a recomposition, starting and ending on original pitches and never resorting to octave transposition. We have used this ornamentation as the basis for those arias, whilst adapting them to our singers and to the drama.

In the hands of a master, the *da capo* aria

suits the needs of the audience, the singers, the composer, and most importantly, the drama. Handel's contemporary Burney commented that his arias are "a canvas a great singer only can colour."

The reprise of the first section drives home the message of the aria, with the ornamentation giving brilliance to a furious mood, and making a tragic mood utterly heartrending. The audience could be excited by a singer's taste and virtuosity and Handel could compose satisfying structures that gave the audience a second chance to leave the theatre humming the hit tunes!



Above: Page from the first edition of Handel's *Ottone*, 1723

TAMERLANO

Music by George Frideric Handel
Libretto by Nicola Francesco Haym

The edition of Tamerlano used in these performances is published by
Bärenreiter Verlag, Kassel and supplied by Faber Music, London

First performed at the King's Theatre, London, on 31 October 1724

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Bajazet

captive king of what is now Turkey
Jorge Navarro Colorado
Thomas Elwin (Cover)

Asteria

his daughter
Ellie Laugharne

Tamerlano

conqueror, once a shepherd
Rodrigo Sosa Dal Pozzo

Andronico

Greek prince, ally of Tamerlano, in love with Asteria
James Hall

Irene

Greek princess of Trebizond, betrothed to Tamerlano
April Koyejo-Audiger
Clara Orif (Cover)

Conductor

Jonathan Peter Kenny

Assistant Conductor

Alexander Robinson

Director

James Conway

Staff Director

Katie Blackwell

Set & Costume Designer

Rebecca van Beeck

Répétiteur

Satoko Doi-Luck

Lighting Designer

Tim van 't Hof

SYNOPSIS

Background

Tamerlano and his army have swept west from central Asia to the coast of Asia Minor, modern day Turkey; most recently he has conquered the Ottoman realm and taken captive the king, Bajazet, and his daughter, Asteria.

Andronico, a fugitive Byzantine prince, has allied himself with Tamerlano; he takes special care of Bajazet, and loves (and is loved by) Asteria. From Tamerlano Andronico learns the art of war, and from Andronico Tamerlano absorbs statecraft. Tamerlano is negotiating with Byzantium for Andronico's return to power there as a client prince; he has also arranged a marriage for himself with Irene, the princess of the neighbouring Greek Pontic kingdom of Trebizond.

Act 1

Andronico released the defeated king Bajazet from close confinement. At first, pleased, Bajazet recoils when he understands that this mercy has been extended by Tamerlano. Above all else, Bajazet and his daughter hate their conqueror. Bajazet tries to kill himself, but relents when Andronico reminds him of his vulnerable daughter.

Tamerlano has news for Andronico: he will restore him to power in Byzantium, and Tamerlano himself will placate his defeated foe by marrying his daughter Asteria. When Andronico raises the problem of Irene, whose arrival is imminent, Tamerlano happily decides to bestow her on Andronico, and he requires his friend to intercede for him with Bajazet and Asteria.

Andronico is caught between his loyalty to Tamerlano and his love for Asteria, and he prays that she will trust his heart, though his words may seem to betray her.

Asteria has heard of Andronico's good fortune – and she resolves to harden her heart against him. Predictably, her father rejects Tamerlano's offer of marriage on her behalf – but she herself will not commit herself, preoccupied as she is with her father's safety and her lover's assumed treachery.

When Irene arrives, she meets Andronico and shows her indignation at the idea of giving up Tamerlano. Andronico persuades her to disguise herself as a companion to Irene, and wait to play her trump cards at the right moment. Even this slender plan makes Andronico hopeful of saving Bajazet, being true to Asteria, and not betraying Tamerlano.

Act 2

Tamerlano thanks the mortified Andronico for his help in winning over Asteria, and indulges in some playful anticipation of love as a kind of "happy warfare".

Andronico confronts Asteria, assuring her of his love – though close to confiding in him, she instead insults him (in order to protect him and her plan), and decides to accept Tamerlano's proposal. Andronico presents Irene (in disguise) to Tamerlano; she makes clear Irene's rights but Tamerlano dismisses her.

The embittered Andronico admits to Bajazet that Asteria has chosen Tamerlano.

As Asteria accepts Tamerlano's invitation to mount his throne (formerly Bajazet's!) together, her father stops her. The conqueror orders his captive to prostrate himself, and Bajazet is contented to do so: he blocks his own daughter's path to the throne, until kicked out of the way by Tamerlano. As all (Bajazet, Andronico and the hopeless Irene) watch Asteria join Tamerlano, Bajazet throws himself at her

and begs her to kill her own father so he cannot witness her shame. Asteria's resolve softens, and disgusted Tamerlano orders he to go back to captivity. She reveals to all the dagger with which she had planned to stab Tamerlano in their wedding night. Enraged, Tamerlano menaces both father and daughter – but cannot make himself kill the girl he now loves.

Asteria is vindicated by her planned murder. Bajazet reclaims her as his daughter, Andronico begs forgiveness for doubting her, and Irene pledges friendship. Alone, the heroine expresses her longing for light and life.

Interval

Act 3

Bajazet and Asteria are imprisoned. As ever, he thirsts for a death that is not at the hand of Tamerlano. With his daughter he shares the small amount of poison that he has acquired – and he pledges to die himself once he is assured that she has the means to take her own life if assaulted by Tamerlano.

Tamerlano's desire for Asteria is still keener, and he confesses it to her in front of Andronico. Andronico this time defies Tamerlano, and names his own love, which Asteria returns. Betrayed by his ally and scorned by the woman he loves, Tamerlano is maddened and violent. Asteria and Andronico recognise that their lives and their love will be short, but they join hands.

Tamerlano requires Asteria to abase herself before him by serving him wine on her knees. To humiliate her father and lover, they are forced to witness her degradation. Asteria secretly poisons the wine, but just as he is about to drink Tamerlano's life is saved

by Irene, who now reveals herself. Asteria begs him to drink, but Tamerlano orders her to offer the poisoned drink either to her father or her lover. In agony, Asteria goes to drink it herself, but Andronico dashes it from her hands. Still obsessed with Asteria, Tamerlano sentences her to serve as the sex slave of his slaves.

Regretting the squandered poison, Bajazet has a furious burst of energy, in which he threatens Tamerlano with all the furies of hell. Bajazet then manages to consume the residue of the poison. Just as Tamerlano agrees to marry Irene after all, having purged himself of love for Asteria, an ecstatic, poisoned Bajazet hurls himself at Tamerlano, and terrifies the superstitious conqueror. He takes leave of his helpless daughter, who begs him to kill her. All witness his death, and all are changed by it.

Tamerlano, weakened, calls for hatred to be put aside. He offers to give Byzantium to shattered Andronico. In sombre fashion, Tamerlano, Andronico and Irene call out for light.

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

As an audience member, we would love you to fill out our survey by scanning the QR code on the right. This will help us learn more about how we can give you the best possible experience in the future.

The survey should take around five minutes to complete. Anything you tell us will be kept confidential, is anonymous and will only be used for research purposes. The information you provide will be held by us and The Audience Agency, who are running the survey on our behalf.

Thank you for your time!

Chorus of *The Golden Cockerel* (2022), James Conway (Director), Neil Irish (Designer), Rory Beaton (Lighting Designer), Credit: Richard Hubert Smith

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THE HEART'S REASON

A DIRECTOR'S NOTE ON *TAMERLANO*

James Conway, Artistic Director

Since I started to study it in the early 1990s, I have felt that Handel's 1724 opera *Tamerlano* is one of the most perfect and austere works of art.

I did a translation of it back then for an Irish production with an astonishing design by artist Dorothy Cross, and a very strong cast including tonight's conductor, Jonathan Peter Kenny, as Andronico. I recall that it opened in Tralee, in County Kerry, and that the very bold and beautiful photographic poster was generally folded over in shops in town, because it showed obviously male open hands over top of (not touching) female breasts, the perfect nipples coming through the hands like stigmata. I remember, too, the indignation and praise in the national Irish press at the time, including the admonishment "the plain people of Ireland with not welcome *da capo* arias", and advice that women playing male

characters "badly need jaw beards".

It was not long ago, but a very different time. For that same Irish opera company over the next decade I directed four other Handel operas as well as *Tamerlano*, and they won the company esteem and fortune at international festivals. People started to recognise in those days that Handel was not only a fine composer, but a man of the theatre – that duration in his operas (as in every kind of theatre) is a key to meaning and to pleasure, requiring neither reverend emptiness nor the imposition of banal ideas to bring them to life. People began to see again that they were written for skilled interpreters, generous enough to bring themselves fully to the stage. Of course there are still plenty of production relapses in big-frock show-downs, parodic skittishness, gender mockery and bunker konzept vehicles, but there is at least air in the room when Handel's operas are considered, and most people think they don't need to be "rescued".

Staring again on a new production, I ask myself what it is that is so special about *Tamerlano*. The score is evenly sophisticated and remarkable, making expressive use of a slender orchestra. It is not an opera of "hits". It does not sparkle or flair, as do the other operas in this season; rather, I would say, it is a burnished, glowing score, drawing the listener into a world of intense and private feelings, finding moments of hope (Andronico's Act 1 finale "Benché mi sprezzì", Irene's mid Act 2 meditation "Par che mi nasca in seno", Asteria's oft-cut, deceptively simple Act 2 finale "Se potessi un dì placare") that feel like exquisite release, and rare ensembles (the bleak and ravishing duet for Andronico and Asteria, and the only final Handel opera chorus that is not "light") that seem to trust the

audience to follow into a dark room of sensation.

This may be why *Tamerlano* has not often been a critics' favourite – for there still remains (in the English-speaking world, at least) a sense that opera is and should be extravagant and fundamentally silly. *Tamerlano* – like some other operas I have had the great good fortune to produce for English Touring Opera (*Iphigenie en Tauride*, *Idomeneo* and *Tito*, *Ariodante* and *Alcina*, Tippett's terrific, eloquent *King Priam*, Goehr's taut *Promised End*, the Shostakovich *Sonnets of Michelangelo*) – is perfectly serious, and the director's work is to realise all the complexity that is in it, in a way that reflects the unsparing clarity of the score and text.

What the score of *Tamerlano* points to, and what I conclude is so special, is the consistently serious tone, eschewing extraneous effects or applause harvesting splendour. There is one setting, essentially, a prison that is a throne room – for throne rooms are prisons in this world. In this place without reference to an outside world, Handel delivers a handful of characters with uncompromising clarity.

At the heart of the drama is Asteria, whose name conjures the stars that are only imagined in the piece. She alone truly acts, and because of this she is truly alone. Her successive arias show bitter sadness, the resolve of an actress, the hope of a young person who has not yet lived, and the resignation of one who in a short time has lived too much. She is a sort of freedom fighter in a world cannibalised by conflicting male wills. At the same time, she knows her heart, and shapes all her failed strategy in that knowledge, so she endangers no one else. To me she articulates the heart's reasons without fear – and it makes her one of the great heroes in opera.

Around her are men who claim her, and one



Above: portrait of Timur (Tamerlano) from Blaise de Vigenere's *Histoire Generale Des Turcs: Contenant l'Histoire De Chalcondyle*

female foil. Much is claimed for the role of Bajazet, her fallen father; normally in 18th century opera tenors played risible older men without much claim on our attention, but Bajazet is like an early Idomeneo, extrovert, magnificent and flawed. His arias range from Bach-like severity ("A suoi piedi"), to terrifying virtuosity ("Empio, per farti guerra"), to heartbreaking tenderness ("Figlia mia"). He wants to die from the first pages, but is prevented from taking his own life by the perceived vulnerability of his daughter; in the end he does kill himself, leaving her worse off than ever. He is a failure by any standard, but most certainly as a father. He never speaks of Asteria without a possessive adjective; he only recognises her as "his".

Tamerlano is, of course, the opposite of Bajazet: unsophisticated, impulsive, sexual,



Left: Title page of the libretto for the first performance of *Tamerlano*, 1724



Above: Portrait of Sultan Bayezid I (Bajazet) by Cristofano dell'Altissimo

successful in terms of force and willing in terms of fraud. He too thinks of Asteria is something the conquest of which will bring him “peace”, or at least a release from agitation. He wants to own her – to be raised in status by her acquisition, or failing that to debase her by brutish domination. His single (simple?) mindedness is strangely attractive, and often repellent. He is as dangerous as a very successful boy child.

Andronico is in virtually every scene, and his is the hardest role. He is at the centre of the piece, but is unable to act. He loves Asteria, but is for a long time unwilling to clarify his desire, because he is reluctant to be ungrateful to (or irritate) his volatile ally, Tamerlano. How could the wily, thoughtful, introvert Greek prince be the ally of Tamerlano? Does he admire the conqueror’s energy, his univocal desire, as much as he appreciates the sophistication of Bajazet? He seems to me caught in a

web-like late poem of W B Yeats. Andronico is a man of deep, not always beautiful feelings, in a very tight spot. While he has not the steel of Asteria, the sharp tooth of Tamerlano nor the pride of Bajazet, he is a striking study in self doubt, in hesitation, in dread. The light-headed will call him a wimp, I am sure; I recognise and love the painful truths that are his strong character.

Thank goodness for Irene, the character from outside. She knows what she wants, and is frustrated that she cannot have it. There is no going back for her: without her commitment to her own desire I doubt we would ever get out of this room, or see a chance of escape in the future. Like the other four, she is proud, even too proud – but to her this is a world of freakish intensity and bad behaviour, and for the audience she is an important reference to an outside world. Nowadays one might say she operates on a need-to-know basis with these reckless killers and self-harmers, and that she succeeds. I wonder if the goal once reached is anything she imagined.

Tamerlano requires and repays concentration, like much of what I think of as good art. I reckon we can all still concentrate, just about. What pleasures there are in it!



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THE GENESIS OF TAMERLANO

Jonathan Peter Kenny, Conductor

The score of *Tamerlano* was completed on 23 July 1724 after an astonishingly swift 20 days. Written to an existing libretto by Agostino Piovene, Handel must have been satisfied that barring the usual adjustments, the bulk of his labour was complete since preparation began almost immediately on a performing score and materials. The leading performers were already familiar to him and to London, principally the castrato Francesco Bernardini, known as Senesino, and the soprano Francesco Cuzzoni, his Giulio Cesare and Cleopatra only a few months before. New singers were eagerly anticipated: Andrea Pacini as *Tamerlano*, Anna Dotti as Irene and, surprisingly, a tenor, Francesco Borosini.

Unforeseen surprises were in store, however, upon their arrival, since both Dotti and Borosini had voices lower than Handel had conceived, compelling him to set about straight away to revise and recompose their music (he rarely transposed, preferring to reimagine arias for different singers). Borosini was familiar with this subject, having appeared in a 1719 adaptation (in which he was closely involved) of the same libretto, with music by Francesco Gasparini. He seems to have brought both the modified libretto and Gasparini's score with him to London and wasted no time bringing them to Handel's attention. The effect was dramatic. Fired by the opportunity to improve Piovene's drama and excited by the possibilities presented, Handel embarked upon a major revision of his already completed opera. Composers of the 18th century often modified their work to suit the talents of different performers but as has been pointed out, this is perhaps the only occasion of a composer radically altering a completed opera upon encountering a different version of the libretto.

The changes undertaken are most evident at the beginning of Act I, the latter part of



Above: portrait of Handel by Balthasar Denner

Act II and the conclusion of Act III (indeed all three acts eventually ended with a new text). Determined to seek a strong opening, Handel discarded his initial setting, eventually composing no less than five different versions, rejecting multiple arias before settling, perhaps inevitably, upon the simplest of his solutions.

Significant changes were made in the Throne Room scene in Act III. Exploiting the dramatic possibilities presented by the infamous 'exit convention' (by which characters usually depart after an aria - a bit like slamming the door behind you after a killer retort in an argument), Handel expanded the scene to Jacobean dimensions as Asteria, against everyone's wishes, appears to be on the brink of marriage to *Tamerlano*. Bajazet, Andronico and Irene enter in turn to confront and prevent her. After overwhelming pressure she capitulates, only to reveal (spoiler alert)

the dagger with which she intended, Jael-like, to stab him in their wedding bed. For this, Handel composed the longest stretch of recitative in 18th century opera, 235 bars of *secco* and accompanied recitative which flags for not a second before exploding into a trio for *Tamerlano*, Bajazet and Asteria. She turns then to each of her accusers and in a short question asks if she is indeed the ungrateful daughter, faithless lover or ambitious woman they thought her to be. Each replies in a short aria beginning with the word 'no', without introduction, but closing with a beautiful *ritornello*. Thus vindicated, she sings a full *da capo* aria to bring the act to a conclusion. The entire scene is precisely 700 bars long and Handel never cut a single bar of it in subsequent revivals.

This extraordinary construction, brilliantly exploiting the dramatic conventions of his time, has its comic precursor in his own *Agrippina*, which rather wonderfully is also part of this season. In *Agrippina*, the ruined Ottone pleads with his former friends, who reject him in turn and exit after brief arias, leaving him to sing the wonderful "Voi che udite". The eminent Handel scholar Winton Dean has pointed out that Piovene was in fact in Venice a few months after the opening of *Agrippina*, so it is conceivable that this is where the idea originated. Even so, the dramatic version in *Tamerlano* caused Handel considerable labour, all three brief arias being recomposed several times and the radical decision made to insert a new text of dramatic relief for Asteria, "Se potessi un dì" instead of Piovene's original "Cor di padre". It proved to be a dramatic and musical master stroke and is one of the glories of the opera.

The conclusion of Act III was subject to the same intensive search for dramatic truth. In Piovene's original, Bajazet takes poison off stage and his death is reported by others. In 1719 this was expanded into a dramatic

death scene which in Handel's hands becomes something astonishing. Dictated only by the drama, he composed a mixture of *secco* and accompanied recitative, *arioso* and aria, lurching from key to key, from curse to blessing, culminating in a halting agony as Bajazet breathes his defiant last.

In his first conception, Handel followed Bajazet's death with a heart rending scene for Asteria, and a duet for Andronico and *Tamerlano* (the only duet he ever composed for two *castrati*). Despite the quality of the music (especially that for Asteria) he realised the dramatic peak had been reached and excised them, composing instead a brief recitative leading straight to the final chorus. The ensemble itself is a remarkable achievement. A happy ending was mandatory in the Enlightenment; if there was no just conclusion how could we believe the world to be a comprehensible place? Handel subverts the convention by setting the happy text to extraordinary music in the bleak key of E minor. The characters mouth words of reconciliation but the music tells us all is changed.

Tamerlano is unique among Handel operas in being set exclusively inside the claustrophobic confines of a fallen palace and prison. There are no outdoor scenes to give relief and there are more dramatic recitatives than for any of his other operas. The drive and power of the drama seems to have excited him. In ruthlessly eliminating music of an astonishing quality in pursuit of emotional truth, Handel reveals himself to be a dramatist of the highest order.

LEARNING & PARTICIPATION

Bradley Travis, Head of Learning & Participation

Autumn 2022

This autumn we premiere a brand-new opera commission for young people touring to schools, libraries and museums, and will run a national workshop programme linking with the Handelfest.

Our new opera commission is for Key Stage 2 (7-11 year olds) audiences and marks the centenary of the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb. **Tutankhamun's Shoes** is written by ETO's new General Director, Robin Norton-Hale and composed by Rosabella Gregory. As part of the development of the piece, Rosabella made the trip to Egypt and consulted with Egyptian scholars and composers to learn more about ancient instruments, modes and instrumentation which then has influenced the composition of the piece. Of Egyptian heritage herself, Rosabella spoke of how the trip allowed her to "reconnect" with her heritage and "soak up" the atmosphere that she hopes has found its way into the score. The story will take children on an adventure back to Ancient Egypt via the Roaring Twenties in an interactive opera where the young people will learn about the ancient world, archaeology, mumification and more, all led by an ever-living cat! The opera is directed by Lysanne van Overbeek, who was ETO's Staff Director on our last two tours, and designed by Bettina John.

Linking with the Handelfest, we are providing two streams of workshops, one for secondary school students and the other for London-based charities.

THE HANDEL PROJECT will run in schools on several stops on our tour, engaging with secondary school students over two days where they will learn about Handel and his music, delve deep into the historical,



Image: feastcreative

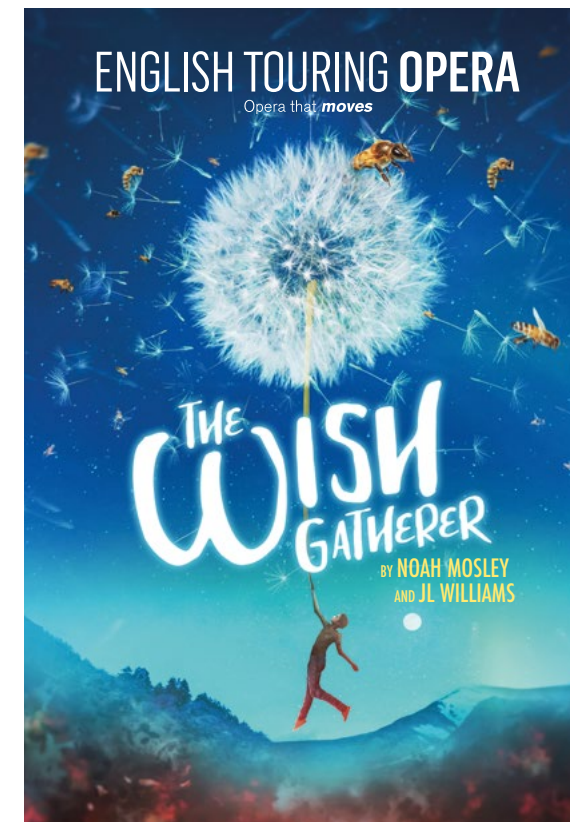
political and emotional context of his operas, and then use this to make a new opera with new words and music informed by their own experiences. The sessions will be run by director Jonathan Ainscough and composer Helen Woods alongside artists performing in the Handelfest. The students will then all be given the opportunity to see one of the Handel operas in their local theatre.

Working with SENSE, Headway and others, ETO will provide participatory workshops to people of all ages, introducing them to opera as an art form and the music of Handel.

Further ahead

ETO are committing to a series of three operas relating to climate change to take place in the spring tours of 2023-2025.

We at ETO are committed to taking action on the climate and ecological crisis. In 2019 we produced **Paradise Planet** by Alex Groves and Rebecca Hanbury, an opera made up of a collection of ocean stories which highlighted the dangers of climate change and how we must rush to save planet earth. The piece was a great success, engaging with 5,000 young people around the country, inspiring them to make changes to their home and school routines including the reduce, reuse, recycle message.



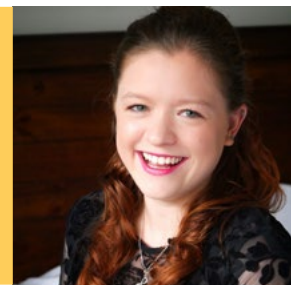
Unfortunately, the climate and ecological crisis has worsened since 2019, and we feel more strongly than ever about educating and mobilising future generations on how they can help combat the effects of climate change. To this end, we are producing three operas relating to different aspects of the fight against climate change: nature, justice, and the ocean. Working with **Julie's Bicycle** we have earmarked these topics as key areas to inspire and engage children with over the coming years.

The first of these operas, **The Wish Gatherer**, relates to how young people can make an impact in protecting the natural world in the face of climate change. Written by Noah Mosley and J.L. Williams, the story follows Lola, a young girl struggling with the effects on her world of Covid, her parent's recent divorce and the climate crisis. Going on Lola's journey with her, the children will meet the magical Wish Gatherer, the mysterious and dark Muddier, the disenchanted bee, Bumbella, and the enterprising Seed Planter in a story about beauty, loss, revolution and new beginnings.

Along with collaborating with Julie's Bicycle on these new operas, ETO are also working with climate activists to relate the works directly to existing campaigns to try and lead on making actual change and impact in the sector.

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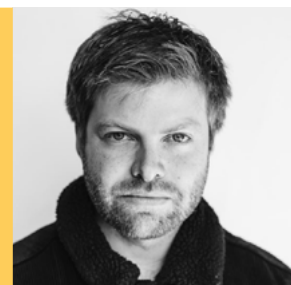
BIOGRAPHIES



KATIE BLACKWELL

Staff Director

Katie Blackwell currently works in theatre and production as a director and singer. She recently graduated with a Master's from Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, having previously graduated from Cardiff University with a BA in Music and History. Katie worked with Creation Theatre in Oxford as their education administrator, and now works as Oxford Opera's Director of Education and Outreach. Recent production credits include Assistant and Directing work with: Oxford Opera, Diva Opera, Opera Anywhere, Opera in a Box, Cardiff Opera. She is a co-founder of All Aboard Opera!, a new operatic initiative dedicated to innovation in opera performance.



SAMAL BLAK

Designer Agrippina

Samal Blak trained at the Central St. Martins College of Art & Design. He won the 2009 Linbury Prize for Stage Design and the Thorvald Poulsen av Steinum Award in 2007, as well as being nominated for a Total Theatre Award in 2009.

Productions include *Don Giovanni*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Carmen* and *Così fan tutte* for Teatro dell'Opera di Roma; *Tosca* at the Macerata festival; *Hamlet* for Gothenburg Opera; *Paria* at Teatr Wielki, Poland; *Dance Nation* at the Almeida Theatre; *The Arrival* at Bush Theatre; *Circle Mirror Transformation* at HOME, Manchester; *Khovanshchina* (Winner - Best New Production, International Opera Awards 2015); *Otello* and *Life is a Dream* for Birmingham Opera Company; *Falstaff* and *Fidelio* at Bucharest National Opera; *Anthropocene*, *The Devil Inside*, *In The Locked Room* and *Ghost Patrol* (Winner- South Bank Sky Arts Award 2013) for Scottish Opera; *Svadba* at Festival d'Aix-en-Provence and *Les mamelles De Tiresias* at Dutch National Opera, La Monnaie, Brussels, and Aldeburgh Music.

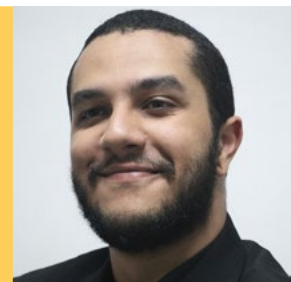


ESME BRONWEN-SMITH

**Nerone Agrippina
Matilda (Cover) Ottone**

Mezzo-soprano Esme Bronwen-Smith won First Prize at the 2022 Kathleen Ferrier Awards and joins ETO off the back of a season at Glyndebourne both as a member of the chorus and covering the role of Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Her other roles include Irene in *Theodora*, Unulfo in *Rodelinda* and Smeton Bolena.

Esme graduated with a masters from the Royal College of Music in 2021 and studies with Rosa Mannion. In recital she has sung at song festivals including Oxford Lieder and Leeds Lieder as a 2020/21 Young Artist, where she won the Leeds Lieder/ Schubert UK Song Prize.

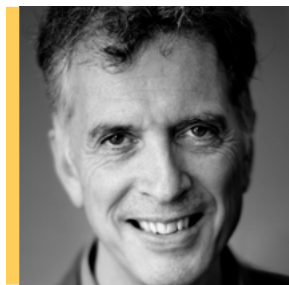


VITOR BISPO

Claudio (Cover) Agrippina

Born in São Paulo, Vitor Bispo is currently studying at the Royal Academy of Music, where he recently performed in *Gianni Schicchi*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, the newly commissioned opera *Witch* and the title role of *Imeneo*. He studies under the tutelage of Mark Wildman and Jonathan Papp, and is supported by the prestigious Bicentenary Scholarship.

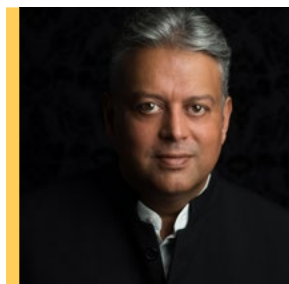
Vitor began his vocal studies at the age of 17 at the Municipal School of Music of São Paulo before studying at the Municipal Theatre of São Paulo's Opera Studio, singing in productions of *L'elisir d'amore*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Così fan tutte* and *La Scala di seta*. During 2022 he was part of the Georg Solti Accademia with Richard Bonynghe, Roberto Frontali and Barbara Frittoli. He was recently awarded the First Place at the 19th edition of the Maria Callas Singing Competition, the Revelation Singer Prize at the Linus Lerner International Singing Competition, and the First Place at the Blyth-Buesst Operatic Prize at the Royal Academy of Music.



JAMES CONWAY

**Director Tamerlano
Original Director Ottone
Original Director Agrippina**

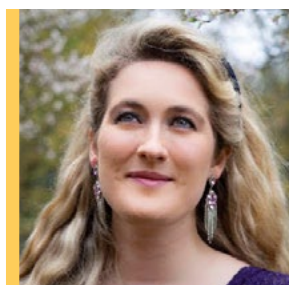
As Director of English Touring Opera for 20 years, James Conway has directed productions of operas by Monteverdi, Bach, Handel, Mozart, Donizetti, Verdi, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky Korsakov, Janáček, Puccini, Debussy, Ullmann, Weill, Britten and Tippett, as well as a world premiere by Alexander Goehr. Before coming to ETO he was General Director of Opera Theatre Company in Dublin; his productions for that company travelled to New York (Brooklyn Academy of Music), and to festivals in Melbourne, London, Buxton, Paris, Dusseldorf, Prague, Brno, Lisbon and Porto. Notable among his freelance directing is the long-running production of *The Cunning Little Vixen* at the Janáček Theatre, Brno, and a recent production of Graun *Cleopatra e Cesare* produced at the Dutch National Opera Academy in Amsterdam and The Hague. His most recent work for ETO includes *The Golden Cockerel*, a revival of his production of *La bohème*, and his powerful staging of Bach *St John Passion* performed with over 30 choirs around the country.



GERRY CORNELIUS

Conductor Ottone

In the last ten years Gerry Cornelius has had work associations with arts companies of all genres and sizes in the UK and abroad. This has allowed him to pursue the broad spectrum of work which interests him and continues to develop, most notably and enjoyably within opera, contemporary music, dance and education. He is the recently appointed Music Director of English Touring Opera.



HILARY CRONIN

**Poppea Agrippina
Asteria (Cover) Tamerlano**

Selected by BBC Music Magazine as a Rising Star of 2022, Hilary Cronin won First Prize and the Audience Prize at the 2021 London Handel International Singing Competition. Recent highlights have included Têlaire in *Castor et Pollux* with The Opera Company and projects with Freiburg Baroque Orchestra, the London Handel Orchestra, Solomon's Knot and VOCES 8. Engagements in 2022/23 include projects with Arcangelo, The English Concert, London Mozart Players, the Monteverdi Choir, La Nuova Musica, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, The Sixteen and her debut at Teatro La Fenice in Venice. This is Hilary's principal debut with English Touring Opera.



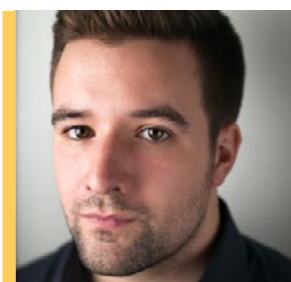
SATOKO DOI-LUCK

Répétiteur Tamerlano

Satoko Doi-Luck takes pleasure in a diverse career as a keyboardist, a composer and a director, and regularly gives solo recitals alongside orchestral work such as Birmingham Opera Company, English Touring Opera, Shakespeare's Globe and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Highlights include directing Hasse *Antonio e Cleopatra* from the keyboard at the Buxton Festival 2022. As a keen chamber musician, Satoko is a member of Ensemble Molière and Ceruleo. Ensemble Molière has been selected as the first-ever BBC Radio 3 New Generation Baroque Ensemble, in partnership with National Centre for Early Music and Royal College of Music.

**LEO DUARTE****Conductor** *Agrippina*

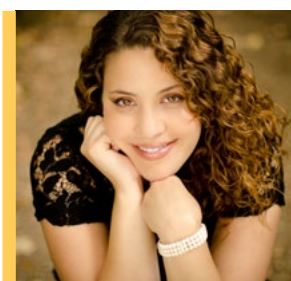
Praised for his vivid conducting, and described in the press as an “explosive tangle of musical energy”, Leo Duarte is always eager to challenge the status quo in search of overlooked aspects of performance practice and is dedicated to research into early manuscripts and treatises. As Artistic Director of Opera Settecento, he has conducted acclaimed landmark performances, including the modern-day premières of Hasse *Demetrio*, four of Handel's pasticcio operas, and, in 2022, the première performances of Bärenreiter's new edition of Handel *Fernando* at the London and Halle Handel Festivals. He is also Principal Oboist with the Academy of Ancient Music.

**THOMAS ELWIN****Bajazet (Cover)** *Tamerlano*

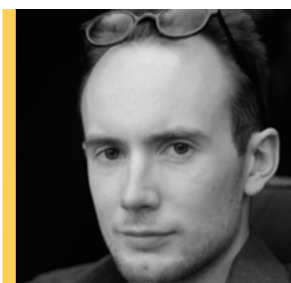
Following his work on Handelfest, London born tenor Thomas Elwin will return English Touring Opera in the Spring 2023 season for his debut as Gennaro in *Lucrezia Borgia*. Previous roles for ETO include Rodolfo *La bohème*, Ferrando *Così fan tutte* and Tippett *Boyhood's End* and *The Hearts Assurance*.

Other recent highlights include Finzi *Dies Natalis* on BBC Radio 3, Mahler Symphony No.8 at the Cheltenham Festival, Handel *Messiah* at the Royal Albert Hall and Mozart Requiem at the Gasteig, Munich.

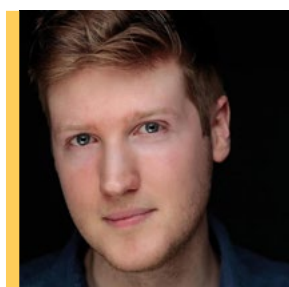
Thomas is an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music and former young artist of Oper Stuttgart, the Solti Accademia Bel Canto, and Equilibrium Artists. Away from music Thomas can be found following most sports, not least West Ham United.

**NAZAN FIKRET****Teofane Ottone**
Poppea (Cover) *Agrippina*

Nazan Fikret is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, a former Britten Pears Young Artist and International Opera Awards bursary recipient. Appearances include Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* for Glyndebourne, Opera på Skäret, and Garsington Opera; Queen of the Night in *AbracadOpera!* for English National Opera/Sky TV; Blonde in *The Seraglio* for English Touring Opera; Arasse in *Siroe* for Nederlandse Reisopera; Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* for European Opera Centre; the soprano soloist in *8bit* digital series and Girl/Bear in *How the Whale Became* at the Royal Opera House; Euridice in *Orfeo ed Euridice* for Longborough Festival Opera; and the title role in *Theodora* with Christian Curnyn and Sarah Connolly (Britten Pears). Future engagements include First Lady in *The Magic Flute* at Welsh National Opera.

**DAVID GERRARD****Répétiteur** *Agrippina*

David Gerrard performs on the harpsichord, clavichord, fortepiano and organ. In demand as a continuo player, David has performed with both modern and period instrument groups including Dunedin Consort, The English Concert, Hebrides Ensemble, Irish Baroque Orchestra, Irish Chamber Orchestra, London Mozart Players, Opera Settecento, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and The Sixteen. A skilled choir trainer and conductor, he has held appointments as Organ Scholar at Canterbury Cathedral and Magdalen College, Oxford, and as Assistant Organist at Paisley Abbey. With experience as a harpsichord technician and restorer, David has begun building early keyboard instruments.

**JAMES HALL****Andronico Tamerlano**
Ottone Ottone

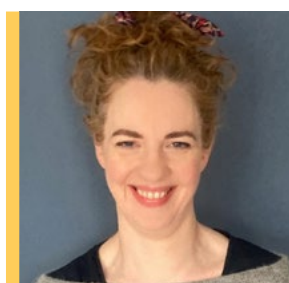
This season James Hall sings Hamor in *Jeptha* in Bregenz, Lichas in *Hercules* at Badisches Staatstheater Karlsruhe, roles in a new Robert Carsen production of *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* for the Maggio Musicale and sings in numerous concerts with Collegium Vocale Ghent. Last season James made his debut with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and also at the Deutsche Oper Berlin as Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the Venice Biennale as The Boy in Sir George Benjamin's *Written on Skin*. In the UK he sang Goffredo in *Rinaldo* for Glyndebourne on Tour, and a concert with Sir George Benjamin at the Royal Festival Hall.

**EDWARD HAWKINS****Claudio** *Agrippina*

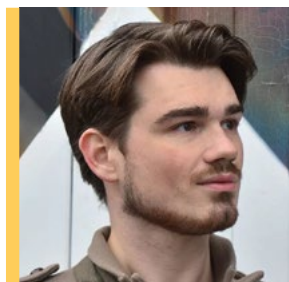
Edward Hawkins read music at King's College, London, studying trumpet at the Royal Academy of Music.

Edward began singing in his late twenties and quickly developed a professional career, studying privately with Russell Smythe and Raymond Connell. He worked in the acclaimed Glyndebourne Chorus for four years before pursuing a solo career.

Recent engagements include Cadmus and Somnus in *Semele*, Achilla in *Giulio Cesare*, General Polkan in *The Golden Cockerel*, *St John Passion* and Colline (cover) in *La bohème*, all for English Touring Opera. He also covered several roles for Glyndebourne, including Rocco in *Fidelio*, Father Trulove in *The Rake's Progress* and Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*. During 2020/21 he also filmed two staged song cycles by Shostakovich for ETO's digital season.

**FRANCES HILLS****Répétiteur** *Ottone*

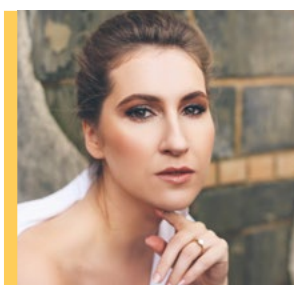
Frances Hills has worked for many companies including Garsington Opera, Opera Holland Park, Opera North, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, English Touring Opera and Copenhagen Opera House. She has played at Bregenz Festival where she was repetiteur for the operas on the lake. She has coached at the Royal College of Music, Morley College and British Youth Opera. Concert venues have included The Clink restaurant in Brixton prison and the London Transport Museum where she played the accordion. Fran played for *West Side Story* and *Guys and Dolls* in Wandsworth prison with Pimlico opera and worked as musical advisor on the plays *Quartet* and *Masterclass* in the West End.

**EDWARD JOWLE****Lesbo, Pallante (Cover)**
Agrippina
Emireno Ottone

A prizewinner of the 2021 Cesti competition and a finalist of the 2021 Kathleen Ferrier Awards, Edward was brought up in Derbyshire and is a recent graduate of the Royal College of Music. A Samling Artist and an alumnus of the Verbier Festival Atelier Lirique, he is also the winner of the 2022 Somerset Song Prize.

His recent work includes Colline *La bohème* in Verbier for Medici TV), Guglielmo *Così fan tutte* for Diva Opera, Papageno *Die Zauberflöte* at the RCM on OperaVision, Adonis *Venus and Adonis* for Pratum Integrum, Polyphemus *Acis and Galatea* at the Ryedale Festival and Garibaldo *Rodelinda* at the RCM.

Having sung in the chorus of *Dardanus* (2017), this is Edward's principal debut with ETO.



ELIZABETH KARANI

Gismonda (Cover) Ottone

British soprano Elizabeth Karani studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, Guildhall School of Music and Drama and National Opera Studio. Previous roles include Nanna/Embla *The Monstrous Child* (Royal Opera House), Gretel *Hansel and Gretel* (English National Opera), Musetta *La bohème*, Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro* (Opera Holland Park) Rutilia *Lucio Papirio Dittatore* (Buxton International Festival), Cino *Teuzzone* (La Serenissima-Venice), Tatyana *Eugene Onegin* (Mid Wales Opera), Isabella *L'inganno Felice* (West Green Opera), Jano *Jenufa* (Longborough Festival Opera), Jay *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Garsington Opera), Rosalinde *Die Fledermaus* (Diva Opera) and Helmwige *Die Walküre* (Hackney Empire). Recent projects include Amy in the UK premiere of *Little Women* (Opera Holland Park) and the Waldvogel *Siegfried* (Hackney Empire). Elizabeth has made concert debuts at the Wigmore Hall, Barbican Hall, Royal Albert Hall, Bridgewater Hall, St John's Smith Square, the Gasteig with Die Münchner Philharmoniker, Xi'an Concert Hall and at La Folle Journée.

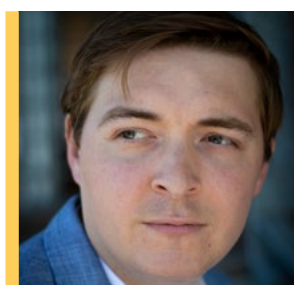


JONATHAN PETER KENNY

Conductor Tamerlano

Jonathan is from Liverpool. For ETO he has conducted *Flavio*, *Xerxes*, *Agrippina*, *Ottone*, *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, *St John Passion*, B minor Mass, *Giulio Cesare*, *Idomeneo*, *St Matthew Passion* and *Amadigi*. Other appearances include *Giulio Cesare*, *Rinaldo*, *Radamisto*, *Alcina* and *Seise* in Lucca, *The Duchess of Malfi* in Northampton, *Stabat Mater* in Dublin, Jocelyn Pook *Anxiety Fanfare* at Kings Place, *Memorial* at the Barbican and Adelaide and Brisbane Festivals and Graun *Cleopatra e Cesare* in the Netherlands. Digital work includes *St John Passion*, *Josquin: Mille regretz* and Ferrandini *Il pianto di Maria*.

As a singer he performed at the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Glyndebourne, Salzburg, Copenhagen, Bologna, Glimmerglass and BBC Proms and with orchestras including the Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and English Baroque Soloists with John Eliot Gardiner, Andrew Parrott, Ivor Bolton and Harry Bicket. Recordings include *St Matthew Passion*, *Agrippina* and Puccini Requiem. His edition of *Tamerlano* has been produced in Dublin, Melbourne, Lisbon and London.

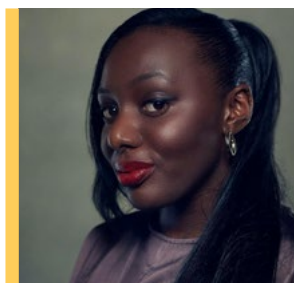


JEROME KNOX

Pallante Agrippina Emireno (Cover) Ottone

Winner of the London Handel Singing competition 2020, British baritone Jerome Knox was born in London and is a graduate of the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. He previously trained at the Royal College of Music, and read Classical Studies at Edinburgh University. Jerome was a finalist in the Grange Festival International Singing Competition.

Recent operatic roles include Marcello in *La bohème* and Prince Aphron in *The Golden Cockerel* for English Touring Opera, the title role of *Eugene Onegin* for Garsington Opera, Count Almaviva and the title role of *Don Giovanni* for Waterperry Opera Festival and Emireno in *Ottone* at Göttingen Handel festival. Jerome looks forward to returning to ETO in the spring of 2023.

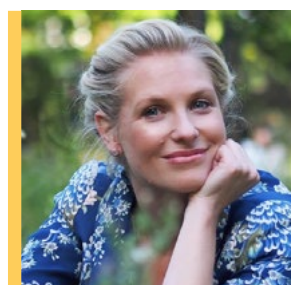


APRIL KOYEJO-AUDIGER

Irene Tamerlano

British soprano April Koyejo-Audiger is a former Link Artist and Jette Parker Anniversary Company Artist 2021/22 for the Royal Opera House, where she performed Barena in *Jenufa*, Dama in *Macbeth*, Anna in *Nabucco*, Parasha in *Mavra* and most recently Zemfira in *Aleko* in the Summer Performance conducted by Sir Antonio Pappano. She also recently performed in as Musetta in *La bohème* for English Touring Opera.

Other recent projects include *Lost and Found*, a collaboration between the Royal Opera House and CASCO Phil as part of the Europalia Arts Festival, *Twelve Poems of Emily Dickinson* for English Touring Opera and Strawberry Woman in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess* for Theater an der Wien.

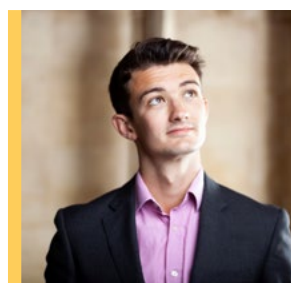


ELLIE LAUGHARNE

Asteria Tamerlano Teofane (Cover) Ottone

British soprano Ellie Laugharne began her career as a Glyndebourne Jerwood Young Artist, was an Associate Artist for Opera North and Company Artist for The Mozartists.

Recent operatic engagements include: Susanna and Eliza Doolittle for Grange Festival; Gianetta, Zara, Adina, Mabel for Scottish Opera; Cupid, Phyllis *Iolanthe*, Barbarina for English National Opera; Pamina, Despina, Gretel for Opera North; Polissena *Radamisto* for English Touring Opera; Susanna, Lucia *The Rape of Lucretia* for Glyndebourne on Tour; Governess, Tina *Flight*, Zerlina for Opera Holland Park; Bastienne, Zerlina, Temperantia *Applausus*, Emirena *Adriano in Siria* for The Mozartists.



TOM LILBURN

Ottone (Cover), Narcisso (Cover) Agrippina

Tom Lilburn is an English countertenor. He recently graduated with distinction from the Royal College of Music, where he was an Ian Evans Lombe Scholar.

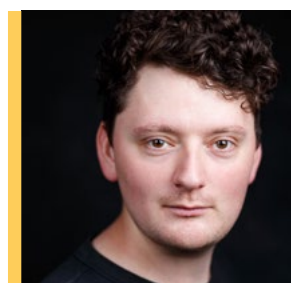
Whilst at the RCM, he sang Refugee in Jonathan Dove *Flight* and Unulfo in Handel *Rodelinda*. In April 2021, Tom was one of four singers at the funeral of The Duke of Edinburgh in St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle. He studies with Sally Burgess, and is represented by Ann Ferrier Artists.



CHRISTOPHER MOON-LITTLE

Revival Director Ottone

Christopher Moon-Little is an Anglo-Indian director specialising in opera. He has assisted directors including Sir David Pountney, John Copley, James Conway and Amy Lane on productions for Welsh National Opera, the Royal Opera House, the Grange Festival, Longborough Festival Opera and English Touring Opera. As a director Christopher founded Opera Holloway, has directed productions for Brent Opera, Epsom Light Opera Company, Wimbledon Light Opera Company, Moon-Little Theatre and revived productions for Weimar Lyric Opera Studio, Coliseu do Porto and English Touring Opera. Future plans including working on Longborough Festival Opera's Ring Cycle.



TIM MORGAN

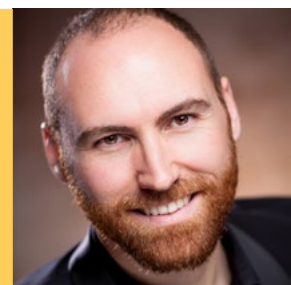
Ottone Agrippina Adelberto (Cover) Ottone

Based between Berlin and London, Tim Morgan is a member of the tenth edition of Jardin des Voix, a Samling artist and a finalist in the 2019 Kathleen Ferrier Awards.

Current engagements include Handel *Partenope* with Les Arts Florissants, tours as a soloist with Sir John Eliot Gardiner, and Bach *Christmas Oratorio* with Polyphony.

Recent stage highlights include *Amadigi* in Handel *Amadigi di Gaula* with ETO, Samuel Adams' play *Gabriel* with the English Concert, Oberon in Britten *A Midsummer Night's Dream* for Nevill Holt Opera and Cupid in Blow *Venus and Adonis* for The Dunedin Consort.

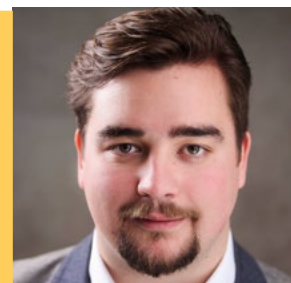
On the concert stage Tim has performed Pergolesi *Stabat Mater* with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, duet recitals with Michael Chance MBE, *St John Passion* with the OAE, Sir Simon Rattle and Peter Sellars, and Purcell *King Arthur* with Vox Luminis



**JORGE NAVARRO
COLORADO**

Spanish tenor Jorge Navarro Colorado trained at London's Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Recent engagements have included Damon in *Acis and Galatea* with the Early Opera Company, Oronte in *Alcina* with Lautten Compagnie, Lurcanio in *Ariodante* at the Göttingen Festival, Petrus in *Brockes Passion* at the Opernhaus Halle, Tempo in *Il trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno* with Bach Consort Wien, Eliates in Keiser's *Crésus* with Ensemble Diderot, Alessandro in Telemann's *Cleofida* with Il Gusto Barocco, Gualtiero in *Griselda* for Teatro la Fenice in Venice and Arias for Ballino at the London Handel Festival. For English Touring Opera, Jorge has previously appeared in *Jonas* and *Josquin: Mille Regretz*.

Bajazet *Tamerlano*

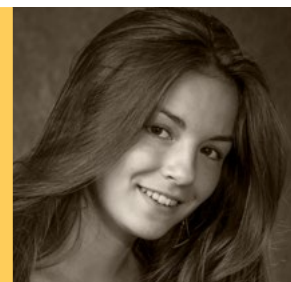


MATT PAINE

Matt Paine has just graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Alexander Gibson Opera School and is a former graduate of the Royal Academy of Music. Most recently, Matt has performed the role of Refugee with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in a premier performance of Jonathan Dove's *Flight* with a newly commissioned orchestration and covered the role of Oberon in Scottish Opera's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Last year Matt covered the role of Dardano in Handel's *Amadigi di Gaula* with English Touring Opera and at Garsington Festival, where he was also an Alvarez Young Artist.

Narciso Agrippina
Tamerlano (Cover) *Tamerlano*



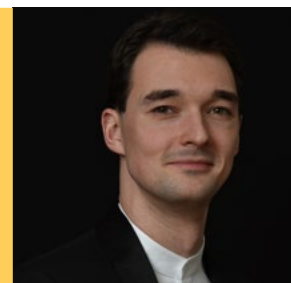
CLARA ORIF

From a Franco-Scottish family, Clara Orif is a Masters student at the Royal Academy of Music. She began singing in the choir of Maîtrise de Radio France and graduated from the Conservatoire of Paris and Sorbonne University.

Making her debut as Larinda in Hasse *Larinda e Vanesio* with the Piccol'opera company, and she also created the role of Marianne in Ambroise Divaret's operetta *L'enlèvement consentant* with the Fantasio company, both in Paris.

A regular soloist with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Clara's credits include Fauré Requiem at Winchester Cathedral, *Carmina Burana* at the Lighthouse, Poole, and next year Haydn *Nelson Mass*. She made her London solo recital debut this year at Blackheath Halls with pianist James Cheung which they will repeat at Chipping Camden Music Festival and in Germany under the tutelage of Christian Gerhaher. As part of Royal Academy's scenes, Clara has performed Adina, Marie and Armida and also joined their production of *Gianni Schicchi* as Gherardino. Next year, Clara joins Royal Academy Opera.

Nerone (Cover) *Agrippina*
Irene (Cover) *Tamerlano*

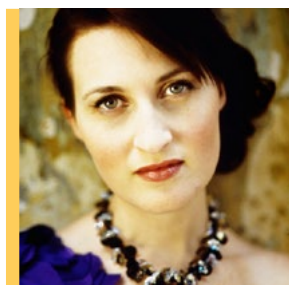


ALEXANDER ROBINSON

Assistant Conductor

Alex Robinson graduated from the RNCM in 2018 with an MMus (Conducting) and has worked with the BBC Philharmonic, Moravian Symphony Orchestra, Prague Philharmonia, Hålle, English Touring Opera and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. Alex was the first Spokane Symphony Orchestra Music Director Fellow in April 2022 and has assisted Sir Mark Elder, Juanjo Mena, Sir Andrew Davies, James Lowe, Vassily Petrenko and Jonathan Peter Kenny.

Local orchestras and choirs include Furness Bach Choir, Sheffield Philharmonic, Rotherham Symphony Orchestra, Amaretti Chamber Orchestra and Nottingham Youth Orchestra and as a harpsichordist, Alex has played and assisted with various UK opera companies, including Northern Opera Group, Radius Opera and Heritage Opera.



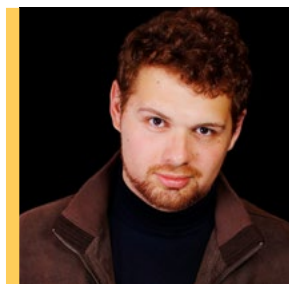
PAULA SIDES

Agrippina *Agrippina*

Paula Sides was born in Tennessee and has since made the UK her home. Previous ETO engagements include Tsaritsa of Shemakha *The Golden Cockerel*, Mimi *La bohème*, Elettra *Idomeneo* and *La voix humaine*. Other recent roles include Cunegonde *Candide* for Scottish Opera and Iford Arts, Donna Anna *Don Giovanni* for Longborough Festival Opera, Giulietta *Un giorno di regno* and *Thais* for Chelsea Opera Group.

As a concert soloist she has performed Mahler Symphony No.8 with the Opera North Symphony Orchestra, and Mahler Symphony No.2, Strauss *Four Last Songs*, Rossini Stabat Mater, Mozart Requiem, Beethoven *Missa Solemnis* and Mass in C and Dvořák *Te Deum* as well as Britten *War Requiem* with Southampton Philharmonic and London Mozart Players.

She recently wrote the libretto for the children's opera *Aidan* for ETO at Home in Spring 2021 and is a passionate singing teacher who has experience working in the NHS Voice Clinic.

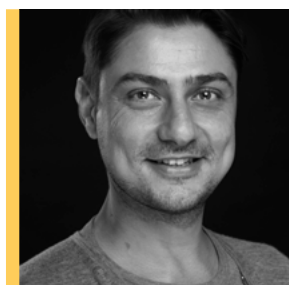


**RODRIGO SOSA DAL
POZZO**

Tamerlano *Tamerlano*
Ottone (Cover) *Ottone*

Rodrigo Sosa Dal Pozzo is one of the most prominent countertenors of his generation. He has performed for some of Europe's most prestigious theatres and festivals, including Royal Swedish Opera, Theater an der Wien, Staatsoper Hannover, Kölner Philharmonie, Festival della Valle d'Itria, Teater Confidencen and Muziekgebouw Amsterdam.

Rodrigo has won main prizes at the Alfredo Kraus, Mirjam Helin and Fondazione Renata Tebaldi International Singing Competitions and is also a recipient of the Drottningholm Opera Stipend. As artistic director and co-founder of the Scandinavian early music ensemble Ars Arctica, Rodrigo combines singing and conducting with his international career as guest conductor and countertenor soloist.



takis

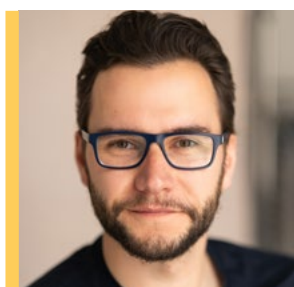
Original Designer *Ottone*

takis is an Olivier nominee performance designer based in London, whose innovative and diverse body of work encompasses West End and Leading UK theatre, international musicals, opera, ballet, circus, fashion and commercial productions.

He has worked for leading organisations including Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Finnish National Opera & Ballet, Oslo Opera House, Frankfurt Opera House, Wexford Opera Festival, Opera Holland Park, English Touring Opera, the National Theatre, the Old Vic, Southbank Centre, the Barbican, Sadler's Wells, Rambert Dance Company, Curve, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Royal & Derngate. takis' work and interactive installations have been exhibited at the Design Museums in London and Helsinki, the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Bucharest Modern Art Museum.

takis, Greek in origin, has studied at the Romanian National University of the Arts in Bucharest, RADA, London College of Fashion and holds a PhD from Helsinki Aalto University.

www.takis.info | @takis DESIGN



BRADLEY TRAVIS

Revival Director *Agrippina*

Bradley Travis was born in Cheshire and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music and the Royal College of Music International Opera School.

As an opera singer, Bradley worked with many companies in the UK, including English Touring Opera, Opera North, English National Opera, and Garsington Opera. He also performed in Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* at the 2016 Last Night of the Proms at the Royal Albert Hall.

At English Touring Opera, Bradley is Head of Learning & Participation. To date he has directed many operas for children, including *Al-Haytham's Light, Aidan* (based on Handel's *Amadigi*), and directed the revival of *Laika the Spacedog*.

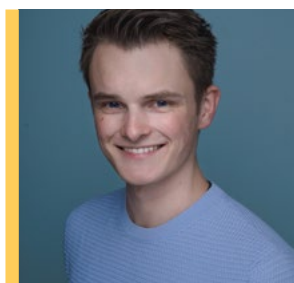


KIERON-CONNOR VALENTINE

Adelberto *Ottone* Andronico (Cover) *Tamerlano*

Welsh countertenor Kieron-Connor Valentine studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, Manchester, Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, Cardiff and Guildhall School Of Music and Drama where he recently completed their prestigious opera course.

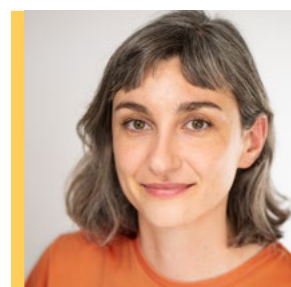
Recent engagements include Fate in *Miss Fortune* and Orpheus in *Orpheus descendent aux enfers* at GSMD. He has also covered the role of Mago Cristiano in *Rinaldo* for Glyndebourne Touring Opera. Roles at the RNCM include L'humana fragilita *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Didymus in *Theodora*, a role he also performed at the Aldeburgh Festival in 2018 as a member of their Britten Pears Programme.



TIM VAN 'T HOF

Lighting Designer

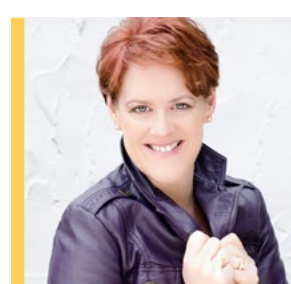
Tim is an international operating Lighting Designer and Theatre Maker. He graduated from the Theatre Arts program at the Amsterdam School of the Arts. During which he started designing for the junior company of Toneelgroep Amsterdam; To be, or no, Hamlet and King Lear. After graduating he has, among many others, collaborated with the Dutch National Opera Academy for *Pheadra* Op.93, *Alcina*, *The Rape of Lucretia* and *Radamisto*. Recently Tim completed his Master of Fine Arts from New York University where he operated as the Resident Lighting Designer for the Second Avenue Dance Company. Currently Tim continues his collaboration with a variety of artists, theatres and production companies worldwide.



REBECCA VAN BEECK

Set & Costume Designer *Tamerlano* Revival Curator *Agrippina*

Rebecca van Beeck is a performance designer, artist and educator from South Africa. Influenced by her background in architecture, her approach links spatial design, urban and participatory research, stage and costume design, and live and visual art. She is very interested in working to make opera and theatre accessible to diverse audiences, and sees much value in collaborative processes and methods of improvisation. Rebecca has lived and worked in Cape Town, Stockholm, Zurich, Bangkok and Los Angeles, and is now based in London.

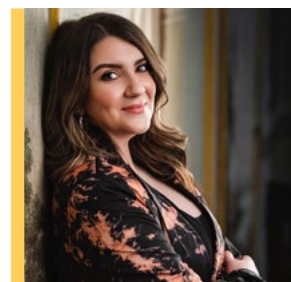


GILLIAN WEBSTER

Gismonda *Ottone* Agrippina (Cover) *Agrippina*

Gillian Webster has had a varied and diverse career since first coming to prominence as principal soprano at the Royal Opera House, where her highlights included Euridice in *Orfeo*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, the title role of *Katya Kabanova*, La Contessa in *La nozze di Figaro*, Michaela in *Carmen* and Mimi in *La bohème*, roles she has repeated in houses throughout Europe.

A versatile artist, her repertoire ranges from Vivaldi to Mozart, Mahler and Wagner. She has sung in many of Europe's opera houses and concert halls, including La Bastille, Théâtre du Châtelet, Komische Oper Berlin and L'opera Nancy, at the Aix-en-Provence and Orange Festivals and in concert at the Concertgebouw Amsterdam, with the New York Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic, De Doelen and Vienna Konzerthaus with conductors such as Bernard Haitink, Sir Colin Davies, Paul McCreesh, and Marc Minkowski. She made her Australian debut with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*.



LAUREN YOUNG

Matilda *Ottone*

Scottish mezzo soprano Lauren Young was an inaugural Mascarade Opera Studio Artist in Florence, Italy. She is a graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's (RCS) Alexander Gibson Opera School.

Lauren is a Britten Pears Young Artist 2022/2023 and a recipient of an Independent Opera Fellowship. In 2020, she was the winner of the Clonter Opera Prize, Joana Trust Award. With her duo partner Jose Javier Ucendo, she was a finalist in the Oxford Lieder Young Artist Platform 2020.

Recent engagements include covering the roles of Mrs Alexander in *Satyagraha* and Rossweisse in *The Valkyrie* with English National Opera, Lucretia in *The Rape of Lucretia* for RCS Opera and Witch in *Hansel and Gretel* for Silent Opera/BYO at Opera Holland Park. Future engagements include Daughter of Akhnaten in Philip Glass' *Akhnaten* with English National Opera.

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AUTUMN 2022

OPERA THAT MOVES



AUTUMN 2022 TOUR SCHEDULE

LONDON • HACKNEY EMPIRE

020 8985 2424 hackneyempire.co.uk

Sat 1 Oct Ottone
Fri 7 Oct Agrippina
Sat 8 Oct Tamerlano

POOLE • LIGHTHOUSE

01202 280000 lighthousepoole.co.uk

Fri 14 Oct Ottone
Sat 15 Oct Tamerlano

MALVERN THEATRES

01684 892277 malvern-theatres.co.uk

Thu 20 Oct Ottone
Fri 21 Oct Agrippina
Sat 22 Oct Tamerlano

SAFFRON WALDEN • SAFFRON HALL

0845 548 7650 saffronhall.com

Fri 28 Oct Agrippina*
Sat 29 Oct Tamerlano*

Performances start at 7.30pm unless
otherwise indicated

*7pm start

BUXTON OPERA HOUSE

01298 72190 buxtonoperahouse.org.uk

Thu 3 Nov Ottone
Fri 4 Nov Agrippina
Sat 5 Nov Tamerlano

EXETER NORTHCOTT THEATRE

01392 72 6363 exeternorthcott.co.uk

Wed 9 Nov Ottone
Fri 11 Nov Agrippina
Sat 12 Nov Tamerlano

TRURO • CHURCH OF ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST

englishtouringopera.org.uk/tamerlano

Thu 10 Nov Tamerlano (in concert)



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