

PRESS RELEASE
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Teens discover opera in new heartwarming film by Opera Holland Park



Teenagers from a south London school have discovered an appetite for opera, in a new film by Investec Opera Holland Park (OHP), *Hip hop to opera*. With their headphones usually tuned to hip hop, rap and soul, opera was a totally alien world for these eight sixth-formers from Archbishop Tenison's School in Lambeth. After meeting OHP's General Director Michael Volpe during some mentoring sessions, they gamely, though sceptically, agreed to take part in this journey into opera and of self-discovery.

Through *Hip hop to opera*, OHP seeks to open an industry-wide discussion about opera, and to that end the film's participants were taken to The Royal Opera House, one of the world's most spectacular opera houses. There they observed a rehearsal, met one of the singers and ROH Director of Opera Oliver Mears, before attending a performance of *Tosca*. The results are heartwarming and inspiring, offering a hopeful vision of what can be achieved if society believes in young people and encourages them to believe in themselves.

As OHP's General Director Michael Volpe explains, the project's aim was not only to broaden these teenagers' cultural horizons, but also to demonstrate that young people should seek the unfamiliar.

"Opera is merely a tool to help them experience things they would, a few short months ago, have considered other-worldly. Opera is our weapon of choice, but the effects of these experiences are the key determining factors for the future health of our industry. We can't just obsess about our bit of the arts world; we have to involve ourselves deeply in the massive issue of social, educational and cultural aspiration."

All eight students' reactions prove that the confidence to try new things is one of the greatest gifts we can give young people. As one of them – George – astutely remarks: "Comfort zones are beautiful places but nothing grows there". And this reaction from Junior sums up opera's accessibility to all:

"I thought I was somebody who's open to trying new things but in the back of my head there were still certain stigmas – opera is upper-class, it's not for people who come from places where I'm from... But actually they're just telling a story and just because they're telling the story differently doesn't mean I can't go."

But would these eight teenagers repeat the experience? Perhaps one of the most overwhelming triumphs is the conversion of David, who was most resistant to opera at the outset:

"I think I'd come to the opera again – I can see myself being a regular. It kills me inside to say this, because I don't like being wrong!"

Hip hop to opera follows Opera Holland Park's 2016 award-winning documentary *From footy to Verdi*, in which three Chelsea fans were introduced to opera. It is a powerful example of Michael Volpe's visionary ideas about arts and education in action – beliefs discussed in his critically acclaimed book *Noisy at the wrong times*, selected for the *Sunday Times*' 100 Biographies to Love.

View the film *From hip hop to opera* here:
<https://youtu.be/coz6CUIXi38>

Those wanting to experience the power of opera for themselves can attend a performance at Investec Opera Holland Park for as little as £20 – and there are even some free tickets for young people and those aged over 60. For more details visit **www.operahollandpark.com**

13 June 2018 sees Opera Holland Park's inaugural Schools' Matinee, a special performance of *La traviata* reserved exclusively for school groups aged 7-18. Tickets are £5 each, although financial assistance is available where necessary. Ahead of the matinee, OHP is also offering workshops for students, CPD workshops for teachers and resource packs. Further information here: <http://www.operahollandpark.com/schoolsmatinee/>

Investec Opera Holland Park's 2018 Season will run from 29 May to 28 July. Tickets on sale now at **www.operahollandpark.com**.

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Contact for further information and pictures

Alexandra Watson, Harestones Communications
alexandra@harestones.org +44 (0)7789 656433

Contact for press ticket requests

Chloe Bridgen, Marketing & PR Manager, Opera Holland Park
chloe.bridgen@operahollandpark.com +44 (0)7713 326006

Notes to editors

Investec Opera Holland Park is extremely grateful to Investec Wealth & Investment, its principal sponsor since 2011.

The 2018 season production of *La traviata* is generously sponsored by Viking Cruises.