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# Un ballo in maschera

Giuseppe Verdi

Programme

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# Un ballo in maschera

## **Giuseppe Verdi**

Opera in three acts

First performed in this version 17 February 1859, Teatro Apollo, Rome

Sung in Italian with English surtitles

Italian libretto by Antonio Somma

New production for the 2019 Season by Opera Holland Park

With City of London Sinfonia and the Opera Holland Park Chorus

**Conductor** Matthew Kofi Waldren

**Director** Rodula Gaitanou

**Designer** takis

**Lighting Designer** Simon Corder

**Movement Director** Steve Elias

**Fight Director** Bret Yount

**Sculptor** Benedict Romain

*The Opera Holland Park Chorus is supported by Angela and Richard Lascelles*

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# Cast

**Amelia** Anne Sophie Duprels

**Gustavo** Matteo Lippi

**Anckarström** George von Bergen

**Oscar** Alison Langer

**Madame Arvidson** Rosalind Plowright OBE

**Ribbing** Benjamin Bevan

**Horn** John Savournin

**Cristiano** Ross Ramgobin

**Servant** Mike Bradley

**Vicar** Ian Massa-Harris

**Répétiteur** Alice Turner

**Chorus Master** Richard Harker

**Assistant Director** Rebecca Meltzer

**Associate Conductor** Sonia Ben-Santamaria

**Stage Manager** Sidsel Pi Andersen

**Deputy Stage Manager** Annette Burnby

**Assistant Stage Manager** Rachael Murray

**Language Coach** Paola Quaglia

**Chorus Music Répétiteur** Mairi Grewar

**Music Staff** Stuart Wild

**Subtitles Translation** Paul Hastie

# Chorus

## **Soprano**

Hannah Boxall  
Susie Buckle  
Eve Daniell  
Laura Hudson  
Emily Kirby-Ashmore  
Lucy Northwood

## **Mezzo Soprano**

Lynn Bellamy  
Lindsay Bramley  
Caroline Carragher  
Lara Rebekah Harvey  
Hyacinth Nicholls  
Ayaka Tanimoto

## **Tenor**

Nicholas Allen  
Mike Bradley  
Robert Jeffrey  
Ian Massa-Harris  
Robert Tilson  
Guy Withers  
Anthony Yates

## **Bass/Baritone**

Nathan Bellis  
Roy Chalmers  
Julian Chou-Lambert  
Jonathan Evers  
Liam McNally  
Richard Moore  
Ben Newhouse-Smith  
Sindre Øgaard  
Victor Sgarbi  
Frank St John  
Matthew Tilley

# Orchestra

## **Violin I**

Martin Burgess *leader*  
Ann Lovatt  
Charlotte Reid  
Joan Atherton  
Jeremy Morris  
Catalin Chelaru

## **Violin II**

Ruth Funnell  
Amanda Britton  
Esther King Smith  
Helena Ruinard  
Ted Barry

## **Viola**

Matthew Maguire  
Alexandros Koustas  
Becky Low  
Fay Sweet

## **Cello**

William Schofield  
Rachel van der Tang  
Judith Herbert

## **Bass**

Lynda Houghton  
Paul Sherman

## **Flute**

Alison Hayhurst  
Debbie Davis (and piccolo)

## **Oboe**

David Thomas  
Matthew Draper (and cor anglais)

## **Clarinet**

Katherine Spencer  
Rachel Elliott

## **Bassoon**

Christopher Rawley  
Stuart Russell

## **Horn**

Mark Paine  
Timothy Caister  
Stephen Smart  
Clare Lintott

## **Trumpet**

Christopher Deacon  
John Young

## **Tenor Trombone**

Ruth Molins  
Rory Cartmell

## **Bass Trombone**

Paul Lambert

## **Cimbasso**

Stephen Wick

## **Timpani**

Tristan Fry

## **Percussion**

Glyn Matthews  
Geoff Boynton

## **Harp**

Stephanie Beck

# Synopsis

## Act I

Several officials are waiting for Gustavo, among them a group of conspirators led by Horn and Ribbing. Gustavo arrives and examines the list of guests for the coming ball. He's elated to see the name of his secret love – Amelia – but is embarrassed when interrupted by her husband, Anckarström. He is Gustavo's friend and advisor, and warns him of a conspiracy. Gustavo refuses to listen. A judge arrives demanding the expulsion of the fortune-teller Madame Arvidson, but Oscar, Gustavo's aide, defends her. Gustavo decides to witness the 'witchcraft' for himself, and proposes they go to see her work incognito.

Gustavo arrives at Madame Arvidson's before the others. She prophesies wealth and status to Cristiano. Gustavo ensures her prediction comes true by slipping a commission, unseen, into Cristiano's pocket. The crowd marvels at her powers, but are asked to leave when Arvidson agrees to meet a secret visitor. Gustavo hides, and is shocked to see Amelia creep in. She wants respite from a secret love which is torturing her and is advised by Arvidson to find a drug which will help her forget her illicit passion. Astonished by Amelia's revelation, Gustavo, still hiding, vows to be with her when she goes to get the drug.

Amelia slips away and the others arrive, including the conspirators. They wait as the disguised Gustavo has his own fortune told. Arvidson correctly identifies him as a man who has 'lived under the star of Mars', but refuses to say any more. When pushed by Gustavo, she finally relents and tells him he will be killed by the man who next shakes his hand. The crowd refuses Gustavo's outstretched hand, but when Anckarström enters he shakes his friend's hand. Gustavo dismisses the prediction as absurd, and removes his disguise. The crowd is amazed to see Gustavo amongst them, while Horn and Ribbing rue another missed opportunity to assassinate him.

## Act II

Amelia has ventured out alone to get the drug that Arvidson told her about. She is surprised by Gustavo, who declares his love for her. Unexpectedly Anckarström appears. Amelia hurriedly covers her face, while her husband warns Gustavo of imminent danger and urges him to flee. As he escapes, Gustavo urges his friend to escort the veiled woman back to town without asking her identity.

The conspirators appear and confront Anckarström. In the struggle, Amelia's veil drops and upon seeing her, Anckarström accuses his wife of infidelity. He asks Horn and Ribbing to meet him later.

## *Interval*

## Act III

Anckarström has resolved to kill Amelia but she protests her innocence, begging to see their child one last time. Anckarström relents, privately declaring that it is Gustavo, not Amelia, who should die. Horn and Ribbing arrive, and Anckarström vows to join their plot. All three want the prize of killing Gustavo. To resolve the matter, they agree to cast lots and call Amelia to draw the 'winning' name – Anckarström. Oscar arrives with invitations to the ball. Horn, Ribbing and Anckarström agree this is where the assassination will take place.

Torn between love and duty, Gustavo has resolved to announce his love for Amelia, and send her and her husband on a foreign posting. Oscar brings an anonymous note warning that an attempt on his life will be made at the ball. At the party, Anckarström tries to learn from Oscar which costume Gustavo is wearing. At first the aide refuses, taunting Anckarström, but finally answers. Meanwhile, Gustavo identifies Amelia and tells her of the decision he has made. As they say goodbye, Anckarström attacks. Fatally wounded, Gustavo insists that Amelia is innocent. ●



**Professor Susan Rutherford on concealment and censorship in the history of *Un ballo in maschera***

# A Masked Ball

**M**asks fall. They don't dissolve, or dissipate. Masks fall, they drop, they plunge into space, into nothingness – sometimes with urgent swiftness, sometimes with infinitesimal, agonising slowness. What is left behind is often described as 'naked' truth or 'stark' reality: unadorned, uncompromising, fixed. Things as they are, not as we might wish them to be.

Giuseppe Verdi's operas were designed around this very principle. The conventions of 19th-century melodrama required a building of tension towards a final scene of revelation, when the protagonists at last see each other in their true light. In *Un ballo in maschera* (1859), the masked ball of the title is just such a denouement: a ruler is revealed as a penitent libertine, a respectable wife as

implicated in adultery, a close friend as an assassin and traitor. But the whole opera is a series of unmaskings, all steps towards this ultimate, irrevocable disclosure.

Impatience with disguise – at least, with social hypocrisy – was also part of Verdi's nature. Writing to a friend, Cesare De Sanctis, in Naples in 1854, Verdi anticipated a lack of success for *La traviata* in that city, because 'your priests and monks would be afraid to see on stage certain things that they do very well in obscurity – and that it would be much better to do in the light of the sun in the public piazza in the manner of Diogenes'. A similar issue would arise again a few years later with *Un ballo in maschera*. Indeed, if thematically the opera was all about unmasking, its own history described precisely the reverse process. →

The original source, Eugène Scribe's *Gustave III, ou Le Bal masqué* (1833) – based on the real-life assassination of a Swedish king in 1792 – would gradually be obscured under other identities.

It all began with Verdi's acceptance of a commission from the Teatro San Carlo in Naples in April 1856: a theatre for whom he had previously composed *Alzira* (1845) and *Luisa Miller* (1849). Verdi initially offered a setting of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, on which he had been working with the poet Antonio Somma. But the theatre could not (or would not) secure one of the only three singers Verdi believed capable of playing the role of Cordelia: Virginia Boccabadati, Maria Spezia, or Marietta Piccolomini. With time running out, Verdi searched frantically for a different subject, and finally alighted on Scribe's drama.

It was an odd choice – at least, for a composer who favoured innovation. Scribe's play had already been set by Daniel Auber in 1833; later adaptations included those by Vincenzo Gabussi and Gaetano Rossi (*Clemenza di Valois*, Venice, 1841), and Saverio Mercadante and Salvatore Cammarano (*Il reggente*, Turin, 1843). As Somma would remark in 1858, the drama would have been accepted without difficulty in 'Florence, Genoa, Trieste, Milan'. But not, it seems, Naples. The censors there demanded so many changes that Verdi withdrew the score and took it instead to the Teatro Apollo in Rome. There, it had its first,

much acclaimed performance on 17 February 1859. Even so, the Roman censors ensured that the opera appeared in very different guise to the source material.

Censorship was itself an act of masking: a means of concealing any action or opinion that might disrupt political, religious or moral authority. With *Un ballo in maschera*, both the Neapolitan and Roman censors wanted the opera removed from contemporary time or close location, so that the plot's vicissitudes could be suitably distanced from their own communities. For Naples, Verdi and Somma dutifully retitled the work *Una vendetta in domino*, moved the action to 17th-century Pomerania, and ensured that the king (now demoted to a duke) was murdered with a dagger instead of the 'pistolet' of the original play. For Rome, the opera became *Un ballo in maschera* and was set in Boston in North America at the end of the 1600s.

Did censors really believe that audiences were incapable of making connections between their own lives and what happened in a fictitious world a long, long way away? That spectators were as naive as, say, Fiordiligi and Dorabella in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, where a mere change of costume prevents them from recognising their lovers? In any event, few spectators, even in Italy's turbulent 1850s, would have had experience of conspiring for a political assassination. Adultery was a different matter.

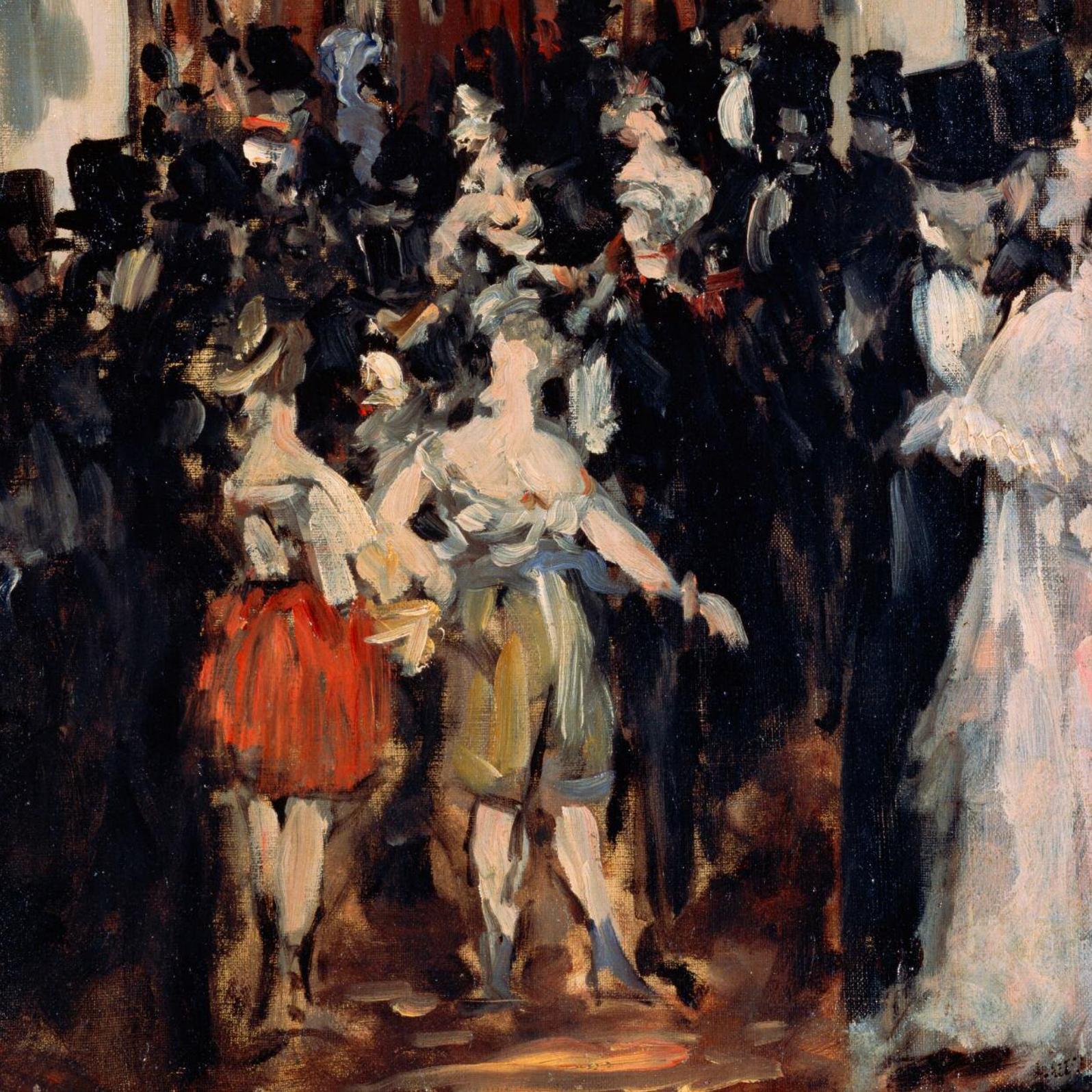
It was, Paolo Mantegazza wrote in 1873, 'the most common and venial sin we know', yet subject to harsh penalties under the law. More, he argued, infidelity had been institutionalised by the practice of arranged marriages, which were a form of prostitution: many of the judiciary 'sell their daughter to a rich husband who cannot love her, who will never love her, and who will drag her down to the irresistible necessity of adultery'. And there was the double standard of how adultery was punished: women could be imprisoned for up to two years, while men faced no such sanctions (at least until 1899, and then only under certain circumstances such as introducing their mistress into the family home). Most pernicious of all, men who killed their erring wives received a much lesser punishment than for other acts of homicide.

The opera's heroine, Amelia, is therefore deeply imperilled by Gustavo's love – even more, by hers for him. The Neapolitan censors sought to obscure the situation by transforming Amelia into Anckarström's sister, rather than his wife, and pointedly removed her acknowledgement of her feelings for Gustavo. Verdi was incensed:

*'For pity's sake! If the words "I love you" don't escape from Amelia, the whole piece remains without life, without passion, without warmth, without that enthusiasm and abandon that are necessary in scenes of this kind: if these words are taken away, the lines that follow become meaningless, and the duet no longer has any reason for being.'*

Indeed, Amelia's reluctant admission is one of the most significant revelations of the opera. Of all the unhappily married wives in Verdi's operas (Lida in *La battaglia di Legnano*, Lina in *Stiffelio*, Elisabeth in *Don Carlos*), Amelia's willingness to own her emotions, even though she rejects their physical consummation, has a striking resonance. Yet a few hours later, facing imminent death at the hands of her enraged husband, Amelia reveals that perhaps the greatest love of her life, the one she thinks of in her last moments, is her infant son. If her earlier surrender to Gustavo embodies sensual passion, the sparse lines of 'Morrò, ma prima in grazia' as she pleads to see her child etch her pain into the musical fabric. Motherhood saves the guilty Amelia from the fate Otello inflicts on the innocent Desdemona. Seeing his wife not as another man's mistress but as the mother of his own son, Anckarström relents. Besides, he reasons, there is another outlet for his vengeance.

Before the fateful masked ball, Gustavo had decided that 'duty and honour' must separate him from Amelia by arranging a new posting for Anckarström and his wife abroad. Amid the ensuing festivities, however, Anckarström's swift, remorseless blade severs that last attempt to hide illicit love behind social convention. Not just a mask, but a body falls. What is left is the most implacable reality of all – death. ●



# From the archives...

It is the duty of the people to take whatever means of enfranchisement is presented to it; eternal right takes precedence even of sweetest mercy. Clemency – not always wise – may at times be the very type of folly. Let us execute all the severity of justice when mercy to the tyrant is injury to the people. And though Justice come as Vengeance, it never can come too soon? What matter the form, the instrument, the hour?

(From *Tyrranicide: Is it Justifiable?* by W.E. Adams, 1858)

It will gratify the lovers of pure morals, and the admirers of vindicated laws, to learn that the Hon. Daniel E Sickles, and that very pure-minded lady, Mrs Teresa Bagioli Sickles, have settled the domestic difficulty that for a time interrupted the course of their connubial felicity. It was unfortunate that this difficulty should have led to the killing of a man, and the destruction of a woman's reputation.

(Editorial on the acquittal of Daniel E Sickles of the murder of his wife's lover, Philip Key, on the grounds of temporary insanity. *Washington Evening Star*, 16 July 1859)



**Professor Jeremy Black looks at the history of Gustav III, King of Sweden, whose assassination provided the inspiration for Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera***

# The Real Gustav III

**A**n unpredictable meteor, Gustavus, born into the house of Holstein-Gottorp, became King of Sweden in 1771 on the death of his lacklustre father, Adolf Fredrik. In 1756, Adolf Fredrik had been humiliated through a failed coup that attempted to recover some power for the crown, which had lost it in the Swedish 'Age of Liberty' after the death of Charles XII in conflict in 1718. In contrast, helped by widespread dissatisfaction, the 26-year-old Gustav staged a bloodless coup on 19 August 1772. The powers of the Crown were restored, the Senate was arrested, and the Riksdag (Parliament) was reconvened.

A new constitution, with greater powers for the crown, was approved on 21 August, by which Gustav regained the power to summon and dismiss the Riksdag, to appoint ministers and to propose legislation. The preamble of the

new constitution declared that the king had tried 'to promote the advancement, strength and welfare of this realm, as well as the improvement, safety and happiness of our loyal subjects... the present situation of the country requires an unavoidable amendment of the Fundamental Laws, adapted to the above-mentioned salutary purpose'. The 'Age of Liberty' was dismissed: 'Under the name of the blessed Liberty, several of our fellow subjects have formed an Aristocracy, so much more intolerable, as it had been framed under licentiousness, fortified by self-interest and severities, and finally supported by foreign powers, to the detriment of the whole society.'

Gustav claimed to be re-establishing the former constitution. Touring Sweden in 1768, he had written to his brother from the small settlement of Avesta: 'At Stockholm, where one lives in plenty, it is impossible to →

imagine the condition of these poor people.' In 1771, he observed that the Riksdag was 'no pleasant spectacle for any but cosmopolitan philosophers'. The political system of the 'Age of Liberty' was indeed regarded as corrupt and prone to sectional interests. Power politics were involved. France backed the coup.

One of the most talented of the enlightened despots, Gustav instigated reforms that included limited religious tolerance, a reduction in the number of capital offences, and the reform of the currency. He sought and welcomed the praise of the French philosopher, Voltaire. In Rome in 1783, Gustav called upon Pius VI and attended a Christmas Mass at St Peter's to publicise his tolerance of Catholics in Sweden. In 1786, he both re-organised the Academy of Letters and founded a Swedish Academy devoted to Swedish language and literature, selecting the first members, including the leading poets of the period.

Gustav was a Freemason. Indeed, in 1788, Hugh Elliott, the British envoy in Copenhagen, referred to him as an adept of 'mysterious arts' and wrote that he was 'infatuated' by 'freemasonry combined with prophecy', a reference to the Illuminati. However, Gustav paid insufficient attention to the need to win elite support, and preferred to work with favourites rather than through his council. After he failed to win widespread support at his first Riksdag under the new constitution, that of 1778-9, where his proposed religious and penal reforms were criticised, it is not surprising that he displayed little interest in his constitutional limitations.

In his later years, Gustav became increasingly interested in a bolder foreign policy. He sought to break the link between his opponents: Denmark, which ruled Norway,

and Russia. Prevented from invading Norway in 1784 by Russian pressure, he attacked Russia in 1788, threatening St Petersburg. Gustav ignored the constitutional prohibition on offensive war without the consent of the Riksdag. The war was begun when Swedish soldiers disguised as Russians staged a border incident at Puumala. However, Gustav's army was not in good shape, and a naval battle in the Gulf of Finland on 17 July 1788, in which the Swedes were hindered by ammunition shortages, denied Gustav the control which he needed both for his military operations in Finland and if he was to carry out an amphibious attack on St Petersburg. An overland offensive was mounted without success. Unsurprisingly, the British diplomat Sir Robert Murray Keith described Gustav as the 'hare-brained heir and imitator of Charles XII'.

The war, which ended in 1790, precipitated domestic tension in Sweden, especially among the Finns. The opposition of the aristocratic officer corps handicapped Gustav, as did the Anjala Confederation, a league of Finnish officers who declared to Catherine the Great that they sought perpetual peace with Russia and would not fight except in defence of their homeland. To break his opponents, Gustav staged a new constitutional coup in 1789. In co-operation with the non-noble Estates, he pushed through an Act of Union and Security, under which the crown's power to introduce laws was considerably extended. Most public offices were opened to commoners, and peasants' rights to purchase land were extended.

Russia's attempt to thwart this policy by supporting the anti-royalist noble opposition failed. The clear relationship of domestic and international strength was displayed by

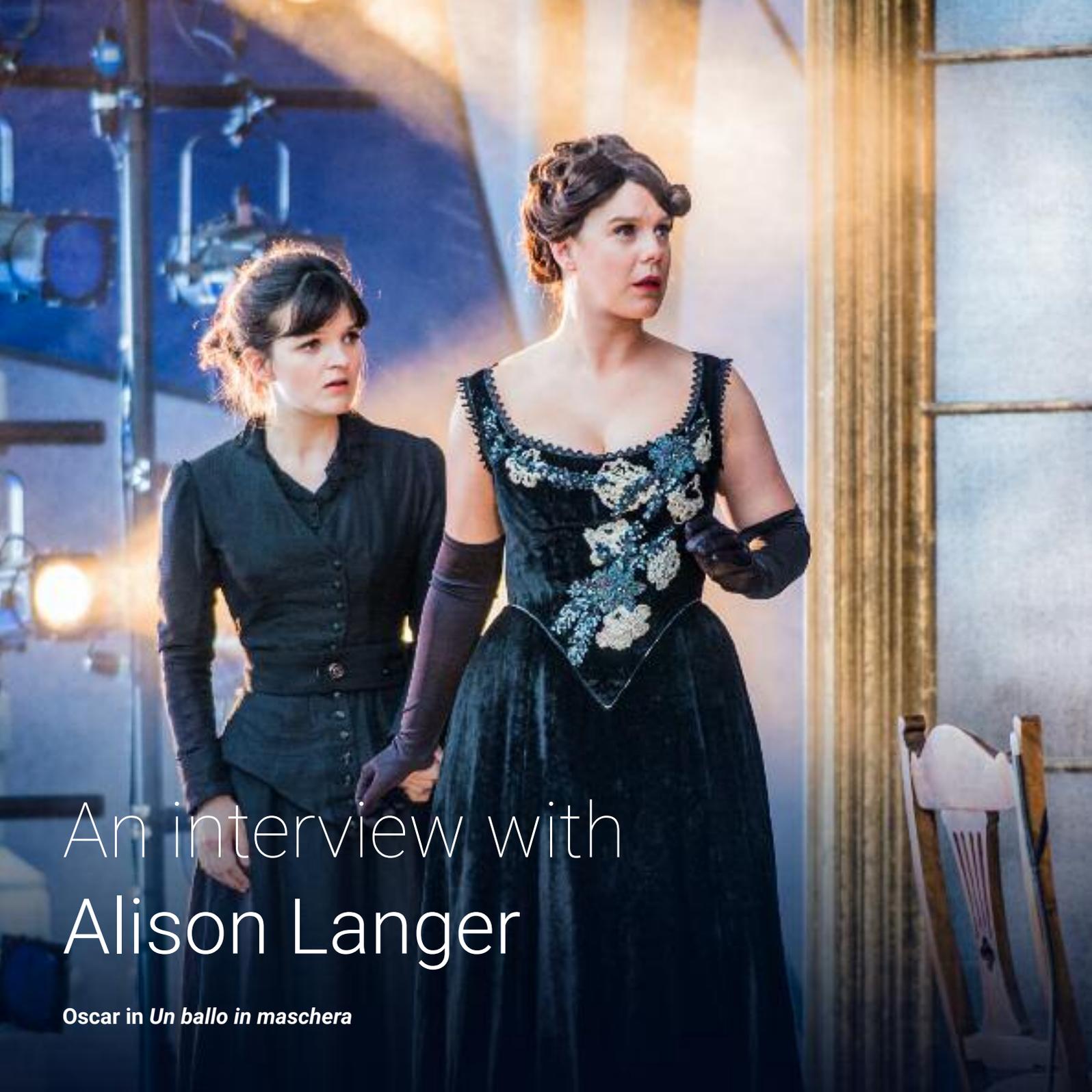
Gustav's reasonable success in the rest of the war. Under pressure from Gustav's subsidy treaty with the Turks (1789) and his search for co-operation with Poland, Catherine concluded peace in 1790. Sweden made no territorial gains but won a recognition of the constitution of 1772 and a promise not to interfere in Swedish politics. This promise was fulfilled in the instructions to the new Russian mission to Stockholm.

From 1790, the situation became increasingly volatile. Gustav, who had observed 'I am myself a democrat', planned another coup to establish a new constitution with a re-organised legislature. He was greatly affected by the French Revolution and made plans to act against France. The British envoy reported him saying in March 1792 that 'popular assemblies were dangerous only when Princes did not know how to manage them; and on my remarking that the manner of transacting the business of the Swedish Diet, in a committee in which His Majesty could overawe and direct debates, was a particular advantage to him, he replied that this would be a great disadvantage to Louis XVI'.

An aristocratic conspiracy led to the mortal wounding of Gustav by Johan Jakob Anckarström that month. At midnight on 16 March 1792, at the masked ball in the Stockholm opera house, Gustav, identifiable by his breast star of the Royal Order of the Seraphim, was mortally wounded by gunshot in the lower back. He was able to thwart the uprising but died on 29 March from septicaemia. Anckarström fled the opera, but his discarded pistol was found and he was subsequently tried and executed.

There is no basis for Anckarström's operatic presentation by both Auber and Verdi as a victim of Gustav's love for his wife, nor for Gustav's supposed pardon of the conspirators. Anckarström defended himself at his trial by accusing Gustav of having violated his contract with the nation, and his young noble supporters saw Gustav as a despot while they espoused social equality and popular sovereignty, and praised the French Revolution. The bulk of the noble opposition, however, did not share these views and were shocked by the assassination.

In 1792, a British caricature, possibly by William Dent, called 'Royal Masquerade', or 'the European Plotters Discovered and Defeated and the Ex-Princes Crossed in their Masked Design against Liberty', showed Gustav III, his belt marked Tyranny, being attacked and killed by a smiling skeleton, while Liberty presided in the character of Death. His son and successor, Gustav IV (r. 1792-1809), had a less lurid overthrow. Displaying signs of instability, and with Sweden challenged by the Russian conquest of Finland, he was deposed in a conspiracy by aristocratic army officers and replaced by his uncle Charles XIII. Transported to Germany, he finally died, poor and lonely, in Swiss exile in 1837. ●



An interview with  
**Alison Langer**

Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera*

**A**lison Langer made her Opera Holland Park main-stage debut in last year's Young Artists performances of *La traviata*. 'When I was asked to audition for Violetta I was slightly dubious, as it is undeniably one of the largest Verdian soprano roles. I knew it would be a huge undertaking... I've not worked on a character that intensely before, but she deserved to be dissected and for every character trait to be surfaced.'

As part of the 2018 Young Artists programme, Langer performed in the inaugural Schools' Matinee to an audience of 1,000 school children. 'What was fascinating about this particular matinee was how attentive and quiet the children were. The final scene of *La traviata* is very moving and usually has the audience hanging onto Violetta's every word. I couldn't believe the silence.'

Langer had already made an impact in the role of Young Heidi in Sondheim's *Follies* at the National Theatre before coming to OHP last summer. '*Follies* has opened me up to the music theatre world, and shown me how dedicated these performers are to their craft... It truly has been a 'pinch me' experience.' Her character, Heidi Schiller, is an opera singer, and the older version of the character was played first by Dame Josephine Barstow and most recently by Dame Felicity Lott. Langer jokes that 'I have now put a rider in my contracts that I only work with Dames!' On a more serious level, 'they have both been so supportive of my career and have given me so much advice, especially speaking with Dame Jo when I was working on Violetta. I was so lucky to get advice from someone who has sung the role so successfully.'

A Sondheim musical and a Verdi opera might appear to be worlds apart, but Langer sees the similarities. 'The dedication it takes to understand a Sondheim show is in a league with understanding a Verdi opera... I don't think you can compartmentalise certain genres when it comes to performing. Vocally it might require a different sort of training and technique, but when it comes to the actual performance, the dedication and the preparation and the grasp of a character should be approached in exactly the same way across the board.'

Langer returns to OHP in Rodula Gaitanou's production of Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*, singing the role of Oscar, Gustavo's page boy. 'Without giving too much away, I haven't had to take on as many of the challenges of playing a trouser role as you would think, but knowing Rodula's style of direction, I think Oscar will be a character to remember! I have been following my husband around the house trying to copy his way of walking and the way he sits. It's completely different to the way I hold myself, so it will be a challenge.'

Following her appearance at OHP this summer, Langer has her sights set on more new challenges. 'I would love to take on some straight acting. It was what I wanted to do before I pursued an operatic career, and I really miss straight text and finding the millions of layers in a Shakespearean play. I try to go to see the Royal Shakespeare Company as often as I can and I sit there for two hours in absolute awe of the actors. They have my utmost respect.' ●

*Interview by Philippa Peall*

# Biographies Creatives



## Conductor

Matthew Kofi Waldren

For OHP: Associate Conductor *Gianni Schicchi* and *Zanetto* 2012, Conductor *Fantastic Mr Fox* 2012, *Les pêcheurs de perles* 2013, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* 2014, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017 (and at the Linbury, ROH 2015), *Lakmé* 2015, *La bohème* 2016, *La rondine* 2017, *La traviata* 2018

Matthew Kofi Waldren was born in Geneva and is of Anglo-Ghanaian descent. He studied at the RCM, Guildhall, and read music at Fitzwilliam College, Cambridge. After a 10-year career as an opera singer, he swiftly gained a reputation as a dynamic young conductor, receiving plaudits for his collaborative approach and his detailed, dramatic readings. Matthew Kofi was a 'Newcomer' nominee in the 2017 International Opera Awards and held the ENO Mackerras Fellowship 2016-18. Most recent and upcoming engagements include *Texting Heer* (Linbury Studio, ROH), *The Marriage of Figaro* (ENO), *Paul Bunyan* (ENO at Wilton's Music Hall), *Don Giovanni* (Opera North), *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, *Gianni Schicchi* (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and *Pelléas Unwrapped* (Scottish Opera). His acclaimed studio recording of Will Todd's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* on Signum Classics entered the official specialist classical chart at number one. In 2012 he was appointed Music Director of the inaugural Christine Collins Young Artists Scheme at Opera Holland Park.



## Director

Rodula Gaitanou

For OHP: *The Queen of Spades* 2016, *La traviata* 2018

Born in Athens, Rodula Gaitanou studied as a violinist before continuing her studies in Musicology at La Sorbonne University in Paris. She moved to Opera Staging at Université Paris 8 and undertook Physical Theatre studies at the International Theatre School Jacques Lecoq. In recent seasons, Rodula has had numerous successes including *L'oracolo/La Mala Vita* (Wexford Festival Opera) and Revival Director for *Pagliacci/Cavalleria rusticana* (Gothenburg

Opera). Other highlights include *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Gothenburg Opera), *Guillaume Tell* (Victorian Opera) and *Lucia de Lammermoor* (Opera Hedeland). After a season as resident director on the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at ROH, Rodula maintains an active relationship with the ROH and frequently returns as revival director. Additionally, she has worked extensively as Associate and Revival Director for other major opera houses and festivals across Europe, as well as establishing a career in Australia.



## Designer

takis

For OHP: *Die Fledermaus* 2016, *La rondine* 2017, *Isabeau* 2018, *Il segreto di Susanna* and *Iolanta* 2019

Greek in origin, takis studied at the Romanian National University of the Arts in Bucharest (Costume and Set Design), RADA (Theatre Technical Arts Course), London College of Fashion (Design Methodologies) and Helsinki Aalto University (Doctoral studies in the Metasuit). Opera credits include *Phaedra* (ROH), *Semele* (RAM), *Dialogues des Carmélites* (Guildhall), *Calisto*, *Ulysses' Homecoming*, *Ottone* and *The Life on Moon* (ETO). Musical credits include *Five Guys Named Moe* (Marble Arch Theatre), *The Toxic Avenger* (Arts Theatre), *Flashdance* (Oslo and UK tour), *Hairspray* (UK tour), *In the Heights* (King's Cross Theatre), *Sweet Charity* (Nottingham Playhouse), *Side Show* (Southwark Playhouse), *The LKY Musical* (Singapore Sands Theatre), *Spring Awakening*, *Oliver*, *The Sound of Music*, *Chicago* (Leicester Curve) and *The Jungle Book* (Citizens Theatre). Theatre credits include *Bacchae* (Royal and Derngate), *Fear and Am I Dead Yet?* (Bush Theatre), *Napoli* (West Yorkshire Playhouse), *Measure for Measure* and *Clytemnestra* (Sherman Theatre), *Stovepipe* (National Theatre) and *Ditch* (Old Vic). Ballet credits include *The Little Mermaid* (Finnish National Ballet). Circus credits include *Xanadu*, *My Beautiful Circus* and *Any Port in a Storm* (Giffords Circus). Installations include *Toyota Flow* (Printworks), *Plus or Minus*, *Suit Yourself* (London and Helsinki Design Museum). Future plans include *Don Quichotte* (Wexford Opera), *Don Giovanni* (Finnish National Opera) and *Optimist* (Oslo).

Biographies as printed in June 2019



**Lighting Designer**  
Simon Corder

For OHP: *Don Giovanni* 2002, *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Stiffelio* 2003, *Luisa Miller* and *Le nozze di Figaro* 2004, *L'amore dei tre re* 2007 and 2015, *La traviata* 2007 and 2018, *Iolanta* and *La Gioconda* 2008, *The Queen of Spades* 2016

Simon Corder left school in 1978 and joined the circus as a ring boy. In 2017 he was awarded a Knight of Illumination for the Opera Holland Park production of *The Queen of Spades*. Work in opera includes productions for La Scala, ENO, ROH, LA Opera, Teatro Colon, Greek National Opera, Teatro Regio di Parma, Teatro delle Muse, Ancona, Teatro Lirico di Cagliari, Teatro Verdi di Pisa, Opéra Municipal Marseille, The Göteborg Opera, Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, Opera North, Palau des les Arts Valencia, Angers Nantes Opera, ETO, Scottish Opera, WNO and Hobart Baroque. He was nominated for an Irish Times Irish Theatre Award in 2013 for *L'arlesiana* (Wexford Festival Opera). His work has appeared several times in the West End and he was nominated for an Olivier Award in 2004 for the Royal Court production of *Hitchcock Blonde*. Simon created lighting for the Night Safari attraction in Singapore, which opened in 1994, the first night-time zoo in the world, which has since been visited by over 20 million people. He makes his own installation and art works, most recently *Bough 3* for the 2018 Lumiere Festival in London. Plans in 2019 include designing set and lighting for *Un ballo in maschera* (Oldenburgisches Staatstheater) directed by Rodula Gaitanou.



**Choreographer**  
Steve Elias

For OHP: *I gioielli della Madonna* 2013, *La rondine* 2017, *La traviata* 2018

Presenter and Choreographer of *Our Dancing Town* (BBC 2), *The Dancing Club* (UK Tour), *Orpheus in the Underworld* (RAM, Hackney Empire), *The Mikado*, *Pirates of Penzance* (Scottish Opera and D'Oyly Carte), *Yeoman of the Guard*, *Iolanthe* (BBC Proms, RAH), *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Mirandolina* (Garsington), *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Den Norske

Opera), *The Beggar's Opera* (Linbury Theatre, ROH), *The Amazing Chinese Conjurer* (Almeida Opera), Carl Rosas's Gilbert and Sullivan season 2007 (Gielgud Theatre), *The Merry Widow* (UK/South Africa), *The Pirates of Penzance* and *HMS Pinafore Carl Rosa* (UK/USA), *Charlie Peace* (CSSD), *Cabaret* (Mountview), *Pinocchio*, *Wind in the Willows* (Old Rep, Birmingham), *Something Old, Something New* (MTA), *Silly Kings* (National Theatre of Wales), *Faustus*, *Oliver*, *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *The Phantom Raspberry Blower* (St James Theatre), *SwanSong* (National Theatre Studio), *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice* (Theatre Royal, Bury St Edmunds), *Dad's Army* (UK Tour), *Evita*, *The Addams Family*, *Whistle Down the Wind* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (CYO).



**Fight Director**  
Bret Yount

For OHP: *La bohème* 2016

Bret is a member of the Equity Fight Directors' Register, British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat and the Society of American Fight Directors. Opera Credits include *Boris Gudonov* and *La bohème* (ROH), *La damnation de Faust* (Glyndebourne), *Rodelinda*, *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Girl of the Golden West*, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Pirates of Penzance* (ENO) and *Don Carlo* (Grange Park). Theatre credits include *Richard III* (Headlong/Bristol Old Vic), *Top Girls*, *Nine Night* and *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (National Theatre), *Caroline, or Change* (Hampstead/Playhouse), *As You Like It* (Regent's Park), *Blueberry Toast* and *The One* (Soho Theatre), *The Girl from the North Country*, *The Caretaker*, *The Master Builder* and *The Hairy Ape* (The Old Vic), *The Painkiller*, *Red Velvet*, *Harlequinade*, *The Winter's Tale* (Garrick Theatre, KBTC), *Only the Brave* (Millennium Centre, Cardiff), *Bad Jews* (Theatre Royal, Haymarket), *Cyprus Avenue* (Royal Court/Abbey Theatre, Dublin), *I See You* (Royal Court Upstairs), *Private Lives* (ATG Tour), *Waiting for Godot*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *The Effect* (Sheffield Crucible), *X*, *Linda* and *Violence and Sons* (Royal Court), *The Winter's Tale* (Cheek by Jowl), *The Wasp* (Trafalgar Studios), *First Love is the Revolution* (Soho Theatre), *Hamlet* (Barbican), *Richard II* (Globe Theatre), *Tipping the Velvet* (Lyric Hammersmith) and *Medea* (Gate Theatre).

*Biographies as printed in June 2019*

# Cast



**Amelia**

Anne Sophie Duprels

For OHP: Violetta *La traviata* 2001, Magda *La rondine* 2002, title role *Lucia di Lammermoor* 2003, title role *Luisa Miller* 2004, title role *Jenůfa* 2007, title role *Kát'a Kabanová* 2009, Mélisande *Pelléas et Mélisande* 2010, Cio-Cio San *Madama Butterfly* 2013, Giorgetta *Il tabarro* and title role *Suor Angelica* 2015, title role *Iris* 2016, title role *Zazà* and Elle *La voix humaine* (in the Elgar Room at the Royal Albert Hall) 2017, title role *Isabeau* 2018

Anne Sophie Duprels trained at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse, Paris. Her numerous operatic roles include Katiusa *Risurrezione* (Wexford Festival Opera), Theresa *Benvenuto Cellini* (Opera National du Rhin), title role *Manon* and Mélisande *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Teatro Colón), Angelica *Suor Angelica*, Cio-Cio San *Madama Butterfly*, Salud *La vida Breve* (Opera North), Lisa *Pique Dame* and title role *Rusalka* (Grange Park Opera), title roles *Manon* and *Rusalka* (Scottish Opera), title role *Jenůfa*, Cio-Cio San *Madama Butterfly*, Marguerite *Faust* (Opera New Zealand) and title role *Thaïs* (Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, Theater Lübeck, Grange Park Opera). Future plans include Katiusa *Risurrezione* (Teatro Maggio Musicale Fiorentino) and Cio-Cio San *Madama Butterfly* (Opéra de Rennes and Angers Nantes Opéra).



**Gustavo**

Matteo Lippi

For OHP: Ruggero *La rondine* 2017

Tenor Matteo studied with mezzo-soprano Laura Bulian, and attended the CUBEC-Academy of Belcanto in Modena as a scholarship holder in 2011. In 2013 he won the competition Toti dal Monte and debuted as Rodolfo in *La bohème*. His recent engagements include Alfredo *La traviata* (Palazzo Pitti) and Rodolfo *La bohème* (Bolshoi, Teatro San Carlo-Naples, Terme di Caracalla,

Opera in Florence, WNO, NNTT Tokyo). He has also performed as Pinkerton *Madama Butterfly* and Il Duca *Rigoletto* (Glyndebourne, Dubai, La Fenice, Valencia, Florence), Alfredo *La traviata* (Oslo, Teatro dell'Opera in Florence) and Roberto *Le Villi* (Modena). Future engagements include two major new productions of *La bohème* (La Fenice and Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow).



**Anckarström**

George von Bergen

For OHP: Marcello *La bohème* 2009, Ostasio *Francesca da Rimini* 2010, Count Almaviva *Le nozze di Figaro* 2011, Ford *Falstaff* 2012, Belcore *L'elisir d'amore* 2013, Steward *Flight* 2015, Cornelius *Isabeau* 2018

A recent ENO Harewood Artist, George von Bergen studied at the University of Bristol, RAM and NOS in London, going on to win the Royal Overseas League singing competition. George's numerous operatic roles include Sharpless *Madame Butterfly*, Marcello *La bohème*, Zurga *The Pearl Fishers* (ENO), Enrico *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Danish National Opera), Renato *Un ballo in maschera* (West Green House), title role *Hamlet* (Croatian National Opera), title role *Don Giovanni* (ETO), title role *Eugene Onegin* (Mid Wales Opera) and Ned Keene *Peter Grimes* (La Scala and Teatro Regio, Turin). George has also performed roles at Garsington, Wexford and Longborough, and recently worked as cover Redburn *Billy Budd* (ROH).



**Oscar**  
Alison Langer

For OHP: Edith *The Pirates of Penzance (Inspire)* 2015, Violetta *La traviata* (Young Artists Performance) 2018

British soprano Alison Langer studied at the Guildhall. Engagements include a *Whistlestop Tour* (Opera North), Musetta *La bohème* (Iford Arts), Bridesmaid *Le nozze di Figaro* (Glyndebourne), Young Heidi *Follies* (National Theatre), Lisette *La rondine* (Opera in the Open, Dublin), Norina *I pazzi per progetto*, title role *Erodiade*, The Countess *The Cunning Peasant* and New Queen *Snow* (The Opera Story). Alison is grateful to be the recipient of a Richard Angas Memorial Award.



**Madame Arvidson**  
Rosalind Plowright OBE

For OHP: Rosa Mamai *L'arlesiana* 2003, La Zia Principessa *Suor Angelica* 2015, The Countess *The Queen of Spades* 2016

One of the most celebrated artists of our time, Rosalind Plowright OBE has, since winning the 1979 Sofia Competition, appeared at the world's great houses, including the ROH, Metropolitan Opera, Paris Opera, La Scala, Verona Arena and the Vienna State Opera, singing opposite José Carreras, Plácido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti. Recordings include *La forza del destino* conducted by Giuseppe Sinopoli and *Il trovatore* conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini. Now singing as a mezzo-soprano, recent engagements have included The Old Baroness *Vanessa* (Glyndebourne), Mrs Sedley *Peter Grimes* (Palau de les Arts, Valencia), Contessa di Coigny *Andrea Chénier* (ROH), Mamma Lucia *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Gothenburg Opera) and Madame de la Haltière *Cendrillon* (Angers Nantes Opéra).



**Ribbing**  
Benjamin Bevan

For OHP: Zaretsky *Eugene Onegin* 1996, Hanezo *L'amico Fritz* and Cristiano *Un ballo in maschera* 2000, Geronte di Ravoir *Manon Lescaut* 2019

Benjamin Bevan originally worked in the wine trade before studying voice at the Guildhall. His operatic roles include Marcello *La bohème*, Lescaut *Manon Lescaut*, Fleville and Fouquier-Tinville *Andrea Chénier* and Riccardo *I Puritani* (Scottish Opera), Sprecher *Die Zauberflöte* and Henry Cuffe *Gloriana* (ROH), Ferryman *Curlew River* (Opéra de Dijon), Lescaut *Boulevard Solitude* (Royal Danish Opera and WNO), Roderick Usher *Usher House* (WNO), The Speaker *The Magic Flute*, Notary *Intermezzo*, Der Haushofmeister *Capriccio* (Garsington) and Baron Douchol *La traviata* (ENO).



**Horn**  
John Savournin

For OHP: Director/Major General *The Pirates of Penzance (Inspire)* and Immigration Officer *Flight* 2015, Colline *La bohème* 2016, Leporello *Don Giovanni* 2017, Sante *Il segreto di Susanna* 2019

John Savournin studied with a scholarship at Trinity College of Music, where he was awarded the Founder's Prize for Excellence and the Paul Simms Opera Prize. Recent projects have included Sarastro *The Magic Flute*, Angleotti *Tosca*, Armchair/Tree *L'enfant et les Sortilèges*, Leporello *Don Giovanni*, Alidoro *La Cenerentola*, Peter Quince *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Schaunard *La bohème* (Opera North), Second Gunman *Kiss Me, Kate* (Opera North and WNO), Alidoro *La Cenerentola* (Scottish Opera) and The King *Eight Songs for a Mad King*.

*Biographies as printed in June 2019*



**Cristiano**  
Ross Ramgobin

For OHP: Kuligin *Kát'a Kabanová* 2017

Ross trained at RAM and the National Opera Studio. Engagements have included The Protector *Written On Skin* (Melos Sinfonia), First Mate *Billy Budd* and Rambashi *The Firework Maker's Daughter* (ROH), Demetrius *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Israeli Opera), title role *Owen Wingrave* (Aldeburgh and Edinburgh Festivals), Belcore *L'elisir d'amore* (Verbier Festival), Pallante *Agrippina* (Brisbane Baroque, Göttingen Festival), Masetto *Don Giovanni* (Angers Nantes Opera), Figaro *The Marriage of Figaro* and Grosvenor *Patience* (ETO), The Counsel *Trial by Jury* (BBC Proms) and Yuri *The Ice Break* (Birmingham Opera Company). Future engagements include Gaveston *Lessons in Love and Violence* (St Petersburg), The Protector *Written On Skin* (Paris, Vienna), Moralès *Carmen* and Guglielmo *Così fan tutte* (WNO).