OPERA
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Visual Story for the Relaxed Performance of

The Cunning Little Vixen



Sunday 25 July, 2pm

Opera Holland Park Theatre
Ilchester Place, London, W8 6LU

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This visual story is designed for visitors to the Relaxed Performance of *The Cunning Little Vixen* to help prepare you if you are curious (or anxious) about your visit.

It contains lots of images along with helpful information, including:

- Photographs of the Opera Holland Park Theatre to help you find your way around
- Descriptions of the main characters in the show
- Notes to highlight any potentially distressing elements of the plot and production

We hope you enjoy this Relaxed Performance of *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

Information about the Opera Holland Park Theatre

The Cunning Little Vixen is being performed at the Opera Holland Park Theatre in London.

The Opera Holland Park Theatre is in the middle of Holland Park. When you arrive, the park might be quite busy and noisy. Lots of people walk their dogs outside the theatre, and some people play sports on the field opposite the theatre.



The theatre site will open at 12.30pm. There are three different entrances. The Main Gate has some steps leading up to it. The West Gate has a steep ramp. The East Gate has a gentle slope. If you use a wheelchair, the East Gate is the best way to get into the theatre.



No matter which gate you use, you will be welcomed by some Front of House staff. They will all be wearing a uniform and an Opera Holland Park lanyard. To keep everyone safe during the pandemic, they will take your temperature. Unless you are exempt, you will have to wear a mask until you get to your seat.



When you go into the theatre, you can buy drinks and programmes, use the toilets, and sit at a table or on a bench while you wait for the auditorium to open. You might not be able to go into the auditorium straight away because the people performing in the show might still be warming up. Because the auditorium has open sides, you might be able to see and hear them while they do their warm ups. The auditorium usually opens about half an hour before the show, but sometimes it can take a bit longer.



There is plenty of space outside the auditorium, so we hope it won't be too busy, but it can get a bit noisy, especially when people are queueing to buy drinks. You can buy drinks and ice creams from the bars on either side of the auditorium.



You can buy programmes from our volunteers at the programme table. The programme table is on the west side of the theatre. If it is very rainy or hot, you will find it under cover on the West Balustrade.



If you need help or have any questions, there are plenty of staff members who can help you. All staff members wear an Opera Holland Park lanyard.



Inside the auditorium

The auditorium is the part of the theatre where the audience sit when they are watching the performance.



The auditorium at Opera Holland Park might look a little different to ones you have seen before. We have got lots of different chairs that we can move around depending on how many audience members we have each day. All the chairs will have cushions. Some of the seats will be on the ground, and you might be very close to the stage. Others will be further back on a raised platform.



All the seats will be marked with a tag telling you the seat number. One of our staff will help you find the seat that matches the number on your ticket.

The stage is the area where the actors perform. At Opera Holland Park there is a section in the middle where the orchestra will sit and the conductor will stand. In *The Cunning Little Vixen*, the performers sometimes leave the stage. Some performers carrying flags walk through the auditorium at the beginning and the end of the show. Throughout the show, other performers will move through the auditorium, so be careful if you need to leave your seat.



Because the theatre is outdoors, it will not get dark inside the auditorium during the performance. You might be able to hear some noises from the park outside, like dogs barking, peacocks calling, or helicopters flying. If it rains, you might be able to hear it on the auditorium roof. These sounds can be quite loud and distracting.



Useful information for the performance day

Relaxation space



If you want to leave the auditorium at any time during the performance, you can visit our relaxation space. You can go there if you need a break before going back in to watch the show. The relaxation space is in a part of the theatre called the Dutch Garden Lounge. There will be some comfortable cushions and chairs where you can sit. If you need to, you can ask any of our staff where the relaxation space is and they will show you the way.

Performance times

The opera is performed in two halves with a 30 minute break in the middle (called the 'interval'). The first half usually lasts 1 hour. The second half will also last about 1 hour. It's difficult to give exact timings because in a live performance sometimes things can go a bit faster or slower than expected.

Show changes

For this Relaxed Performance the sound and lighting and some other small aspects of the show have been altered. This is to try and make the experience less stressful for all our audience members. If you need to take a break at any time that's fine. Just ask a staff member to show you the way to the relaxation space. You can read more about some aspects of the show you might want to prepare for on page 9.

What is the show about?

The Cunning Little Vixen is an opera (which means people sing to tell the story, accompanied by an orchestra). It's all sung in English, and there will be some words on screens in the auditorium – called surtitles – which will also tell you what the characters are singing. This makes it easier for some people to follow along with the story.

The opera tells the story of a young fox, Vixen Sharp Ears, who is growing up in a forest. When she is young, she is captured by a Forester, who wants to keep her as a pet. The opera follows her story as she grows up, escapes the Forester, and lives her life in the forest.

Characters in the show

Below are pictures of the different singers and the names of the characters they play. Some singers play more than one character. They will change the clothes and make up they wear for each different character they play.



Vixen Sharp Ears

A cunning young fox. She's captured by the Forester as a cub. When she escapes, she must use all her wits to survive life in the forest.



The Fox

A handsome young fox who falls in love with the Vixen. Although the fox is male, he is played by a woman. In opera this is known as a trouser role.



Forester

A forest worker who captures the Vixen when she's a young cub. After she escapes, he follows her progress throughout her life.



Forester's Wife

She's married to the Forester, and lives with him and their two children.

The singer who performs the role of the Forester's Wife also plays the role of the Owl.



Schoolmaster

He, like the other human men in the opera, is in love a local girl, Terynka.

The singer who performs the role of the Schoolmaster also plays the Mosquito.



Badger

Badger is evicted from his sett by the Vixen, after she escapes the Forester.

The singer who performs the role of Badger also plays the Priest.



The Poacher

To the jealousy of the other men in the village, he gets engaged to the beautiful Terynka. He also sets a dangerous trap for Vixen and her family.



Chocholka

She's a hen who roams the Forester's farm and keeps the other hens in order.



Lapák, the dog

Lapák belongs to the Forester and his wife. He lives in the yard with Vixen during her captivity, and tries to give her advice about life and love.

The Cunning Little Vixen also features a number of other characters.

The other humans in the village are the Innkeeper and his wife, who run the local pub, and the Forester's children Frantik and Pepík.

The other animals in the forest include the Jay, the Woodpecker, and the Rooster who patrols the Forester's yard along with Chocholka and the other hens.

In *The Cunning Little Vixen*, you will see some characters played by children too, such as the Frog and the Young Vixen.



The Innkeeper's Wife



Young Vixen

As well as the characters in the list, there will be other people on stage. They are the Chorus – a group of singers who sometimes play smaller background characters. In this opera, you will see them perform as Chickens and Sunflowers. As well as the Chorus of professional opera singers, there is also a children's chorus with performers from a local school.

You will also see the orchestra in what's known as the orchestra pit. They play the music for the opera. A person known as the Conductor shows the orchestra, Chorus, and other singers how they should perform the music, and helps keep them in time.

Lights, sounds and other warnings

An opera like this one is told through song. No one on stage will be using a microphone, but the singers can be very loud. Some of the notes they sing are very high. When the orchestra, Chorus, and other singers all come together the sound can be quite overwhelming. If you are particularly sensitive to sound you are welcome to wear ear defenders during the performance, if you have brought them with you.

The Cunning Little Vixen is all about the natural cycles of life. This means there are parts of the show which you and other audience members might find funny or uplifting, and there are some which you might find quite sad. Some of the animals in the show die, to reflect what happens in real life, including the Vixen herself. You should feel free to respond however you want to the emotions in the show.

At the start of the performance, people will clap when the Conductor walks out. This is a way of welcoming the musicians. If people like the way a particular part of the show is performed they will clap once the song has finished. You might hear some people shout ‘bravo’ or ‘brava’. These are Italian words that mean they really enjoyed the performance.

There are some warnings for this production, which you may wish to be aware of:

- Some swear words are used throughout this show. As well as being sung on stage, they will also be written on the surtitle screens.
- Towards the beginning of the show, Vixen kills the Forester’s flock of chickens. This is represented by multiple balloons being popped and feathers falling onto the stage. This happens just after Vixen has hidden herself in the wheely bin.
- In the first half there is an implied sex scene, which is hidden beneath a blanket. This takes place after the Fox tells Vixen he loves her.
- During a couple of moments, some of the characters fall over on stage. This can be loud and alarming. The Schoolmaster falls over just after the pub scene and lies on stage unmoving for a while. This is planned, so there’s no need to be worried about the performer himself. Later, the Poacher falls over when he is being taunted by the Vixen.
- Towards the end of the show, the Poacher shoots the Vixen twice and kills her. He then picks her up and carries her off stage. There are no gunshot effects planned at this performance, but the percussion in the orchestra symbolises gunshot sounds.

Because our auditorium is outside it will be quite bright during the performance. There will be some brightly coloured lights used on stage during the show. In the first half of the show there is a single bright flash of light on stage. This happens towards the end of the half, when all the main characters are lined up at the front of the stage.

If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to one of our Front of House staff. We hope you enjoy the show.