

NORTHERN IRELAND OPERA PRESENTS



GIACOMO PUCCINI

TOSCA

9, 12, 14, 16 SEPTEMBER 2023

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ROY BAILIE O.B.E.

CHAIRMAN, NORTHERN IRELAND OPERA

On behalf of the Board of NI Opera, welcome to this brand-new production of Puccini's Tosca.



Northern Ireland Opera has gone from strength to strength over the last 12 months with an international tour to Australia in March, a Best Production for 2022 win at The Irish Times Theatre Awards for 'Into the Woods', our huge success touring 'The Salon Serie's throughout NI and our award-winning film 'Old Friends and Other Days' streaming globally in August. The company's diversity and quality of work is second to none.

Under the Artistic Director Cameron Menzies our national opera company continues to create work which inspires, excites and thrills audiences from Northern Ireland and beyond. Funding continues to be a challenge. We would love to be able to create spectacular productions like the one you'll see tonight more than once a year. We'd like to tour regularly to cities and towns across Northern Ireland and expand our in-demand outreach and education activities to the young singers, musicians, and future theatre professionals who can be found across the country. If you can help us fund and increase the number of opera, musical theatre productions and outreach projects we can deliver and help us give more artists and creatives the opportunity to perform regularly here in Northern Ireland, please do contact us for a conversation about ways you or your company can help.

We are very proud of the work and the opportunities that NI Opera creates and we hope you enjoy tonight's performance of this well-loved masterpiece.

ROISIN MCDONOUGH

CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ARTS COUNCIL OF NORTHERN IRELAND

Northern Ireland Opera's sensational rise as an artistic tour de force keeps on gathering momentum. Rave critical reviews and prestigious national and international awards reflect a company that is fresh and exciting, and relishes challenging our perception of the art form. With some of the finest singing talent on the island performing with the Ulster Orchestra, this new production of 'Tosca' is definitely not one to be missed. Like our eponymous heroine, for this night at least, we will 'live for art'.



As Principal Funder, the Arts Council is proud to support Northern Ireland Opera and its visionary Artistic Director, Cameron Menzies, as the company continues to create sublime, world-class opera.

Enjoy the show!



NORTHERN
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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

CAMERON MENZIES

This new production of *Tosca* is the company's biggest in the history of the company, and it represents an epic undertaking for Northern Ireland Opera and all that are involved in the creation and delivery across all departments. Just over 200 artists, artisans, administrators, collaborators and colleagues are involved in creating tonight's performance. This Northern Irish premiere is historic in many ways.



Directing and conceptualising this wonderful dramatic work has been a joy and challenging in equal measure. This opera requires three very distinct settings for each act to help house the very different sonic worlds that Puccini has created throughout Rome. We have chosen to look at how these locations affect the people that inhabit them and how each location creates a different pressure on each scenario, dealing with unrest both politically and socially, oppression, the gaze of the other, love, lust and horror all within the first half an hour of the piece. We have set our production very much wedged in between an old romantic civilisation and that of a more industrial future and this is reflected beautifully throughout the design of both set, costume and lighting.

Creating this opera has been such a joy and working with our entire cast and creative team, musically led by Eduardo Strausser and with Svetlana Kasyan in the title role has been thrilling.

CONDUCTOR'S NOTE

EDUARDO STRAUSSER

Since its premiere in 1900, '*Tosca*' has been one of the most frequently performed operas worldwide and the reason for that is very simple: everybody enjoys a good story! Presenting the political turmoil of Italy around 1800, Puccini created a cinematographic narrative full of drama, action and feelings. It is the kind of music that catches the listener's attention from the very first chord and transports them to a huge palace of emotions.



'*Tosca*' is about love, tyranny and the fight for freedom – topics that are still very relevant to our society and that make us reflect on the world we live today, while the music may bring tears to one's eyes. It is for me a great joy to come to Belfast and get to know the amazing artists collaborating with Northern Ireland Opera and I can't wait to tell this story to our audience!



Svetlana Kasyan, Soprano
Photography: Neil Harrison, Hair and Make-Up: Nuala Campbell, Gown, Linda Britten, Styling: Cameron Menzies

ABOUT 'TOSCA'

It's shallow, melodramatic and tawdry. The characters are two dimensional and driven by sexual desires. It's shabby, nasty and cruel. All these things and more have been said about 'Tosca', yet here we are again, eager to devour it and wallow in all those elements. Any modern opera house that omitted 'Tosca' from its regular repertoire would be very brave. So why is it so successful?

Puccini was already off to a head start by getting the rights to the play 'La Tosca' by the French playwright Sardou in 1887 which had already taken the world by storm. The unchaste aspects of the main character played by Sarah Bernhardt together with the action and violence ensured its notoriety. The story takes place in the complicated history of the aftermath of the Roman Republic of 1798-1799. In the opera Puccini removes nearly all the political detail, reducing it to a handful of lines that acknowledge the setting. Yet it is not merely a tale of jealousy and lust. The unique, febrile environment where an unstable police state intertwined with the church gives ample opportunity for the abuses of power that Tosca is forced to suffer.

The libretto consists almost entirely of action-driven duets and very little personal reflection which is where, normally, opera is happy spending most of its time. Puccini responded to this challenge by creating the most action driven opera ever written and did so with exacting precision and craftsmanship. Realism is one of the methods he uses to achieve this. The story unfolds in a 16-hour time frame in real locations in Rome. Any bells you hear are the actual pitches of the churches from Rome they depict. The shepherd in Act 3 sings in a Roman dialect. Each act occurs in real time: any activity such as moving up from the courtyard below up to Scarpia's apartments or writing a travel document takes as long as it needs to. Notably, if someone gets shot or stabbed, rather than sing a moving farewell to the world, they drop dead or choke on their own blood. It is fascinating that Puccini even considered removing Tosca's great aria "Vissi d'arte" from Act II because he felt it held up the action. But even this lyrical outburst provides a logical psychological pause as she contemplates her fate and makes the ensuing action even more effective.

The orchestra keeps the action moving by being far more prominent (and savage) than it was in 'La Bohème'. Puccini uses an extensive palette of motifs that represent characters, emotions and actions. These help to propel the narrative while being an economic way to comment on the action. The most obvious of these is the Scarpia theme which opens the opera. It sets the tone then continues to pervade the entire opera, often appearing under other themes. Listen to how all the themes appear in Tosca's great Act III monologue describing her travails in Act II. This musical intensity is what concentrates the action. The second act was historically criticised for its lack of subtlety and the unapologetic depiction of sexual desire and violence, but the modern viewer now just marvels at the exhilaration and tension created by this master dramatist. It is a thrilling, unmatched experience.

Not dissimilar to the characters in 'Succession', those in 'Tosca' can be a little hard to like. Cavaradossi is somewhat dismissive of Tosca's passionate jealousy and berates her for giving up Angelotti's location even though it was to prevent him being tortured. Awaiting his execution, he doesn't lament the lost republic but only that he is no longer able to enjoy

Tosca's physical charms. The diva herself is passionate but naïve and at times, frustratingly conflicted. She brings flowers for the Madonna in Act I as penance for the love-making she will indulge in later that evening. After killing Scarpia she places a crucifix on his chest. Scarpia is repulsive: a sociopathic bully and sexual predator who fulfills his role of state purely to satisfy his base, sexual lusts. Yet the twisted relationship between Scarpia and Tosca is the more convincing. It is fitting that at the end of the opera it is Scarpia's name that she shouts to the heavens.

But just in case heart-stopping action, opera's greatest villain and perhaps the most compelling musical depiction of dramatic tension that have ever been composed aren't enough to persuade you, surely adding three of the most famous arias in the repertoire would make any resistance, as Scarpia would suggest while slipping his chianti, futile.

Angus Grant

SYNOPSIS

ACT I:

Cesare Angelotti, an escaped political prisoner, seeks refuge in The Church Sant' Andrea della Valle, Rome. Mario Cavaradossi, an artist, is working on a painting of Mary Magdalene. His lover, Floria Tosca a singer, arrives and suspects him of infidelity with the Marchesa Attavanti. Mario helps Angelotti escape, and they flee to his villa where he hides in the well. Baron Scarpia, the chief of the secret police, arrives looking for Angelotti. He uses the fan with the Attavanti crest to fuel Tosca's jealousy. Tosca leaves, and Scarpia plots to capture her.

INTERVAL

ACT II:

Scarpia is having dinner in his apartment in the Palazzo Farnese, he plans to bend Tosca to his will. He captures Mario and tortures him while Tosca sings at a gala to celebrate the defeat of Bonaparte. The sounds of her lover being tortured makes Tosca reveal Angelotti's hiding place, and Mario is taken away. Scarpia offers Tosca a deal: her lover's life for her submission. Tosca reluctantly agrees but makes Scarpia agree to write her and Mario a safe-conduct, she kills him. She takes the document and escapes.

ACT III:

Mario is brought to the place of his execution atop the Castel Sant' Angelo. Tosca arrives and tells him of the deal she has struck with Scarpia to fake his execution. However, Scarpia's betrayal results in Mario's actual death. As Tosca discovers that Mario is in fact dead, the authorities come to arrest her for murdering Scarpia. She jumps to her death.

CAST

SVETLANA KASYAN - SOPRANO

FLORIA TOSCA

Russian soprano Svetlana Kasyan trained at the Moscow State Conservatory and was a member of the Young Artists Programme at the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow from 2009-2011. She is the winner of the 2019 Premio Internazionale "Penisola Sorrentina" Arturo Esposito and the 2011 International Vocal Competition in Ningbo City, China.



Recent highlights include Nefta/Clotilde *Asrael* (Opera Bonn) Mimi *La bohème*, Cio-Cio-San *Madama Butterfly* and Leonora *Il trovatore* (Novaya Opera, Moscow); Cio-Cio-San *Madama Butterfly* (Teatro Comunale, Bologna); Berio's *Folk Songs* in concert at Zaryadye Hall, Moscow; and gala concerts for Novaya Opera.

Other operatic engagements include the title role *Tosca* (Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, Teatro La Fenice, Polish National Opera, Bolshoi Theatre, Theater St Gallen and Vilnius City Opera); title role *Aida* (Teatro Lirico Giuseppe Verdi Trieste and Arena di Verona); Giorgetta *Il tabarro* and title role *Suor Angelica* (Teatro Comunale, Ferrara). Svetlana has also performed at Latvian National Opera, Yekaterinburg Opera, Teatro Pteruzelli, Beri, and for the International Opera Festival of Miskolc, Hungary.

PETER AUTY - TENOR

MARIO CAVARADOSSI

A former company principal at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Peter Auty has appeared in principal roles across the UK, including at Glyndebourne Festival, ENO, Welsh National Opera, Opera North and Scottish Opera, and abroad at houses like Oper Frankfurt, Malmö Opera and New Zealand Opera.



With reviews comparing him to Jon Vickers and Neil Shicoff, Peter is particularly acclaimed for his dramatic embodiment of Italian opera, but has recently expanded his repertoire with role debuts as Paul *Die tote Stadt* (Longborough Festival Opera) and Laca *Jenufa* (Welsh National Opera). He previously sang Cavaradossi for Grange Park Opera, and other Puccini roles in recent seasons include Pinkerton *Madama Butterfly* (WNO), Roberto *Le Villi* (Scottish Opera; Holland Park), Des Grieux *Manon Lescaut* (Grange Festival; OSESP); Johnson *La fanciulla del West* (RTÉ NSO) and Edgar (Scottish Opera; Konzerthaus Berlin). He recently sang the title role in Franchetti's rediscovered *Asrael* at Theater Bonn.

BRENDAN COLLINS - BARITONE

BARON SCARPIA

Irish Baritone Brendan Collins studied at the Opera Studio of Theatre de la Monnaie in Brussels under renowned bass-baritone José van Dam.



As a soloist he has performed across Ireland, the UK, Europe, the Middle East, China and America at some of the world's leading venues including the Royal Albert Hall under Sir Andrew Davis, the Brooklyn Academy of Music under Sir Mark Elder, Kennedy Center Washington D.C., National Concert Hall Dublin, Sadler's Wells London, Palais des Beaux Arts Brussels, Opéra de Lausanne, Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg, Stefansdom Vienna, and his Chinese debut in concert at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre.

Opera engagements include NI Opera, Irish National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Scottish Opera, English Touring Opera, Opera Theatre Company, Longborough Festival Opera, Opera Collective Ireland, Cork Operatic Society and Iford Opera.

His repertoire of nearly 70 roles include the title role in Gianni Schicchi, Count Almaviva (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Marcello (*La Bohème*), Escamillo (*Carmen*), Germont (*La Traviata*), Tonio (*Pagliacci*), Alfio (*Cavalleria Rusticana*), Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*), Paolo Albiani (*Simon Boccanegra*), Marullo (*Rigoletto*), Crespel (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*), Masetto (*Don Giovanni*) and Count Gil (*Il Segreto di Susanna*).

MATTHEW DURKAN - BASS

CESARE ANGELOTTI

As a Harewood Artist at the English National Opera (2015-2020), Matthew gave over 100 performances for the company, including Demetrius A *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Schaunard and Marcello *La Bohème*, Marullo *Rigoletto*, Ormonte *Partenope*, Yamadori *Madama Butterfly*, Polyphemus *Acis and Galatea*, Counsel *Trial by Jury*, Fiorello *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Hel Helson *Paul Bunyan* and Malcolm Fleet *Marnie*.



In the 2022/23 season, Matthew's highlights include a return to the Royal Opera House to sing Flemish Deputy in *Don Carlo*; Escamillo *Carmen* for Waterperry Festival Opera and Dancaïro for the English National Opera.

Elsewhere he has sung Belcore *L'elisir d'amore* for Glyndebourne on Tour; Demetrius for the Opéra National de Montpellier; Masetto *Don Giovanni* with Opéra de Rouen Haute Normandie, the Opéra Royal de Versailles and Longborough Festival Opera; Brabantischer Edler *Lohengrin* for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden; the title role in *Don Giovanni* with Diva Opera and Escamillo, Melisso *Alcina* and Elviro Serse for Longborough Festival Opera.

Matthew was winner of the 2014 Stuart Burrows International Voice Award and a finalist in the 2014 Kathleen Ferrier Competition.

NIALL ANDERSON - BARITONE

SACRISTAN

Originally from Fife, Niall Anderson began his vocal studies at the Royal Academy of Music, before joining the Académie at the Opéra national de Paris, where his engagements included Krzysztof Warlikowski's production of Bernstein's *A quiet place* at the Palais Garnier; conducted by Kent Nagano, as well as *Ballades du Nord*, *Classiques Américains* and *Concert de fêtes* at the Amphithéâtre Olivier Messiaen – Opera Bastille.



Engagements in 2022 / 2023 currently include Escamillo in Peter Brook's *La Tragédie de Carmen* at the Atelier Lyrique de Tourcoing, Junius *The Rape of Lucretia* at the Teatro Petruzzelli Bari, Second Priest / Second Armed Man *Die Zauberflöte* for the Opéra national de Paris, Allazim *Zaide* for Angers Nantes Opera and Opéra de Rennes, Elgar *The Light of Life* with Cairo Celebration Choir & Orchestra and Mozart *Requiem* on tour with Orchestre de Pau Pays de Béarn.

His recordings include An Officer of Cromwell in Mercadante's *Il proscritto* with Britten Sinfonia for Opera Rara.

AARON O'HARE - TENOR

SPOLETTA

Irish tenor Aaron O'Hare transitioned from baritone in 2022 having sung with leading companies across the UK and Ireland. As an Associate Artist with Welsh National Opera, he sang the title role in *Don Giovanni* on tour, Stárek *Jenufa* and March Hare/White Knight in Will Todd's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. In 2021 he sang Schaunard *La bohème* (Northern Ireland Opera) and new commission *Elsewhere*, composed by Michael Gallen and produced in Ireland with support from the Centre Culturel Irlandais in Paris.



Aaron completed his BMus (Hons) at the University of Ulster and MMus at the RNCM. He won Northern Ireland Opera's Voice of 2015 competition, during their Festival of Voice, and is also a recipient of the BBC NI and Arts Council NI Young Musician's Platform Award. Aaron joined Garsington Opera's Alvarez Young Artist's programme in 2016 and was an Opera Holland Park Young Artist in 2018. He played Mike in John Adam's *I was looking at the Ceiling and then I saw the Sky* for the studio of Opera Lyon in 2020.

CONNOR CAMPBELL - BASS

SCIARRONE

Baritone Connor Campbell is a postgraduate student at the Royal College of Music in London, studying with Professor Peter Savidge. He was recently awarded the *Koganovitch-Kagan Scholarship* and has been a participant of Glyndebourne Opera Academy. He has performed throughout Ireland and the UK with recent performances including *Marchese d'Obigny* in NI Opera's production of *La Traviata*, as well as Sicario in Verdi's *Macbeth* with Blackwater Valley Opera Festival.



PAUL MCQUILLAN - BASS

A JAILER

Belfast-born baritone Paul studied singing with the late Frank Capper, Judith Sheridan and Russell Smythe. He has performed in the chorus for Northern Ireland Opera for *La Traviata*, *La Bohème*, *Die Fledermaus*, *The Magic Flute*, *Bartered Bride*, and for Castleward Opera in *La Traviata*, *La Belle Helene*. Since 2018 he has been a member of NI Opera Chorus, performing in *Rigoletto*, *Die Fledermaus*, *La Bohème*, *La Traviata*. In early 2023, he sang in the premier performance of Neil Martin's new Opera *Nobody/Somebody*.



He has performed as a concert soloist in Handel's *Messiah*, Faure's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, Gounod's *Requiem*. Paul is a member of the Belfast based chamber choir, Cappella Caeciliana and has recorded and performed with them throughout Ireland, Europe and America.

He has been a member of the NI Opera Chorus Development Programme since 2022.

MOLLIE LUCAS / ALEXA THOMPSON

A SHEPHERD

Praise for NI Opera's

'LA TRAVIATA'

at the Grand Opera House in 2022

The Observer: 'La Traviata' selected as number 2 in top ten operas and concerts in the UK in 2022.

The Observer: ★★★★★

'NI Opera's excellent new Verdi production went straight to the heart'

Opera Magazine:

'Northern Ireland Opera's La Traviata suggests that the artistic director Cameron Menzies has at long last realised the region's ambition to have a grand opera company truly deserving of the name.'

The Stage: ★★★★★

'Joyous'

The Irish News:

'NI Opera's dazzling production, full of emotion and relevance'





**BEST PRODUCTION
INTO THE WOODS**

**THE IRISH TIMES
THEATRE AWARDS 2022**

Photo Credit: Philip Magowan

CREATIVE TEAM

CAMERON MENZIES - DIRECTOR

Award Winning Director Cameron Menzies is Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Northern Ireland Opera. He has directed opera, theatre, music-theatre, cabaret and film. He has worked for Shakespeare's Globe, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Diva Opera UK, Opera Australia, Victorian Opera, Short Black Opera Company, Malthouse Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and Sydney Symphony Orchestra. His film *Old Friends and Other Days* won the 2022 Paris Short Film Festival for Best Production/Costume Design, Best Short Narrative and Best "First Time" Director; the film also won the Best Short Feature for the London International Short Film Festival 21 and a Madrid Art Film award.



Cameron's most recent credits are the acclaimed sold out five-star production of *La Traviata* in the Grand Opera House Belfast in 2022 and *The Salon Series* touring across Northern Ireland over 36 dates. His award-winning production of *Sondheim's Into the Woods* made its Australian premiere in March this year with West Australian Opera. Cameron was nominated for Best Director at The Irish Times Theatre awards and *Into the Woods* won Best Production of 2022 at The Irish Times Irish Theatre Awards.

Cameron is currently working on a new opera commission with the working title 'Muses' which explores the fusion of couture design, opera, the human condition and what happened to an artist when the muses start to leave. He will also direct the Philip Glass/Robert Moran re-telling of the Grimms Fairy-tale, *The Juniper Tree* next year.



EDUARDO STRAUSSER - CONDUCTOR

The charismatic and energetic Brazilian conductor, Eduardo Strausser has gained a reputation for his intelligent programming and physical style on the podium. Plans for the 2022/23 season include returns to Antwerp Symphony, Kansas City Symphony, Fundacion Musical Simon Bolivar, West Australian Symphony Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra for *Messiah* and debuts with New Zealand Symphony Orchestra, Sydney Symphony, NorrlandsOperan, the Halle Orchestra, Bamberg Symphoniker and North Carolina Symphony.



Previously Resident Conductor of Teatro Sao Paolo from 2014-2016, Eduardo has become an experienced opera conductor and productions in Sao Paolo have included *Elektra* and Carlos Gomes' *Fosca*, as well as performances of *The Nutcracker* with the Balé da Cidade de São Paulo and a Stefano Poda production of Mahler Symphony No. 1.

Most recently he led a new production of Leonard Ever's *Die Odyssee* for Zurich Opera and other highlights include *Tosca* for Theater Magdeburg which he also conducted for Staatstheater Hannover alongside productions including; *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *Hansel and Gretel* and *Die Zauberflöte*. Elsewhere he has also conducted *La bohème* for Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro and Teatro Verdi di Padova.

Through his studies at the Zurich University of Arts, Eduardo developed an interest in works by contemporary composers and as well as working with the visionary Karlheinz Stockhausen. Also as a student he took part in the International Forum for Conductors at the Ferienkurse für Neue Musik in Darmstadt, where he had the chance to work closely with composers György Kurtág and Brian Ferneyhough.

Eduardo has worked with a number of top soloists, including Isabelle Faust, Augustin Hadelich, Richard Galliano, Steven Osborne, Barnabas Kelemen and Sergei Krylov among others. A multi-linguist, Eduardo speaks eight languages fluently including; German, Italian, French, Spanish and Hebrew.

NIALL MCKEEVER - SET

Niall is an Irish scenographer based in London. After graduating from Wimbledon College of Art he was awarded the 1 year design residency at the National Theatre in London where he was Associate Set and Costume Designer on *Translations*. In 2021 he worked with Diane Page, on the JMK Award winning production *Statements after an Arrest under the Immorality Act* at the Orange Tree Theatre. He was recently nominated for an Irish Times Irish Theatre Award for Best Set for *Into The Woods*.



Theatre and Opera: *Under The Kundé Tree* (Southwark Playhouse); *The Dry House* (Marylebone Theatre); *Into The Woods* (His Majesty's Theatre Perth), *La Traviata* (Northern Ireland Opera/Grand Opera House Belfast); *Yellowman* (Orange Tree Theatre); *Werther* (Lyric Opera/National Concert Hall Dublin); *Into The Woods* (Northern Ireland Opera/Lyric Theatre Belfast); *Statements After an Arrest Under the Immorality Act* (Orange Tree Theatre); *This Beautiful Future* (Jermyn Street Theatre); *Garage, No Planet B* (New Nordics Festival); *I RUN* (Edinburgh Fringe/Theatre 503/Vaults Festival); *The World We Made*, (Change Festival); *Nora: A Dolls House, Appropriate* (LAMDA); *Some Voices, Herons, Mary Barnes*, (Plaford Theatre); *Liale Shop of Horrors* (Pleasance Theatre); *Wake* (Union Theatre).

As Associate/assistant: *Translations*, *Peter Gynt*, *Dick Whittington*, (National Theatre); *Klippies* (Young Vic); *The Trails* (Donmar Warehouse); *Caroline or Change* (Broadway transfer); *Missing Julie* (Theatr Clywd).

Television/Film: *Game of Thrones* season V - VII (HBO); *In The Earth, In Fabric*, (Rook Films); *LOVE*, (Cuba Pictures/National Theatre); *Dungarees*, (BBC/BFI); *Trigger: Charlie. One*, (Atomium Films).

GILLIAN LENNOX - COSTUME

After graduating with a BA Honours in Fashion and Textiles at The University of Ulster Gillian Lennox went on to be a designer within the fashion industry.



After a spell designing for Marks & Spencer Menswear Gillian began a 14-year career working for a London based manufacturing/design company where she progressed to Head Designer supplying companies such as online retailer ASOS, and Southern Ireland high street stores Dunnes and A-Wear. Her designs for ASOS and A –Wear were often featured in magazine editorials.

Gillian's work often took her overseas to Paris, Syria, and Morocco where she gained insight into the entire process of textile design, garment, and pattern construction.

Throughout her career Gillian also continued with her own freelance work and has been a maker and illustrator for Universal Studios when they first came to Northern Ireland with films such as Your Highness and more recently was a maker for the film The Northman.

In 2022 Gillian engaged in a living history tender for Mid Ulster Council designing and producing twenty-three costumes for historical sites and National trust properties.

For the Lyric Theatre, Gillian has supervised the Costume Department on all producing shows for the past six years and has been the Costume Designer for Dr Scroggy's War, Good Vibrations, Alice: The Musical, Double Cross, Rough Girls (Arts & Business Awards) Dark of the Moon, Shirley Valentine, Peter Pan: The Musical, 1984 (Postponed Covid), Sadie, Dracula, Pinocchio, Blue Stockings, The Snow Queen, Romeo & Juliet and most recently Good Vibrations 2023 which is now showing in New York.



CIARÁN BAGNALL - LIGHTING

Ciarán is the Creative Director for Prime Cut Productions, Belfast. He trained at the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama in Cardiff and was made a fellow of the College in 2017.



He was the Assistant Artistic Director for the Opening Ceremony of the Commonwealth Games 2022 in Birmingham.

Lighting designs include: *An Old Song Half Forgotten* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin); *The New Electric Ballroom* (The Gate, Dublin); *Old Ghosts* (ANU/INO); *Tosca* (INO); *Staging the Treaty*, *Wakefires* (ANU); *The Lonesome West*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Cripple of Inishmaan* (Gaiety, Dublin); *Romeo & Juliet* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); *Scrapefoot* (The Ark, Dublin); *The Anvil* (ANU/Manchester Theatre Festival 2019); *Hamlet* (Octagon Theatre, Bolton); *Pentecost* (Lyric Theatre, Belfast – Winner Best Lighting Design Irish Times Theatre Awards); *Perseverance Drive* (Bush Theatre, London); *Much Ado About Nothing* (RSC West End), *Dido*, *Queen of Carthage* (Royal Shakespeare Company).

NUALA CAMPBELL - HAIR AND MAKE-UP

Nuala's career as a professional designer spans across multiple fields, whether that is designing Luxurious Interiors or Wigs and Makeup for Professional Fashion, Theatre and TV productions worldwide.



With a career for over 15 years as a Fashion, Beauty & SFX Makeup Artist, working on some of the greatest Fashion week shows in the likes of London, Milan, Tokyo and Paris and been published in many different magazines including Vogue.

Nuala has been working with Theatrical companies not only across Belfast and Northern Ireland, but also throughout the Republic of Ireland and the UK. With companies such as Northern Ireland Opera, Lyric Theatre Belfast, Grand Opera House, Theatre at the Mill, Cahoots, The Abbey and many more.

Recent Theatre Productions include the sell-out *Agreement* at the Lyric Theatre, International touring show *Good Vibrations*, *Propaganda*, *Shop at the Top of the Town*, the Award-Winning *La Traviata*, *Gap Year*, *Translations by Brian Friel*, *Into the Woods*, *This Sh*t happens all the time*, *La Boheme*, *Old Friends & Other Days*, *Rough Girls*, *Sadie*, *Kiss me Kate*, *Playboy of the Western World*, *Peter Pan*, *Driving Home for Christmas*, *A Street Car Named Desire*, *Good Vibrations*, *Shirley Valentine*, *Street Car Named Desire*, *39 Steps*, *Sweeney Todd*, *3 Penny Opera*, *Don Giovanni*, *Turandot*, *The Importance of being Earnest*, *The Little Prince*, *Jungle Book*.

With numerous Business Awards under her belt such as, Winner of the Belfast Chamber of Commerce Award and the Aer Lingus Viscount Awards in the prestigious Pall Mall, Nuala went on to be voted one of Northern Ireland's Most Inspirational Women and one of Northern Ireland's Top 40 under 40 business people by Business First Magazine. Most recently Nuala was listed as Entrepreneur of the Year in the Ulster Tatler Influential Women Awards.

JENNIFER ROONEY - MOVEMENT CONSULTANT

Jennifer Rooney trained at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance. She has worked as a choreographer for over twenty years and is currently the resident movement director on Harry Potter and the Cursed Child (London).



Choreography credits Theatre: Into the Woods (West Australian Opera & Northern Ireland Opera), La Bohème & Kiss Me Kate (Northern Ireland Opera), Fun Home & Piaf (Gate Dublin), Good Vibrations (Lyric Belfast & IAC New York), Rigoletto & L'elisir d'amore (Diva Opera), A Christmas Carol (The MAC), The Elves and the Shoemaker (Cahoots NI, The MAC), Turnabout (Maiden Voyage Dance). For TV and Film: Derry Girls (series 2 and 3), World on Fire (series 2), Old Friends and Other Days (Northern Ireland Opera). Directing credits: The Devil Made Me Do It (NI Opera), Flight (BBC, One Dance UK), Lark (Northern Ireland Screen). Associate Movement Director: Truth (Helen Chadwick Company, UK Tour), Once (The Olympia Theatre, Dublin and Charlotte Theatre, Seoul, South Korea). Resident Movement Director: Once (Phoenix Theatre, London).

FRASIER HICKLAND - RÉPÉTITEUR

Pianist Frasier Hickland studies with Simon Lepper, Kathron Sturrock and Roger Vignoles at the Royal College of Music, London. He is a SongEasel Young Artist, and has participated in masterclasses with renowned musicians Sir Thomas Allen, John O'Connor, Finghin Collins, Dennis O'Neill, and Iain Burnside, among others.



He has been featured on both BBC Radio 3 'In Tune', and on BBC Radio Ulster's 'Classical Connections'. He has also performed in many prestigious venues in Europe and America, including Wigmore Hall, London, the Willard InterContinental, Washington DC, the Royal Over-Seas League, London, the Yacht Club de Monaco, Monte-Carlo, the National Concert Hall, Dublin, the Ulster Hall, Belfast, and at the BMS International Festival of Chamber Music.

He was selected to work in a residency with distinguished composer Sally Beamish, and gave the Irish premiere of her piece "Wild Swans" at ChamberFest Dublin. Alongside flautist Amy Gillen, he will give a recital as a West Wicklow Chamber Music Festival 'Rising Star'. Competition successes include winning the Accompanist Prize in the John Kerr Award for English Song, the Irish Heritage Accompanist Award, the Pianist Prize in the Brooks-van der Pump English Song Competition and the John Benson Memorial Cup in the Feis Ceoil. Répétiteur roles with Northern Ireland Opera include Verdi's La Traviata, Puccini's La Bohème, Offenbach's Daphnis et Chloé and L'île de Tulipatan, as well as Seán Doherty's Waking Beauty and Vaughan Williams' A Sea Symphony.

MATTHEW QUINN

ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR/TOSCA CHORUS MASTER

Matthew is a versatile young conductor/musical director from Belfast, Northern Ireland who is developing a reputation for his exciting and dynamic approach to his music making. Working across the UK and Ireland, Matthew has conducted ensembles such as the Ulster Orchestra, NI Opera, Crouch End Festival Chorus, Hallam Sinfonia, and Manchester Philharmonic Choir, and is comfortable across a wide range of operatic, orchestral, and choral repertoire.



He was the winner of the 2019 RTÉ/Feis Ceoil Orchestral Conducting Award with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra - securing the opportunity to record Dvorak's Ninth Symphony with the orchestra last season. Matthew also featured as a Young Conductor on the Crouch End Festival Chorus' Inaugural Conducting Mentorship programme last season, receiving coaching and assisting opportunities with the choir's Musical Director, David Temple MBE. He is a sought after Musical Director and vocal coach, having worked for companies such as the National Stage School of Ireland and Voiceworks NI, as well as at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

JAMES GROSSMITH

BELFAST PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY CHORUS DIRECTOR

James studied conducting at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland after studying music as organ scholar of Clare College, Cambridge. From 2005 he worked as Chorus Master and staff conductor at Scottish Opera, Director of Choral Music at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and Director of Chapel Music at the University of Glasgow. In 2014, James was appointed Principal Chorus Master of Kungliga Operan (Royal Swedish Opera), one of Europe's foremost full-time professional opera choruses, collaborating with many of Europe's leading conductors. Whilst in Stockholm, James conducted the music for the Nobel Prize Banquet in 2018 to a global TV audience of half a billion viewers, and was conductor for the Royal Swedish Opera's flagship opera commissions, known as 'Short Stories', which are televised annually in Sweden.



As a choral and orchestral conductor, James has worked, amongst others, with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, The London Sinfonietta, The Paragon Ensemble, The BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, The St Magnus Festival Chorus, The Royal Scottish National Orchestra Chorus and the Aberdeen Sinfonietta as well as the Hermitage Orchestra in St Petersburg, the Orchestra of Scottish Opera and the Royal Swedish Orchestra in Stockholm.

James returned to the UK in 2022 where he is now Chorus Director of the Belfast Philharmonic Choir and the Edinburgh Festival Chorus.

NORTHERN IRELAND OPERA CHORUS

Northern Ireland Opera's Chorus Development Programme is in its second year and starts in March. Singers receive the opportunity to work on the rehearsal room floor with local and guest coaches including conductors, language coaches choreographers and chorus masters. They are able to work on a wide range of repertoire and across different platforms from concert work, fully staged opera, corporate events, outreach/ education programmes and will have a chamber work fully staged for them in early 2024. Singers are selected from applications and an open audition process. This audition process will open again in early 2024. This programme gives us the opportunity to build the performance experience, skills and repertoire of the chorus as a whole enabling us to create and sustain a vibrant and more highly-skilled group of artists in Northern Ireland.

SOPRANO

Sarah-Jane Cooper
Rachael Heater
Alice Johnston
Erin Kennedy
Niamh Lavery
Melanie Topley
Marcella Walsh
Petra Wells

MEZZO SOPRANO

Jenny Bourke
Áine Brolly
Naomi Cantley
India Chapman-Webb
Sheelagh Greer
Cicely Hé
Susie Hunter
Fiona McLroy

TENOR

Charlie Clarke-Hughes
David Corr
Desmond Havlin
Rhydian Jenkins
Gabriel Seawright
Daniel Rivers

BARITONE

Seamus Brady
Connor Campbell
James Cooper
Conor Foster
Ryan Garnham
Matthew Jeffrey
Paul McQuillan



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biographies.

Reviews for the NI Opera Chorus for 'La Traviata' in 2022.

'The locally based NI Opera chorus is, post-Covid, new, recruited through open auditions earlier this year yet already able to produce the vital, full-bodied sound needed for Verdi's beloved work'

The Observer

'Ravishing choruses, as hypnotic as the marquee arias, inject periodic brio into the musical'

Theatre News

BELFAST PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

JAMES GROSSMITH

CHORUS DIRECTOR OF THE BELFAST PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

Members of the Belfast Philharmonic Choir and Youth Choir are delighted to be collaborating with Northern Ireland Opera on their 2023 production of Puccini's *Tosca*. Our young singers join the Opera Chorus for the sacristy scene when the victory against Napoleon is announced to great excitement and as the first act then builds towards the massed spectacle of the *Te Deum*, both our young singers and members of the adult symphonic chorus join the forces of the Opera Chorus on stage.

This is a wonderful opportunity for our singers to work outside our usual concert performances, working from memory in a fully-staged new production combining all of the elements of live theatre, singing side-by-side and learning from the professional opera chorus whilst immersing themselves in the passionate musical world of Puccini and the thrilling story of *Tosca*.

TOSCA - EXTRA CHORUS

SOPRANO

Helena Carlin
Karine Cramsie
Katie Egan

MEZZO SOPRANO

Katherine Hanratty
Clodagh Loughrey
Hanae Nakamura-Keig
Joanna Patton
Aoife Rooney
Lou Sayers
Hilary Speers

TENOR

Geoff Brooks
Stephen Rusk

CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Molly Agnew
Anna Calvert
Nuria Goldston
Ava Hudson
Mollie Lucas
Harley McKeag
Fern Mellor
Eva Pringle
Siofra Speirs
Alexa Thompson
Isobel Turkington
Francesca Wilson



NORTHERN
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ULSTER ORCHESTRA

1ST VIOLIN

Ioana Petcu-Colan
Jonathan Griffin
Alys Jackson
Danny McCann-Williams
Zuzanna Edmonds
Claire Thatcher
Ana Vandeppeer

2ND VIOLIN

Nick Rippon
Ruta Mazolyte-Aghaunor
Megan Lowry
Kevin Harrell
Usman Peguero
Scott Lowry

VIOLA

Paul Silverthorne
Richard Guthrie
Feargal Ó Dornáin
Philip Walton
Richard Hadwen

CELLO

Morag Stewart
Sarah Shephard
Kathryn Lowry
Andrew Nesbitt

DOUBLE BASS

Mark Jenkins
Aura Stone

FLUTE

Jennifer Sturgeon
Aisling Agnew
Andrew Douglas

OBOE

Chris Blake
Josh Hall
Rebecca Halliday

CLARINET

Anthony Friend
Ciaran McQuaid
Patrick Burke

BASSOON

Vahan Khourdoian
Greg Topping
Rhiannon Carmichael

HORN

Paul Klein
Peter Mullen
Jesse Durkan
Derek Parkins

TRUMPET

Tom Fountain
John Vernon
Jonathan Corry

TROMBONE

Neil Gallie
Gemma Riley
Nathan Moore

BASS TROMBONE

Richard Ashmore

TIMPANI

Mark McDonald

PERCUSSION

Sam Staunton
Joe Mathers
Jonathan Herbert
Ronan McKee

HARP

Richard Allen

CELESTE/KEYS (ORGAN)

Vincent Lynch



NORTHERN
IRELAND
OPERA

STAGE MANAGEMENT

KATE WATKINS - COMPANY STAGE MANAGER

Opera includes: *La Traviata*, *Flying Dutchman*, *Macbeth*, *Turn of the Screw*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Turandot* (Northern Ireland Opera) *The Second Violinist*, *The First Child* (Irish National Opera and Landmark Productions) *Der Rosenkavalier* (Garsington Opera) *20 Shots of Opera* (Irish National Opera) Touring with English Touring Opera (4 Seasons) Touring with Diva Opera (5 Seasons).

As a Company Stage Manager, recent work includes '*Oklahoma*' at The Wyndhams Theatre and Young Vic, '*Into the Woods*' for Northern Ireland Opera and '*Medicine*' at EDIF, GIAF, and St Anns Warehouse NYC for Landmark Productions and Galway International Arts Festival.

Other Theatre includes: *A Number* (The Bridge Theatre) *Grief is the thing with Feathers* (Galway, Dublin, New York, Barbican), *Berberian Sound Studio* (Donmar) *Baghdaddy*, *Pity*, *The End Of History*, *A Kind Of People*, *Living Newspaper* (*For the Royal Court*).

VICKI MACKENZIE - DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER

Vicki trained in Performance Design and Management at Manchester University and has been in Stage Management for over 15 years. Her career started at Opera North where she worked on over 30 shows including Phyllida Lloyds '*Boheme*', Peter Mumford's '*Ring Cycle*' and Jo Davis's '*Carousel*'. Shows were performed all over the North of England as well as The Brigitta Festival in Tallinn & The Barbican.

Other opera credits include: English Touring Opera (6 Seasons) and Opera Holland Park (3 Seasons). Theatre credits include: '*Medicine*' (St Anns Warehouse), '*One Man Two Guvnors*', '*Curious incident of the dog in the Night-time*' and '*Pericles*' (National Theatre), '*Oklahoma*' (The Wyndhams Theatre), '*Miss Julie*' (Theatre by the Lake) and '*A Christmas Carol*' (Bolton Octagon).

For Northern Ireland Opera: '*Into the Woods*' and '*La Traviata*'.

LILY WIELAND - DEPUTY STAGE MANAGER

Opera credits include: *Hansel & Gretel*, *Little Women* (Opera Holland Park). Theatre credits include: *Rise*, *The Wife of Willesden* (The Kiln Theatre), *Company* (Leeds Conservatoire), *Baghdaddy* (The Royal Court Theatre), *The Skin of Our Teeth*, *What We May Be*, *The Three Musketeers*, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Radio Play* (USA).

DEIRBHILE LARKIN - ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Deirbhile is a freelance Stage Manager and Production Manager based in Belfast, and has worked with Replay Theatre Company, Belfast Ma Productions, Bright Umbrella, Aisling Ghéar, Green Room Productions NI, Kabosh, and the Northern Ireland Executive for the 21 Artists for the 21st Century. This is Deirbhile's second production with Northern Ireland Opera, having previously worked on *La Boheme* (2021).

PRODUCTION AND TECHNICAL

SET DESIGNER

Niall McKeever

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Pádraig Ó Duinnin

SET CONSTRUCTION:

Lyric Scene Shop

HEAD OF CONSTRUCTION:

Aidan Payne

SCENIC CARPENTERS:

Matt Laverty, Finn Steadman,
Phillip Goss, Stephen Bamford

WORKSHOP ASSISTANTS:

Jack McGarrigle, Conor Barbour
Phelan Hardy

HEAD OF SCENIC ART:

Bev Craig

SCENIC ARTIST:

Chris Hunter

MASTER CARPENTER AND PROPS

Michael Edgar

PROPS PAINTER:

Tim Weir

CHIEF LX

Rory Harkin

LIGHTING PROGRAMMER

Eoin Winning

LIGHTING AND RIGGING PARTNER

Production Services Ireland

PA AND SOUND DESIGN

McCusker Pro-Audio

TRANSPORT SERVICES

Castle Stage Hire

COSTUME

COSTUME DESIGNER

Gillian Lennox

PATTERN CUTTER

Erica Poole

MAKER

Marian Hegarty

BREAKDOWN ARTISTS

Sarah Carey, Una Hickey

DYER

Sophie George

ACTING SUPERVISOR

Arlene Riley

SENIOR COSTUME ASSISTANT

Niamh Mockford

TRAINEE COSTUME ASSISTANT

Olivia Armstrong

HAIR AND MAKE-UP

HAIR AND MAKE-UP DESIGNER

Nuala Campbell

HAIR ASSISTANT

Sophie Watson



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NORTHERN IRELAND OPERA

CHIEF EXECUTIVE / ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Cameron Menzies

GENERAL MANAGER

Laura Salt

HEAD OF MARKETING AND DEVELOPMENT

Julia O'Hara

ADMINISTRATOR

Helen Jenkins

BOOKKEEPER

Tom Coard

PRESS

PRESS AND MEDIA CONSULTANT

Diana Whitehead, Fourth Wall PR

ARTWORK

PROGRAMME DESIGN AND ARTWORK

Kubrix Design

THANKS

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Northern Ireland Opera Board
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Cathal Murphy, Director of Music,
Clonard Monastery
Mel Harrison, The Harrison
Chambers of Distinction
Laurence Roberts, City Resorts
Stormont Presbyterian Church

Sam Robinson
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Allison Harding
Mary McCabe
Tristan Russcher
Aaron O'Hare
James Henry
Peter Rooney
Church of the Immaculate Conception
and St Joseph, Crossgar. Downpatrick
St Patrick's Parish Downpatrick



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ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND OPERA

Northern Ireland Opera believes in the power of opera to bring people together, to offer unmatched entertainment and escapism, and to tell universal stories. Northern Ireland's rich history of song, music and storytelling are the foundations which fuel our ambition to draw communities together to experience the total artform of opera presented through a contemporary Northern Irish voice, and the emotional and social benefits that it can bring.

As Northern Ireland's national opera company, we are the only professional company in the country producing full scale work on stage and which celebrates and platforms Northern Irish artists, for audiences from their local communities and beyond. We contrast this with nimble smaller scale high quality opera productions which we tour to communities across the country where there is low/no classical music provision. From teenagers experiencing their first opera, to those with a lifelong love of the artform; our critically acclaimed produced work engages audiences in a unique opera experience rooted in a country with a rich history of music.

We are building a community of local and international singers, musicians and creatives and supporting them to develop their craft and progress their professional pathways. Our approach instils generosity as well as aspiration and collaboration as we draw on, invest in and contribute back to our local communities. We capture imaginations and provide the space and tools for people to explore their creative skills and potential. Every person who participates with us, whether as a member of our Northern Ireland Chorus Development Programme, a participant on a creative workshop or Skills Expo session, is given the personalised support which will enable the most impactful outcomes.



LA TRAVIATA

at the Grand Opera House, September 2022

Photo Credit: Neil Harrison Photography

SUPPORT NORTHERN IRELAND OPERA

We are a charity and the support of Donors, Friends, Supporters, Trusts, Sponsors, Foundations and our Principal Funder, the Arts Council NI, is vital in helping us in our mission to bring accessible and high quality opera performances to as many people as possible in Northern Ireland.

If you're a festival, venue or a business looking for a performance for an event, we are always interested in finding new opportunities for the NI Opera Chorus and our Artists in Development.

If you are in a position to support us financially or in kind, either as an individual or as a corporate sponsor, you can help us with our work developing emerging artists, our outreach and education projects bringing opera to new audiences across Northern Ireland and give us more opportunities to put on more productions like 'Tosca'.



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