



Cumbria
OPERA GROUP

Artistic Patron: Joan Rodgers CBE



Cumbria Opera Festival

4th-11th September 2021

Ambleside | Appleby | Carlisle
Grange-over-Sands | Kendal | Penrith



A week of operas,
recitals,
and workshops across
Cumbria

Registered charity no. 1183545
www.cumbriaoperagroup.com



The 2021 Cumbria Opera Festival

4th September 2021

Opera Workshop followed by Open Rehearsal for *Così fan tutte*
Evergreen Centre, Penrith

Recital by Roderick Williams OBE
Penrith Methodist Church

5th September 2021

A Hand of Bridge and *Trouble in Tahiti*
Kendal Town Hall

6th September 2021

Recital by Caroline Taylor and George Needham
St Mary's Church, Ambleside

7th September 2021

An Evening of Opera
Tithe Barn, Carlisle

8th September 2021

An Evening of Opera
Appleby Public Hall

9th September 2021

Così fan tutte
Victoria Hall, Grange-over-Sands

10th September 2021

Joan Rodgers in Conversation/Young Artists' Masterclass
St Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle

11th September 2021

Così fan tutte
St Andrew's Church Penrith

Tickets for all events available at www.cumbriaoperagroup.com



Festival Outline

Welcome!

The 2021 Cumbria Festival of Opera is the first of its kind: a week of music, theatre, and education in one of the most beautiful areas in the world.

The Cumbria Opera Group has existed since 2016, with the aim of bringing high-quality opera, classical music, and music education to Cumbria. Our productions of *Dido and Aeneas*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Acis and Galatea* have demonstrated people's passion for opera in this beautiful county, and we are thrilled to present Cumbria's first ever Festival of Opera.

We're delighted that the Festival will combine some of the brightest young Cumbrian talent alongside world-renowned operatic stars. Roderick Williams is, quite simply, one of the best singers in the world and we're delighted that he'll be opening the Festival. Our Artistic Patron Joan Rodgers will also make a much-anticipated appearance: hailing from Cumbria, Joan has had a career as one of the most sought-after sopranos in the world.

We urge you not to miss our two fully staged operatic productions. Mozart's *Così fan tutte* was his final comic opera – the culmination of the composer's masterful exploits in a genre he made his own. A double bill of Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti* and Barber's *A Hand of Bridge* represents the pinnacle of post-war American theatre: jazz meets opera as the sounds of Gershwin, Mahler, and Ellington are rolled into one.

Outreach is at the heart of everything we do, and we're delighted that an extensive series of schools' workshops will culminate in our Opera Workshop on September 4th. This, combined with two Evenings of Opera events – expect highlights ranging from the 'Queen of the Night' aria to *Nessun Dorma* – and a special recital from the unparalleled Caroline Taylor and George Needham, should provide a Festival well worth attending!

This is an event in Cumbria, for Cumbria, in celebration of an art form that everybody should enjoy. We hope to see you there!



Joe Davies
Artistic Director



Lucy Britton
Managing Director

Welcome



Opera Workshop and Open Rehearsal

Evergreen Centre, Penrith
Saturday 4th September, 14:00



Singers, directors, and actors from the Cumbria Opera Group lead an all-inclusive workshop on theatre, music, and stagecraft.

The Cumbria Opera Group has been praised for 'inspiring and memorable' schools' workshops; and now, as an introduction to the Festival, we present a free hour-long workshop for anyone with a passion for the performing arts.

Following this, all are welcome to attend an Open Rehearsal for our flagship opera, Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, between 3 and 5pm. This is a unique opportunity to see an opera come to life, and will include a 30 minute Q&A session led by the Director and Musical Director. Find out all you've ever wanted to know about opera but were too afraid to ask!

Please visit www.cumbriaoperagroup.com for more information. Registration is required for both of these events.



4th September - workshop and rehearsal

Roderick Williams OBE and Christopher Glynn in Recital

Saturday 4th September, 19:30



© Benjamin Ealovega

‘Our greatest living baritone’ *The Telegraph*

A world-class opera star comes to Cumbria, as Roderick Williams opens the inaugural Cumbria Festival of Opera with style.

Roderick Williams is one of this country’s most sought-after baritones and is constantly in demand on the concert platform and in recital, encompassing a repertoire from the baroque to world premieres. In 2014 Roderick was the featured soloist at the BBC Last Night of the Proms, and in 2016 he won the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Singer of the Year award.

Opera engagements have included leading roles at the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Opera North, and Scottish Opera. Concert highlights include appearances with the Berlin Philharmonic, all the BBC orchestras, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Russian National Orchestra, Academy of Ancient Music, The Sixteen, Le Concert Spirituel, and Bamberg Symphony Orchestra.

He is an accomplished and highly sought-after recital artist who can be heard at venues and festivals including Wigmore Hall, Kings Place, LSO St Luke’s, the Perth Concert Hall, the Concertgebouw, Oxford Lieder Festival, London Song Festival, Howard Assembly Room, the Musikverein, Vienna and on Radio 3, where he has participated on Iain Burnside’s Voices programme. His numerous recordings include Vaughan Williams, Berkeley and Britten operas for Chandos, and an extensive repertoire of English song with pianist Iain Burnside for Naxos. He was awarded an OBE for services to music in June 2017.

Penrith Methodist Church
£25/£20 conc./£5 YPT

4th September - Roderick Williams



Jazz Opera Double Bill

Sunday 5th September, 19:30

The Cumbria Opera Group presents a fully staged double-bill of two modern classics, exploring the darker undertones of 1950s American suburban life. In a decade when magazines are saturated with a relentless positivity to conceal the post-war scars, both pieces ask the question: does the life that the media sells us as an idyll offer genuine satisfaction?

A HAND OF BRIDGE



Synopsis

Barber's brief one-act opera reveals the secret thoughts of two married couples as they play a hand of bridge. Bill is obsessing over his mistress, Cymbeline. His wife, Sally, fixates herself with a hat she has recently seen for sale. Geraldine laments over the lack of genuine love in her life, regretting that her only non-superficial relationship is with her dying mother, who she has ignored for most of her life. Her husband, David, is dissatisfied with his average existence, and fantasises about exotic riches. They all continue to play the game despite clearly wanting to be elsewhere.

Notes from the Director

A Hand of Bridge offers a view into the inner monologues of two unhappily married couples – or rather, four distracted individuals. As well as being caught up in their own fantasies, each character is also second guessing the intentions of those around them. This constructs a complex psychological tension, where the pressures of social expectation enhance each of their fixations, all being hidden under the thinly veiled facade of a friendly game of bridge. In this way, Barber's miniature work is an exercise in how the smallest of outward gestures can reveal the most significant inner voices. This production aims to explore this relationship between appearance and reality, drawing from expressionist aesthetics to heighten every action and place the intricacies of social interaction under an inescapable microscope.



5th September - Jazz Opera Double Bill

Kendal Town Hall
£20/£16 conc./£5 YPT



Synopsis

As a jazz trio presents the audience with a glistening image of suburbia, married couple Sam and Dinah quickly reveal the psychological dissonances hidden beneath. At the breakfast table, Dinah accuses Sam of having an affair, which he bluntly denies. Sam is frustrated that Dinah needs more money to pay for her therapy, and insists on competing in his handball tournament despite a clash with their son's school play. They agree that they need to address the issues in their relationship, planning a conversation for later that evening.

While Sam thrives at work, Dinah tells her therapist of a recent dream. The couple later run into each other on the street, and both lie to avoid having lunch together. Sam is successful at his handball tournament, while Dinah has spent the afternoon watching Hollywood's latest romance, *Trouble in Tahiti*. She initially slates it, but gets drawn into its fantasy as she recounts its events. Both miss their son's play. Back at home, they attempt to talk about their relationship. Sam suggests they should go to the movies. Dinah agrees, hiding the fact she has already seen the film. Both reflect on whether their passion will ever be rekindled.

Notes from the Director

Known as one of the darkest pieces in Bernstein's oeuvre, *Trouble in Tahiti* charts a day in the life of married couple Sam and Dinah as they attempt to plaster over the monotonous and passionless cracks in their 'perfect' suburban life. Sam craves an unattainable virility as he strives to uphold his image at work and at the gym; Dinah aimlessly searches for meaning through hours of therapy and a subservience to the materialism forced upon her by society. Their internal struggles distract them both away from the thing that seemingly binds them: their son, Junior. Constantly contextualised by an eerily bright and enthusiastic vocal jazz trio, their attempts to find excitement are in vain as both are ultimately forced to give in to their sanitised existence and the pre-packaged thrill of Hollywood cinema. Drawing on the offensively cheery aesthetic of 1950s American advertising, this dynamic and chorus-driven staging shines a fresh light on the dissonance between appearance and reality in this much-loved work.



Caroline Taylor and George Needham in Recital

Monday 6th September, 19:30

Caroline Taylor and George Needham are one of the country's most exciting singer-pianist duos. On the third night of the Festival the pair will perform a programme of Richard Strauss, Debussy, Lehár, Johann Strauss, and the premiere of a new song cycle from Cumbrian composer Jen Hartley, using texts from local poet Kerry Darbishire.

This event is preceded by a discussion at 18:30, featuring Joe Davies (Artistic Director), Dr Roger Allen, and Professor Allyson Fiddler.



Increasingly sought-after as a recitalist of 'deep understanding', **George Needham's** performs in solo and collaborative settings throughout Europe. After graduating from Oxford University with first-class honours, he continued his pianistic studies in the UK, with significant teachers including Helen Krizos (Royal Northern College of Music) and Sam Armstrong. He was supported during this time by Oglesby Charitable Trust and Drapers' Music scholarships, the William and Frances Dobie Charitable Foundation, and postgraduate awards from the Countess of Munster Musical Trust and Help Musicians UK.

Since then his training continued at the Franz-Schubert-Institut in Vienna, and presently with Matthias Kirschner at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater, Rostock. He was a Leeds Lieder Young Artist 2019 and Britten-Pears Young Artist 2020. He has worked in masterclass settings with such musicians as Stephen Kovacevich, Lars Vogt, Roger Vignoles and Julius Drake.

Caroline Taylor studied with Louise Winter as an Oglesby Scholar at the RNCM. She won the 2018 Joyce and Michael Kennedy Strauss Award and the 2019 Dean and Chadlington Singing Competition. Caroline is a Concordia Foundation Artist, a Longborough Festival Opera Emerging Artist and a member of the 2019/2020 Wigmore Hall French Song Exchange. Roles include Chocholka and cover Vixen Sharp-Ears/*The Cunning Little Vixen* (Longborough), *Asteria/Tamlerano* (Cambridge Handel Opera Company) and *Adina/The Elixir of Love* (Duchy Opera). Other performances include Britten's *Les Illuminations* (Northern Ballet Sinfonia) and recitals at St James's Piccadilly and St Martin in the Fields.



6th September Recital

St Mary's Church, Ambleside
£15/£12 conc./£5 YPT

An Evening of Opera

7th September: Tithe Barn, Carlisle, 19:30

8th September: Appleby Public Hall, 19:30

Two star soloists accompanied by David Palmer present highlights from the opera repertory: from the 'Queen of the Night' aria to Nessun Dorma, from Carmen to Candide, these evenings will have it all. Opera is an art form known for its drama, adventure, and spectacle, and this evening will demonstrate why.

Lixin Liu studied at the Royal Northern College of Music where she was generously supported by the James and Mary Glass Scholarship. She finished an Advanced Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Performance at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in 2019, supported by RBC Tuition Scholarship. During her studies, Lixin has been awarded The St Claire Barfield Memorial Bowl for Operatic Distinction, and won 1st Prizes in both The Edwards Brooks Lieder Prize and the Cecil Drew Oratorio Prize. She also received The Claire Croiza Prize for French song and she was one of the finalists for the Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award.

Lixin has played the Queen of the Night (*The Magic Flute*) at the Crescent Theatre in Birmingham 2019. Other roles include the Controller (*Flight*), Sprite (*Cendrillon*), Nanetta (*Falstaff*), Frasquita (*Carmen*), Sophie (*Werther*), Constance (*Dialogues de Carmelites*), Clara (*La Vie Parisienne*), Laurette (*Le Docteur Miracle*), Ilia (Idomeneo), Gretel (*Hansel und Gretel*), Clorinda (*La Cenerentola*) and Fox Cubs (*The Cunning Little Vixen*).



Maximilian Lawrie is a tenor studying on the Artist's Diploma (Opera) course at the Royal Academy of Music, learning under Giles Underwood. Maximilian has recently performed the role of Don Jose (*Carmen*) for two productions by CUOS and Rogue Opera in Cambridge, London and the South East. Other roles include the titular character in *Albert Herring* and 'Male Chorus' in *The Rape of Lucretia*. Since graduating from the University of Oxford in 2017, other solo highlights include Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* in Hong Kong with the HK Philharmonic and Bach's *Mass in B Minor* in St John's, Smith Square with the English Baroque Choir. Maximilian is generously supported in his studies by a consortium of over twenty individuals and charities, and thanks them for their continued support.

£15/£12 conc./£5 YPT

Recitals, 7th and 8th September



COSÌ FAN TUTTE

9th September: Victoria Hall, Grange-over-Sands, 19:30

11th September: St Andrew's Church, Penrith, 19:30

The flagship opera of the Festival, Mozart's unparalleled *Così fan tutte*, will be performed in two unique venues in Kendal and Penrith. Featuring a young, exciting cast, this production of Mozart's final Italian comedy will be set in Hollywood's Golden Age, painting the wife swapping of our two couples in a thrilling and relevant context.



9th and 11th September

£20/£16 conc./£5 YPT

Così fan tutte synopsis

Our story begins with Don Alfonso speculating on the fidelity of women with his two friends, Guglielmo and Ferrando (engaged to Fiordiligi and Dorabella respectively). Don Alfonso is adamant that women will always betray their lovers, while his two friends defend the loyalty of their betrothed.

Don Alfonso persuades the pair to disguise themselves and test the loyalty of their fiancées – they pretend to be called to war, but then quickly return in dubious disguises. The two men are challenged to seduce the other man's fiancée. Despina, the women's assistant, aids Don Alfonso in his cunning plan.

The women begin by rejecting their advances, but with time are quickly won over. Eventually, the deception is revealed, all is forgiven and happiness resumes. Don Alfonso claims his point has been proved, and he states 'Women are all the same!' (*Così fan tutte!*).

Notes from the Director

Così fan tutte is one of Mozart's most popular works, boasting a lush musical score and a complex, comedic story-line.

For inspiration behind our interpretation of *Così fan tutte*, I drew on the works of William Shakespeare and the worlds he created, with disguises, role-swapping and wit aplenty. In the words of Shakespeare, we're reminded that, 'all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players: they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts...'. In *Così*, this rings true and with this playfulness in mind we have updated our story, originally set in 18th century Naples, to a film set in 1930s Hollywood.

Amongst the glitz and glamour of this 'Golden Era' we ask ourselves, what is make believe and what is real?



Joan Rodgers in Conversation & Young Artists' Masterclass

Friday 10th September, 19:30



© Rose Daniel

A national treasure, an opera star, a Cumbrian.

The Cumbria Opera Group are honoured to have Joan Rodgers CBE as our Artistic Patron, and we look forward to this event celebrating the soprano's career and Cumbrian heritage. Joan will be interviewed by our Artistic Director Joe Davies, after which she will lead a masterclass featuring three young Cumbrian singers.

Joan Rodgers is equally established in opera, concert and as a recitalist. She has appeared in concert with conductors including Solti, Barenboim, Mehta, Harnoncourt, Mackerras, Ashkenazy, Salonen, Rattle, Elder and Bolton. She has appeared in recitals and concerts throughout Europe and the USA. Operatic engagements have included performances at all the major UK opera houses as well as in Paris, Munich, Brussels, Amsterdam and Vienna and the Metropolitan Opera, New York.

Her many recordings include albums of songs by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov, Wolf, Fauré and Mozart and the three Mozart Da Ponte operas with Daniel Barenboim and the Berlin Philharmonic.

Joan Rodgers received the Royal Philharmonic Society award as Singer of the Year for 1997, the 1997 Evening Standard Award for outstanding performance in opera for her performance as The Governess in the Royal Opera's production of *The Turn of the Screw* and an Honorary Doctorate of Music from Liverpool University in July 2005. Joan Rodgers was awarded the CBE in the 2001 New Year's Honours List.



10th September

St Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle
£15/£12 conc./£5 YPT

Cast and Creative Team

*=*Così fan tutte* ^=Jazz Opera Double Bill

Kerran Cotterell - *Trio*^



Born and educated in Cumbria, Kerran began his interest in choral music with local choirs such as Penrith Singers and Cambiata North West before moving further afield with Vox Boys' Choir and NYCGB. Theatrical roles include Tony in *West Side Story* and Javert in *Les Misérables*. Kerran has just

graduated from St. Peter's college Oxford where he studied music as an undergraduate and was a choral scholar in the chapel choir. Aside from choral music Kerran has sung with the University's leading jazz a cappella choir The Oxford Gargoyles for two years and in the second took the role of Musical director for the group. When not singing Kerran is often found performing on guitar at folk festivals all across the UK.

Ross Cumming - *Guglielmo**



Scottish Baritone Ross Cumming is currently studying for an MMus in Performance at the Royal Northern College of Music under the tutelage of Matthew Best. He has represented the RNCM, performing lead roles in college opera productions and singing with the RNCM Songsters. Recent performance highlights include Simone in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, The Forester in Janáček's *The*

Cunning Little Vixen and the titular role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Concert solo performances include the Diesel in *West Side Story* conducted by Sir John Eliot Gardiner and baritone solos in works such as Mozart Requiem, Durufle Requiem, Handel's *Messiah*, Faure Requiem and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Ross recently won the Bessie Cronshaw/Frost Brownson Song Cycle Competition, and looks forward to beginning at the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in September 2021.

Jack Dolan - *Ferrando**/*Bill*^



Born and raised in Manchester, Jack Dolan is currently based in London where he studies as a Master's student at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under Sarah Pring and Adrian Thompson as a John S Cohen Foundation Scholar, additionally supported by Margaret Hamilton. Previously, he

studied under Maureen Brathwaite at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, graduating with First Class honours in 2019. Jack's musical roots lie in rock and blues, and he studied the guitar for six years whilst developing a love for Classical music. His eclectic musical tastes, from rock to musical theatre, sparked a fascination with vocal music and motivated his research into all different types of singing. Originally, he intended to follow an academic path and become a teacher; however, he was persuaded by Claire Surman to change his path to study at Conservatoire and train as a tenor.

www.jackdolantenor.com

Jonathan Hill - *Don Alfonso**



After being Head Chorister at Carlisle Cathedral, Jonathan has starred in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as Leporello and played the hunter in *Venus and Adonis* and Polyphemus in *Acis and Galatea* with the Cumbria Opera Group. Jonathan has sung the character Goffredo in

the stage premier of Judith Weir's *Armida and The Armchair* and The Black Cat in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* with the University of Manchester Opera society. Jonathan has also had the privilege of performing in the chorus for Opera North's production of *Silent Night* by Kevin Putts and Bergen National Opera's production of Britten's *Peter Grimes*. Jonathan is currently singing as a lay clerk at Carlisle Cathedral before returning to RNCM in September to start his masters degree.

Cast and Creative Team



Alexander Joseph - *Trio*



Alexander Joseph is a singer, pianist, and composer. Whilst at Oxford University, Alexander sang with and managed The Oxford Gargoyles, Oxford's renowned jazz a cappella ensemble, performing with the group for three consecutive years at the Edinburgh Fringe

Festival. Alexander held a choral scholarship with St Peter's College Chapel Choir, studied singing with Nicholas Warden, and had both acting and musical-directing roles in various operas and musicals, including *Marat/Sade* (2017, MD), *Candide* (2017, Cast/AMD), and *Nice Guy* (2018, MD). Since graduating, Alexander has worked as a pianist and singer in corporate entertainment. In November 2020, Alexander began building up a following online by sharing videos of piano arrangements and original compositions, which have accrued millions of views on TikTok. Alexander is currently working on an album of reimagined classical pieces, due to be released later this year.

www.alexanderjoseph.com

Samantha Lewis - *Dorabella**



Samantha developed her interest in opera while at The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where she graduated with an MMus degree with distinction and won the Postgraduate Course Prize. Roles include Fanny Price in Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park*,

Prospero in *The Enchanted Island* by Jeremy Sams, and Mother/Other-Mother in Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Coraline*. Samantha has a vehement passion for art song, winning The Edward Brooke's English Song Prize in 2019. Samantha is an experienced concert soloist, featuring with many acclaimed choirs including The London Male Voice choir and Ex Cathedra, with whom she held a scholarship during 2019-2020. Samantha is currently on the Advanced Performance Diploma at The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire where she holds a full scholarship, studying with Yvonne Sandison.

www.samanthalewismezzosoprano.com

Chris Murphy - *Sam*/*David*



Chris is a professional singer based in Oxford where he holds the post of Bass Lay Clerk at Christchurch Cathedral. Stage roles have included Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with Oxford Alternative Orchestra, Gerónimo in *The*

Secret Marriage and Ariodate in *Seirse* with NCO, and Sid in *Albert Herring* with Aspect Opera. As a soloist, Chris has performed Duruflé's *Requiem* with Sussex Chorus, Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* with Hull Philharmonic, Bach's *St John Passion* with Calamity Consort and the Headington Ensemble and Fauré's *Requiem* with Yarm School Choral Society and Eastcote Choral Society. Chris currently learns with Giles Underwood and when not performing enjoys baking and tending to his allotment.

Jemimah Taylor - *Trio*



Jemimah began her performance career at the National Youth Music Theatre, with title roles in Richard Taylor's *Whistle Down The Wind* and Howard Goodall's *The Dreaming*. Since then, other roles include Cathy in *The Last Five Years* (Michael Pilch Studio), Anna in *Spring Awakening* (Keble O'Reilly Theatre)

and Alice in *Queueue* (Oxford Modern Art). Other singing exploits include being a member of the jazz acapella group, The Oxford Gargoyles and Merton College Choir, as well as being the lead singer of a jazz/neo-soul band. She has performed with Cumbria Opera Group in their earlier years, singing the part of a witch in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*.



Holly Teague - *Despina**/*Geraldine*^



Soprano Holly Teague is completing her masters at the Royal College of Music studying under Amanda Roorcroft, where she holds the Audrey Sacher Award and is supported by the Countess of Munster Trust, the Mario Lanza Educational Foundation, and the Dick Maidment and Peggy Cooper Award (Help Musicians

UK). Holly completed her undergraduate degree at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, where she studied with Catherine Benson and Amanda Roorcroft. At RBC Holly was awarded the St Clare Barfield Rosebowl for Operatic Distinction in 2020, and the RBC Singing Prize, the Cecil Drew Oratorio Prize and the interdepartmental Doris Newton Music Club Award in 2019. Roles include Mary Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, Tina in *Flight* and Cricket in *Pinnocchio*, all by Jonathan Dove, as well as Hanna in Lehar's *Die Lustige Witwe* and Ariel in Sams' *The Enchanted Island*.

www.hollyteague.com

Myrna Tennant - *Fiordiligi**



Originally from the Netherlands, Myrna is based in London and is currently on the Artist Masters programme at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama under the tutelage of Yvonne Kenny. Myrna completed her undergraduate studies at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with Helen Lawson, graduating with a Bachelor with Honours

(First Class), after which she spent two years working as a freelancer and studying with Wilma MacDougall. Previous performance highlights include the title role in Massenet's *Cinderella*, Galatea (*Acis and Galatea*), Venus (*Venus and Adonis*); concert appearances include being the soprano soloist for Mozart's *Requiem* and Handel's *Messiah*. Myrna has won prizes in competitions including the Keldwyth Award, the AESS Courtney Kenny Award, and the Norma Greig French Song Prize. This summer Myrna was a chorus member for Grange Park Opera's 2021 Festival, including a production of Verdi's *Falstaff* starring Bryn Terfel in the title role.

www.myrnatennant.com

Helsa Townsend - *Dinah*^/*Sally*^



Helsa Townsend is a 23 year old soprano from Cumbria and a recent graduate of the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire under the tutelage of Jonathan Gunthorpe and Paul Wingfield. While at the conservatoire, Helsa performed the full roles of Prospero in Jeremy

Sams' *The Enchanted Island* and Coraline in Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Coraline*, as well as L'Ensolliad and Hansel in scenes from *Chérubin* and *Hänsel und Gretel* respectively. Helsa plans to return to Birmingham in September to obtain a Post Graduate Certificate before auditioning for opera schools next year. Before Birmingham, Helsa studied voice and cello at the Junior Conservatoire at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, as well as being a member of both the National Youth Choir and National Youth Chamber Choir, with whom concert highlights include several BBC Proms and concerts at the Snaps Proms and at Cadogan Hall.

www.helsatownsend.com

Persia Babayan-Taylor - *Director**



Persia trained at Guildford School of Acting. Beginning a varied career in the performance industry, Persia has worked as an Actor and Musician performing on screen and on stage in London's West End, as a composer creating music for theatre and short film and as a Producer and Director, working with

Theatre by the Lake, Guildford School of Acting and most recently, her theatre company Jupiter Creatives, directing and producing their 2021 UK tour of *Twelfth Night*. In 2021 Persia will also be producing and directing an R&D of the new play *Swallows and Armenians* with Guildford School of Acting. Persia began working with the Cumbria Opera Group in 2017, co-producing Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and then directing John Blow's *Venus and Adonis* in 2018.

Cast and Creative Team



Jonny Danciger - *Director*



Jonny Danciger is a stage director, designer and composer from London. He is currently the Artistic Director of the OSO Arts Centre in Barnes. As founder and artistic director of theatre company Barricade Arts, he has coordinated international tours with the British Council School in Madrid. Engagements as director or assistant include work with the British Youth Opera (assisting Keith Warner), Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, Oxford Alternative Orchestra and Oxford Playhouse. He works frequently as a sound designer and audio engineer, with credits including the Birmingham Old Rep, Oxford Playhouse and Peacock Theatre. Jonny has also performed in the West End under the direction of Polly Findlay (*Twisted Tales*, Lyric Hammersmith) and Stephen Daldry (*Billy Elliot*, Victoria Palace Theatre). He completed a training placement with the Royal Opera House, and read music at St Peter's College, Oxford.

www.jonnydanciger.com

Joe Davies - *Musical Director*



Critically praised as an 'inspiring' conductor with a 'substantial future ahead of him', Cumbrian-born Joe Davies is founder and Artistic Director of the Cumbria Opera Group. He is Musical Director of the Ripieno Players, Worcester Philharmonic Orchestra, Leamington Sinfonia, Abney Orchestra, and CoMA East Midlands, and a Musical Director for Barricade Arts and SLAM Theatre. Highlights include collaborations with Laura van der Heijden, Jess Gillam, and Xhosa Cole; Musical Director credits include *Candide*, *Acis and Galatea*, *Venus and Adonis*, and *Dido and Aeneas*. Also a composer and arranger, his comic operetta *How to Use a Washing Machine* toured the UK in summer 2019. Joe graduated with a first-class degree in music from St Peter's College, Oxford. He then studied orchestral conducting at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire under Michael Seal (Associate Conductor, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra), where he graduated with Distinction. He looks forward to serving as Musical Director for the Festival's three productions.

www.joedaviesconductor.com

Megan Bowyer - *Costume Designer*



Megan Bowyer is an artist and costumer based in Lancaster. She has costumed Cumbria Opera Group's productions since 2016, including *Dido and Aeneas*, *Venus and Adonis* and *Acis and Galatea*. Megan holds a BA in Fine Art from Lancaster University, and is currently studying for an MFA in Drawing at Paris College of Art. She has loved watching the group grow, and is super excited to be organising costumes for three shows during the festival. She's really enjoyed working with all of the talented teams, singers and musicians for another year of performances.

meganbowyerartist@gmail.com

Jordan Summers - *Lighting Designer*



Jordan is passionate about theatre and the arts, and loves to enable and support fantastic shows and performances through his work as a sound, lighting and media engineer. Jordan has lit Cumbria Opera Group productions since 2016, including *Dido and Aeneas*, *Venus and Adonis* and *Acis and Galatea*. Working through his company, **1Five Events & Film**, Jordan gets to be part of a wide range of events, from concerts to conferences to theatre, bringing knowledge and enthusiasm to every project. He is excited to have been invited to light three of the performances at the Festival of Opera this year.

www.1five.co.uk



Cast and Creative Team

Emma Turner - *Set Designer*



Emma Turner is a freelance scenic designer, builder and painter with a love for all things theatrical. She holds a BA in Fine Art from Lancaster University and enjoyed studying a specialist course in Scenic Art at RADA earlier this year. Emma has designed and built sets for shows at the OSO Arts

Centre, Delta Academy of Dance and Performing Arts, the Dukes Theatre and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Emma has enjoyed working with the Cumbria Opera Group directors to create three thought-provoking sets for beautiful venues across Cumbria. She has revelled in every stage of the process and hopes that you enjoy each lovingly handcrafted moment. Thinking of creating something scenic? Emma can be contacted at:

www.emmaturner.myportfolio.com

David Palmer - *Accompanist, Evenings of Opera*



David Palmer is a composer and pianist specialising in contemporary music and instrumental chamber music. David studies composition with Richard Barrett in The Hague, and piano with Ronan O'Hora at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. David read music at Oxford University, graduating with a first-class BA in 2019,

where he studied composition with Robert Saxton. David has worked with many eminent composers, including Judith Weir, Michael Zev Gordon, Tristan Murail and Martyn Harry, and often collaborates with student composers. Alongside frequent solo recitals, David regularly performs with his piano trio and violinist Charlie Lovell-Jones. David has an extensive orchestral keyboard repertoire, including major parts by Stravinsky, Copland, Shostakovich and Saxton.

www.davidpalmermusician.com

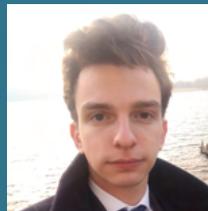
Jonny Budd - *Répétiteur*



Jonny Budd is a pianist, currently studying under the tutelage of Alasdair Beatson at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Having given his first concert performances aged 17, Jonny now also enjoys performing varied solo recitals and chamber works.

He is a founding member of the Abode Ensemble, who have performed works of Ravel, Fauré, Schumann and Strauss and have recently recorded a selection of pieces by living female composers including Hannah Kendall, Freya Waley-Cohen and Grace-Evangeline Mason. Jonny also regularly collaborates with singers and has taken on orchestral piano opportunities over the last few years, which has led to a number of performances at Birmingham's Symphony Hall. A finalist in 2021 in the Conservatoire's most prestigious piano prize, Jonny is also looking forward to performing solo recitals at venues in France and the UK over the coming months.

William Nixon - *Répétiteur*



William Nixon is a Bmus piano student at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, having just finished his third year, studying under Daniel Browell. He has been playing piano since the age of 9, and hopes to pursue a career in performance, teaching and composition. In the past, he has won awards in piano and flute

performance at the Carlisle Music Festival, and has taken part in composition workshops, such as Cumbria Calling, which ended with sell out concerts in the Sands Centre performing alongside the Carlisle Youth Orchestra. In Birmingham, William frequently accompanies various singers, taking part in festivals and competitions, as well as regularly performing with the Conservatoire Folk Ensemble, notably playing in the EU Parliament in 2019.



Friends' Scheme



If you want to help support classical music, music education and opera in Cumbria and the Northwest, there's no better way than by becoming a Friend of the Cumbria Opera Group. We welcome any level of support.

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- A complimentary invitation to the Festival Closing Drinks (11th September)
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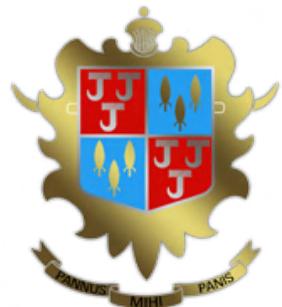
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1Five Film produces engaging, story driven films for weddings, events and businesses nationwide. We tried to put a showreel into this brochure, but apparently you still can't play videos on paper, so head to the website to see some of our work, produced for the likes of Penrith Town Council, local artists and businesses, plus a multitude of wedding couples.

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Ticket Information

Tickets for all our events will be released on these dates:

1st June

Priority Booking for all Friends and Sponsors

1st July

General Booking

We strongly recommend booking early to avoid disappointment, particularly for our Jazz Opera Double Bill for which tickets are very limited.

All tickets available at www.cumbriaoperagroup.com or by phone +44 (0) 7860807183.

COVID-19 Policy

All events will be held subject to government guidance, including any social distancing regulations.

In the event of COVID-19-enforced cancellations, full refunds will be issued for any tickets purchased.

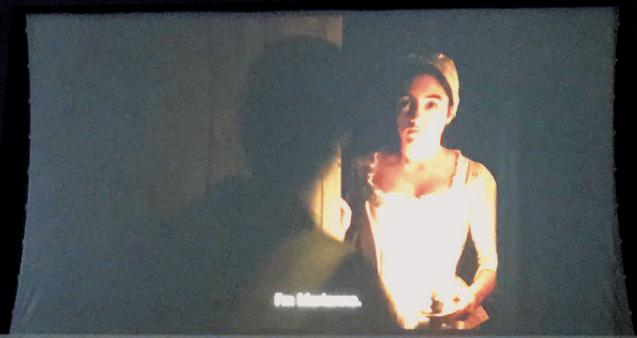
Ticket holders, Friends and Sponsors will be notified if any Festival plans change.



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