



OPERA VERA

in collaboration with



CANTATA
DRAMATICA

presents

SHAHRAZAD

A NEW OPERA
BY DANYAL DHONDY

LIBRETTIST NICK PITTS-TUCKER

CONDUCTOR PHILIP HESKETH

DIRECTOR NINA BRAZIER

Leighton House Museum

Friday 10th & Saturday 11th February, 7pm



THE 999TH NIGHT

IN CALIPH HAROUN AL RASHID'S HAREM

THE 1000TH NIGHT

THE TALE OF PRINCESS ALMOND
AND PRINCE JASMINE

THE 1001ST NIGHT

THE CALIPH'S REVENGE

There will be a 30-minute interval after the first act during which drinks will be served downstairs. There will be a brief pause between the second and third act.

Please turn your mobile phone off during the performance.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

STORYTELLER

SHAHRAZAD

KING SHARYAR

HAROUN AL RASHID

the Caliph

ZUBEIDAH

favourite of Haroun

JAFAR AL BARMAKI

Haroun's Vizier and friend

ABBASA

sister of Haroun

YAHYA

Jafar's father

The characters in Shahrazad's story on the 1000th night:

PRINCE JASMINE

a prince

PRINCESS ALMOND

a princess

DERVISH

KING AKBAR

Princess Almond's father

WICKED UNCLE

Princess Almond's uncle

ALEXANDER ANDERSON-HALL
King Sharyar

PHILIPPA BOYLE
Shahrazad/Abbasa

PETER BROOKE
Haroun al Rashid

CHRISTINE BURAS
Princess Almond

PHILIP HESKETH
Conductor and Piano

NICOLA BARBAGLI
Oboe, Cor Anglais

JOLEY CRAGG
Tabla

NINA BRAZIER
Director

PETER BROOKE & JULIA STUTFIELD
Producers

AURORE LACABE
Zubeidah/Prince Jasmine

MARTIN LAMB
*Storyteller/Dervish/Akbar/Wicked Uncle/
Yahya*

TOM MORSS
Jafar

FLORA GRACE CURZON
Violin

KIMON PARRY
Clarinet

JOSH SALTER
Cello

INTRODUCTION

We are very pleased to invite you to Cantata Dramatica’s 6th new commission, *Shahrazad*, a co-production with Opera Vera.

The work takes its inspiration from the Thousand and One Nights, often known in English as the Arabian Nights, from the first English language edition (1706). The libretto has been inspired by many sources, including the excellent old translations of Mardrus and Mather, the Histories of al-Tabari, and Sufi poems from *The Conference of the Birds* by Farid ud-Din Attar. The music—lyrical, fantastic and dramatic by turns—draws from both Eastern and Western traditions, and is composed by Danyal Dhondy.

Everyone knows that the Thousand and One Nights are the never-ending stories told by Shahrazad to avoid death at the hands of the jealous king, who has vowed to marry a virgin every night and kill her in the morning, but few know how the stories end.

Our opera takes place over the final three nights: Shahrazad must sing for her life but knows that she is near the end of the series of tales. The 999th night features an improvised song contest in the harem of Caliph Haroun al Rashid, that begins with joy but ends in foreboding. The 1000th night delights all with a fantastical and light hearted romance, while the 1001st night concludes the dark tale of the Caliph’s terrible wrath and merciless revenge. The epilogue reveals the fate of Shahrazad and the final judgement of King Sharyar.

COMPOSER DANYAL DHONDY WRITES:

The invitation to create an opera based on the Arabian Nights presented me with some fantastic opportunities. These well-loved stories, full of drama and colour, provide ideal ‘operatic’ material—the chance to depict in music both an evocative external world, and the psychological journeys of complex characters as they encounter extreme challenges.

There is, however, a problematic aspect of working with source material from this geographic and historical context, and there were a few particular questions that confronted me from the beginning of this project. In dealing with stories from the Middle- and slightly further-East, how far should my score go in incorporating (/appropriating) the musical language of these cultures? While this opera does draw on musical inspiration from the geographical sources of these stories—North Africa and South Asia as well as the Middle East—I wanted to avoid the banality of simply presenting a pastiche of these ‘exotic’ musical sources. The challenge was to integrate various melodic, harmonic, rhythmic and structural ideas in a way that is interesting and new.

Another question is: should the piece take a ‘moral stance’ on aspects of the text such as female subjugation, which clearly spring from the patriarchal context of their own time, but come into conflict with a modern, feminist viewpoint? All of the female characters in the piece suffer, to varying extents, under the rule of Kings and Caliphs, and lack agency in determining their own (often horrific) fates. Rather than change the material to fit better with our own moral values, I felt the best way to approach this dilemma was to simply let these characters speak, giving them a voice to express the injustices of their situations.

DIRECTOR NINA BRAZIER WRITES:

Bringing to life the story of the One Thousand and One Nights is potentially complicated and throws up many questions—how does one remain honest to the integrity of the story, and yet interpret it in a way that speaks to a contemporary audience? How do we, through our Western eyes, make sense of a series of stories so outside our social convention that we have no real point of reference? We have chosen to remain ostensibly timeless in our setting as a nod to the eclectic, folkloric quality of the original work—reminding us that the stories have already been told and retold over several centuries, and that we are a small part of an ongoing interpretation. Then, taking our cue from the immersive nature of Danyal’s score and the episodic nature of the piece, we have chosen to use the space as fully as we can, shifting from the ‘frame’ story of Sharyar and Shahrazad, to the tales that she invites us to witness, from Haroun’s harem to the buffalo fields of Prince Jasmine. Nicholas’ libretto is packed with witty poetry, and Danyal’s evocative, often hypnotic score is cut through with delicious, Eastern-inspired melodies; text and music somehow both cleverly acknowledge the origin of the stories. In the staging I have aimed to reflect this, recognising the original but finding a fresh interpretation, bringing to life an Eastern world through a modern, Western perspective.

OPERA VERA

Opera Vera is a London-based company that seeks to offer opportunities to young professional singers. Formed in 2012 the company has attracted critical acclaim, starting with its first production—Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*—led by James McOran-Campbell in the title role. The company has recently completed the Mozart-Da Ponte cycle, performing in an exciting range of venues from a thirteenth century barn to a converted forge. Future projects for 2017 include a touring production of *Magic Flute* in London, Devon and the Midlands.

For more information please see our website www.operavera.co.uk.

LEIGHTON HOUSE

Leighton House Museum is the former home of the Victorian artist Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830–1896). The only purpose-built studio-house open to the public in the United Kingdom, it is one of the most remarkable buildings of the nineteenth century, containing a fascinating collection of paintings and sculpture by Leighton and his contemporaries.

Designed to Leighton’s precise requirements by George Aitchison, from modest beginnings the house grew into a ‘private palace of art’, featuring the extraordinary Arab Hall with its golden dome, intricate mosaics and walls lined with beautiful Islamic tiles. Leighton travelled to Turkey in 1867, to Egypt in the following year and to Syria in 1873. On each of these trips he collected textiles, pottery and other objects that were later to be displayed in his house. However, the trip to Damascus in 1873 laid the foundations for the wonderful collection of tiles that line the walls of the Arab Hall extension, on which construction began in 1877. Leighton and Aitchison brought together a group of their contemporaries to contribute to the project, including the potter William De Morgan, the artworker Walter Crane, the sculptor Edgar Boehm and the artist and illustrator Randolph Caldecott.

For more information please see our website www.leightonhouse.co.uk.

SHAHRAZAD: A SYNOPSIS

Shahrazad presents a series of stories within a story, a recurring feature of the *Thousand and One Nights*.

The opera opens with a summons from the Storyteller. He introduces us to Shahrazad and King Sharyar in the king's chamber on the 999th night of Shahrazad's storytelling marathon¹. King Sharyar has clearly been captivated by Shahrazad and her stories, but the threat of her execution is still very real and every night she is singing for her life.

Shahrazad announces that the final story will be 'A tale of Haroun al Rashid, Caliph, Allah's ruler on earth, a tale hard to believe were it not true! A tale of folly and pride, of misjudgement and mis-chance, of forbidden love.' The story begins in Haroun's harem, where he is dallying with Zubeidah, his favourite companion. Haroun is about to go away on a pilgrimage to Mecca and Zubeidah declares that before he goes they must have a song. Haroun calls for Jafar, his Vizier and close friend, to join them, together with his beloved sister Abbasa (who must sing modestly veiled and from behind a curtain). They take titles from a brass jar and improvise songs, establishing the characters of the singers and providing a hint of what is to happen to them in the story.

Zubeidah picks the title of the first song from a brass jar and performs the Song of Jasmine. The others follow. Abbasa sings the Song of the Swan, which Jafar applauds enthusiastically, prompting Haroun to invite

Abbasa to unveil and come out from behind the curtain. Haroun has 'a plan, a command indeed. Marry Jafar! Marry for music, marry for poetry, Marry your souls and reach for the

**MARRY FOR MUSIC,
MARRY FOR POETRY,
MARRY YOUR SOULS
AND REACH FOR THE PRIZES
THAT PARADISE AFFORDS!**

prizes that paradise affords!'. Abbasa moves to sit with Jafar as instructed, but the tension is palpable as Haroun sings the Song of the Falcon, a terrifying declaration of brooding and inexorable power.

The other singers all applaud Haroun sycophantically. Next, Abbasa picks the Song of the Rose, and it becomes an erotically charged duet for herself and Jafar. Haroun's excitement is palpable as he mimics words from the song: 'O prettily done! Prettily sung! You silly pretty lovers!' He then picks the Song of the Hoopoe — an exuberant quartet based on Sufi poems from *The Conference of the Birds* by Farid ud-Din Attar. The song ends with each voice quietly singing 'For there is no wisdom in that man', the excitement melting away. Haroun takes this as his cue to depart, with the ominous

**NO PASSION HERE, NOTHING
THAT IS NOT OF THE SOUL.**

admonition 'Sing songs for me while I'm gone, play music but remember your vows. No passion here, nothing that is not of the soul'. Zubeidah leaves with him, but Jafar and Abbasa remain in stunned silence. Jafar picks one last song and finds another duet, The Song of the Moth and the Candle. Resigned, he comments, 'I am the moth, it seems, and you are the candle', and the opening phrase 'I am the lover whose love burns up his heart', says it all. The song moves gradually towards the climactic phrase 'You drank your death, eternity was in it. But have we not lived all, living in a minute?' As the lights fade, Jafar and Abbasa accept their fate and embrace.

**I AM THE LOVER WHOSE LOVE
BURNS UP HIS HEART.**

The second act opens in King Sharyar's chamber on the 1000th night. Shahrazad warms up her voice in preparation for another night of storytelling, and chooses the whimsical romance of Prince Jasmine and Princess Almond as a diversion from the impending doom of the previous night's tale. Shahrazad starts by introducing the beautiful Prince Jasmine ('eyes long beneath a brow that shames the moonlight, teeth like diamonds... For all his beauty, he just kept the royal buffaloes'), and then the characters in the story start to act out their own tale. They sing to a hypnotic

**TONIGHT, O AUSPICIOUS KING,
I WILL TELL YOU THE DELICIOUS
TALE OF THE LOVE OF PRINCESS
ALMOND AND PRINCE JASMINE.**

instrumental accompaniment, underpinned by the beat of a tabla (Indian drum) that mimics the intensity of the emotions in the story.

The simple but fanciful tale has all the essential elements — a beautiful young prince and princess, a go-between (in this case, a Dervish) who gets them together, a stern father, and a wicked uncle who tries to thwart their forbidden love. To heighten the sense of unreality, the prince and princess are both female roles and all the other parts are played by the same male singer. In the end the lovers make a series of miraculous escapes and all ends happily. The 1000th Night ends with Shahrazad's final impassioned plea to King Sharyar: 'So with this happy tale, auspicious king, I end this thousandth night. A thousand

**A THOUSAND TALES I'VE TOLD
FOR YOUR DELIGHT. DO WITH
ME WHAT YOU WILL!**

tales I've told for your delight. Do with me what you will! And if you must, your songbird you may kill!

Returning to the king's chamber on the 1001st night, we find King Sharyar eager to resume the story of Haroun al Rashid. Jafar's father, Yahya, has been left in charge of the harem while Haroun is away. The jealous Zubeidah goes to greet Haroun on his return from Mecca, and tells him that Jafar and Abbasa have been seeing one another and that they have a child. 'And where is this child of my sister and my vizier?' Haroun rages, and Zubeidah replies pertly, 'Well, Haroun, why not ask his father?'

Haroun secretly goes to find the child and kill it, but cannot bring himself to do so. Next we see Yahya in the harem, desperately

¹ Previously the king had discovered that his first wife was unfaithful to him. He therefore resolved to marry a new virgin each day and behead her the day after, so as to avoid any chance of being deceived again. By the time he was introduced to Shahrazad, a large number of virgins had already met this grim fate, but Shahrazad was prepared to take the risk and her strategy was to tell the king a story, leaving it unfinished each night. He was so entertained by the first story that he spared her life on the first day to allow her to finish her tale, whereupon she started another, and so it went on.

seeking mercy for his sins. Yahya prays in fear and trembling, 'O God, my sins are a mighty number... Take my hearing, my sight, my wealth, my family... but not Jafar, I pray.'

O GOD! IF INDEED YOU MUST
PUNISH ME, THEN TAKE ANY ONE
OF US BUT NOT JAFAR, I PRAY.

Haroun overhears him and responds with a dramatic exhortation for his kingdom to be cleansed: 'O Jafar, O Abbasa, such defilement! Now wash away the dirt with your sweet blood.' He retreats to the desert and pours out his brooding anger in music that recalls the merciless power of the Song of the Falcon: 'No mercy here for sinners with such stains. In the pure breath of Allah this Caliph reigns.'

Next he summons Yahya. 'I have sent for you in a matter so secret that if the button of my shirt knew it, I would cut it off.... Go to the house where your son and Abbasa lie. Wait, wait for my command'. Haroun returns to Baghdad, where he refuses Jafar's invitation to dine and as the tension builds, it becomes clear that his command is for Yahya to execute his own son. Jafar tries to negotiate but finally the lovers realise that the end is nigh. They reprise the

LOVE'S LAW FOR ME IS TO
PERISH OF DESIRE, TO BE
CONSUMED BY FIRE.

Song of the Moth and the Candle: 'I am the lover whose love burns up his heart. Love's law for me is to perish of desire, to be consumed by fire. So fire blaze out to candle and moth, and drink our death, eternity is in it. But have we not lived all, living in a minute?'

Shahrazad has ended her tales. But King Sharyar realises that her talents exceed all the gold, silver and diamonds in his treasure halls. In a sudden outbreak of wisdom, he begs Shahrazad to be his wife. The cast reprise the last mystic lines from the song of the Hoopoe, in praise of wisdom.

BUT HAVE WE NOT LIVED ALL,
LIVING IN A MINUTE?

SHAHRAZAD: THE SONGS

THE SONG OF JASMINE

Come to me, mourn not. I am Jasmine,
My stars whiter than silver in a blue moon.
From the breast of God to the breasts of women
With wine, with me. White shines laughter.
White joy I am, my lords!

THE SONG OF LAVENDER

I am no city flower. Foolish talk escapes me.
I grow in hot brown dust, loving not men, but man.
No slave, no city dweller touches me. I dwell
In the wasted heat of Arabia,
Mistress of hermits, bees, gazelles and bitter absinthe.
A free girl, lust seeks me not, but the wild rider seeks me,
Coming to the valleys when the morning breeze
Kisses me, near to the wine of me. Allah! Allah!
Even camel boys, telling of me, forget their oaths!

THE SONG OF THE SWAN

Mistress of my desires, I cruise the skies,
The waters and meadows equally.
Calm, confident, my lily bended neck I show.
Mistress of mysteries of waters and green
Dim glinting drifts of treasure submarine
I sail, myself. With adventure, riches grow.
The timorous shore waders stay-at-home;
Desiring pearls just nets the bitter foam!

THE SONG OF THE FALCON

That I am sombre and spare of words
is very well known among the birds.
The rule of silence is my profession.
My sole virtue is discretion.
When I am snared, I remain discreet.
I give no sign of defeat.
You will not see my head downcast
or my hooded eyes weep for what's past.
Bit by bit my master yearns for me,
Fears lest my reserve should be
Loss of love. He blinds me with this hood.

Koran says, 'To veil the eyes is good.'
He ties my tongue down to my underbeak,
Koran says, 'Tis wisdom not to speak.'
Stops my freedom with a silken thread.
'Walk not in pride,' says Koran again.
So wisdom ripens in my hooded night.
Kings become servants.
Royal hands cast up my wings to beat.
I spurn their hands beneath my soaring feet.

THE SONG OF THE ROSE

My time is shorter than the nightingale's,
between winter and summer.
Hasten to play with me. Time is a sword.
My breath is balm. I am the colour of love.
I quiver in the hand of the girl that plucks me.
Don't hold me long. The nightingale calls.
Thorns burst out of my stems like steel arrows.
Men hurry me along, burn my heart, collect my tears.
I feel fire. My spirit melts. Sweet sweat returns my pain.
My body goes but my soul remains.
The wise do not regret my little time in the garden
But lovers, silly pretty lovers would have me there for ever.

THE SONG OF THE HOOPOE

When I came up out of Saba with a love note for the golden king
A love note from the queen of long blue eyes,
Suleiman said to me, 'O Hoopoe, you have brought
News which has set my heart to dancing!'
So he blessed me and set a crown on my head. I wear it still.
Suleiman taught me wisdom. Even now, after ages past,
I go apart and say over the lessons of Suleiman.
O Hoopoe, if conscience had good understanding,
She would hear glad tidings.
If the soul was sleepless, she would take light from the stars.
If the body was pure, the eyes would see love.
If a man put off the cloak of pride and walked naked with God
He would have no evil thoughts.
If a man put off that cloak, he would see the health of the soul
Poised in the balance. He would cool himself with the fan of God.
He would possess the cherry tree of refuge, the plum tree of righteousness.
His soul would be a mortar of patience, a sieve of humility.
And after a night awake, he would walk with the friend alone at dawn.
O Hoopoe, who sees no portent in the creaking of a door,
In the buzz of flies, in the murmur of insects in the dust,

That man will not see the walking of the mists,
The light of mirage, the colours of the sea fog;
For there is no wisdom in that man.

THE SONG OF THE MOTH AND THE CANDLE

I am the lover whose love burns up his heart
Love's law for me is to perish of desire, to be consumed by fire.
The candle's kisses tear the tissue of my wings
But listen to the song the candle sings.

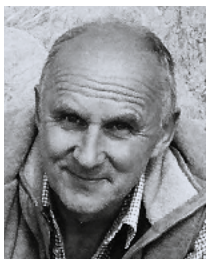
I suffer too. The flame loves me, as I love you.
As I love you.

The flame sighs and burns me up. The flame drinks and melts the cup.
By fire it was I came away from where I and honey loitered yesterday
To shed my life, to waste away, to weep hot tears,
To jet my little hour to light the years.

Then fire burst out to candle and me.

You drank your death. Eternity was in it.
But have we not lived all living in a minute?

BIOGRAPHIES



NICK PITTS-TUCKER

Librettist

During a long and successful career in banking, Nick found the time to develop an interest in powerful stories from each century of our era. The first was the story of William Carey, self taught educator of early Raj India, which emerged as a community play. The second was put to music and became the dramatic cantata *Perpetua*. The third is *Cantata Eliensis*, the story of

Ely Cathedral in three acts, each put to music by a different young composer. The fourth, *Memoirs of a Snub Nosed Cat*, is being written for radio. Last year Nick wrote the verse libretto for Louis Mander's *Beowulf*, co-produced with Chilmark Opera. Cantata Dramatica has emerged from this series of accidents as a musical force in its own right.



DANYAL DHONDY

Composer

Danyal Dhondy is a versatile composer and arranger from South London.

He has written four previous operas which have been performed at Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival, Grimeborn, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and in Germany and Sri Lanka. He is an associate artist at Tara Theatre in South London, and Composer in Residence at the National Orchestra for All.

He was nominated for a British Composer award in 2015 and

an Arts Foundation Award in Opera Composition in 2010. He contributed to Sam Lee's Mercury-nominated album in 2012.

He is currently collaborating with choreographer Arielle Smith on a ballet, *Cradle*, which will be performed at the Barbican on April 20th by the London Schools Symphony Orchestra and students from Rambert School. His opera *Just So*, based on Kipling's stories, will be performed at Tara Theatre in April.



NINA BRAZIER

Director

Nina trained at RADA, Exeter University, The Royal Court/Channel 4 Directors Scheme, and the Operating Table Course at the Royal Opera House. Upcoming productions include *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, JACC, Kuwait; a full reading of *If This is a Man* at the Royal Festival Hall, and *A Song of Good & Evil* on tour to Den Haag and The Berlin Konzerthaus. Previous productions include *Debussy & his Muse* at Buxton Festival, and productions for Ryedale, Montauban, Lammermuir, Tête-à-Tête

and Stockholm Interplay Festivals, including Time Out Critics' Choice for both *The Magic Flute* and *Spilt Milk & Trouble* in Tahiti at The Arcola. She has acted as visiting director at the Royal College of Music, Guildhall School of Music & Drama, the Italian Opera Summer School and Birkbeck University. She has also worked as a Staff & Assistant Director at the Royal Opera, the Bayerische Staatsoper, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera and Opera North.



ALEXANDER ANDERSON-HALL

King Sharyar

Alexander trained at the RCM in London and at English National Opera with the Opera Works Programme. His national debut was in the form of a number of roles for Scottish Opera.

In the UK, USA, Africa and Europe Alexander has performed more than 30 roles in the lyric tenor repertoire including Count Almaviva, The Duke of

Mantua, Don Jose, Ferrando, Nemorino, Tamino, Rodolfo, Ottavio, Macduff, Fenton, Alfredo, Lenski and Riccardo (*Un Ballo in Maschera*).

As a director he produced *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*.

He is currently recording an album of folk music.



PHILIPPA BOYLE

Shahrazad/Abbasa

Award-winning soprano Philippa Boyle trained in Rome at Conservatorio di Musica Santa Cecilia, graduating with full marks and distinction, and Opera Studio Santa Cecilia, where she studied with world-renowned soprano Renata Scotto. Prior to her studies in Italy she was a choral scholar at Clare College, Cambridge, where she read Classics.

Opera roles include Cathleen (Vaughan

Williams' *Riders to the Sea*) for Wexford Festival Opera, cover Cockerel (Janáček's *Cunning Little Vixen*) for Glyndebourne Festival Opera; Giorgetta (Puccini's *Il Tabarro*), for Opera Vera, Alice Ford (Verdi's *Falstaff*), Giunone (Cavalli's *La Calisto*), and Donna Anna. Future engagements include Verdi Requiem with Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.



PETER BROOKE

Haroun al Rashid

Described by *Opera Magazine* as a 'finely-honed, rich baritone' (*La Calisto*) Peter Brooke has worked with a number of companies including Grange Park Opera, Opéra de Bauge, Hampstead Garden Opera and Fulham Opera. His recent roles comprise Klingsor for Elemental Opera, Guigliemo and Belcore for Opéra de Bauge, Figaro for Opera Vera and Opera A La Carte, Colline for Regents Opera and Woodhouse Opera, Giove in

La Calisto for Hampstead Garden Opera, and Leporello for Opera Vera.

Peter has given oratorio performances with various choral societies in and around London, including Haydn's *Creation*, Bach's Passions and Mozart, Fauré and Brahms' Requiems and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*. He has also given recitals of Schubert's *Winterreise*, and Schumann's *Dichterliebe*. Peter studies with Robert Dean.



CHRISTINE BURAS

Princess Almond

American soprano Christine Buras is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Music's postgraduate Vocal Studies course, where she studied with Julie Kennard and James Baillieu and received the DipRAM award for an exemplary final recital. Her operatic roles include Suor Dolcina and La Prima Sorella Cercatrice (Puccini's *Suor Angelica*) for Royal Academy Opera, Hélène (Chabrier's *Une Éducation Manquée*) for Pop-Up Opera, Lucy (Menotti's *The Telephone*) for Salon Opera, Theodora (Handel's *Theodora*) for Benslow Opera,

and Belinda (Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*) for Indiana University.

As an ensemble singer she has worked for conductors including Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Masaaki Suzuki, Laurence Cummings, and Marin Alsop. She is a founding member of the contemporary music group Ensemble x.y, who are making their debut at St. John Smith Square and St. Martin-in-the-Fields later this year. In her free time she enjoys cooking, dinner parties, and hillwalking in Scotland.



AUORE LACABE

Zubeidah/Prince Jasmine

French mezzo-soprano Aurore Lacabe moved to London to study singing at Trinity Laban Conservatoire. While there, she earned a place on the Royal Opera House mentoring scheme and was awarded the Paul Simms opera prize before gaining her advanced postgraduate diploma in vocal studies with Distinction.

On the operatic stage, Aurore's roles have included Orfeo (*Orfeo ed Euridice*), Mère Marie (*Les Dialogues des Carmélites*), Olga (*Eugene Onegin*), Mercedes (*Carmen*), Siebel (*Faust*), Dido/Sorceress (*Dido and Aeneas*), Dorabella (*Così fan*

tutte), Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), Flora (*La Traviata*), 2nd Priestess/Diane (*Iphigénie en Tauride*), Stéphano (*Roméo et Juliette*), Orlofsky (*Die Fledermaus*), Emilia (*Otello*), and Amneris (*Aida*).

Aurore is also in demand as a soloist on the oratorio and concert platform, in England and abroad. As an ensemble singer, she has performed throughout Europe under the baton of many prestigious conductors. Aurore is delighted to sing again with Opera Vera after performing Frugola (*Il Tabarro*) and Marcellina (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) with the company.



MARTIN LAMB

Storyteller/Dervish/Akbar/Wicked Uncle/Yahya

Martin was born in Southport and studied at St John's College, Oxford and at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. He has made frequent appearances as a principal artist for ENO, Scottish Opera, and many of the UK's leading touring companies and summer festivals. His repertoire embraces some of the most famous Italian buffo roles, along with works as

diverse as Gilbert & Sullivan, Wagner and a number of world premières.

When not singing, Martin works as a writer and director, and has created a number of plays for family audiences as well as several site-specific pieces for some of the country's best-known visitor attractions.



TOM MORSS

Jafar

Tom Morss completed his postgraduate studies at the RNCM in July 2013 where he was tutored by Thomas Schulze, and is now a freelance singer based in London. Roles in the last few years include Albert in *Albert Herring* (Hampstead Garden Opera), Pedrillo for Pop-Up Opera

(Mozart's *The Abduction*), Camille for Ryedale Festival Opera (Lehar's *The Merry Widow*), Fenton for The Black Cat Opera Company (Verdi's *Falstaff*), Ferrando for Opera Vera (Mozart's *Così fan tutte*) and Ernesto for Opera Holloway (Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*).



PHILIP HESKETH

Conductor and Piano

Philip Hesketh, the Musical Director of Opera Vera, has a very busy and varied musical life. He currently holds the musical directorships of the French Festival Opéra de Bauge, The London Children's Ballet, the West London Sinfonia, and The Norfolk Symphony Orchestra, and makes regular

appearances as guest conductor in Britain and abroad. He has an immense knowledge of orchestral music but is always looking forward to the next new piece. Fortunately, the richness of this repertoire means there is an inexhaustible supply.



NICOLA BARBAGLI

Oboe, Cor Anglais

Nicola Barbagli studied modern oboe in Italy at Scuola di Musica di Fiesole and the Scala Theatre Academy. Following his graduation from Geneva Haute École de Musique, he moved to the UK to play in the Southbank Sinfonia. He was awarded the San Martino Scholarship and Nancy Nuttall Early Music Prize at the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied baroque oboe with Katharina Sprekelsen. Nicola has played many times with the

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. He has also performed with the Gabrieli Consort, La Barocca, International Baroque Players, The King's Consort, Classical Opera, Ensemble Zefiro, Oxford Baroque, Geneva Camerata, and the Kohn Foundation RAM Bach Cantata series, among others.

When Nicola is not at 415 Hz, he's baking cakes and playing accordion with his folk band.



JOLEY CRAGG

Tabla

Joley Cragg's professional work includes City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, London Contemporary Orchestra, and numerous shows with Alex Parker Productions.

Joley recently worked alongside the Berkeley Ensemble, featuring on the album *Stabat Mater*, a work previously un-recorded by Lennox Berkeley. A live recording was broadcast on Radio 3 for the Spitalfield's Summer Festival 2016.

Joley is a keen chamber musician and is a member of contemporary music ensemble The Workers Union, who have worked closely with Sound and Music, PRS for Music Foundation, New Dots and Non-Classical, and have commissioned many works by notable composers. Most recently the ensemble were featured as composer Matthew Kaner's first piece for his Embedded: Radio 3's Composer in 3 residency.



FLORA GRACE CURZON *Violin*

Award-winning violinist Flora Curzon is best known for her musical versatility. A recent graduate of the Royal Academy of Music, she now spends her time performing in a mixture of contemporary, historical, folk and improvised music projects. Her fast growing and eclectic resumé

of worldwide performances includes work with Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, London Sinfonietta, acclaimed folk singer Sam Lee, Talvin Singh, and Jocelyn Pook. Her playing has been described by critics as ‘exquisite’ and ‘a particular treat’.



KIMON PARRY *Clarinet*

Kimon Parry is a young clarinettist whose successes include winning the 2011 Clarinet and Saxophone Society (CASS) Solo Clarinet Competition, reaching the 2012 finals of the Wind and Percussion section of the Royal Overseas League Annual Competition, and being awarded Recommended Artist status under Making Music’s Philip & Dorothy Green Award scheme for 2012. Kimon was also a soloist on the Countess of Munster Recital Scheme 2012/13.

Kimon completed his Master of Arts with Distinction at the Royal Academy of Music under the tutelage of Mark Van

de Wiel. During his undergraduate years as a Foundation Scholar at the Royal College of Music, Kimon studied under Richard Hosford and won the RCM Senior Woodwind Prize in 2008 before graduating with a First Class Honours in 2009. Kimon has played on a number of occasions with the BBC Philharmonic, London Chamber Orchestra, the Philharmonia, London Sinfonietta and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. Kimon was also a member of Southbank Sinfonia 2013.

Kimon is currently playing in the production of *Amadeus* at the National Theatre.



JOSH SALTER *Cello*

Josh Salter studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he was a scholarship holder and awarded prizes for cello and chamber music, and as a postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music, graduating with an MA with Distinction in July 2016. His principal teachers have been Nicholas Jones, Nick Trygstad and Felix Schmidt. He is grateful for the financial support of the Dorothy Croft Trust, Raphael Sommer Trust, Stephen Bell Charitable Trust, Loan Fund for Musical Instruments and Ann Watson Trust.

He looks forward to a performance with

the Lincoln Symphony Orchestra of Tchaikovsky’s *Rococo Variations* in June 2017. His chamber music performances include live broadcasts on BBC Radio 3, recitals at St-Martin-in-the-Fields, Wigmore Hall and St John’s, Smith Square. Festivals include Aberystwyth Musicfest, Lake District Summer Music, Suffolk Villages Festival, English Haydn Festival and Mendelssohn on Mull.

Josh regularly freelances with the Halle, BBC Philharmonic, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, City of London Sinfonia, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and Hanover Band.

ABOUT CANTATA DRAMATICA

Cantata Dramatica is a not-for-profit organisation (charity registration number 1158027) whose objective is to commission and promote new music.

Our first commission, *Perpetua*, with music by Nick Bicât, was premiered at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford in November 2012. Since then we have commissioned at least one work per year from seven different composers and we have organised an initial private workshop/preview with an invited audience followed by one or more public performances for most of these works, with more in the pipeline. Almost all of our commissions tell a story and are designed to be understood by the listener at first hearing. *Beowulf* was our first fully staged performance, and *Shahrazad* is our second. For both we are indebted to joint venture partners.

We work with a mix of professional and amateur performers at many different levels and we aim to provide a rewarding creative experience for all.

Chairman Nick Pitts-Tucker

Treasurer Julia Stutfield

Secretary Virginia Goode

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Performances of new and unusual works call for a high degree of creative collaboration between composer, conductor, singers, instrumentalists and our production team. We would not be able to embark on such projects without the generous support (financial and otherwise) of our Sponsors, Friends, and enthusiasts, including our amateur performers, to all of whom we are immensely grateful.

Our thanks to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea for permission to perform in Leighton House.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Our goal is not just to commission accessible, performable new music dramas, but to get them performed more widely in front of diverse audiences.

Cantata Dramatica welcomes your support in achieving this, whether by making introductions, building our contacts with venues, performers and Directors of Music, by fundraising, or by enthusiastic attendance at our performances and spreading the word. For more information have a look at the Supporters section of our website, www.cantatadramatica.com, or contact us at cantatadramatica@gmail.com.

CANTATA CUTHBERTI

A cantata based on the life of St Cuthbert, founder of Durham Cathedral and one of the most important medieval saints of northern England.

DURHAM CATHEDRAL
MARCH 2018

Follow Cantata Dramatica on Facebook or Twitter for updates on new and current projects!



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