



PRESS RELEASE

THURSDAY 29TH MAY 2014

DIALOGUES DES CARMÉLITES, COMMUNITY ENSEMBLE

A 67-strong Community Ensemble features in Robert Carsen's production of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* at the Royal Opera House, conducted by Simon Rattle.

The Royal Opera has worked with a range of partner organizations and charities to deliver a Community Ensemble of 67 people to feature in Robert Carsen's production of Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, conducted by Simon Rattle.

Robert Carsen's production of the opera, which follows a group of nuns through the turmoils of the French Revolution, largely dispenses with conventional sets; instead using a large crowd of people – a populace or mob – to create the geography and flow of the production.

The Royal Opera has taken this opportunity to enlist volunteers who are new to the Royal Opera House's participatory work, to form a Community Ensemble of actors to work alongside artists, the chorus and orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Royal Opera House staff and the production team for *Dialogues des Carmélites*.

The Community Ensemble has been recruited in partnership with Streetwise Opera, Synergy Theatre Project, the Department for Work and Pensions, and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London.

Participants, some of who have experienced homelessness, the criminal justice system and long-term unemployment, as well as those studying drama and theatre in learning and community settings, have been given the chance to increase their self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as an opportunity to build on life skills such as teamwork and communication.

Alongside the workshop and rehearsal process, participants were invited to take part in a *Careers Support Programme*, devised by the partner organizations and the Royal Opera House's HR department, offering work-related skills in the performing arts, an understanding of careers in theatre on stage and 'behind-the-scenes', and signposted routes into work experience and work placements.

Notes to editors:

Streetwise Opera is a well-established charity that uses music to help homeless people make positive changes in their lives, through a weekly music programme in 10 homeless centres across England and Wales and by staging opera productions starring homeless performers.

www.streetwiseopera.org

Synergy Theatre Project works toward rehabilitation with prisoners and ex-prisoners through theatre and related activities, while also placing the wider issues surrounding criminal justice in the public arena.

www.synergytheatreproject.co.uk

The Department for Work and Pensions plays a central role in offering opportunities to people who have experienced long-term unemployment

www.dwp.gov.uk

The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, is a college of higher education that concentrates on the performance and creative arts, working with students currently engaged on the MA Applied Theatre course.

www.cssd.ac.uk

- *Dialogues des Carmélites* opens on 29 May at 7.30pm, with subsequent performances on 2, 4, 9, and 11 June at 7.30pm and 7 June at 7pm
- *Dialogues des Carmélites* will be broadcast live on BBC Radio 3 on 7 June at 7pm.
- The production is given with generous philanthropic support from Mrs Aline Foriel-Destezet, The Taylor Family Foundation and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

PRESS OFFICE CONTACTS

Ann Richards, Head of Opera Press, Royal Opera House

Tel: 020 7212 9132 / ann.richards@roh.org.uk

David Brownlie-Marshall, Opera Press and Communications Officer, Royal Opera House

Tel: 020 7212 9504 / david.brownlie-marshall@roh.org.uk

Sarah Crompton, Project Manager, Streetwise Opera

Tel: 020 7730 9551 / sc@streetwiseopera.org

Jessica Draper, Education Manager, Synergy Theatre Project

Tel: 020 3668 6730 / jessica@synergytheatreproject.co.uk

Meryl Jones, Group Partnership Team, Department for Work and Pensions

meryl.jones@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Selena Busby, Course Leader MA Applied Theatre, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London

selina.busby@cssd.ac.uk