



ROYAL
OPERA
HOUSE

THURROCK

22 MAY 2014

Royal Opera House celebrates Verdi at High House Production Park, Purfleet

FUSED Festival

Thursday 3 to Saturday 5 July

The Backstage Centre, High House Production Park, Purfleet, RM19 1RJ

Box Office 020 7304 4000

www.roh.org.uk/thurrocksummer

The High House Production Park in Purfleet rings to the sound of choirs and international orchestras this summer as its FUSED Festival celebrates composer Giuseppe Verdi with concerts and workshops.

FUSED, a three-day festival that includes workshops, interactive exhibitions, activities and concerts, returns to Thurrock this summer with a programme that explores the themes central to Verdi's *Requiem*: remembrance, conflict and loss. The festival opens on Thursday 3 July with a performance of the *Requiem*, a dramatic and emotionally powerful piece that is one of the best-loved of the choral repertory.

Verdi's *Requiem* is performed by the **Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus** with international soloists from the **Royal Opera House Jette Parker Young Artists Programme**. They will be joined by the **Brighton Festival Chorus** and the combined forces of two

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outstanding French orchestras, **L'Orchestre Symphonique de Bretagne** and **Orchestre de Picardie**, under the baton of Dutch conductor **Arie van Beek**.

Sumptuous and vivid, **Verdi's *Requiem*** merges religious music with the excitement and radiance of opera in a lament for lost souls. This Italian masterpiece is shamelessly dramatic, combining high drama with moments of heart wrenching tenderness. The performances will be preceded by an Insight event offering the audience the opportunity to learn more about the composer and the piece.

It is the biggest production yet for the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus which was formed just three years ago. In that time, working with professional Chorus Master **Jeremy Haneman**, the Chorus has grown into a dynamic and vibrant group of 140 singers with a waiting list of others keen to join.

Madeleine McGrath joined the Royal Opera House Thurrock Community Chorus almost two years ago and has sung in three concerts with it. She is full of enthusiasm for the Chorus and looking forward to performing the *Requiem*: 'As a lifetime choral singer, I find being a member of the Chorus truly uplifting. It brings together the most unlikely combination of characters and proves that everyone can make a contribution to a chorus. The quality of all-round professional guidance we get is second to none, and helps us achieve remarkable performance standards. I can't wait for July's performances of the Verdi *Requiem* - our operatic bias is filling rehearsals with emotion and drama, so I can only imagine what the final result will be. Bring your hankies, won't you?'

The original Chorus came together to sing in *Ludd and Isis: The Purfleet Opera* at the opening of the Royal Opera House Bob and Tamar Manoukian Production Workshop in Purfleet in 2010. Such was the desire

for the group to continue to sing together, that the Royal Opera House appointed Jeremy the Chorus Master and the Chorus has gone from strength to strength appearing at Covent Garden, singing with the Chorus of the Royal Opera House and performing at the Brandenburg Choral Festival in London, as well as staging its own sell-out events in Thurrock such as last year's *Ebb and Flow* at the Civic Hall, Grays.

Jeremy is eagerly anticipating the concert and said: 'We are so excited about our performance in July when we get to collaborate with our colleagues from France and Brighton. The sound from 300 singers, two orchestras and four amazing soloists will make for an unmissable and extraordinary event.'

FUSED is curated by Jeremy Haneman and Artistic Director of Elastic Theatre **Jacek Ludwig Scarso**, both of whom are acclaimed vocal experts. On Saturday 5 July, Jeremy and Jacek will lead a creative and interactive workshop entitled *Songs of Life and Death*. The workshop, which is suitable for all ages and takes place from 2.30–5pm, will explore the power of the human voice in conflict throughout history. In the evening, Thurrock's youth vocal group **RM19** will perform the world premiere of *A Little Thing Called Life*. The performance marks the culmination of several months' work during which RM19 has been exploring concepts of remembrance, conflict and loss to create an original piece of music, drama and design.

The FUSED concerts take place in the stunningly contemporary setting of The Backstage Centre at the High House Production Park.

The performances of Verdi's *Requiem* are part of the Royal Opera House's involvement in **ACT – A Common Territory**, a European partnership between 13 different organizations on both sides of the English Channel. The partnership supports live performance and culture through the development of projects fostering and developing creative skills in local people and promoting wider access to art and cultural events. Events took

place across Thurrock in 2013 involving local young people and international artists and in November 2013, Royal Opera House Jette Parker Young Artists joined the French orchestras and Brighton Festival Chorus to perform Verdi's *Requiem* on tour in Amiens, Compiègne and Rennes to sell-out audiences of over 3500 people.

Tickets for the concerts and workshop can be purchased from the Royal Opera House Box Office on 020 7304 4000 or online at www.roh.org.uk/thurrocksummer.

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Notes for Editors

Royal Opera House Learning and Participation in Thurrock

Royal Opera House Learning and Participation in Thurrock has been offering innovative and creative projects and programmes in schools, colleges and across communities in the Thames Gateway for the past six years. In 2010, more than 1000 people from Thurrock, young and old, took part in creating and performing the spectacular Purfleet Opera: *Ludd and Isis*, the third large scale ROH performance created with communities in Thurrock. As a result of this work a Thurrock Community Chorus has been created with over 140 members of all ages. For further information, please go to:

www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-in-thurrock/community-chorus. RM19, a new Youth Chorus for 11-25 year olds was started in 2012:

www.roh.org.uk/learning/learning-in-thurrock/rm19-youth-singing-group.

Public and educational tours of the state-of-the-art Bob and Tamar Manoukian Production Workshop where the sets and scenery for the Royal Opera House stage in Covent Garden are built are now available. Please go to www.roh.org.uk/visit/tours/thurrock-tours for further details.

The High House Production Park is supported by a unique partnership including Arts Council England, Creative & Cultural Skills, the Royal Opera House and Thurrock Council: www.highhouseproductionpark.co.uk