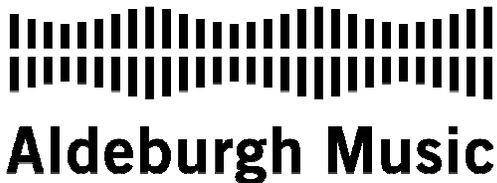


Press Release

9 April 2015



PLEASURE: NEW OPERA BY YOUNG LIVERPOOL-BORN COMPOSER MARK SIMPSON TO PREMIERE IN 2016

A new chamber opera, ***Pleasure***, a family tragedy played out against the backdrop of a gay nightclub, will receive its world premiere at Opera North in Leeds in 2016, with further dates in Liverpool, Aldeburgh and London.

Created by the young composer **Mark Simpson** and writer **Melanie Challenger**, ***Pleasure*** is the fourth new opera commissioned and produced as part of a three-year partnership between Aldeburgh Music, The Royal Opera and Opera North, designed to boost opportunities for emerging opera writers, and bring new work to audiences across the UK.

The opera tells the story of Val, who works as an attendant in the toilets in Pleasure, a hedonistic gay club in the north of England, presided over by the Bacchanalian drag queen Anna Fewmore. For years, Val has been both a shoulder to cry on and a confidante. She is much-loved, but viewed as an enigma. Why is she still there? Why does she never leave? When Nathan, a beautiful and unpredictable young man, arrives in Pleasure and leaves a gift for Val, it marks the beginning of an emotional and violent night.

Tim Albery directs, with set and costume designs by **Leslie Travers**; a creative pairing whose previous work together has included award-winning productions of *Otello* (2013) and *Giulio Cesare* (2012) at Opera North, and Aldeburgh Music's open-air staging of *Grimes on the Beach* (2013) marking Benjamin Britten's centenary. **Tim Albery** has also directed numerous productions at The Royal Opera, including *Der fliegende Holländer* and *Tannhäuser*.

Pleasure will be performed by a cast of four singers including soprano **Lesley Garrett** as Val, alongside the Manchester-based music ensemble **Psappha**, conducted by **Nicholas Kok**.

One of the UK's most exciting young musical talents, **Mark Simpson** was born in Liverpool in 1988. He won BBC Young Musician of the Year as a clarinettist in 2006 and also, that same year, received the accolade of BBC Young Composer of the year – the only individual to have won both competitions. He was recently named Composer in Association with the BBC Philharmonic, and his new work for orchestra and chorus, *The Immortal*, will premiere at Manchester International Festival in July 2015, again set to a libretto by **Melanie Challenger**. *Pleasure* is his first opera.

The world premiere of *Pleasure* will be at the Howard Assembly Room at Opera North, Leeds in April 2016, before the production tours to the Liverpool Playhouse, the Britten Studio at Aldeburgh Music, Snape Maltings, and the Lyric Hammersmith in London.

PLEASURE

By Mark Simpson

Libretto by Melanie Challenger

Sung in English | Approx 75 mins

Cast includes:

Val **Lesley Garrett**

Conductor **Nicholas Kok**
Director **Tim Albery**
Set and Costume Designer **Leslie Travers**

Ensemble **Psappa**

Dates:

Howard Assembly Room, Leeds

Thu 28 Apr 2016 WORLD PREMIERE

Fri 29 Apr 2016

Liverpool Playhouse

Wed 4 May 2016

Britten Studio at Aldeburgh Music, Snape Maltings

Sat 7 May 2016

Lyric Hammersmith, London

Wed 11 May 2016

Thu 12 May 2016

Fri 13 May 2016

Sat 14 May 2016

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Notes to editors:

The new collaboration between Aldeburgh Music, The Royal Opera, and Opera North has been conceived to bridge the 'gap' in opportunity for composers in the middle stages of their careers who have demonstrated potential to write large-scale operas. It creates new, high quality chamber work which is relevant for and engages today's audiences.

Previous operas commissioned as part of the new opera writing partnership included *Café Kafka* and *The Commission* (both 2014): the first operas by composers Francisco Coll and Elspeth Brooke, written in collaboration with the playwright and librettist Meredith Oakes and young poet Jack Underwood respectively. A new opera by composer Matt Rogers and writer Sally O'Reilly, *The Virtues of Things*, is due to premiere in the Linbury Studio Theatre, Royal Opera House, on 2 May 2015.

The new opera commissioning collaboration between Aldeburgh Music, Opera North and The Royal Opera is supported by a legacy from Ms D. Kurzman via Arts Council England.

Generously supported in Leeds by the Opera North Future Fund, The Emerald Foundation and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

Opera North

Opera North is breathing new life into the Arts in the North of England, inspiring audiences, engaging communities and challenging preconceptions. We produce a busy programme of main stage productions, but also strive to create opportunities for everyone to engage with the arts, regardless of their social or economic circumstances. Acclaimed for imaginative programming and innovative productions on the main stage, the Company also creates and commissions smaller-scale projects that bring together music, words and theatre in new combinations. Every year we collaborate with a vast array of artists, musicians and creatives who work with our dedicated chorus and orchestra to grow the art form. Through our work and performances we strive to reflect and engage community life in the North whilst contributing unique, vital and truly original material to the world of opera.

www.operanorth.co.uk

Aldeburgh Music

A Place of Inspiration for Music and the Arts

Aldeburgh Music is an international performance centre set in a stunning landscape on the Suffolk coast with artist development and education as its creative engine. Its year-round programme has grown out of the Aldeburgh Festival, founded in 1948 by Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier, and is the realisation of Britten's vision for a special place where established stars, young artists, amateurs and audience members come

to broaden their horizons in an exhilarating creative and natural environment. Aldeburgh Music's campus is based around the iconic Snape Maltings Concert Hall and the organisation programmes more than 150 events per year including the Aldeburgh Festival in June, Snape Proms in August and Autumn and Spring seasons. Artist development work includes the Britten–Pears Young Artist Programme for the world's best emerging professional musicians; the life-changing programme for outstanding 8-18 year olds, Aldeburgh Young Musicians; Aldeburgh Residencies and Open Space Residencies, which give artists and ensembles the chance to take time out to develop new work; and the Jerwood Opera Writing Programme, a unique course for composers and writers. www.aldeburgh.co.uk

The Royal Opera

The Royal Opera, under the artistic direction of Antonio Pappano, Music Director, Kasper Holten, Director of Opera and John Fulljames, Associate Director of Opera, is one of the world's leading opera companies. Renowned for outstanding performances on both the main stage and in the Linbury Studio Theatre, The Royal Opera House presents traditional opera alongside co-commissions and collaborations with today's leading opera composers at the iconic Covent Garden theatre in London and relayed live to cinemas around the world. The Royal Opera House also plays a leading role in education, community engagement, skills development, professional training and cultural regeneration in the UK. www.roh.org.uk

Lyric Hammersmith

The Lyric Hammersmith is one of the UK's leading producing theatres. Over its hundred and twenty five year history it has been responsible for creating some of the UK's most adventurous and acclaimed theatrical work. It has also gained a national reputation for its work with and for children and young people. The Lyric's dual commitment to producing the highest quality contemporary theatre, alongside nurturing the creativity of young people is what makes it unique within the cultural ecology of the UK. It is a local theatre rooted in its community with a national and international reputation for the quality and innovation of its artistic work. www.lyric.co.uk



Supported using public funding by

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