



8 October 2020

#OurHouseToYourHouse

Public booking opens for latest opera performances, *4/4* and *New Dark Age*

New casting also announced

Public booking is now open for two of The Royal Opera's first socially distanced performances appearing on the main stage at Covent Garden this autumn.

4/4 and *New Dark Age* – two newly programmed evenings of extraordinary music dramas – feature celebrated directors from the world of opera and theatre, paired with composers, conductors, singers and the **Orchestra of the Royal Opera House** in innovative works that would never normally be performed on the main stage of the Royal Opera House.

Sopranos **Nadine Benjamin**, **Anna Dennis** alongside mezzo-soprano **Susan Bickley**, join the all-female composed double-bill *New Dark Age* on **Saturday 24 October**. The singers, conducted by **Natalie Murray Beale**, are part of the premiere of **Katie Mitchell's** music drama piece – *A New Dark Age*. With video direction by **Grant Gee**, the programme includes music by some of the most exciting young composers in contemporary classical and electronic music: Mercury Prize-nominated composer, producer and performer **Anna Meredith**, Grammy-nominated composer **Missy Mazzoli** and award-winning Icelandic composer **Anna Thorvaldsdottir**. Featuring work that meets at the intersection of these musical genres,

the evening will showcase classical compositional skills as well as forward-thinking remixing and sampling techniques.

New Dark Age also features ***The Knife of Dawn***, a one-person chamber opera by one of Britain's most exciting young composers, **Hannah Kendall**. First performed at the Roundhouse in 2016 to mark National Poetry Day during Black History Month, *The Knife of Dawn* is based on the story of Guyanese political activist and poet Martin Carter. It is set in his prison cell towards the end of a hunger strike in 1953 when he was incarcerated without charge. As a British composer of Caribbean/Guyanese descent, Hannah wanted to highlight Guyana's significance within British history, drawing on cultural, political, and social issues still very relevant today.

British baritone **Peter Brathwaite** will sing the role of the prisoner, directed by critically acclaimed director **Ola Ince**, and conducted by **Jonathon Heyward** who makes his Royal Opera House debut, with video design by multi-disciplinary designer **Akhila Krishnan**.

Jonathon Heyward, conductor for *The Knife of Dawn* said:

"I was first introduced to Hannah's music at the Proms and was amazed by her sound world and language. We started working together about two years ago, so it's a privilege to be conducting *The Knife of Dawn*. It is music that needs to be heard, and the work is so timely. It's a great story with a beautiful narrative and compelling drama, and what better platform to present it than on the main stage of the Royal Opera House."

The pared-back works will be designed by two of Britain's leading stage designers, **Antony McDonald** (*4/4*) and **Vicki Mortimer** (*New Dark Age*), with lighting designed by **Adam Silverman**. The stripped-back aesthetic, eschewing traditional sets and elaborate costumes for a more distilled approach, will see the Opera Company exploring a different model for the opera of the future.

Vicki Mortimer, designer for *New Dark Age* said:

"I think of this double-bill as a brief occupation of the empty opera space. Not quite 'no-scenery', but 'borrowed scenery'. We re-use a few pieces from past productions... we notice the marks left by work that was made 'before'. We borrow the associations of an inherited opera landscape and use them to counterpoint other stories, other perspectives. To question. To leave our own mark."

On Saturday 17 October *4/4* will open to audiences featuring **Handel's** cantata ***Apollo and Daphne*** with singers **Alexandra Lowe** and **Jonathan McGovern**, directed by Olivier Award nominee **Adele Thomas**,

conducted by renowned baroque specialist **Christian Curnyn**. **Gruber's** wild and irreverent ***Frankenstein!!*** will see British tenor **Allan Clayton**, take to the stage, directed by multi-Olivier Award-winning director **Richard Jones**, conducted by former **Jette Parker Young Artist (JPYA) Edmund Whitehead**. Current JPYA soprano **Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha** will sing **Barber's *Knoxville Summer 1915***, directed by **Antony McDonald** and conducted by **Patrick Milne**. And finally, leading mezzo-soprano **Christine Rice** will perform **Britten's** final masterpiece ***Phaedra*** – conducted by **Richard Hetherington**, directed by world renowned British director of theatre and opera **Deborah Warner**.

Ends

Notes to Editors

For further information or interview requests please contact Chloe Westwood -

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- Please note that all ROH performances and participating artists are subject to change due to Covid-19 restrictions.
- In order to ensure the safety of artists and creative teams and to prevent the spread of Covid-19, mitigations have included strict socially distancing in the rehearsal studio alongside testing, for those in physical contact during rehearsal, administered privately at no expense to the NHS.
- With the safety of audiences, our community of staff and artists at its heart, significant mitigations have been put in place across the organisation to ensure we can bring audiences the best of our art forms while ensuring we prevent any further spread of Covid-19.
- Livestream priced at £16, available via: stream.roh.org.uk, available for 30 days on demand

4/4, Saturday 17 October, 7.30pm BST

- Images can be downloaded [here](#).
- Tickets for the online livestreams of **4/4** and ***New Dark Age*** are available [online](#).
- Public booking for live audiences now open – visit roh.org.uk
- Please find general imagery of The Royal Opera House [here](#) and [here](#).

***New Dark Age*, Saturday 24 October, 7.30pm BST**

- Images can be downloaded [here](#).

- Tickets for the online livestreams of **4/4** and **New Dark Age** are available [online](#).
- Public booking for live audiences now open – visit roh.org.uk
- Please find general imagery of The Royal Opera House [here](#) and [here](#).

Programme:

4/4

Running time: 2 hours

Designer: Antony McDonald

Lighting designer: Adam Silverman

Apollo and Daphne

Director: Adele Thomas

Conductor: Christian Curnyn

Movement director: Emma Woods

Baritone: Jonathan McGovern

Soprano and Jette Parker Young Artist: Alexandra Lowe

Knoxville Summer of 1915

Director: Antony McDonald

Conductor: Patrick Milne

Soprano and Jette Parker Young Artist: Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha

Movement director: Sarah Fahie

Phaedra

Director: Deborah Warner

Conductor: Richard Hetherington

Mezzo-Soprano: Christine Rice

Frankenstein!!

Director: Richard Jones

Movement director: Sarah Fahie

Conductor: Edmund Whitehead

Tenor: Allan Clayton

NEW DARK AGE

Designer: Vicki Mortimer

Lighting Designer: Adam Silverman

A New Dark Age

Director: Katie Mitchell

Composers: Missy Mazzoli, Anna Meredith and Anna Thorvaldsdottir

Conductor: Natalie Murray Beale

Soprano: Nadine Benjamin

Soprano: Anna Dennis

Mezzo-soprano: Susan Bickley

Video Director: Grant Gee

The Knife of Dawn

Composer: Hannah Kendall

Video Designer: Akhila Krishnan

Director: Ola Ince

Conductor: Jonathon Heyward

Baritone: Peter Brathwaite

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About The Royal Opera

The Royal Opera, under the artistic direction of Antonio Pappano, Music Director, and Oliver Mears, Director of Opera, is one of the world's leading opera companies. Based in the iconic Covent Garden theatre, it is renowned both for its outstanding performances of traditional opera and for commissioning new works by today's leading opera composers, such as Harrison Birtwistle, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Thomas Adès.

About the Royal Opera House

Home to The Royal Ballet, The Royal Opera and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House our vision is to give everyone access to exceptional ballet and opera.

Since closing our doors due to the global pandemic in March 2020, the Royal Opera House has continued to bring together the world's most extraordinary artists and curated the #OurHouseToYourHouse programme of 19 streams, 4 socially distanced live concerts and a suite of online content that has been viewed over 315 million times in 183 countries.

The Royal Opera House continues its #OurHouseToYourHouse programme this autumn, bringing audiences the best of the ROH through a new series of live performances, cinema screenings, Friday Premieres and cultural highlights in partnership with the BBC and Sky Arts. We hope to welcome back socially distanced audiences in the near future.

The Royal Opera House is committed to widening participation and deepening learning for all ages. This summer we launched Create and Learn, offering free online home-learning opportunities for children and young people. In addition, The Royal Ballet partnered with Cast and Doncaster Council to support Doncaster residents with online resources and remote direction to create a unique community dance film, *Doncaster Dances*.

Royal Opera House Recovery Campaign

Live performance is a shared experience, and our audiences are at the heart of what we do on our stages, backstage, online, in cinemas and in our communities. This year's global pandemic has affected all arts organisations across the world. We have lost £3 in every £5 of our income, and any Government loan will take us only part of the way. We need your help with our Recovery Fund to bring artists back to our stages. roh.org.uk/donate