



ROYAL
OPERA
HOUSE

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The Royal Opera House reveals highlights of its first full Season since 2019

- 11 new productions, including 5 world premieres, and 20 revivals
- An exciting roster of UK and international talent with many debuts
- Full Season details to be announced on roh.org.uk on **1 June**.

The Royal Opera House is excited to share early plans for its 2021/22 Season, the first full Royal Opera House Season since 2019.

Today we reveal highlights including five world premieres from The Royal Ballet and The Royal Opera as well as a wealth of British and international talent taking to our stages in the first full ROH Season for eighteen months.

The Royal Ballet's internationally-acclaimed artists come together on stage in the Company's 90th anniversary year to 'respect the past, herald the future, but concentrate on the present'* in a Season of classic and modern works. The world premieres of three ballets are announced for the 2021/22 Season with Resident Choreographer Wayne McGregor's *The Dante Project*, Artistic Associate Christopher Wheeldon's *Like Water for Chocolate* and a new work by American choreographer Kyle Abraham.

Wayne McGregor's much anticipated *The Dante Project* will be given its world premiere in October 2021. The Royal Ballet's first ever co-production with Paris Opera Ballet takes its inspiration from Dante's *Divine Comedy* and is presented as part of the 700th anniversary celebrations of the poet's death in 1321. Dante's epic journey through the afterlife is realised in this collaboration between three trailblazing forces of the contemporary arts scene: the multi-award-winning McGregor, acclaimed composer Thomas Adès, who creates a brand-new score, and artist Tacita Dean, celebrated for her pioneering and poetic film and media work. The creative team is completed by McGregor's regular collaborators lighting designer Lucy Carter and dramaturg Uzma Hameed. Part 1 of the work is based on *Inferno*, which received its premiere in Los Angeles in 2019 as part of The Royal Ballet's international tour with Adès conducting the LA Philharmonic in his virtuoso new score. The production will also be an opportunity for audiences to celebrate the extraordinary career of Edward Watson who performs the role of Dante.

The Royal Ballet also presents the world premiere of Christopher Wheeldon's new full-length ballet *Like Water for Chocolate*, based on the Mexican novel of the same name by Laura Esquivel. This co-commission between The Royal Ballet and American Ballet Theatre reunites Wheeldon with composer Joby Talbot, costume and set designer Bob Crowley and lighting designer Natasha Katz. Joining the renowned creative team is Luke Halls as projection designer. Esquivel worked with Wheeldon to shape the text of her magical novel into a scenario for the ballet. Internationally acclaimed conductor and official cultural ambassador to Mexico Alondra de la Parra returns to the Royal Opera House to conduct this ballet, and act as musical consultant for Talbot's newly commissioned score. The ballet also draws on rich historical research by Camilla de la Parra. The original cast for this imaginative reshaping of Esquivel's richly layered love story will be led by Francesca Hayward and Marcelino Sambé.

The Season will also see more new work on the Main Stage in a contemporary mixed programme (to be announced) that includes the world premiere of a work by Kyle Abraham. Alongside these exciting new works will be revivals of Royal Ballet signature classics and audience favourites including *Giselle*, *The Nutcracker*, *Swan Lake*, works by Frederick Ashton, and Kenneth MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet*.

The Linbury Theatre continues to be a driving force for collaboration and creativity, featuring independent companies and schools and developing new work. The Royal Ballet presents Company Wayne McGregor in *The Dark Crystal: Odyssey*, a work for family audiences choreographed and directed by Wayne McGregor. Based on Jim Henson's iconic 1982 film, this magical coming-of-age story brings together a team of world-class collaborators including artists Brian and Wendy Froud, composer Joel Cadbury, digital designers kontrastmoment, lighting designer Lucy Carter, dramaturg Uzma Hameed, costume designer Philip Delamore and face-and body-artist Alex Box, with puppets and props from Jim Henson's Creature Shop.

The Royal Ballet will also welcome Cassa Pancho's **Ballet Black** back to the Royal Opera House to continue their association with the Linbury Theatre. This company of Black and Asian classically trained dancers will present a dynamic mixed programme by Olivier-award-winning choreographers Mthuzeli November and Will Tuckett. *Yorke Dance Project* also return with a programme of works that juxtaposes past and present, celebrating choreographers who have indelibly shaped dance today. *Dance Reflections by Van Cleef & Arpels Festival*, an exciting new partnership with Van Cleef & Arpels, will present a selection of established works alongside new pieces of choreography.

The Linbury Theatre will again be host to creative opportunities for choreographers in the form of **Draft Works** and a new appointment to the Emerging Choreographer Programme. This continues The Royal Ballet's commitment to developing a diverse talent pipeline in dance alongside the Constant Lambert Fellowship and Jette Parker Young Artists Programme ballet conductor initiatives.

The Royal Opera Season will open with a new production of Verdi's *Rigoletto*, directed by Oliver Mears – his first production since becoming The Royal Opera's Director of Opera in 2017. This new production will receive its premiere in September 2021, with Royal Opera Music Director Antonio Pappano conducting the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House. Carlos Álvarez performs in the title role, alongside Lisette Oropesa and Liparit Avetisyan. In 2022 the ROH will celebrate Antonio Pappano's twenty-year career at the Royal Opera House. Pappano is the ROH's longest serving Music Director, and during his tenure he has conducted extensive repertory including Wagner's *Ring* cycle, Turnage's *Anna Nicole* and in 2019 Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

Katie Mitchell directs a new production of Handel's oratorio *Theodora* in January 2022 – a work not seen on the stage at Covent Garden since 1750. An international cast includes American soprano Julia Bullock in the title role and mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato as Irene, alongside British tenor Ed Lyon, Polish countertenor Jakub Józef Orliński and Hungarian-Romanian baritone Gyula Orendt. Harry Bicket will conduct and the female-led creative team includes award-winning choreographer Shelley Maxwell. This exciting new take on Handel's late masterpiece, in which love transcends political tyranny, continues The Royal Opera's celebration of the operas and oratorios Handel wrote for Covent Garden.

Continuing The Royal Opera's exploration of Janáček's works, we are thrilled to present the long-awaited premiere of Claus Guth's production of *Jenůfa*, with Henrik Nánási conducting Asmik Grigorian in the title role, Nicky Spence as her jealous suitor Laca, Karita Mattila as the Kostelnička and Andrew Staples as Števa.

The Royal Opera continues its series of Benjamin Britten's operas with a new production of *Peter Grimes* in collaboration with Teatro Real, Madrid. Deborah Warner directs and Mark Elder conducts a cast that includes British singers Allan Clayton, Bryn Terfel and John Tomlinson alongside Maria Bengtsson and former Jette Parker Young Artist Jacques Imbrailo. This exciting new production will have its premiere in Madrid in April 2021, before coming to the Royal Opera House in March 2022.

Richard Jones directs a new production of Saint-Saëns's *Samson et Dalila* with Antonio Pappano conducting Nicky Spence and Elīna Garanča in the title roles, leading a cast that includes Polish bass-baritone Lukasz Golinski.

In January 2022 we celebrate the 75th anniversary of The Royal Opera company, which first came together as a company at its Covent Garden home on 14 January 1947 in a performance of *Carmen*. More details on the anniversary celebrations will be announced soon.

For The Royal Opera's Season in the Linbury, **Little Bulb Theatre** returns to the Royal Opera House for the world premiere of their magical new Christmas show for family audiences. The Linbury Season also sees the world premiere of a new opera, *The Blue Woman*, by composer Laura Bowler and librettist Laura Lomas. A co-commission with Britten Pears Arts, directed by Katie Mitchell, this new commission explores violence against women. *Bajazet*, co-produced with Irish National Opera and directed by Adele Thomas, will see the ROH's first opera by Vivaldi presented on the Linbury stage.

The Royal Opera welcomes a breadth of British and international talent in revivals of much-loved operas this Season. These include Anna Netrebko in *Nabucco*, Angela Gheorghiu in *Tosca*, Sonya Yoncheva in *Madama Butterfly* and Simon Keenlyside in *Macbeth*. The 2021/22 Season also sees the return of *La traviata* with no fewer than six sopranos singing the role of Violetta in Richard Eyre's time-honoured production: Lisette Oropesa, Ekaterina Bakanova, Anush Hovhannisyán, Pretty Yende, Angel Blue and Hrachuhí Basséñz.

This Season's revival of Keith Warner's production of *Otello* in Summer 2022 sees American tenor Russell Thomas taking to the stage in the title role – one of the most punishing in the repertory. Daniele Rustoni will conduct a superb cast including Hrachuhí Basséñz as Desdemona and Christopher Maltmann as Iago. Jonas Kaufmann takes the lead roles in Damiano Michieletto's double production of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, alongside Albanian soprano Ermonela Jaho and Georgian mezzo-soprano Anita Rachvelishvili.

Among many conductors this Season we welcome three who will make their Royal Opera debuts: Oksana Lyniv, who will conduct the first performances of *Tosca*, Giacomo Sagripanti, who will conduct some performances of *La traviata* as well as performances of *Don Pasquale*, and Speranza Scappucci, who will conduct two concert performances of Verdi's *Attila*. We are also delighted that Julia Jones returns to the Royal Opera House to conduct *Così fan tutte* and Jakub Hrůša to conduct *Lohengrin*.

Oliver Mears, Director of Opera said: 'After a turbulent year we are thrilled to announce a line-up of productions for everyone to enjoy in our first full Season since 2019. The opera company and all staff and artists in the building are itching to create and stage work and we are excited to welcome back international and British artists, and of course our magnificent Chorus and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House. Since first closing our doors a year ago, we have been proud to present a wealth of digital work to audiences around the globe, however, nothing can replace the live theatre so missed by us all in the last 12 months. We look forward to opening our doors in the autumn and presenting a truly remarkable new Season of work.'

Kevin O'Hare, Director of The Royal Ballet, said: 'The Royal Ballet are bouncing back after the most challenging year in our history, and I am thrilled to be sharing some of the exciting new work planned for our 2021/22 Season. Wayne McGregor's inspired *The Dante Project* receives its long-awaited world premiere alongside Christopher Wheeldon's magical, epic romance *Like Water for Chocolate*. It's fantastic that Kyle Abraham will also create a new work for us this Season. Our dedicated audiences have missed the thrill, passion and exhilaration of live ballet, as much as we have and we can't wait to be back on stage for our first full Season in 18 months.'

Detailed information about these exciting new works and more will be announced on 1 June. The Royal Opera House Live Cinema Season and digital programme will be announced later this summer, alongside further details of the Linbury Theatre Season.

All details of the new 2021/22 Season are subject to change.

*Ninette de Valois, Founder of The Royal Ballet.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Public booking for the 2021/22 Season opens on Tuesday 24 August 2021, further details via www.roh.org.uk

1. For all ballet enquiries, please contact: Ashley Woodfield – Ashley.Woodfield@roh.org.uk
2. For all opera enquiries, please contact: Chloe Westwood – Chloe.Westwood@roh.org.uk

3. Please find opera images [here](#) and ballet images [here](#).

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About The Royal Ballet

Under the directorship of Kevin O’Hare, The Royal Ballet unites tradition and innovation in world-class performances and is a driving force in the development of ballet as an art form. Based at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, it brings together today’s most dynamic and versatile dancers with a world-class orchestra and leading choreographers, composers, conductors, directors and creative teams to share awe-inspiring theatrical experiences with diverse audiences worldwide. The Company’s extensive repertory embraces 19th-century classics, the singular legacy of works by Founder Choreographer Frederick Ashton and Principal Choreographer Kenneth MacMillan, the compelling new canon of work by choreographers today including Resident Choreographer Wayne McGregor and Artistic Associate Christopher Wheeldon, and the bold and complementary programming in the Linbury Theatre. Guest choreographers Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Cathy Marston, Crystal Pite, Hofesh Shechter, Pam Tanowitz and Twyla Tharp-have also created works for the Company.

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 George Benjamin, 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, the Royal Opera House brings together the world’s most extraordinary artists in live, streamed and broadcast events and performances that thrill, move and excite; that transport people to other worlds. Our theatres are in London’s Covent Garden but our work is accessed and experienced across the UK and globally through touring partnerships, cinema programmes, free outdoor screenings, radio, TV and live-streaming.

Since closing our doors due to the global pandemic in March 2020, the Royal Opera House continued to bring together the world's most extraordinary artists and curated the #OurHouseToYourHouse programme, made up of nine live concerts (six for opera, two for ballet and two galas), 38 streamed productions and a suite of online content that has been viewed over 15 million times in 183 countries,

together with a suite of cultural highlights in partnership with the BBC, Sky Arts and Netflix and a host of online home learning opportunities wherever you are in the country.

We are hugely excited to welcome people back to our theatres as soon as possible, showcasing the very best of our art forms and bringing the joy of live performance back to our audiences. We would like to thank everyone who continues to support our creative community as we get closer to re-opening our doors once again.

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. The global pandemic has affected all arts organisations across the world. We have lost £3 in every £5 of our income, and our loan from Government takes us only part of the way. We need your help with our Recovery Campaign to bring our artists back to our stages. roh.org.uk/donate