

OCI

Opera Collective Ireland





Opera Collective Ireland

OPERA COLLECTIVE IRELAND
& KILKENNY ARTS FESTIVAL

GF Handel
Semele

A Musical Drama in Three Parts

Libretto by William Congreve

With

Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin | Sestina

First performed at the Covent Garden Theatre 10 February 1744.
Tonight's performance edition is by Clifford Bartlett for King's Music

Opera Collective Ireland
would like to thank the following for their generous support:



**KILKENNY
ARTS
FESTIVAL**



AKADEMIE FÜR
ALTE MUSIK
BERLIN 



Welcome Note

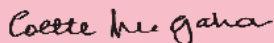
My welcome note for tonight's performance of Handel's *Semele* is different from what I usually write. I need to begin by saying what a joy it is for Opera Collective Ireland to finally bring this stunning opera to the stage following what has been an incredibly difficult two years for the arts sector worldwide. Our planning discussions to bring *Semele* to Irish audiences began in 2018 and the Arts Council generously agreed to fund the project for performance in 2020. However, it was with heavy hearts that the project was deferred, first to 2021 and then to 2022.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our *Semele* co-producer Kilkenny Arts Festival and its director Olga Barry for their unfaltering support of the project. To our creative partners, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin and Sestina, our thanks for clearing your diaries in 2020, 2021 and 2022!

We were very excited to be able to reassemble the same creative team of director Patrick Mason, conductor Christian Curnyn, set and lighting designer Paul Keogan and costume designer Catherine Fay who brought Monteverdi's *The Return of Ulysses* to sold-out houses in Kilkenny and Dublin in 2018. Thank you for hanging in there!

Finally, I thank the board and Friends of Opera Collective Ireland for all their support and I reserve a very special debt of gratitude to my Girl Friday – our Project Administrator Pauline Ashwood.

Opera Collective Ireland is extremely proud of the work we have done since 2014 and the number of young Irish singers we have brought to Irish audiences, many of whom are now singing in opera houses from Covent Garden to San Francisco. We hope you enjoy tonight's cast of wonderful singers and we look forward to sharing plans for our 10th birthday with you very soon.



Artistic Director Opera Collective Ireland

The Creative Team

Conductor	Christian Curnyn
Director	Patrick Mason
Set Lighting Design	Paul Keogan
Costume Design	Catherine Fay

Head of Music Andrew Griffiths | *Musical Assistant* Connor Wilcox* |
Assistant Director Chris Kelly* | *Stage Manager* Conleth Stanley |
Assistant Stage Managers Ilona McCormick, Clive Welsh |
Costume Supervisor Monica Ennis | *Assistant Costume Supervisor*
 Sharon Ennis | *Chief Electrician* Eoin Lennon, Ado Moylon |
LX Programmer Eoin McNinch | *Set Construction* Stephen Burke |
Hair & Make-up Carole Dunne | *Assistant Hair & Make-up* Tee Elliott |
Sound Design Denis Clohessy | *Production Management*
 Statement Productions, Eoin Hannaway

* participant in the Opera Collective Ireland Mentoring Scheme

Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

General Manager Uwe Schneider

Sestina

Musical Director Mark Chambers

The Cast

Apollo | Jupiter
 Cadmus | Somnus
 Semele
 Athamas
 Juno | Ino
 Iris
 High Priest

Andrew Gavin
 Edward Hawkins
 Kelli-Ann Masterson
 Gerben van der Werf
 Dominica Williams
 Jade Phoenix
 Fionn Ó hAlmhain

Sestina

Soprano Hannah Traynor, Laura Aherne, Anna Gregg
Alto Leanne Fitzgerald, Nathan Mercieca, Ellis Dexter
Tenor Ben Escorcio, Luke Horner
Bass Adam Cahill, Fionn Ó hAlmhain

The performance is about 2 hrs 40 mins
 including one 20-minute interval.

*The taking of photographs and the use of recording
 equipment in the auditorium are forbidden.*

*Members of the audience are requested to turn off
 all mobile phones and digital alarms.*



OCC

Opera Collective Ireland

Jonathan Dove
FLIGHT

**Next inbound opera landing
in autumn 2023**

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ealaíon

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opera



IRISH
CHAMBER
ORCHESTRA

Endless pleasure, soft delights – terror and astonishment: the story of *Semele*

Where would opera be without Ovid's *Metamorphoses*? From Monteverdi to Gluck, Cavalli to Salieri, composers and their librettists have lifted plots, characters, images and actions from the myths and legends that are featured in Ovid's epic poem. Semele, Callisto, Medea, Daphne, Orpheus and Euridice – the list goes on. From the first opera of the Renaissance, through the Baroque, and into the Rococo, the *Metamorphoses* has inspired and sustained European music drama.

Ovid was a contemporary of Jesus. He wrote his idiosyncratic epic during the reign of the Emperor Augustus, a time when, in the words of another poet, T ed Hughes: 'The Greek/Roman pantheon had fallen in on men's heads. The obsolete paraphernalia of the old official religion were lying in heaps, like old masks in the lumber room of a theatre, and new ones had not yet arrived.' These stories were already a thousand years old when Ovid set them down, and yet they continued to exert their influence for another two thousand years: the old masks repainted and refurbished century after century, long after the new Christian masks had arrived. Why?

Hughes, in his introduction to his own *Tales from Ovid*, offers a convincing answer. 'Above all,' he writes, 'Ovid was interested in passion. Or rather, in what a passion feels like to the one possessed by it. Not just ordinary passions either, but human passion *in extremis* – passion where it combusts, or levitates, or mutates into an experience of the supernatural.' From the first, opera composers responded to the challenge of making audiences feel the force of these extreme passions through music: music that would possess them, make them combust and levitate with emotion. And, perhaps, no composer of opera has been more successful at doing that than George Frideric Handel.

In 1744, faced with a Lenten ban on performances of opera in London, Handel composed *Semele* as a secular oratorio, and tried to pass it off as such. He took an existing libretto by the Restoration playwright William Congreve, edited out the racier bits to suit a more censorious Georgian taste, and managed to get it past the Lord Chamberlain. The performance went ahead. But critics and audiences were having none of it: it was denounced as a 'bawdy play' and roundly condemned.

Hardly surprising, given the way in which the chorus applauds Semele's 'Endless pleasures, endless love,' and then gives voyeuristic and enthusiastic approval to her Act 2 love-making with Jupiter: 'How engaging, how endearing'. Chorus cries of 'terror and astonishment' at her fate might seem to reinforce the moral of the story [the wages of sin is death!], but they are soon drowned out by lively songs celebrating the birth of Bacchus, god of wine: 'Happy, happy!' Not much evidence of Lenten abstinence there.

To our modern taste, the opera is refreshingly amoral. And Handel's score is as sensuous and seductive as his heroine. Ovid's mix of passionate intensity, wry worldliness and erotic playfulness seems to bring out the best in our George, and his wonderfully varied, subtle music sets the director and the designer a particular challenge: how to create an equally volatile and fascinating world on stage? How to give space, shape and appropriate colour to its endlessly playful energy? Ovid's classical settings of Olympus, Citheraon, Arcadia, have lost their significance for us. The palaces and groves of Baroque convention have lost their lustre. Where in our world could such a strange fantasy of love, power, revenge, and hedonism feel at home?

The themes, atmosphere and actions of the opera, its blend of worldliness, hedonism and eroticism, led us to California: to Hollywood. Not the real Hollywood, of course: this is not a documentary. We're talking a fantasy Hollywood, a Californian mask, as it were: an LA of the imagination.

A place where a beautiful young woman might catch the eye of the most powerful man on Earth, a godlike president, and where her ambition and his desire could have fatal consequences. Or so they say. A place of lavish parties, multi-million-dollar hideaways and Art Deco hotels: an earthquake zone of paranormal activities, drug-dealing doctors and savage revenge. A place where the grotesque lives side by side with the sublime, the raunchy with the tender, the innocent with the corrupt.

For an ancient myth, it seems to have made itself quite at home in our modern fantasy world. It feels at ease. And that shouldn't surprise us. It may be an old story, but it is the story of *Semele*.

Patrick Mason



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NOF

Mortals and Immortals: a guide to Handel's *Semele*

THE BACKSTORY:

Once upon a time – a time when Mortals and Immortals mixed freely – there was a mortal king called Cadmus, who had two daughters: Semele and Ino. There was also a prince, another mortal, called Athamas, who fell in love with Semele. Cadmus wanted Semele and Athamas to marry, but Semele resisted. Unknown to everyone, Semele was already the lover of the god Jove [Jupiter], chief of the Immortals. Unknown to everyone, Ino had fallen in love with Athamas. However the goddess Juno, wife of Jove, had got wind of her husband's infidelity, and sent her friend Iris, another Immortal, to investigate.

THE ACTION. PART ONE:

Exasperated by Semele's refusal to marry Athamas, Cadmus brings the couple to consult Juno's oracle. An anxious Ino accompanies them. The oracle approves the marriage, and Cadmus insists that it goes ahead immediately. Athamas is ecstatic: he praises Juno. Semele is conflicted: she appeals to Jove. Ino is heartbroken: she tries to stop the ceremony. Jove intervenes with heavenly thunder. Juno responds with heavenly fire. Cadmus realises that the Immortals are at odds over the wedding. Jove sends a powerful earthquake to disrupt the proceedings. Cadmus, Semele, and the congregation run for their lives.

Athamas is devastated, and laments his loss. Ino is hopeful, and declares her love. Athamas is appalled by what he hears: they are both victims of Love. Cadmus interrupts, to tell them of the sudden abduction of Semele by a giant eagle. The congregation arrive back to congratulate Cadmus on his good fortune: The eagle was Jove in disguise, Semele now lives among the Immortals. They are granted a vision of Semele in her new surroundings.

Juno catches up with Iris, who has discovered where Jove has hidden Semele. Juno is enraged, and vows to destroy Semele. Iris points out a problem: the hideaway is guarded by ferocious dragons. Juno decides to call on Somnos, the god of sleep, to sedate the dragons.

The two Immortals set out to seize his magic power.

Semele is alone and sleepless in her hideaway.

Jove returns, and Semele complains of his neglect.

He comforts her: where love is, he is there, even when he's away.

Semele is unconvinced: she is still mortal and feels his absence.

He reassures her, and they make love.

The attendant Immortals look on approvingly.

PART TWO:

Semele is unable to sleep: a mortal among Immortals, she feels inferior.

Jove is alarmed, and tries to divert his lover:

He throws her a party, sends for Ino, and transports the two sisters to Arcadia.

Juno and Iris track down Somnos, and demand his power of sleep. He refuses to hand it over. Juno dangles the prospect of gaining Pasiphea, the love of his life, in return for his power. Somnos gives way. Juno and Iris leave to deal with the dragons.

Increasingly isolated, Semele laments her lover's absence. Juno, disguised as Ino, enters the hideaway. She claims to see signs of immortality in Semele's eyes, and offers her a mirror to check for herself. Semele is entranced by what she sees. Juno/Ino turns Semele's head. If Semele wants immortality, she must trick Jove into swearing to give her what she wants, and then demand that he appear to her in all his godlikeness. Only then shall she be immortal. Semele is convinced.

Jove appears, disturbed by a bad dream, sent by Juno and Somnos. He seeks comfort from Semele, but she is unresponsive. What does she want? Swear to give me what I want, and I will tell you. I swear. And Semele is doomed. Juno is triumphant.

Thunder clouds and lightning announce the approach of the god as god. Semele begins to regret her demand. Too late. The naked power of Jove burns her up.

Ino is transported back among the mortals, bearing the ashes of her sister.

Cadmus and Athamas are grief-stricken by the story of Semele's death.

Ino reveals that Jove has ordained that Athamas should now marry her.

Cadmus insists the god's will be done: Athamas consents.

Apollo, the god of light and music, descends from the sky.

He brings good news from the Immortals:

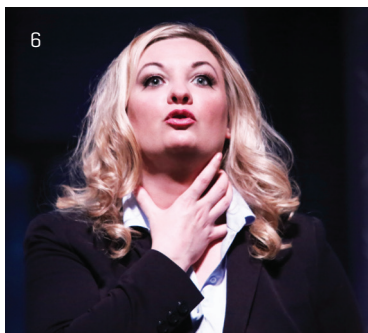
The birth of Bacchus, love-child of Jove and Semele, and god of wine.

The baby Immortal will usher in a new age of love and pleasure for mortal men and women.

Patrick Mason

Past Opera Collective Ireland Productions





1. Rory Musgrave, *Vagabones* 2019, 2. Sharon Carty, *Agrippina* 2015, 3. Christopher Cull & Carolyn Dobbin, *The Rape of Lucretia* 2014, 4. Sarah Richmond, *Owen Wingrave* 2017, 5. Rachel Kelly, *Agrippina* 2015, 6. Jennifer Davis, *The Rape of Lucretia* 2014, 7. Jessica Hackett, Christopher Bowen, Malachy Frame & Fionn Ó hAilmhain, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* 2022, 8. Gyula Nagy, Emma Morwood & Akamus, *The Return of Ulysses*, 2018
Photos © Marshall Light Studio



Photos Kyle Tunney



Opera Collective Ireland

Elevating Ireland's next generation of opera talent

Since 2014 Opera Collective Ireland has been developing a new landscape for opera production in Ireland. Putting Irish artists centre stage, our critically acclaimed productions have showcased young Irish singers who have subsequently gone on to perform on some of the most prominent opera stages of the world, including the Royal Opera Covent Garden, La Scala Milan, the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Maggio Musicale Florence, Teatro Real Madrid, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Oper Frankfurt and Salzburg Festival.

As the only Irish opera company with the clearly formulated policy of exclusively casting Irish artists in major roles where possible, OCI creates valuable employment opportunities for young artists, making a vital contribution to both their personal and professional development. Uniquely, our repertoire choices are artist-led, chosen with care to nurture and showcase the finest young Irish singers. As a result our critically acclaimed work has shown, beyond doubt, that it is viable to mount opera of the highest standard with native talent.

Singers engaged to date by OCI include:

Andrew Boushell | Christopher Bowen | Anna Brady | Margaret Bridge
Dawn Burns | Sharon Carty | Brendan Collins | Eoin Conway | Christopher Cull
Rachel Croash | Jennifer Davis | Anna Devin | Carolyn Dobbin | Máire Flavin
Andrew Gavin | Rachel Goode | Peter Harris | Jessica Hackett | Patrick Hyland
Rachel Kelly | Raphaela Mangan | Emma Morwood | Rory Musgrave |
Gyula Nagy | Emma Nash | Amy Ní Fhearraigh | Bríd Ní Ghrúagáin |
Peter O'Reilly | Padraic Rowen | Sarah Richmond | Benjamin Russell |
Ross Scanlon | Roisín Walsh

Artistic Director Colette McGahon | *Artistic Consultant* Dr Suzanne Murphy
Marketing Muireann Sheahan | *Project Administrator* Pauline Ashwood

Patron Michael D Higgins, President of Ireland

The Cast

Jupiter | Apollo Andrew Gavin



Andrew Gavin completed his Masters in Music Performance at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in 2016. He was awarded the PwC Wexford Festival Opera Emerging Young Artist bursary and is a

former member of the Irish National Opera ABL Aviation Studio. Andrew is currently undertaking his doctoral studies at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and Trinity College Dublin. In 2018 he sang the role of Telemachus in OCI's hugely successful production of Monteverdi's *The Return of Ulysses*. Upcoming operatic engagements include Tonio in Donizetti's *La file du Régiment*, Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Rodolfo in Puccini's *La Bohème* and Ruodi in Rossini's *William Tell* with Irish National Opera. Andrew is fascinated by horology and collects mechanical watches. He is also an enthusiastic cook!

Somnus | Cadmus Edward Hawkins



Born in London, Edward read music at King's College, London, studying trumpet at the Royal Academy of Music with Ian Wilson. Having begun singing in his late twenties, he quickly began to develop a

professional career and in 2015 Edward became a member of the Glyndebourne Chorus, where he appeared in various critically acclaimed productions, including performances at the BBC Proms and worldwide cinema broadcasts. During the period of theatre closures, Edward filmed two staged song cycles by Shostakovich for English Touring Opera. When not performing, Edward enjoys nothing more than a swim in the sea with his wife and children, followed by a delicious barbecue!

Semele Kelli-Ann Masterson



Wexford soprano Kelli-Ann Masterson is a graduate of Trinity College Dublin [BMus. Ed.] and TU Dublin Conservatoire of Music and Drama [MMus]. Kelli-Ann is an alumna of both the Irish

National Opera ABL Aviation Studio 2019–2021 and Northern Ireland Opera Studio 2018–2019. Recent opera engagements include Duchess/Bottle in Todd's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* [Opera Collective Ireland] and Amor in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* [Blackwater Valley Opera Festival]. Upcoming roles in 2022 include Norina in *Don Pasquale* in a nationwide tour with Irish National Opera. Kelli-Ann was a finalist in the 2022 BA Lirica International Voice Competition, Italy. In 2019 Kelli-Ann made her Wexford Festival Opera debut singing the role of La Fée in Viardot's *Cendrillon* and in the same year she created the role of Donal in the world premiere of Raymond Deane's *Vagabones* with Opera Collective Ireland. Kelli-Ann has a weakness for watching daytime Agatha Christie movies on ITV, especially while munching on scones!

Iris Jade Phoenix



Jade Phoenix graduated in 2020 with First Class honours from the Royal Irish Academy of Music with a Bachelor of Music Performance and in 2021 she graduated from Guildhall School of Music and

Drama in London with a Masters in Music Performance. Jade participated in Wexford Festival Opera's Academy programme in 2020 and 2021. With Wexford Festival Opera she sang the role of Alice in Verdi's *Falstaff* in 2020 and then Giulietta in

Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* in 2021. Jade will make her professional debut with Wexford Festival Opera in 2022, where she will sing the role of Ariel in *La Tempesta* by Fromental Halevy. Jade is crazy about rollerblading, even using them to freewheel up to her *Semele* costume fitting!

Athmas Gerben van der Werf



The Dutch countertenor Gerben van der Werf made his operatic debut at the age of 12 as First Boy in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. Gerben first obtained graduate degrees in Chemistry, Physics, and

History and Philosophy of Science at Utrecht University. However, in recent years the desire to sing and nurture his lyrical talents became so prominent that he decided to change his career plans entirely and instead dedicate his life to becoming an opera singer. Gerben made his debut at the Dutch National Opera as Sergei Diaghilev in the world premiere of Willem Jeths' *Ritratto* (2020). This season, Gerben made his international debut at Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar as Helicon in *Caligula* (Glanert) and appeared as a soloist with the renowned Nederlandse Bachvereniging. In 2022–2023 he will debut at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam as the Handelian hero Rinaldo and at BOZAR in Brussels as the Egyptian pharaoh Akhnaten (Glass). Gerben loves cycling and has confessed that Britney Spears is his guilty pleasure!

Juno | Ino Dominica Williams



Dominica Williams is a mezzo-soprano from Dublin. Over the past few years, she has sung regularly with Irish National Opera, Northern Ireland Opera and Opera Holland Park. Dominica was

a Young Artist with Northern Ireland Opera in

2016/2017 and was the 2020 winner of the Irish Heritage Brackaville Vocal Studies Bursary.

Dominica has just completed her Masters in Opera Studies at the David Seligman Opera School at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama where she won the 2021 Janet Price Opera Prize. This autumn Dominica will join Wexford Festival Opera for the three mainstage operas of the festival and will also sing the role of Miss Loring in *The Master* by Enrico Caruso. Dominica's dream dinner party guests would include Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Samuel Beckett, Francis Poulenc and then Graham Norton (to keep the conversation going!).

High Priest Fionn Ó hAlmhain



Fionn has performed with Irish National Opera, Blackwater Valley Opera Festival, Lyric Opera, the Salford Choral Society, Piccadilly Symphony Orchestra, North Wales

Opera and the Yorke Trust Opera. He made his debut with Opera Collective Ireland as Ned Perry and the Jailer in the world premiere of Raymond Deane's *Vagabones* and was accepted into the Glyndebourne Academy in 2017. Earlier this year Fionn played the part of the Caterpillar in Opera Collective Ireland's production of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Fionn is currently a member of the Northern Ireland Opera Studio and will be undertaking postgraduate study at the Royal Academy of Music in London from September. When Fionn's not singing he loves to play the Uilleann pipes, the Irish flute and online chess!

The Creative Team

Christian Curnyn Conductor

Christian Curnyn is widely recognised as one of the UK's leading conductors specialising in the Baroque repertoire. He founded Early Opera Company in 1994 with whom he has given notable performances throughout the UK and abroad, along with multiple award-winning recordings for Chandos. EOC earned an Olivier Award nomination for its collaborations with the Royal Opera.

A regular at English National Opera since 2008, Christian's opera credits also include acclaimed productions for Scottish Opera, Garsington Opera, Opera North, The Royal Opera Covent Garden, Komische Oper Berlin, Oper Frankfurt, Landestheater Salzburg, Oper Halle, OperStuttgart, Teatro Nacional de Sao Carlos, Halle Handel Festival, as well as further afield with Opera Australia, New York City Opera, Glimmerglass Opera and Chicago Opera Theater. For Opera Collective Ireland he conducted Monteverdi's *Ulysses* in collaboration with the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin.

On the concert platform engagements have included concerts with the Academy of Ancient Music, Budapest Festival Orchestra, Bournemouth Symphony, English Concert, EssenPhilharmoniker, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, The Hallé, Scottish Chamber, Swedish Chamber, Stavanger Symphony, and Ulster Orchestras, as well as further afield with the Tasmania, West Australia, and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras.

Forthcoming highlights include concerts with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales,

the SWR Symphony, a return to Komische Oper Berlin, concerts with his Early Opera Company in Bruges and Eindhoven and a return to Covent Garden for a new production of *Alcina*. His 10th recording for Chandos, Handel's *Amadigi*, is released in September.

Patrick Mason Director

Born in London in 1951, Patrick Mason was educated at Downside School, and trained at the Central School of Speech and Drama, where he was awarded diplomas from the Central School, and the University of London.

He joined the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, as a Voice Coach in 1972, before becoming a lecturer in Performance Studies at Manchester University in 1975. He returned to the Abbey as a resident director in 1978. His long association with the Abbey culminated in his tenure as Artistic Director from 1993 to 1999. He has worked extensively with Irish writers such as Brian Friel, Hugh Leonard, Tom Murphy, Tom Kilroy and Tom MacIntyre. His production of Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* won him an Olivier nomination and a Tony Award for Best Director. He is also closely associated with the work of Frank McGuinness and directed the premieres of *The Factory Girls*, *Observe the Sons of Ulster Marching Towards the Somme*, *Dolly West's Kitchen* [Abbey/Old Vic, London] and *Gates of Gold* [Gate Theatre, Dublin].

He first directed at the Gate Theatre, Dublin, in 1983 and has returned over the years to direct a series of productions of Anglo-Irish

playwrights such as Farquhar, Sheridan, Wilde and Shaw. In recent years he has directed a series of productions for the Gate Theatre, Dublin, which include *The Yalta Game* [Sydney/Edinburgh Festivals], *Hay Fever* [Charleston Spoleto Festival], and *The Speckled People*.

Opera work includes productions for Wexford Festival Opera, WNO, ENO, Opera Zuid, Opera Ireland, the Buxton Festival and Irish National Opera. In 2018 Patrick directed *The Return of Ulysses* for Opera Collective Ireland. In 2000 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by Trinity College Dublin in recognition of his contribution to Irish Theatre. He is currently an adjunct professor in Drama at University College Dublin and was conferred with an honorary doctorate by the university in 2013.

Paul Keogan

Set | Lighting Design

Paul's previous designs for Opera Collective include *The Return of Ulysses*. Other recent lighting designs include *Elektra*, *Fidelo*, *20 Shots of Opera*, *Aida*, *The Marriage of Figaro* [Irish National Opera]; *Constellations*, *The Visiting Hour*, *Hamlet*, *The Snapper*, *The Red Shoes* [Gate Theatre]; *Translations*, *Portia Coughlan*, *Walls And Windows*, *Citysong*, *Last Orders At The Dockside*, *Katie Roche* [Abbey Theatre]; *Scandaltown*, *Love Love Love*, *The Plough And The Stars* [Lyric Hammersmith]; *Doubt* [Chichester Festival Theatre]; *The Naked Hand*, *Shirley Valentine*, *DoubleCross*, *Here Comes The Night* [Lyric Theatre Belfast]; *Happy Days*, *Blood In The Dirt* [Landmark Productions]; *The Visiting Hour*, *Hamlet*, *The Snapper* [Gate Theatre]; *I Think We Are Alone* [Frantic Assembly tour]; *Cyprus Avenue* [Abbey Theatre, MAC Belfast, Public Theater NY, Royal Court]; *The Caretaker* [Bristol Old Vic]; *The Gaul*,

A Short History Of Tractors In Ukrainian [Hull Truck]; *Guests of the Nation*, *The Hairy Ape*, *Woyzeck*, *Far Away* [Corcadorca Theatre Company]; *The Treaty*, *Duck Duck Goose* [Fishamble, Dublin]; *The Gondoliers*, *Utopia Ltd* [Scottish Opera, D'Oyly Carte Opera, State Opera South Australia]; *Dyad* [Justine Doswell]; *Sama*, *Flight* [Rambert]; *Last*, *Giselle* [Ballet Ireland]; *No Man's Land* [English National Ballet and Queensland Ballet].

Catherine Fay

Costume Design

Catherine Fay designs for theatre, opera and dance and previously designed the costumes for Opera Collective Ireland's productions of *The Return of Ulysses* and *Owen Wingrave*. Recent work includes *Translations*, *Portia Coughlan*, *iGirl*, *Walls and Windows* and *14 Voices* [Abbey Theatre]; *Elektra*, *Orfeo ed Euridice* [Irish National Opera]; *Acis and Galatea* [Opera Theatre Company]; *Outrage*, *The Treaty and Embargo* [Fishamble]; *The Plough and the Stars* [Irish Times Theatre Award nomination 2017]; *Our Few and Evil Days* [Irish Times Theatre Award nomination 2015]; *Henry IV Part I* [Irish Times/ESB Theatre Award nomination 2007]; *Owen Wingrave* [OperaBastille, Paris, 2016]; *Transmission* [Little Wolf]; *GLUE* [Rough Magic]; *Näher... nearer, closer, sooner* [Liz Roche Dance Company]; *The Plough and the Stars* [Lyric Hammersmith/Abbey Theatre]. She designed *Girl Song* [United Fall]; *12 Minute Dances*, *Totems* [Liz Roche Dance Company]; *The Importance of Nothing* [Pan Theatre Company]; *Romeo and Juliet* [Irish Times Theatre Award nomination 2016] and *The Threepenny Opera* [Gate Theatre].

Our Partners for *Semele*

Kilkenny Arts Festival

For almost 50 years, Kilkenny Arts Festival has been one of the leading festivals in Ireland, celebrated for its effortless blend of tradition and innovation, and for its electrifying range of events, staged in some of the country's loveliest venues.

Since its foundation in 1974, Kilkenny Arts Festival has gathered many of the world's finest musicians, performers, writers and artists in Ireland's medieval city. For ten days each August, the city's historic churches, castle, courtyards, townhouses and gardens offer a magical setting for unique collaborations and intimate encounters between audiences and artists.

From outdoor theatre to contemporary dance, the Festival is dedicated to staging events of the highest calibre, thrilling audiences of all kinds. Classical music has been at the core of the Festival from the very beginning, and recent concerts have featured an astonishing number of globally acclaimed artists including Sir András Schiff, Alina Ibragimova, Alexander Gavrylyuk, Nathalie Stutzmann, Alfred Brendel, Roderick Williams, Les Arts Florissants and the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin.

In recent years the Festival has enriched its programme with major new initiatives like The Marble City Sessions, a cross-genre series of unique musical collaborations, hosted and co-curated by the great Irish fiddle-player and artist-in-residence Martin Hayes.

Indeed, artist residencies now lie at the heart of everything the Festival does, offering a combination of continuity and innovation that gives the Festival its unique spirit. The Festival's orchestra-in-residence, the Irish Chamber Orchestra, collaborates with leading national and international performers on concerts that combine the traditional with the thrillingly modern, while in recent years the position of poet-in-residence has been graced by everyone from Paula Meehan and the late Eavan Boland to former US laureates Billy Collins and Robert Pinsky.

Each year the Hubert Butler Lecture series, delivered by illustrious critics and thinkers including Lara Marlowe, John Gray, Masha Gessen and Samantha Power, brings the pressing issues of our time into focus before rapt audiences in the spectacular St Canice's Cathedral, one of Ireland's most magnificent churches, which also plays host to a series of unforgettable concerts each year. Indeed, Kilkenny boasts many of Ireland's loveliest historic spaces, including Rothe House, the Black Abbey and the Castle Yard, which has hosted dazzling theatrical productions by the likes of Rough Magic, Shakespeare's Globe and Druid Theatre. Few festivals can boast such a wealth of venues, and the Festival is constantly devising unique events tailored to the city's extraordinary spaces, including its many beautiful gardens, hosts of the perennially popular Secret Garden Music series.

Under the direction of Olga Barry, the Festival has continued to innovate. In 2020, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Festival presented KAFX: a wide-ranging collection of exhibitions and events, some (like Blaise Smith's live-streamed portrait project *Village People*) delivered online, and others performed live before a socially distanced audience, such as the world premiere of *Solar Bones*, Rough Magic's stage adaptation of Mike McCormack's novel. Garnering widespread acclaim for its imaginative response to the realities of the pandemic, KAFX amply demonstrated why the Festival continues to be 'one of the jewels in the arts calendar crown' (*Irish Daily Mail*).

Festival Director Olga Barry | Festival Producer Marjie Kaley | Festival Administrator Valerie Ryan (maternity leave) | Acting Festival Administrator / Friends Manager Céline Reilly | Marketing & Development Manager Pat Carey | Digital Marketing and Social Media Executive Cathy O'Connor | Production Manager Aidan Wallace | Producer Lisa O'Brien | Development Officer Grace Kearney | Covid Compliance Officer Rob Usher | Publicity O'Doherty Communications | Designer Íde Deloughry | Copywriter Alistair Daniel | Website Path

Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin

The Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin (Akamus) celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2022. Founded in Berlin in 1982, the ensemble is now one of the world's leading chamber orchestras playing historically informed music. From New York to Tokyo, London or Buenos Aires, Akamus is a welcome guest, appearing regularly at the most important venues throughout Europe and internationally. Akamus has established itself as one of the pillars of Berlin's cultural scene, having had its own concert series at the Konzerthaus Berlin for more than 30 years and having collaborated with the Staatsoper Berlin on their Baroque repertoire since 1994.

Akamus' recordings have won all the major recording awards for classical albums, including the Grammy Award, Choc de l'année and the Annual Prize of the German Record Critics. The orchestra has been honoured with the Telemann-Preis Magdeburg in 2006 and with the Bach Medaille Leipzig in 2014. www.akamus.de

General Manager Uwe Schneider | *Dramaturg & Assistant General Manager* Linus Bickmann | *Project Management* Madeleine Onwuzulike, Evelin Achtenhagen | *Violin* Péter Barczy, Verena Sommer, Matthias Hummel, Thomas Graewe, Edburg Forck | *Viola* Clemens-M Nuszbaumer | *Violincello* Jan Freiheit | *Violone* Michael Neuhaus | *Lute* Lorenzo Abate | *Harpichord* Andrew Griffiths | *Oboe* Michael Bosch, Elisabeth Beckert | *Bassoon* Katrin Lazar | *Horn* Hannah Miller, Kevin O'Hara | *Trumpet* Pamela Stainer, David Collins | *Timpani* Richard O'Donnell

Sestina

Sestina is a dynamic vocal ensemble specialising in the performance of early music. Founded in Belfast in 2011 by Mark Chambers, who remains the ensemble's Musical Director, Sestina has a reputation for excellence and authenticity in early music performance as well as a fresh and innovative approach to the programming of early music. Sestina collaborates regularly with specialist early music performers, and has worked with ensembles such as His Majesty's Sagbutts and Cornetts, The Monteverdi String Band and the Irish Baroque Orchestra. Along with regular performances in Northern Ireland, Sestina performs all around Ireland and the UK, with recent performances at East Cork Early Music Festival, Purbeck Art Weeks Festival, the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham and Sligo Festival of Baroque Music. Sestina's debut recording, *Master and Pupil*, exploring the influences and legacy of Claudio Monteverdi, was released in April 2022.

The support and development of aspiring professional singers from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland is at the heart of Sestina's activities, and its Next Generation mentoring programme provides training for young performers, giving them the opportunity to work alongside world-class professionals. Sestina also has a comprehensive education and outreach programme, including schools workshops and 'Sing with Sestina' events.

Sestina is grateful to its principal sponsor, Exitex Ltd, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Arts Council Ireland and The Foyle Foundation for funding its current season.

Musical Director Mark Chambers | *General Manager* Ciara Burnell

“The cream can always find a market, but unless provision is made for an adequate supply of milk, there will be no cream.”

Charles Villiers Stanford, *Pages From An Unwritten Diary*

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Opera Collective Ireland

Past Productions

Britten *The Rape of Lucretia* (2014)

Director Michael Barker-Caven | *Lighting Designer* Sinéad McKenna |
Set and Costume Designer Joe Vanek | *Conductor* Stephen Barlow
 Wexford | Cork | Dublin | Dundalk

Handel *Agrippina* (2015)

A co-production with Northern Ireland Opera
Director Oliver Mears | *Set and Costume Designer* Annemarie Woods |
Lighting Designer Kevin Treacy | *Conductor* Jonathan Cohen | Irish Chamber Orchestra
 Limerick | Galway | Dublin | Armagh

Britten *Owen Wingrave* (2017)

A co-production with the Académie de l'Opéra national de Paris
Director Tom Creed | *Set and Lighting Designer* Aedin Cosgrove |
Costume Designer Catherine Fay | *Conductor* Stephen Barlow | Irish Chamber Orchestra
 Limerick | Cork | Dublin

Monteverdi *The Return of Ulysses* (2018)

A co-production with the Kilkenny Arts Festival
Director Patrick Mason | *Set and Lighting Designer* Paul Keogan |
Costume Designer Catherine Fay | *Conductor* Christian Curnyn |
 Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin
 Kilkenny | Dublin

Telemann *Pimpinone* (2019)

In association with Killaloe Chamber Music Festival.
Director Jonathan Cocker | *Conductor* Peter Whelan
 Killaloe

Raymond Deane *Vagabones* (2019)

Based on the play *Trespasses* by Emma Donoghue.
Director Ben Barnes | *Set and Costume Designer* Monica Frawley |
Librettist Renate Debrun | *Lighting Designer* John Comiskey |
Movement Director Libby Seward | *Conductor* Sinéad Hayes | Crash Ensemble
 Dublin | Dundalk | Youghal | Waterford

Will Todd *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (2022)

Original Production by Opera Holland Park
Director Caroline Chaney | *Set and Costume Designer* Leslie Travers |
Conductor Stephen Barlow | Irish Chamber Orchestra
 Kilkenny | Navan | Limerick | Dublin

Board of Directors


Seamus Crimmins | Laura Gilsonen | Virginia Kerr | Maria Loomes, company secretary |
 Colette McGahon | Suzanne Murphy | Cormac Simms, chair


Design Íde Deloughry


Production image © Marshall Light Studio

Special thanks to Laura Gilsenan.

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