

the **ROMAN THEATRE**
OPEN AIR FESTIVAL



GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S

IOLANTHE

SUNDAY 30TH MAY
WEDNESDAY 16TH JUNE
& THURSDAY 17TH JUNE



A Note from our Artistic Director

We are delighted to be returning to this beautiful venue after our first visit in 2020 – one of the great new collaborations that have arisen from the last year or so. After 1 year, 2 months and 13 days, we are thrilled to finally share this production with you, after it's London run was cancelled just before opening night. Now, CCO looks forward to a summer of touring, including our new, madcap G&S murder mystery – Express G&S.

You can also take Iolanthe home! Our brand new audio recording has just been released. Further details can be found in your programme.

Thank you so much for your support.
We hope you enjoy – Iolanthe!

Yours, John Savournin



Charles Court Opera

Charles Court Opera has been described as one of the leading and most versatile chamber opera and music theatre companies in the UK. They are considered one of the champions of the current reinvigoration of Gilbert and Sullivan, described as “the masters of G&S in small places” and were the 2020 Off-west-end award winners for Best Opera for their production of *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

Aside from their Gilbert & Sullivan productions, their notorious ‘Boutique Pantos’ have become a legendary part of London’s Christmas, known for their ‘off-piste’ nature and described by the Telegraph as “an annual madhouse”.

They are committed to devising new work, education and outreach, have performed across the UK in venues ranging from pub theatres to concert halls, and toured to the US and Europe.

They have co-produced operas with the Iford Arts Festival as a regular visiting company, and are proud to be an associate company of The King's Head Theatre, London. This summer, they are to co-produce *The Pirates of Penzance* with Opera Holland Park, and will present *Express G&S - The Complete works of G&S in 75 minutes* - at the Pleasance Theatre, London before embarking on a UK tour of their brand new production of *Iolanthe*, *Express G&S* and their "five-star heaven" 2018 production of *The Mikado*.

Website: www.charlescourtopera.com

Twitter: @charlescourt

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Production photographs included are shot by Robert Workman.



Thank you to all our CCO Friends & Supporters!

Performing is our world, but productions are expensive – even on a small scale. We could never achieve the work that we do without the support of our beloved Friends.

As an unfunded, not-for-profit organisation, we rely on the support of our audiences, and our Friends, to whom we are eternally grateful. All donations go into our productions and the running of the company.

With special thanks to our VIP & Dress Circle Friends:

David Bowers, Tom & Silke Cochrane, Jessamine Harris, David James, Gisela Kingsley, James Lonsdale, The Hon Dame Sonia Proudman DBE, Richard van Remmen, Anonymous, Gayna Martine & Simon Masterton-Smith, Antony Thomlinson.

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Would you like to become a Friend of Charles Court Opera?

During these uncertain times we all need the escapism that theatre and music can offer and without the help of our Friends this would not be possible. Rest assured that your contribution is going to be well spent – be it on our singers' wages, costumes, scenery, or the hire of a piano.

We would love you to join our Friends scheme as a way of offering more long term support, click the memberships below to find out more about the benefits:

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A huge thank you to all our Friends for your generous support – it is very much appreciated.

A full list of all our friends can be found online:
www.charlescourtopera.com/become-a-friend-of-cco



CAST

The Lord Chancellor – Richard Suart

Earl of Mountararat – Matthew Siveter

Earl Tolloller – David Menezes

Strephon / Willis – Matthew Kellett

Queen of the Fairies – Natalie Davies

Iolanthe – Meriel Cunningham

Celia – Catrine Kirkman

Leila – Jennie Jacobs

Phyllis – Llio Evans

TEAM

Director – John Savournin

Musical Director – David Eaton

Choreographer – Jo Meredith

Designer – Rachel Szmukler

Original Lighting Design – Claire Childs

Touring Lighting Design – Ian Wilson

Producer – Catherine Chibnall

Stage Manager – Octavia Peneş



TAKE GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S IOLANTHE HOME WITH YOU

Our production of Iolanthe is now available as an audio recording!

**BUY ON
CD NOW!**

Our brand new audio recording, featuring the original cast from our postponed King's Head Theatre London run, including most of the cast from today's performance, has just been released!

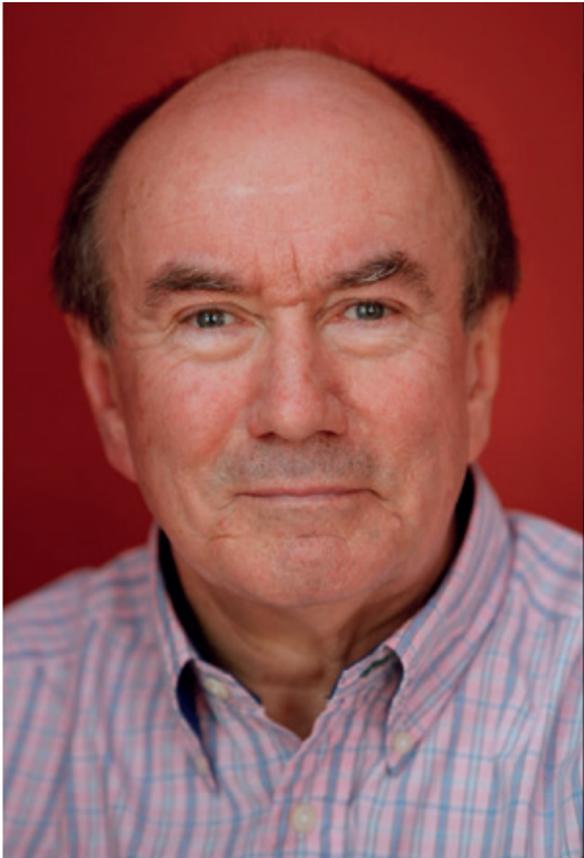
The cast features G&S veteran Simon Butteriss as the Lord Chancellor, and includes all musical numbers, as well as specially selected dialogue extracts.

To purchase and download a copy digitally ***please click here.***

If you would prefer to receive a hardcopy CD then ***please click here to contact us*** and we will register your interest for when they are available in the coming weeks.

This recording is produced in collaboration with the King's Head Theatre.

The Lord Chancellor | Richard Suart



G&S have always played a major part in Richard's career, ever since he assumed the role of Ko-Ko at ENO in 1988, the same year he joined the D'Oyly Carte.

He has performed *Iolanthe* in San Francisco, *Yeomen at Covent Garden* with WNO, *Mikado* in New York, Venice, Vancouver and throughout Holland, as well as on tour with Scottish Opera, for whom he sings *The Gondoliers* and *Utopia Limited* later this year.

At the BBC Proms he has sung *The Lord Chancellor*, *The Duke of Plaza Toro* and *Sir Joseph Porter*. He has written *They'd none of 'em be missed* and *Mikado Memories*, and is a Vice-President of the Gilbert & Sullivan Society.

Earl of Mountararat | Matthew Siveter



Matthew has been performing professionally since graduating from Royal Holloway University of London seven years ago.

A regular principal with The National Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company, Opera Della Luna and Charles Court Opera, he has performed the works of Gilbert and Sullivan up and down the country.

A former Young Artist of Iford Arts Festival, he has also worked for The Buxton International Festival and Lyric Opera Ireland. He has sung as guest entertainer for Music Festivals At Sea onboard P&O cruise ships and created a one man cabaret act that has proven popular around the UK including venues such as The National Liberal Club and The Scottish Arts Club.

Earl Tolloller | David Menezes



Born in Barnsley, David gained a degree in classics at St. Hugh's College, Oxford, before studying singing at the Royal College of Music.

Roles include, Colonel Fairfax – Yeomen of the Guard, Flute – A Midsummer Night's Dream (British Youth Opera), Goro – Madama Butterfly, Dr Caius – Falstaff (Wexford Festival), Remendado – Carmen (Longborough Festival), Peter Quint/Prologue – Turn of the Screw (Opera Up Close), Ferrando – Così fan tutte, Mozart – Mozart & Salieri, Nanki-Poo, Richard Dauntless, Ralph Rackstraw, The Duke of Dunstable, The Defendant, & Frederic (Charles Court Opera), Count Almaviva – The Barber of Seville, Don Ottavio – Don Giovanni, Frederic (Heritage Opera), Oswald – Haddon Hall, Richard Dauntless Nanki-Poo and Frederic (National Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company).

Strephon / Willis | Matthew Kellett



London born baritone, Matthew Kellett, is a graduate of The Royal Northern College of Music and Trinity College of Music, where he was awarded the TCM Trust's Silver Medal for vocal studies.

Matthew is a regular performer with Charles Court Opera, previously taking the roles of: Dick Deadeye (HMS Pinafore), Pooh Bah (The Mikado), Robin Oakapple (Ruddigore), Papageno (The Magic Flute) and Basilio (The Barber of Seville) among many others, as well as many appearances in CCO's famous annual Christmas pantomime.

This year Matthew will also be touring with the National Gilbert and Sullivan Opera company performing as Dick Deadeye (HMS Pinafore) and Pish Tush (The Mikado).

Queen of the Fairies | Natalie Davies



Natalie Davies is a recent graduate of the Guildhall School of Music & Drama where she was the CM Vinson Scholar and studied under the guidance of John Evans.

She was awarded the 2018 Basil A Turner Prize by British Youth Opera for her performance as Hermia in the European premiere of Jeremy Sams 'The Enchanted Island', and returned to the company to play Tisbe in Rossini's 'La Cenerentola'.

Other performance highlights include Mozart's Requiem at Snape Maltings, Stravinsky's 'Pribaoutki' with the Ubu Ensemble and a live performance on BBC Radio 3's In Tune.

Iolanthe | Meriel Cunningham



Meriel Cunningham is a recent graduate of The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where she received both her Bachelors and Masters degrees under the tutelage of John Evans.

Recent operatic highlights include Pastora (Dorilla in Tempe, Wexford Festival Opera 2019), (cover) Minerva (The Return of Ulysses, Royal Opera at The Roundhouse), The Muse /Nicklausse (The Tales of Hoffmann, Grimeborn Opera Festival) and Mère Gerald (Dialogues des Carmélites, GSMD).

Experience in Musical Theatre includes An Evening on Broadway at Milton Court Theatre and in Guys & Dolls (Hot box girl) and Crazy For You (Margie) both at Silk Street Theatre for GSMD.

Previously for CCO, roles include Ruth (Ruddigore), Mary (The Nativity Panto), Boatswain (HMS Pinafore) and Harry (Snow White).

Celia | Catrine Kirkman



Based in South East London, Catrine Kirkman graduated with a Masters from the Guildhall School of Music & Drama. Awards include First Prize and Audience Prize at the 2012 John Kerr English Song competition and the Russell-Davies Prize.

A former Britten Pears Young Artist, Catrine's Gilbert and Sullivan roles include Mad Margaret (Ruddigore), Angelina (Trial by Jury), Laetitia (The Zoo), Celia (Iolanthe) at the Kings head in Islington and Cousin Hebe in Offie award winning production of HMS Pinafore all with Charles Court Opera. In 2019 Catrine co-created & starred in her one woman show about the legendary soubrette star of the original Savoy Operas, Jessie Bond which premiered at the International Gilbert and Sullivan Festival.

As an actress Catrine also plays the title role in feature film In Love with Alma Cogan (now on Amazon Prime) alongside Roger Lloyd Pack and John Hurt.

Leila | Jennie Jacobs



Jennie Jacobs trained at The London School of Musical Theatre, representing them at the Stephen Sondheim Society Student Performer of the Year competition in 2011. Since graduating, Jennie has worked in film, theatre, musicals, and plays, as well as a recording artist and cabaret performer.

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Credits include: Wicked Queen in Charles Court's Snow White in the Seven Months of Lockdown; Jack Frost in The Nativity Panto (King's Head Theatre); Little Buttercup in HMS Pinafore (King's Head Theatre); Prince Charming in Buttons (King's Head Theatre); Mrs Morcom in Guilty of Love (National Tour); Mad Margaret in Ruddigore (Barons Court Theatre); Pitti-Sing in The Mikado (National Tour).

Phyllis | Llio Evans



Soprano, Llio Evans, trained at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the Wales International Academy of Voice. She is a British Youth Opera Alumna and an Alvarez Young Artist at Garsington Opera where she received the Leonard Ingrams Award.

Recent roles include Celia Iolanthe, for English National Opera, Iris Semele for Garsington Opera, Zerlina Don Giovanni for Longborough Festival Opera, The Little One in the UK premiere of The Golden Dragon (Peter Eötvös) for Music Theatre Wales, and Barbe on Chandos' studio recording of The Beauty Stone (Arthur Sullivan).

This season Llio will also be returning to Longborough Festival Opera to play Melanto in The Return of Ulysses by Monteverdi.

CREATIVES

Director | CCO John Savournin

As well as his many and varied productions for CCO, John has directed Trial by Jury (Opera North); Britten's Songs and Proverbs of William Blake (ETO); Die Zauberflöte and Il Barbiere di Siviglia (Iford Arts/CCO) and several G&S operas for the National G&S Opera Company.

This summer: The Pirates of Penzance for OHP/CCO.

During the pandemic, he directed three films: Grief, a new short by Amanda Holden and Nils Holger-Peterson (Opera Vision); a Whistle-stop Cinderella for Opera North and CCO's online pantomime (both of which he also penned).

He has written and/or directed numerous outreach projects for the Royal Opera, Opera North, OHP, Concordia Foundation and CBBC.

Musical Director | David Eaton

David Eaton studied at the Royal College of Music and has been the Musical Director of Charles Court Opera since it was founded.

He had written several opera translations, and writes both music and lyrics for the CCO pantomime at the Kings Head Theatre. He is looking forward to conducting *The Pirates of Penzance* with Charles Court and Opera Holland Park this summer.

Choreographer | Jo Meredith

Jo Meredith is a movement director and choreographer credits include: *Norma*, Teatro Real, Madrid (dir. Justin Way), *I Masnadieri*, Teatro Alla Scala Milan, (dir. David McVicar), *Drot Og Marsk* Royal Danish Opera, (dirs Amy Lane and Kasper Holten), *Rigoletto* Savonlinna Opera, (dir. David McVicar). *Tosca*, Icelandic Opera, (dir. Greg Eldridge). Jette Parker Young Artist Summer Concert, (dir. Noa Naamat), *Il Trionfo del Tempo e del Disinganno*, Alte Munze, Berlin, (dir. Julia Burbach). Jette Parker Young Artist Summer Concert, *La Scala Di Seta* and *The Lighthouse*, Linbury Studio Theatre, (dir. Greg Eldridge). *Macbeth* (dir. Bruno Ravella) and *A Fairy Queen* and *Un Ballo in Maschera*, (dir. Tim Nelson) at Iford Arts.

Designer | Rachel Szmukler

Rachel trained at the Motley Theatre Design Course in London, and has a first class degree in Fine Art from the Glasgow School of Art.

Recent productions include: Whistlestop Cinderella (Opera North), The Nativity Panto, HMS Pinafore and The Mikado (all for Charles Court Opera); Orfeo (Oxford Festival of the Arts/Three Palaces Festival Valetta); The Magic Flute (Waterperry Opera Festival); Mansfield Park (Opera South); Don Giovanni (British Youth Opera); Jephtha (Iford Arts); l'Ospedale (Wilton's Music Hall/Bury Court Opera); the world premier of Snow (The Opera Story); Several productions for Blackheath Halls Opera including Carmen, Idomeneo, Brundibar and The Little Sweep; Thousand Furs (Tete a tete/Aldeburgh Music); The Cunning Little Vixen (Co-Opera Co); La Rondine (Go Opera); and Semele (Hampstead Garden Opera).

Lighting Designer | Ian Wilson

Ian graduated from Wimbledon College of Art with a Foundation degree in lighting design and practice. His relationship with Charles Court Opera dates back to *The Three Musketeers* Boutique Pantomime at The Rosemary Branch in 2012.

Previous lighting designs for the company include *HMS Pinafore* and *Ruddigore* along with *The Barber of Seville* and *Tosca*, both at the Musique Cordiale Festival in southern France. Other previous lighting designs include *Henna Night* – New Diorama Theatre, Euston (dir. Peter James), *A Dark and Stormy Night* – Old Laundry Theatre, Bowness-on-Windermere (dir. Roger Glossop), *And you were in it* – Questors Studio, Ealing.



*Richard Suart in Charles Court Opera's HMS Pinafore
(Photography: Bill Knight)*

A Matter of Patter An Interview with G&S Veteran Richard Suart

You have appeared in such a wide variety of repertoire, including many contemporary works, but you are particularly well known for your G&S roles. What do you think is the reason G&S remains so enduringly popular with audiences?

I maintain that audiences like to be entertained; sometimes by something they know, or a reworking thereof, and sometimes they like to be challenged by a work that is new to them. Attending a G&S performance probably falls into the former category, it is comforting, and you know you will smile, laugh and be entertained. Good comfort food for the whole body.

You are most famous now for playing the comic character roles (the 'pattermen') in the G&S operas. What are the particular challenges (apart from just remembering the words!) of these roles and why do you find them rewarding?

The patter roles are many and varied; one could argue that Major General Stanley and Sir Joseph Porter for instance are rather like cardboard cutouts, there is no time for development in their characters because of how Gilbert has drawn them, unlike Ko-Ko whom we can observe at length. But they are all vulnerable, they think they know more than they do, they believe themselves wise, perhaps even virtuous, but like us all, they are flawed. It is a challenge sometimes to portray them with success and with interest. The comedy is frothy and satirical, and one must work within those boundaries.

Many consider *Iolanthe* to contain some of Sullivan's best music. As a performer what do you enjoy most about the piece, and performing the role of the Lord Chancellor?

I love the overture! I first met this piece when I joined the D'Oyly Carte in 1988, and I remember so well the conductor, Bramwell Tovey, rehearsing it; his attention to detail in the Sitzprobe was infectious. It is stunning.

All G&S roles, and yours in particular, rely on excellent diction. What advice do you have for young singers taking on roles where clarity of text is so important, particularly if they find themselves in difficult acoustics? The profession routinely employs language coaches for foreign languages – is there a role in the British opera world for English Language coaches?

I'm totally fascinated by the discipline of singing in English; so much of the world speak our language, but few sing in it! And I maintain that at music colleges it is not often a high priority. I began singing at English National Opera nearly 40 years ago, when the company had a very fine set of 'house' principals, and they all sang so well in English. At ENO, I am often employed as 'Diction Coach' for a production. I listen to rehearsals and report back to each singer. Consonants are the first to disappear obviously, they require energy, and can get in the way of the beauty of the sound, but this need not be the case, and the ability to be understood by one's audience is so rewarding. I hope to do more of this.

You are famous for the ingenuity of updating Ko-Ko's 'little lists' in *The Mikado*. How much research do you have to do to make these topical and have you ever found yourself struggling for appropriate content? What is the 'list' you feel most proud of, or which provoked the biggest audience reaction?

Updating Ko-Ko's 'Little list' was a privilege that was thrust upon me as I inherited the role from Eric Idle at ENO, and I have enjoyed it enormously over the past 35 years. I have found that as a rule, I have to secretly like the people I include, there must always be a redeeming quality: it is, after all, part of an entertainment, it is not a speech to the United Nations. In the Autumn of 2019, when I did my most recent performances at ENO, Prince Andrew was quite a hit... "and then there's Nigel Farage, whose big grin one can't abide; and the Grand old Duke of York who has been 'letting down the side'". A favourite pair of lines mention a former Culture Secretary... "and football club supporters who make love with kiss-and-tellers, wearing all the gear for kinky fun that once was David Mellor's". But it is never an easy ride...there I was in New York with City Opera in September 2001; there was very little that was at all amusing after 9/11.

G&S has always had a very loyal audience base – how do you think we can attract a new and younger audience to enjoy these works?

We must keep performing the operas in an accessible way: the productions must move forward and the style contemporary; we must respect the past but look to the future.

People talk of you as carrying on a great G&S patterman tradition. Are there particular performers either in the past or currently who you have learnt from or been inspired by?

The two pattermen that I heard early in my career and had great respect for were Derek Hammond Stroud, and Eric Shilling: I learnt much from them both and am most grateful for their friendship and inspiration.

What is the most challenging role (G&S or otherwise) that you have taken on and which is your favourite?

I think all roles present their challenges, but my work with contemporary opera has thrown up perhaps some of the greatest. Peter Maxwell Davies wrote "Eight Songs for a Mad King", they are vocally challenging above all, and are much loved by directors for offering them opportunities for outrageous productions. In a memorable one, I sang the first three songs sitting on a loo, and the other five from a bath. But I shall never forget Ken Russell's ill-fated attempt at Princess Ida when King Gama's first entrance was from high above the stage, perched upon a fish-burger, gradually being lowered onto the stage with dry ice surrounding a large fish whose head and tail were moving...my instructions were to tear up a copy of The Times whilst descending before beginning my song - I could neither see nor hear anything...thanks Ken.

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31st May 2021

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23rd June – 2nd July 2021

Photography **Bill Knight** | Artwork **Alex Jackson Creative**