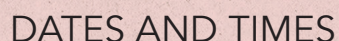
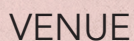




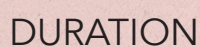
Sunday 13 July	6pm–6.30pm
Tuesday 15 July	6pm–6.30pm
Friday 18 July	6pm–6.30pm
Monday 21 July	6pm–6.30pm
Friday 25 July	6pm–6.30pm



Sunday 13 July	7.15pm-9.15pm
Tuesday 15 July	7.15pm-9.15pm
Friday 18 July	7.15pm-9.15pm
Monday 21 July	7.15pm-9.15pm
Friday 25 July	7.15pm-9.15pm



Pavilion Arts Centre



2 hours, including a 20-minute interval

With special thanks to
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INEVITABLE

Carmel Smickersgill (b. 1996)

Libretto by Josh Overton

Sung in English, with side-titles

Duration: 20 minutes

CREATIVES

Music Director

Director

Designer

Lighting and Video Designer

Dramaturg

Berrak Dyer

Marcus Desando

Elliott Squire

Alex Musgrave

Emma Jenkins

CAST

A young and ready for responsibility **Beca Davies**

B a man aged by purpose **Christopher Cull**

C someone brand new **Julia Mariko**

ENSEMBLE

Provided by Northern Ballet Productions

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Cello

Clarinet/Bass clarinet

Drum kit

Piano

Winona Fifield

Oliver Morris

Rosalyn Cabot

Toby Turton

Emily Wilson

Jack McCarthy

Berrak Dyer

With thanks to Julia Mariko, Christopher Cull, Beca Davies and Erika Gundesen for their contributions to the research and development of the piece.

LIFE GETS STRETCHED

Martin Green (b. 1977)

Libretto by Martin Green

Sung in English and an imagined language

Duration: 20 minutes

CREATIVES

Music Director

Director

Designer

Lighting and Video Designer

Dramaturg

Transcriber/Arranger

Paul McKenzie

Rebecca Meltzer

Elliott Squire

Alex Musgrave

Maureen Lennon

Robin Wallington

CAST

He

She

Shimble

Themba Mvula

Alexandra Meier

Tsen Day-Beaver

ENSEMBLE

Provided by Northern Ballet Productions

Classical Accordion

Piano

Viola

Cello

Ciorstaidh Chaimbeul

Paul McKenzie

Rosalyn Cabot

Toby Turton

With thanks to Alexandra Meier, Tsen Day-Beaver, Themba Mvula and Ayye Leventis for their contributions to the research and development of the piece.



DISORDERLY HOUSE

Jasper Dommert (b. 1997)

Libretto by Jessica Walker
Sung in English and Polari, with side-titles
Duration: 20 minutes

CREATIVES

Music Director
Director
Designer
Lighting and Video Designer
Dramaturg

Paul McKenzie
Rebecca Meltzer
Elliott Squire
Alex Musgrave
Alex Chisholm

CAST

Bobby
Robert
Harold
Constance

Egor Sergeev
Christopher Cull
Francis Gush
Rebecca Anderson

ENSEMBLE

Provided by Northern Ballet Productions

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass
Flute/Alto flute
Clarinet
Piano

Winona Fifield
Oliver Morris
Rosalyn Cabot
Toby Turton
Ria Nolan
Fiona Fulton
Emily Wilson
Paul McKenzie

With thanks to Oliver Barker, Francis Gush, Richard Woodall, Rebecca Anderson for their contributions to the research and development of the piece.

TEARS ARE NOT MEANT TO STAY INSIDE

Thandanani Gumedé (b. 1985)

Libretto by Zodwa Nyoni
Sung in English, Ndebele and Zulu, with side-titles
Duration: 20 minutes

CREATIVES

Music Director
Director
Designer
Lighting and Video Designer
Dramaturg
Music Mentor
Transcriber

Berrak Dyer
Marcus Desando
Elliott Squire
Alex Musgrave
Marcus Desando
Abel Selaoe
Alistair Vennart

CAST

Nomvula, The Patient
Sangoma, Traditional Healer
The Initiate

Roberta Philip
Danielle Mahalele
Themba Mvula

ENSEMBLE

Provided by Northern Ballet Productions

Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Double Bass
Clarinet
Percussion
Piano

Winona Fifield
Oliver Morris
Rosalyn Cabot
Toby Turton
Ria Nolan
Emily Wilson
Jack McCarthy
Berrak Dyer

With thanks to Teruki Chan, Grace Nyondoro, Themba Mvula, Roberta Philip, Danielle Mahalele and Erika Gundesen for their contributions to the research and development of the piece.



shorts

NEW OPERA FOR THE 21st CENTURY

Throughout history opera production has been a hotbed of innovation and creativity, with composers constantly pushing boundaries to produce exceptional new works. Fierce competition in the late 18th century led to an explosion of quality and diversity in opera, enriching the cultural landscape and making it a central part of life in cities like Vienna. Operas often reflected political and social issues, finding a deep resonance with audiences which contributed to their lasting impact.

Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* faced controversy and was initially banned in Vienna because of its critique of the aristocracy. Beethoven's *Fidelio* in 1805 met with mixed reactions with some audience members walking out over its political themes. Yet operas also brought immense joy and emotional responses, with numerous new works pushing the limits of the artform in the choice of stories that were told and how they were put together.

An intense creative environment produced a wealth of diverse performances and left a legacy of great works that continue to captivate audiences today, showcasing the enduring impacts of this golden age of opera.

Our motivation for *Shorts* is to invest in the future of opera through the people who are making it and the way it is made. Buxton International Festival has commissioned seven award-winning writers and composers to craft four 20-minute operas from scratch.

Each performance in *Shorts* is a world premiere, blending compelling narratives with a diverse range of musical styles. We aim to challenge perceptions and invite new ways of thinking. We ask: What's next for this exciting artform today? What can we learn from leading artists in other fields about what opera is and what it can become? Can we set new precedents? What you will see may surprise you; you may not like it all, in which case we encourage you to reflect on why you feel this way. What rules have been broken?

We hope you feel part of a new moment for opera by being the first audiences to experience these pieces. We hope you leave feeling a little inspired; a little shocked, outraged, joyful, motivated, in awe. We want to know your thoughts and feelings, and we encourage you to engage in a dialogue with us and the artists about the future of this complex artform.

Thank you for supporting new work.

Helen Goodman



SYNOPSIS

INEVITABLE

In a barren room an old man [B] achingly turns a crank over and over; with every turn of the crank a clock ticks back a few seconds. [A] is born into the world. [B] is thrilled to see them; it's finally time for him to retire and let someone else take over his work. [A] is confused and [B] explains that when the clock hands reach midnight all human life will be cleansed from the earth. Each turn of the crank buys the world a few extra seconds. He instructs [A] to turn the crank. [A] is troubled by this, suggesting that the only way they could keep the clock from reaching midnight is to work together. [B] scoffs at this, as he's paid his dues and suggests [A] is simply work shy like all their generation. He opines on the importance of good, hard graft building character. The two argue, and with a patronising farewell [B] departs to begin his retirement.

[A] is left alone, wondering if there's any point in turning the crank at all – why bother if it's only delaying the inevitable? But, they muse, even a single extra second is so much extra time when it will be experienced by billions of people. They turn the crank, trying to push as hard and fast as they can, desperate to turn the clock back even if it's only for a moment. They succeed but the toll the act takes on their body is severe. They collapse to the ground, almost dying from exhaustion.

[C] is born into the world, bright eyed and fascinated by the new experience. But the clock is still ticking and [A] is too exhausted to explain what any of it means. As they try to get [C]'s attention a drunken [B] returns, singing his praises for his retired life. [C] joins in, blissfully unaware of the danger and of the exhaustion which finally claims [A]'s life. As [B] grows tired and bored, [C] wonders what the clock is for – perhaps when it reaches midnight they'll receive a marvellous gift. The clock ticks to midnight. The end.

LIFE GETS STRETCHED

Shimble addresses the audience with a story:

A pair of teenagers flee from war. They arrive in a new, unfamiliar country; a safer place, where the jam is too sweet.

She is wired; he teaches her how to breathe.

They fall in love and in time have a child.

The trauma of their early lives leaves them with differing ideas of survival and protection, over time pushing them apart.

Can they find a common ground again to raise this child together?



DISORDERLY HOUSE

December 1927

A basement flat in Fitzroy Square becomes the centre of a scandal that rocks London's queer community. Bobby Britt, a flamboyant West End dancer, hosts a lively gathering of music, laughter, and other explicit activities. As the night unfolds Bobby performs The Dance of the Seven Veils from *Salome* for an uninvited mysterious stranger, unaware that the celebration is about to be cut short. Moments later police crash through the door arresting everyone present under charges of keeping a 'Disorderly House'.

TEARS ARE NOT MEANT TO STAY INSIDE

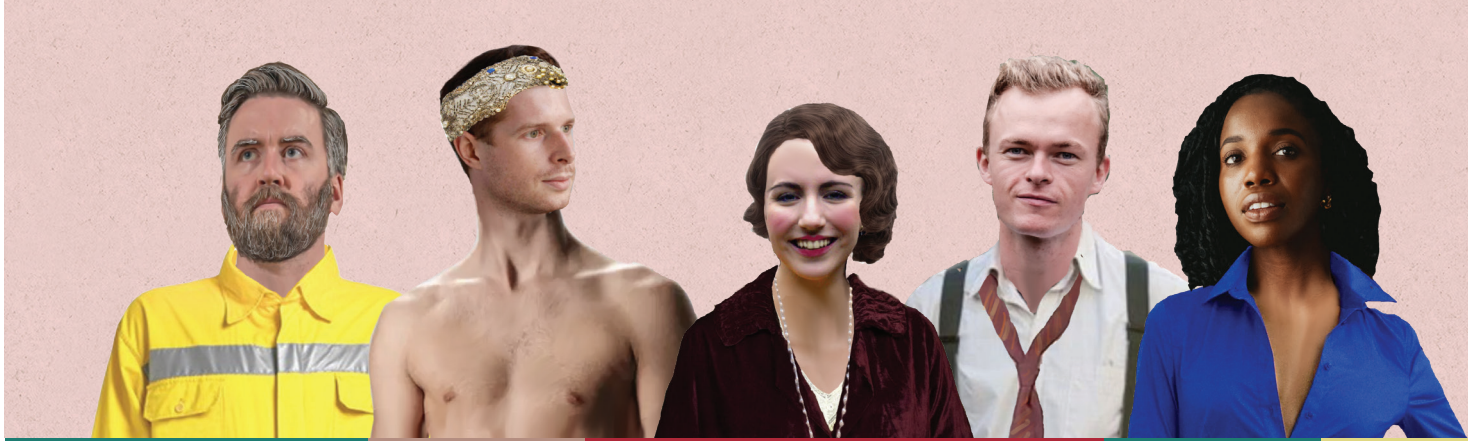
Tears Are Not Meant To Stay Inside is a ritual of healing and release.

Nomvula is a black woman who feels lost and displaced in her world. Living in survival mode has hoarded pain in her body. She feels numb, unloved, unsafe and invisible. She wants to feel the softness and joy of her existence. But to do so she must break open. Cry. Cleanse the anger, the grief, the exhaustion and the disappointment from inside. But Nomvula is afraid to be vulnerable. She seeks out a Traditional Healer for help.

Spiritual healing in African traditions is based on the belief that illnesses are caused by supernatural imbalances between a person and the spiritual world or their social environment. Traditional healers use a variety of methods to diagnose and treat illnesses, including incantations, divination, herbs, communication with ancestors and rituals.

Nomvula's tears are not meant to stay inside. To feel free and to find herself again, she must be brave enough to offer herself to the healer.

shorts



INEVITABLE

A POETIC FEELING OF HELPLESSNESS

This piece was collaboratively imagined by Librettist Josh Overton and Composer Carmel Smickersgill. Having been thrown together by Buxton International Festival to collaborate, they spent two days in a library discussing everything and anything. The initial idea for the work came from a desire to put something on the stage which embodies a poetic feeling of helplessness most of us experience. We all feel things about the world we're living in, whether on the macro level of politics and the climate or the more intimate setting of our own community and home. We watch systems change or become broken, we all have a relationship with the idea of 'work', we all have a different sense of responsibility towards other people. *Inevitable* draws on all these threads to present a really simple problem ... there's a crank that has to be cranked by someone. Otherwise everything ends.

Musically, Carmel had no interest in scoring what could be seen as a bleak story with bleak sounds. Compositionally, she often sets out to take very silly sounding music very seriously. Within the context of *Inevitable*, this particular artistic pursuit allows for a more nuanced expression of the situation and finds a way to seek out joy in each character's predicament. As much as she takes inspiration from composers such as Richard Ayers, Jerskin Fendrix and Meredith Monk, Carmel also has a longstanding love of composers from the operatic canon such as Puccini and Wagner. There are elements of all of the above in this work.

Inspired directly by the artwork *Can't Help Myself* by Sun Yuan and Peng Yu, the composer and librettist worked collaboratively to devise the plot, characters and setting of this chamber opera. This has been a collaboration which both have really enjoyed and they intend to write more together.

Carmel Smickersgill, composer

LIFE GETS STRETCHED

A DAUNTING PROSPECT

This is my first foray into the world of opera, and it has been a wonderful rabbit hole; one of extraordinary music and remarkable people. The legacy makes writing such music a daunting prospect to those from outside the genre (perhaps those within it too) and I am hugely grateful for the support and encouragement I have been shown along the way – from both Buxton International Festival and the singers and musicians.

What to write is of course the first question you ask yourself, and I went through a few possibilities. Opera is SO good at telling big stories, it allows for a form of heightened drama that is less and less common in a box-set age. So I went for a story I felt suited this musical opportunity for scope and scale.

My background is in traditional folk music where, of course, there is also a long history of telling stories through song, especially in the ballads. The differences have been interesting to me; ballad singing is musically repetitive, it creates a certain hypnotic state to help us through long winters. The music of opera, however, constantly evolves; the composer pulls the listener through a series of adventures of differing but connected flavours. And perhaps the biggest of all – folk singers do not often inhabit character.

The process has been exciting for me. I started by writing the story, a desire for something both epic and personal. I have been working with younger people a lot in recent years and have some children of my own, and I am constantly inspired to try and keep a little bit of the bravery and openness that young people are able to access so easily. I have found it harder to keep that as I get older, and I suspect other people may too. So, this story is about that really.

I then recorded myself reading the story and improvised music to that recording. Accordion is my instrument, so I wrote most of it on accordion and extracted parts and melodies from that. These were expanded into arias and other moments.

Finally, a little on the language – I believe this to be a universal story and therefore didn't want to plant us anywhere specific, so the language is one of my own invention. A secondary reason, but of equal importance, is that as a folk singer I am lucky enough to hear songs in many languages I do not speak, and I often find these experiences the most transcendent as a listener. They allow for a closer connection to the emotion and I am not lost in the words. This is my intention here, so don't worry too much about what the words mean, enjoy the incredible voices of these wonderful singers.

Martin Green, composer

“ There are themes that I revisit often, like womanhood, culture, rituals, migration and identity. They are so personal to me, I wonder how they feel inside and affect others ...

– Zodwa Nyoni, librettist



DISORDERLY HOUSE

BALANCING SECRECY WITH CAMERADERIE

There isn't much concrete information in the public realm about Bobby Britt, the dancer at the centre of *Disorderly House*. Most of what we know comes from police records of the 1927 raid on his flat, including a rather forlorn photo of him in his dance skirt, used as evidence against him and his friends.

When we think about the Roaring Twenties, we conjure decadence, excess, and a level of permissiveness. While the upper echelons of society – writers and artists like Christopher Isherwood, Duncan Grant, and Lytton Strachey – enjoyed some freedom, working-class lads like Britt had no such luxury. If caught in an illegal act, respectable life as they knew it was over.

Reading about Bobby's fate after the raid became the creative drive behind *Disorderly House*. We wanted to celebrate this daring young man whose performing life was cruelly cut short. His extraordinary longevity – 1900 to 2000 – made him a witness to the queer fight for equality across the twentieth century. Born three years after Havelock Ellis's study 'Sexual Inversion', he lived through the partial legalisation of homosexuality in 1967, the introduction of Clause 28 in 1988, and the lowering of the age of consent to 18 in 1994. Less than four years after his death, civil partnerships were introduced.

Our short opera introduces Bobby's life to a contemporary audience while also highlighting how queer people throughout the last century fell victim to the vagaries of British law-making, simply due to when they were born.

The opera draws upon found music connected to Bobby Brit through police records, specifically 'The Dance of the Seven Veils' and 'What a Wonderful Party' from Gershwin's *Lady, Be Good*. Bobby had premiered *Lady, Be Good* in the West End alongside Fred Astaire, making the song a poignant link to his career. These works become the foundation of the opera, appearing in fragments before being reshaped and transformed, echoing the charged atmosphere of that fateful night.

The libretto weaves in Polari, a secret slang historically used by the queer community in Britain to communicate discreetly and avoid detection in a hostile society. Expressions like 'Hilda Handcuffs' (a term for the police) highlight the coded ways in which they navigated their lives, balancing secrecy with camaraderie.

A key compositional approach is the use of microtones, pitches that fall between the notes of a piano's 88 keys. These 'in-between' sounds serve here as a metaphor for queerness, existing outside rigid structures and bending familiar musical material into something new. As the party escalates and the sense of unease grows, these microtonal distortions intensify, warping the sound world to reflect the shifting tension in the room.

According to the police report, when officers arrived they were greeted by Constance, who said, 'But Mr Britt was about to give us a Salome dance!'. This moment encapsulates the defiance and theatricality of the scene. *Disorderly House* seeks to capture both the exuberance of Bobby's world and the haunting echoes of a night that changed everything.

Jasper Dommett, composer, with Jessica Walker, librettist

TEARS ARE NOT MEANT TO STAY INSIDE

GENUINE AUTHENTICITY

Zodwa penned a brilliant libretto about a woman who feels unheard and unseen, so she becomes a Patient who seeks the help of a traditional Healer. The healer is a character that is often mistranslated as 'witch-doctor' in Western and European culture, thus the healer is misunderstood and not seen in her true light either. Understanding the calling and role of this latter character is relevant to the concept behind the accompanying music, because the Zulu word for traditional healer is 'Sangoma'. Izangoma (pl.) are the bridge between this world of the living and the spirits of the ancestors in the realm of those who eternally sleep beneath the ground. Zodwa is Ndebele and I am dually Zulu and Xhosa; we are water from the same well and thus share at least 85 percent of our lexicon. In our tradition, Ngoma is a type of drum used by healers across different parts of Africa during the healing rituals. Contemporary music is called 'umculo', while the ritual music as well as the dances are called 'ingoma'. The healers are therefore the 'People of the Song' and they have a very specific sound world that is connected to their practice of healing and divination. I have endeavoured to do justice to their sound (in the compositional process) without compromising the integrity and purity of the classical operatic voice. I also have a background in jazz and I felt compelled to incorporate its elements as an ode to its African origins. The goal was to create an amalgamated sound that is cross-pollinated at the points where Classical music intersects with Jazz and African Ritualistic songs. At the risk of coming across as verbose due to the tautological title, my logic is that I cannot overstate how integral 'authenticity' was in the compositional process of these pieces. The intersection of classical music and traditional Sangoma music was not an easy road to navigate, but being equally authentic to the classical voice and African genres became my true north. I defenestrated conventions of my usual compositional formulas and focused on bending my knee to the libretto as best as I could; to not be afraid of the newness of its ancient music in an unusual genre setting and to amplify the unheard voice of the Patient so she could be heard and, hopefully, finally be seen.

Thandanani Gumede, composer


shorts



Carmel Smickersgill

Composer: *Inevitable*

Carmel is a composer and performer based in Manchester. After studying at the RNCM with Gary Carpenter she has had a varied freelance career in music: working in theatre, writing for concert halls and touring with bands. She was a 2020 Ivor Novello Nominee, recipient of the Rushworth Composition prize (Liverpool Philharmonic) and releases music with PRAH

recordings. Carmel has been mentored by Anna Meredith, a composer who has been hugely supportive and with whom she has toured as a support act. She's previously been commissioned by Liverpool Philharmonic's ensemble 10/10, BCMG, Manchester Camerata and Laura Bowler among others.



Josh Overton

Librettist: *Inevitable*

Josh Overton is a Sunday Times award-winning playwright and poet, a theatremaker, director, fire dancer, musical theatre lyricist and co-owner of a circus. His passion for language and lyricism can be found at the heart of all his work. Collaborating as a playwright with theatres and companies up and down the

UK and as a poet with the Loud Poets of Edinburgh, his work is political, violent, angry, campy, dumb and kind: a million different genres and tones but always pointed firmly in the direction of progress, sanity and a cautious bit of optimism.



Martin Green

Composer & Librettist: *Life Gets Stretched*

Martin is a multi-award-winning musician and Ivor Novello winning composer. As a member of Lau he has won four BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards for Best Group. Raised in a family of folk musicians, he has gone on to make multi-media work that has toured across the globe. In 2014 he received a Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award for Artists

in recognition of his work as a composer. In 2019 he won the Ivor Novello award for his sound walk 'Aeons' that was part of The Great Exhibition of the North. More recently his critically acclaimed work for BBC Radio 4 exploring rave culture, morris dancing and brass banding has received millions of listens.



Jasper Dommett

Composer: *Disorderly House*

Jasper is a PhD composer and 2023 Mendelssohn Scholar. Their passion lies in creating works around queer history allowing for a space for these stories to be heard. Their Ivor nominated work *Disco! Disco! Good! Good?* written for the Riot Ensemble, pays tribute to the queer ballroom culture that emerged during the disco era. Jasper's music has also been performed by musicians

including Sir Andrew Davis, RSNO, LPO, BBC NOW, London Sinfonietta, Fenella Humphreys, and George Fu; and heard on BBC Radio 3 and at Queen Elizabeth Hall, Usher Hall, Hallé St Peters, St Martin-in-the-Fields, St David's Hall, and BBC Hoddinott Hall.



Jessica Walker

Librettist: *Disorderly House*

Jessica's latest commissions and projects include *Coming up for Air* with Bernd Franke (Oper Leipzig, 2025/6 season); *Jephtha's Daughter* with Luke Styles (La Nuova Musica at Wigmore Hall); *Barbara – La Solitude* (La Barcarolle St Omer, Nevill Holt and Deal Festival); *The People's Cabaret* (Brighton, Norfolk and Norwich, and O. Festivals) and *Voices of Power* (Philharmonia and Three Choirs Festival) both with Luke Styles; *Scene Unseen* (ETO at Home and Royal and Derngate theatre) and *Cabaret Macabre* (British Youth Music Theatre) both with

Joseph Atkins; *(Dead) Funny Women* for Lichfield Festival, where she was associate artist from 2022-2024. Other recent commissions include *Not Such Quiet Girls* (Opera North and Leeds Playhouse) and *All I Want is One Night* (Royal Exchange Theatre), which was critic's pick in the New York Times, alongside her two other New York residences for *The Girl I Left Behind Me* with Neil Bartlett (Opera North) and *Pat Kirkwood is Angry* (Royal Exchange Theatre).



Thandanani Gumede

Composer: *Tears Are Not Meant To Stay Inside*

Thandanani Gumede is known as Thanda — a Zulu name that means 'Love One Another'. He is of dual Xhosa and Zulu heritage and hails from KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. He debuted in London at the inaugural 'Nelson Mandela Day' sanctioned by the United Nations. Accolades include a Parliamentary Jazz Award — Ensemble of the Year 2023 (as the lead singer of his former band, Ubunye). Thanda performed for

44 members of the British Royal Family; appeared at the Theatre Royal in London's West End; worked with Warner Classics to perform for the late Emeritus Bishop Desmond Tutu alongside cellists Abel Selaoocoe and Yo-Yo Ma, and appeared on BBC Radio/TV, SKY 1, SABC 1 and Channel 5. Thanda serves on the board of the Manchester Jazz Festival.



Zodwa Nyoni

Librettist: *Tears Are Not Meant To Stay Inside*

Zodwa Nyoni is a Zimbabwean-born writer/director working in theatre, TV, film and radio. She won the Channel 4 Playwrights' Scheme and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize, Alfred Fagon and George Devine Award. Her plays have been produced across the UK, France, Germany, USA, Zimbabwe and South Africa, and her latest, *Liberation*, played at the

Manchester Royal Exchange. She directed three short films: *Mahogany* (National Trust & 24 Design Ltd), *Notes On Being A Lady* (New Creatives/BBC Arts) and *The Ancestors* (BBC Films & BFI Network). Zodwa was an international fellow on Oxbelly's inaugural Episodic Program in Greece. She's a writer on Netflix's spin-off series, *Castlevania: Nocturne*.



Berrak Dyer

Music Director: *Inevitable & Tears Are Not Meant To Stay Inside*

Berrak studied at GSMD and the National Opera Studio. She has worked on *Snow*, *Goldilocks and the Three Little Pigs*, *The Yellow Wallpaper*, as conductor for *Robin Hood*, *Beauty and the Seven Beasts* (The Opera Story), *Rhondda Rips It Up* (Welsh National Opera), *Eugene Onegin*, *The Dancing Master* (Buxton International Festival); as assistant conductor on *Così fan Tutte* (ETO), *Psychosis 4.48*, *Phaedra*, *The Lost Thing*, *Blue Woman*

(Royal Opera House), *Gigi*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (West Green House Opera), *La Fanciulla del West*, *Lakmé*, *La Traviata*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Hansel und Gretel*, *Itch*, *Tosca* (Opera Holland Park). Berrak conducted the Opera Scenes at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire in 2023. This year she will be joining Britten Pears Arts on the world premiere of *A Visit to Friends* by Colin Matthews.

Paul McKenzie

Music Director: *Life Gets Stretched & Disorderly House*

Paul attained an undergraduate degree from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, before studying for a Masters at the Royal College of Music in Piano Accompaniment. Since graduating 10 years ago, Paul has been working as a répétiteur with, amongst others, English Touring Opera, Grange Park

Opera and the RCM International Opera School. Recently he has begun to focus on vocal coaching, with a special emphasis on contemporary music. Paul is also an enthusiastic cook, a gamer, a wild tennis player, and a Mixed Martial Arts aficionado.



Marcus Desando

Director: *Inevitable & Tears Are Not Meant To Stay Inside*

South African Director Marcus Desando started his career as an opera singer and since 2001 is an opera director, known for a diverse repertoire that spans classic and contemporary works. Since his first opera *Dido and Aeneas* in 2001, his interpretations reflect a blend of traditional and modern sensibilities. Other notable productions include *Carmen*, *La Bohème*, and *Rigoletto* (which was recorded for broadcasting by SABC in South Africa),

and Cape Town Opera's 5:20 and 4:30 short operas. Marcus has been involved as a singer in new productions including Roelof Temmingh's *Enoch*, *Prophet of God*. Marcus has worked with a number of opera schools and Universities as a guest lecturer and director. He is currently Executive Director of the Prince Claus Fund in Amsterdam.



Rebecca Meltzer

Director: *Life Gets Stretched & Disorderly House*

Rebecca Meltzer is an Opera Director, Movement Director, Choreographer and Teacher from London. Her work is known for its honest storytelling and physically driven agenda. She has worked with companies across the UK and internationally including the Royal Opera, Scottish Opera, Garsington Opera, Opera Holland Park and New Zealand Opera. Notable credits include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Garsington Opera/BBC

Proms), *Andrea Chénier* (Theatre St Gallen), *Vanessa* (Spoleto Festival) and *Mala Vita & L'oracollo* (Wexford Festival), *The Turn of the Screw*, *Svadba*, *Mansfield Park* (Waterperry Opera Festival/New Zealand Opera). Rebecca is also a passionate educator having taught in conservatoires across the UK. She is the Co-Director of the Waterperry Opera Festival Young Artist Programme, a festival she co-founded in 2018.



Elliott Squire

Set and Costume Designer

Elliott is a Canadian Set and Costume Designer working across theatre, opera, and education. He is a graduate of Edinburgh's Scenehouse Programme and holds a BFA in Theatre Design from the University of British Columbia. Opera highlights include: *La Canterina & The Boatswain's Mate* (Buxton International Festival), *Dewi in the Deep* (Royal Opera

House, Clore Studio), *Rip Van Winkle* (Gothic Opera), *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Sets), *Semele* (Sets) and *Candide* (Blackheath Halls Opera), *Giulio Cesare* (Bury Court Opera) and *Captain Blood's Revenge* (Norfolk Into Opera Festival). Theatre highlights include: *Cartas Vivas* (Cervantes Theatre & Madrid transfer) and *Midnight: The Musical* (The Union Theatre & Seoul transfer).



Alex Musgrave

Lighting and Video Designer

Credits include: *Home* (Chichester Festival Theatre), *Figaro: An Original Musical* (London Palladium), *A Christmas Carol* (The Lowry), *The Forsyte Saga – Parts 1 & 2* (Park Theatre, Finsbury Park), *Stones in His Pockets* (Barn Theatre, Cirencester; Salisbury Playhouse & Bolton Octagon), *The White Factory*, *The Last Word* (Marylebone Theatre, London) *Unbound – a New Musical*,

A Concert (Hoxton Hall, London), *Kin: The Musical* (Teatro Technis, London), *It's a MotherF**king Pleasure* (Washington DC, SoHo Playhouse, New York City & Boston; Southbank Centre & Soho Theatre London, National and European Tours), *Sherlock & the Whitechapel Fiend*, *Treasure Island* and *Private Lives* (Barn Theatre, Cirencester).



Beca Davies

A in *Inevitable* (Mezzo-soprano)

A Welsh National Opera Associate Artist 2023-24, Beca is an alumna of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland where she was a Sheila Osborne Scholar, and King's College London where she attained a first-class honours degree in Music. At Welsh National Opera Beca performed the roles of Beggar Woman *Death in Venice*, *Second Conversa Suor Angelica*, *Nina* *Ainadamar*, and

joined the WNO Orchestra as the mezzo-soprano soloist for A New Year's Celebration, Schools Concerts, and Play Opera LIVE. Beca is currently creating a Welsh language opera with composer Sarah Lianne Lewis, in association with Ty Cerdd and Music Theatre Wales as part of their CoDi 2024/25 scheme.

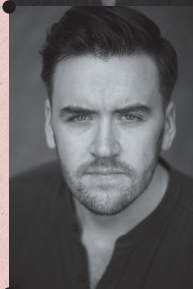


Christopher Cull

B in *Inevitable* & Robert in *Disorderly House* (Baritone)

An alumnus of the National Opera Studio London, Guildhall School of Music, The Royal Irish Academy of Music, and Queen's University Belfast, Christopher has sung Marcello *La Bohème* (Opera Holland Park), Masetto *Don Giovanni* (NI Opera), Tarquinius *The Rape of Lucretia* (GSMD), Donner *Das Rheingold* (Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra), Valentin *Faust* (Clonter Opera), and Collatinus *The Rape of Lucretia* (Irish Youth Opera). A long-standing collaborator with the Belfast Ensemble and

composer Conor Mitchell, he created roles in *The Headless Soldier*, *Abomination*, and *MASS*. Concert performances include Johannes-Passion (RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra), Belshazzar's Feast (Barbican), Elijah (Truro Cathedral), and Ein deutsches Requiem (Angmering Chorale). Recent engagements include Theseus *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Blackwater Valley Opera).



Julia Mariko

C in *Inevitable* (Soprano)

Julia Mariko recently worked with Scottish Opera covering the roles of Plaintiff *Trial by Jury* and Sylvia Lawless *A Matter of Misconduct!* (world premiere). She toured with Opera North as Alice *Wonderland Restored* and sang the soprano role in *The Big Opera Adventure*. Other roles include Cathleen *Riders To The Sea* (Opera Up Close), Barbarina *The Marriage of Figaro* (Opera

North); Gretel *Hansel and Gretel* (Waterperry Opera); Anne Trulove cover *The Rake's Progress* (ETO). She continues to work with ENO Engage as part of their Discover Opera Days. She will make her film debut as Musetta in Robin Norton-Hale's Olivier award-winning production of *La Bohème* (Finite Films).





Themba Mvula

He in *Life Gets Stretched* and *The Initiate in Tears Are Not Meant To Stay Inside* (Baritone)

Zambian Themba Mvula trained at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and has performed roles with Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Birmingham Opera, English Touring Opera, and Opera Holland Park. Internationally, he has appeared at Theater an der Wien, Aix-en-Provence Festival, Bregenz Festival, and the Holland Festival. A strong advocate for new work, he starred in the one-man opera *Bhekizizwe*

and appeared in *The F*gg*ts and Their Friends Between Revolutions*, where he also conducted and played multiple instruments. He also collaborated with Birmingham Royal Ballet in *Luna*, performing as part of the choreography. Mvula brings compelling dramatic and musical insight to both traditional repertoire and contemporary opera.



Alexandra Meier

She in *Life Gets Stretched* (Mezzo-soprano)

Mezzo-soprano Alexandra Meier has performed with a variety of opera companies in the UK. Most recently she worked with English Touring Opera, covering the role of Lel *The Snowmaiden*, and Berthe in Judith Weir's *Blond Eckbert*. Previously she played Dinah *Trouble in Tahiti* (Grimeborn

Festival), *Hänsel Hänsel und Gretel* (HGO), and Angelina *La Cenerentola* (Longhope Opera). Alexandra is a 2025 Opera Prelude Young Artist and is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama opera course.

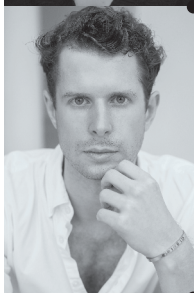


Tsen Day-Beaver

Shimble in *Life Gets Stretched* (Actor)

Tsen Day-Beaver is a recent graduate from Manchester School of Theatre hailing from Fife, Scotland. Her credits whilst training include: Emma in 'Light Falls' and Martha in 'Mr Wroe's Virgins'. Tsen was a finalist for Carleton Hobbs Bursary Awards 2024

and the Spotlight Prize 2024. Theatre making credits include assistant directing 'A Number' with Red Brick Theatre, as well as several R&D's for new writing.



Egor Sergeev

Bobby in *Disorderly House* (Baritone)

Russian baritone Egor Sergeev debuted in 2021 as Conte d'Almaviva at the Novaya Opera Theater, followed by roles as Guglielmo and Eugene Onegin. In 2022-23, he performed in Ravel's *L'enfant et les Sortilèges* and *L'heure Espagnole* (Hanns Eisler School of Music), and in Germán Alonso's *Loveleas* (Deutsche Oper Berlin). He made his Konzerthaus Berlin debut in Donizetti's rediscovered *Dalinda*. His concert debut was in

Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*. In 2023-24, he performed at Staatsoper Unter den Linden in Eötvös's *Sleepless* and debuted at the Salzburg Festival. In 2024-25, he joins the National Opera Studio as a Young Artist. He has also received recognition in competition, winning the Gustav Mahler Prize at the Gabriela Beňáčková International Singing Competition.



Francis Gush

Harold in *Disorderly House* (Countertenor)

English-Dutch countertenor Francis Gush is a graduate of the Royal College of Music. Recent performances include Tolomeo *Giulio Cesare* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera (cover)), the title role in *Titus L'Empereur* (Händel Festspiele, Halle) and Spirit *Dido and Aeneas* (Barcelona). Previous performances include the title role *Cesare Giulio Cesare* (English Touring Opera),

Arbante *La Forze dell'amor Paterno* (The Barber Opera), and the Prince *The Masque of Vengeance* (The Music Troupe). He made his international operatic debut with the Ensemble Alia Mens in Boulogne-sur-Mer, singing in Purcell's *King Arthur*. He also debuted with the Orchestra of the Age of the Enlightenment, singing Purcell and Blow.



Rebecca Anderson

Constance in *Disorderly House* (Mezzo-soprano)

Rebecca Anderson completed a Masters of Music with distinction at the Royal Northern College of Music in 2021 and then worked as the President of the Students' Union 21-22. She completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies in Performing with distinction (RNCM) and now works across the UK. Recent opera credits include Mary Ann *The Boatswain's*

Mate; Lady Bertram *Mansfield Park*; Lapak *The Cunning Little Vixen*; and Soeur Anne de la Croix *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Rebecca has performed at the Wigmore Hall, the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, has worked with Opera North as a Leverhulme Arts Scholar, and was recently awarded the Platinum Prize in the Saint-Saens International Music Competition.



Roberta Philip

Nomvula, The Patient in *Tears Are Not Meant To Stay Inside* (Soprano)

Roberta Philip is finalising her Master of Performance at Guildhall School of Music and Drama. She was a 2024 British Youth Opera Serena Fenwick artist and 2023-24 Pegasus Opera Company mentee. Credits include covering Barbarina *The*

Marriage of Figaro (English National Opera), performing and walking in London Fashion Week, singing as part of the Biennale di Venezia and in choruses at the Royal Albert Hall, Philharmonie de Paris and Lucerne Festival, Switzerland.



Danielle Mahaillet

Sangoma, Traditional Healer in *Tears Are Not Meant To Stay Inside* (Soprano)

Danielle Mahaillet is a French soprano and a graduate of the Masters programme at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama. In recent years, she has received operatic training from companies such as Pegasus Opera Mentoring Programme in partnership with Glyndebourne, and is currently an OperUs

Young Artist in Trieste Italy. Danielle has an extensive repertoire, from Massenet to Puccini, and upcoming performances include Les Voix des Outre-Mer's production of *Porgy and Bess* in France.