**Wednesday 19 September 2018**

**The Royal Opera House announces opening Season for the new Linbury Theatre**

* The **Linbury Theatre**, the **West End’s newest and most intimate theatre**, showcases an exciting array of **opera** and **dance** in its inaugural Season, from an **18th-century rarity** to **21st-century new works**.
* **The first Season** features **four world premieres**, including **Gavin Higgins**’s new opera ***The Monstrous Child***, based on **Francesca Simon**’s novel of the same name.
* **Directors** and **choreographers** participating include **Ivo van Hove**, **Aletta Collins**, **Adele Thomas**, **Wayne McGregor** and **Timothy Sheader**.
* **Co-producers** and **visiting companies and artists** include **Alessandra Ferri,** **National Dance Company Wales**, **Introdans**, **Cas Public**, **Ballet Black**, **Yorke Dance Project**, **Lost Dog**, **London Handel Festival**, **Isango Ensemble** and **Muziektheater Transparant**.
* **Ticket prices range from** **£5 to £45**, with **25 per cent** of seats priced at **£25 or less**.

Today the **Royal Opera House** announces the first Season’s programme for the **Linbury Theatre**, the West End’s newest and most intimate theatre, opening in December 2018 after an extensive re-development as part of the Royal Opera House's **Open Up** project. A fully flexible space designed by Stanton Williams, the Linbury Theatre incorporates up to 406 seats and is designed as a fully realized new stage for the Royal Opera House to present an exciting array of innovative and engaging new work.

**Dance**

**Creative Producer for The Royal Ballet, Emma Southworth, said:**“I’m delighted to be able to welcome audiences into this beautiful, intimate new theatre, offering an international stage for The Royal Ballet and dance, giving us the opportunity to collaborate with artists from across the country and beyond. It’s so exciting to be able to fill the space with such a variety of programming, especially with artists who are so well known to audiences through their past work with The Royal Ballet.’

Olivier Award-winning international ballerina **Alessandra Ferri** returns to the Linbury Theatre in January 2019, presenting ***TRIOConcertDance*** alongside renowned American Ballet Theatre Principal dancer **Herman Cornejo** and acclaimed concert pianist **Bruce Levingston**. The show features work by choreographers including **Demis Volpi**, **Russell Maliphant, Wayne McGregor, Herman Cornejo, Fang-Yi Sheu** and **Angelin Preljocaj**, and offers audiences an opportunity to experience the work of these internationally renowned artists in a beautiful and intimate new space.

In February 2019, The Royal Ballet presents ***New Work New Music***, a programme which includes ***Blue Moon***,a new work by acclaimed director and choreographer **Aletta Collins**,set to a **David Sawer** score co-commissioned by **The Royal Philharmonic Society Drummond Fund** and **BBC Radio 3** and performed by an ensemble of female dancers from The Royal Ballet. A collaboration with the **London Sinfonietta**, *New Work New Music* will offer audiences an opportunity to hear a variety of contrasting music set to dance for the first time, across work by choreographers including **Goyo Montero,** Royal Ballet Principal Character Artist **Kristen McNally**, Royal Ballet Soloist **Calvin Richardson** and **Alexander Whitley**, who returns to the Royal Opera House after the premiere of his work *Noumena* in the **Clore Studio** in November 2017.

In March 2019, **National Dance Company Wales** present ***AWAKENING***, a programme featuring contemporary works by **Fernando Melo**, **Caroline Finn** and **Marcos Morau**. ***Afterimage***(Melo) is a unique theatrical experience, using a mixture of mirrors and creative choreography; ***Revellers’ Mass*** (Finn) depicts an unlikely dinner party and is inspired by old paintings while ***Tundra***(Morau) is an ultra-modern, robotically mesmerizing exploration of Russian folk dance and revolution. In addition, National Dance Company Wales present ***Discover Dance*** – a fun and relaxed interactive performance suitable for children and families, offering audience members the chance to dance on stage with NDC Wales dancers and learn excerpts from the Company’s show, followed by a performance of *Revellers’ Mass*. Also in March, **Introdans** presents the programme ***Dutch Masters***, containing important items from their signature neoclassical repertory. Returning to the UK for the first time in more than a decade, the company perform a mixed bill, which includes ***Polish Pieces***and ***Andante*** by **Hans van Manen**, ***Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*** by **Jiří Kylián** and ***CANTUS*** by **Nils Christe**.

The Royal Ballet’s signature ***International Draft Works***programme is presented in the Linbury Theatre in April 2019, and is a forum for choreographers and dancers to explore ideas and present developing work. Submissions will be invited from the UK, Europe and North America’s foremost dance companies and beyond. Each piece will be fully realized, with costumes, set and lighting. The programme offers audiences an opportunity to see choreographic voices of the future develop new and innovative work.

Also in the Linbury Theatre, **Ben Duke**’s company **Lost Dog** presents ***Juliet & Romeo***, which runs alongside The Royal Ballet’s revival of ***Romeo and Juliet***. A witty reassessment of Shakespeare’s star-crossed couple as they survive, marry and move into their 40s, *Juliet & Romeo* combines dance, theatre and comedy to present a memorable duet mirroring our modern obsessions.

In the **Clore Studio**, **Yorke Dance Project** presents *Playground* by **Kenneth MacMillan**, 40 years after the work had its premiere at the **Edinburgh Festival**. Alongside this, Yorke Dance Project will also present a new work by **Robert Cohan**, *Communion,* created as the company celebrates its 20th anniversary. **Wayne McGregor**, a mentee of Cohan, will also join him for a Q&A after the performance. The company will also perform their full anniversary programme including *Playground*, *Communion*, a new commission by Los Angeles based choreographer **Sophia Stoller** and a work by **Yolande Yorke-Edgell.**

Receiving its UK premiere in May 2019, Canadian company **Cas Public**’s ***9*** is produced in collaboration with Belgian company **Kopergietery**. Choreographed by **Hélène Blackburn** and set to Martin Tétreault’s overlayed score (based on **Beethoven**’s Symphony no.9) the piece is inspired by Cas Public performer **Cai Glover**, who overcame a hearing impairment to become a professional dancer. Suitable for audiences of all ages, *9* utilizes a unique sensory approach to performance, exploring notions of listening to a musical masterpiece without hearing, and transcending boundaries to transform bodies into visual language. Following this, award-winning ballet company **Ballet Black** returns to the Linbury Theatre with a mixed programme of work, including **Cathy Marston**’s ***The Suit***.

In June 2019 the Linbury Theatre will host the inaugural **Young Talent Festival**, presenting performances from some of the world's leading junior companies and schools. Running from Monday 16 June to Saturday 6 July 2019, the festival includes mixed programmes presented by the **Ballett Zürich Junior Company**, **The Norwegian National Ballet 2**, **Dutch National Ballet Juniors,** **Rambert School** and **The Royal Ballet School**. **Rambert 2** will also participate with a staging of *Kamuyot* by **Ohad Naharin** in the **Paul Hamlyn Hall**. Completing the festival line-up, participants of the Royal Opera House’s **Chance to Dance** programme perform their own creative interpretation of **Igor Stravinsky**’s *The Firebird*, performing alongside dancers from The Royal Ballet. Running alongside this is the culmination of the annual **Young Creatives** programme, which cements The Royal Ballet's commitment to nurturing future generations of dancing talent from across the UK and beyond.

Looking ahead to the 2019/20 Season, The Royal Ballet and **Rambert** will present *Aisha and Abhaya*, a co-production in association with **BBC Films**, directed by ground-breaking London-based filmmaker **Kibwe Tavares** and choreographed by **Sharon Eyal**.

*Aisha and Abhaya* (meaning ‘Hope and Fearlessness’) is a contemporary fairytale about two sisters seeking refuge from their homeland in a fantastical world, which proves to be riven with familiar troubles and dangers. Set to a commissioned score by **GAIKA** and **Ori Lichtik**, with costumes by visionary artist **Uldus Bakhtiozina**, this incredible new dance work combines film, animation and live performance by Rambert’s extraordinary dancers to tell a compelling parable for our times. Originally programmed to open the Linbury Theatre in December 2018, the premiere of *Aisha and Abhaya* has had to be postponed due to Kibwe Tavares suffering a sudden, unexpected illness.

**Opera**

**Creative Producer for The Royal Opera, Sarah Crabtree, said:**“It’s thrilling to be able to open a brand-new, intimate theatre fit to showcase the best in opera and music-making for generations to come. Our inaugural programme looks to the future with world premieres and back to our roots with a long overdue revival; it showcases exciting emerging talent alongside the finest theatre-makers of our time.”

The first work presented by **The Royal Opera** in the Linbury Theatre is **Gavin Higgins**’s new opera ***The Monstrous Child***, which receives its world premiere in February 2019. Based on **Francesca Simon**’s darkly humorous novel for teens, *The Monstrous Child* explores ordinary teenage angst in the extraordinary world of Norse gods, giants and the Underworld. The opera is the latest work commissioned by The Royal Opera for a younger audience, following the world premiere of **Mark-Anthony Turnage**’s ***Coraline***at the Barbican Theatre in March 2018, ***Hatch*** and ***Dot, Squiggle and Rest*** at the Polka Theatre in 2015 and 2017, and ***How the Whale Became*** and the ***Firework-Maker’s Daughter***in the Linbury Studio Theatre in 2013 and 2015 respectively. *The Monstrous Child* is directed by Regent’s Park Open Air Theatre Artistic Director **Timothy Sheader**, making his Royal Opera debut,and sees **Jessica Cottis** return to the Company (following her debut with *Mamzer Bastard* at Hackney Empire in 2018) to conduct a cast featuring **Marta Fontanals-Simmons**, **Tom Randle**, **Dan Shelvey**, **Lucy Schaufer**, **Elizabeth Karani** and **Graeme Broadbent**.

In March 2019, The Royal Opera and **London Handel Festival** present a new staging of Handel’s ***Berenice***, which returns for the first time to the site of its premiere at the **Covent Garden Theatre** in **1737**. Sung in a new English translation by **Selma Dimitrijevic**, the opera’s story pits two strong women against princes and each other in a battle of love and politics. **Adele Thomas** directs the new production, with London Handel Festival Musical Director **Laurence Cummings** conducting the musicians of the **London Handel Orchestra** and a cast featuring **Rachael Lloyd**, **James Laing**, **William Berger** and Jette Parker Young Artists **Jacquelyn Stucker** and **Patrick Terry**.

The Royal Opera House welcomes award-winning South African lyric theatre company **Isango Ensemble** to the Linbury Theatre to present the first revival of ***A Man of Good Hope*** alongside a staging of ***SS Mendi: Dancing the Death Drill***in April 2019. Based on **Jonny Steinberg**'s book, ***A Man of Good Hope***tells the true story of one refugee’s epic quest across Africa through music and dance. **Mark Dornford-May**’s production, co-produced by The Royal Opera and first seen at the Young Vic in 2016, has received widespread critical acclaim as ‘An extraordinary, magical piece of theatre’ (*The Times*), ‘Exhilarating and inspired’ (*The Guardian*) and ‘Glorious, vibrant musical theatre that speaks to the biggest concern of age’ (*Financial Times*). ***SS Mendi: Dancing the Death Drill*** is a powerful and moving requiem inspired by Fred Khumalo’s book on the real-life maritime disaster of 1917, when the SS Mendi sank off the Isle of Wight, killing more than 600 South Africans en route to the Western Front to support British troops. Transferring to London for the first time following hugely successful performances in Southampton as part of the 14-18 NOW World War I programme, *SS Mendi* is a remarkable retelling of a largely forgotten tragedy.

For their annual chamber opera in May 2019, The Royal Opera and the **Jette Parker Young Artists** present Henze’s ***Phaedra***, in a new production by Jette Parker Young Artist director **Noa Naamat**. The late German composer’s final opera had its premiere at Berlin State Opera in 2007 and is a re-working of Greek myth. The story explores the death of Hippolytus, destroyed by his stepmother Phaedra’s obsessive love for him. *Phaedra* reunites the Jette Parker Young Artists with the musicians of **Southbank Sinfonia**, who are conducted by **Edmund Whitehead**.

Belgian director **Ivo van Hove** makes his Royal Opera debut in June 2019, bringing **Muziektheater Transparant**’s production of ***The Diary of One Who Disappeared*** to the Royal Opera House for its UK premiere. This unique staging of Leoš Janáček’s song cycle features singers **Ed Lyon** and **Marie Hamard** and actors **Hugo Koolschijn** and **Gijs Scholten van Aschat**, and includes new music by Annelies Van Parys composed for the production. Ivo van Hove’s work in London in recent seasons has been widely praised, most notably his productions of Lee Hall’s *Network* and Henrik Ibsen’s *Hedda Gabler* at the National Theatre, and of Arthur Miller’s *A View from the Bridge* at the Young Vic, for which he received the Laurence Olivier Award for Best Director.

In July 2019The Royal Opera presents **Engender**, a new weekend festival that puts women working in opera at the front and centre of the action. Engender highlights a wealth of female talent both onstage and behind the scenes and provides a platform for conversations exploring gender in opera today. Events across the weekend offer insights into the creative process, first glimpses of work in progress, performances from emerging artists and the opportunity to examine and debate the future of opera with practitioners from across the art form.

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Season Overview**

**Dance**

***TRIOConcertDance***
**Alessandra Ferri, Herman Cornejo, Bruce Levingston**
Thursday 17–Sunday 27 January 2019Booking opens Monday 24 September 2018

***New Work New Music***
**The Royal Ballet**
Wednesday 6–Saturday 9 February 2019Booking opens Monday 24 September 2018

***AWAKENING***
***Afterimage / Revellers’ Mass / Tundra***
**National Dance Company Wales**
Friday 8–Saturday 9 March 2019
***Discover Dance***
Sunday 10 March 2019
Suitable for ages 7–12
Booking opens Monday 24 September 2018

***Dutch Masters***
***Polish Pieces / Andante / Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen / CANTUS***
Introdans
Friday 15–Sunday 17 March 2019
Booking opens Monday 24 September 2018

***International Draft Works***
Thursday 11–Friday 12 April 2019
Booking opens Wednesday 30 January 2019

***Lost Dog***
***Juliet & Romeo***
Saturday 13–Sunday 14 April 2019
Suitable for ages 13+
Booking opens Wednesday 30 January 2019

***20th Anniversary Celebration*Yorke Dance Project
Clore Studio** Tuesday 14–Friday 17 May 2019
Booking opens Wednesday 30 January 2019

***9***
**Cas Public**
Thursday 23–Thursday 30 May 2019
Suitable for ages 5+
Booking opens Wednesday 30 January 2019

***Mixed Programme
The Suit / New Work***
**Ballet Black**
Thursday 13–Saturday 15 June 2019
Booking opens Wednesday 3 April 2019

***Young Talent Festival***
Monday 16 June–Saturday 6 July 2019
Booking opens Wednesday 3 April 2019

**Opera**

***The Monstrous Child*The Royal Opera**
Thursday 21 February–Sunday 3 March 2019
Suitable for ages 8+
Booking opens Monday 24 September 2018

***Berenice***
**The Royal Opera and London Handel Festival**
Wednesday 27 March–Sunday 7 April 2019
Booking opens Wednesday 30 January 2019

***A Man of Good Hope*** and ***SS Mendi: Dancing the Death Drill***
**Isango Ensemble**
Tuesday 16 April–Saturday 4 May 2019
Suitable for ages 12+
Booking opens Wednesday 30 January 2019

***Phaedra*The Royal Opera and Jette Parker Young Artists Programme**
Generously made possible by Oak Foundation
Wednesday 15–Monday 20 May 2019
Booking opens Wednesday 30 January 2019

***The Diary of One Who Disappeared***
**Muziektheater Transparant**
Friday 5–Monday 8 June 2019
Booking opens Wednesday 30 January 2019

**Engender**
Friday 12–Sunday 14 July 2019
Booking opens Wednesday 3 April 2019

**PRESS OFFICE CONTACTS**

1. For interviews, tours and further information contact Sarah Farrell and Matthew Horne
2. For images, time lapse footage and artists renderings, please click [here](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8tx67dbl7kr3gt6/AAAuszjapg_fPoj_2HIVRX1fa?dl=0)
3. To request press tickets please contact Hannah Last

**About the Royal Opera House Open-Up project**We believe that opera and ballet should be experienced by everyone, and our Open Up project will make the Royal Opera House a daytime destination open to everyone, every day from 10am. The new bars, cafés, restaurants, free events and unique front-of-house displays will transform these dedicated new spaces, welcoming everyone to our revitalized home.  The brand new Linbury Theatre will become the West End’s newest, most intimate theatre, showcase the best of our art forms and provide a wealth of innovative world premieres, co-productions and collaborations.

**Philanthropy**

The final construction cost for the whole Open Up project is estimated at £50.7m, with all of the funds raised from philanthropy. These trusts, foundations and individuals who are closest to us were asked to make an exceptional gift on top of their ongoing support of the Royal Opera House.  The Royal Opera House is truly grateful to the following:

* The Linbury Trust
* The Monument Trust
* The Clore Duffield Foundation
* Mrs Susan A. Olde OBE
* The Dorfman Foundation
* Dr Genevieve Davies and family
* The Taylor Family Foundation
* Mr Stefan Sten Olsson
* Dunard Fund
* Garfield Weston Foundation
* The Kirsh Foundation
* Sir Simon Robey
* The Sackler Trust
* The Celia Blakey Charitable Trust
* Mrs Lily Safra
* The Hobson Charity
* Tim and Sarah Bunting
* Hamish and Sophie Forsyth
* Sir Simon and Lady Robertson
* Royal Opera House Endowment Fund

**About the Royal Opera House**The Royal Opera House’s aim is for many more people to enjoy and engage in exceptional ballet and opera. As The Royal Ballet, The Royal Opera and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, we bring together the world’s most extraordinary ballet and opera artists in more than 500 performances every year; live events that thrill, move and excite, and that transport people to other worlds through music, theatre and dance.

**About The Royal Ballet**Under the directorship of **Kevin O’Hare**, The Royal Ballet unites tradition and innovation in world-class performances, and is a driving force in the development of ballet as an art form. Based at the **Royal Opera House, Covent Garden**, it brings together today’s most dynamic and versatile dancers with a world-class orchestra and leading choreographers, composers, conductors, directors and creative teams to share awe-inspiring theatrical experiences with diverse audiences worldwide.

The Company’s extensive repertory embraces 19th-century classics, the singular legacy of works by Founder Choreographer **Frederick Ashton** and Principal Choreographer **Kenneth MacMillan** and the compelling new canon of work including pieces by by Resident Choreographer **Wayne McGregor**, Artistic Associate **Christopher Wheeldon** and Artist in Residence **Liam Scarlett**.

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