

Opera
North



Opera North Youth Orchestra

**Perform Excerpts from Humperdinck's
*Hansel & Gretel***

Sunday 29 March, 3.30pm • Dewsbury Town Hall

Welcome to this afternoon's performance of *Hansel & Gretel* by the Opera North Youth Orchestra.

ONYO is a uniquely ambitious initiative: a preprofessional orchestra in the North of England for career-minded instrumentalists in sixth form and university. It offers young musicians the rare opportunity to work closely with professional singers, conductors, and instrumentalists, supporting their transition from further or higher education into the professional world of music, and in particular, introducing them to the joys and intricacies of performing operatic repertoire.

This season has been filled with exciting artistic milestones. In September, ONYO joined the Opera North Youth Company for a wonderfully fun and imaginative staging of Judith Weir's *The Secret of the Black Spider* at Leeds Grand Theatre. In December, ONYO performed for the first time at St Paul's Hall in Huddersfield, accompanying Katie Stillman, Leader of the Orchestra of Opera North in a spine-tingling performance of Ernest Chausson's *Poème*.

We are also delighted that this year, for the first time, a student from our Saturday music provision, the Young Musicians Studio, successfully auditioned and earned a place in ONYO. Opera North is committed to creating pathways for young musicians to develop all the way from our In Harmony programme through to the professional ensemble, and it is fantastic to see this vision succeed. This term, with the help of our DARE Fellow, Anna Gilmour, we launched a new mentorship scheme to support that progression further. It has been inspiring to see our young musicians learning from one another, and building their confidence and understanding in the next phase of their musical journeys.

This afternoon, we are thrilled to share with you Engelbert Humperdinck's sumptuous fairytale score. Huge thanks go to our wonderful conductor Oliver Rundell, and to our four incredible soloists, Aimée, Frances, Claire and Pasquale, who you may recognise from their many appearances in performances with Opera North, as both soloists and as members of the Chorus.

Thank you for joining us today. We hope you enjoy the performance.

Felicity Dunk

Talent Development Producer

SYNOPSIS

Act One - The House

Hansel and Gretel have been left alone at home. Hansel complains that he is hungry and Gretel shows him the milk that their mother is keeping for supper. The children play until their mother returns and angrily asks why they have done so little work. She accidentally knocks the milk over so that it is spilt and wasted. Losing her temper she sends the children out to the forest to pick strawberries. The father comes home. He has made more money selling brooms than usual and has been drinking to celebrate. As he unpacks the food that he has bought he asks where the children are. When his wife tells him that she has sent them to the forest he tells her that they are in danger from an evil witch. They both go in search of the children.

Act Two - The Forest

Hansel and Gretel taste one of the strawberries they have picked, then another, and then another until they are all gone. They realise that they have lost their way. As it grows darker they become frightened. The Sandman appears and sings them to sleep. The children pray that they will be safe during the night and, falling asleep, dreaming of angels looking after them.

Act Three - The Witch's House

As the sun rises, the Dew Fairy wakens the children. A magical edible house has appeared in the woods. Gleefully Hansel and Gretel start eating it. The Witch catches them and tries to tempt them to trust her with promises of more food. When the children try to run away she casts a spell on them. She puts Gretel to work but decides that Hansel needs fattening up. The Witch heats up the oven until it is ready for baking. Gretel manages to break the spell and set Hansel free. When the Witch asks her to check if the bread is cooked, Gretel pretends that she doesn't know how to and asks the Witch to show her. As the Witch bends over to peer into the oven, the children push her into it. The oven explodes and the children express gratitude for their salvation.

CONDUCTOR



OLIVER RUNDELL

Oliver studied Music at Cambridge University and trained at the National Opera Studio. From 2002-10 he was a member of the music staff at Scottish Opera, where he worked on over 30 productions, including the *Ring Cycle*, and conducted touring productions of *Die Fledermaus* and *La Cenerentola*. Oliver joined Opera North as Chorus Master in 2016. Highlights of his work with the chorus include *Billy Budd*, *The Greek Passion*, *Aida*, *Turandot* and *Parsifal*. He was appointed Staff Conductor in 2023, and has been the musical director of the Opera North Youth Orchestra since its foundation in 2021. For Opera North he has conducted *Ruddigore*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Trial by Jury*, *Kiss Me*, *Kate*, *A Little Night Music*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *La rondine*, *My Fair Lady*, *The Magic Flute* and *Le nozze di Figaro*.

CAST

FRANCES GREGORY – HANSEL

is an alumna of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment's Rising Stars Scheme. She was a Studio Artist at Opéra national de Lyon, an Alvarez Young Artist at Garsington Opera and an Emerging Artist at Longborough Festival Opera. For her performance as Sycorax in Jeremy Sama's pastiche *The Enchanted Island*, she was awarded the Dame Hilda Brackett Award from Sadler's Wells, and her operatic engagements have also included Ellie Gifford in the premiere of Paul Carr's *Under the Greenwood Tree* (Dorset Opera Festival). Recent engagements include: Arethuze / Proserpine in Charpentier's *La Descente d'Orphée aux Enfers* (Vache Baroque); Arnalta *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* (The Grange Festival); and Cherubino (The Mozartists). Concert highlights include: Mary *L'Enfance du Christ* (NFM Wroclaw Philharmonic); Solomon (The Gabrieli Consort and Players); Sea Pictures (Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment); and Messiah (Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra). Highlights of her current season also include: Annio *La clemenza di Tito* and Flora Bervoix *La traviata* (Buxton International Festival); Idamante *Idomeneo* (Chelsea Opera Group); and Luna *Tales Untapped: A Rotherham Opera* (Royal Ballet & Opera). For Opera North: *Apsarā Orpheus*, Cherubino *The Marriage of Figaro*.

CAST

AIMÉE FISK – GRETEL

is a Leeds-born soprano who is establishing herself as a distinctive and versatile performer across opera and concert repertoire. She is a graduate of the Royal Academy Opera School, where she was awarded the Tom Hammond Opera Prize and Kendal Award. Her international training includes studies at the Franz Liszt Academy of Music in Budapest and the Conservatorio di G. Rossini in Pesaro, alongside a First-Class Honours degree from the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. She has performed a wide range of operatic roles, including Pamina *Die Zauberflöte*, Musetta *La bohème*, Fiordiligi *Così fan tutte*, Nella *Gianni Schicchi* and Berenice in Rossini's *L'occasione fa il ladro*. She has appeared with companies including Opera North, English National Opera, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and the Royal Ballet and Opera, and performs regularly with Opera North as both chorister and soloist. On the concert platform, she has appeared as a soloist in works including Verdi's *Requiem*, Handel's *Messiah*, Brahms's *Requiem*, and Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* at venues including St John's Smith Square, French Embassy Budapest and the Petersfield Music Festival. Away from the classical stage, Aimée has a longstanding love of jazz and musical theatre, which continues to inform her musical communication and stagecraft.

CAST

PASQUALE ORCHARD – SANDMAN / DEW FAIRY

New Zealand-born soprano Pasquale Orchard is a dynamic stage animal who has burst onto the UK opera scene in a series of arresting cameos, since joining Opera North in Autumn 2022. In 2024, she sang Laretta opposite Sir Bryn Terfel at Grange Park Opera to universal critical acclaim. The Daily Telegraph remarked: “Terfel’s...heart is melted by Pasquale Orchard as his daughter Laretta in “*O mio babbino caro*”. Awarded a MMus and MMA in Classical voice, a LTCL Diploma in Performance Arts—and diplomas in ballet, jazz, hip-hop, and tap dance - in her native New Zealand, she was a 2019 Dame Malvina Major Emerging Artist with New Zealand Opera performing as Rosina (*The Barber of Seville*). In 2018 Pasquale won a full tuition scholarship to the Royal Northern College of Music from which she graduated with Distinction in 2020. In 2021, she was awarded her Postgraduate Diploma with Distinction and in 2022 completed their International Artist Diploma under the tutelage of Mary Plazas. Her engagements include: Susanna (*Le Nozze di Figaro*); Soeur Constance (*Dialogue des Carmelites*); Monica (*The Medium*) for RNCM; Vixen (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) for RNCM and Opera North; La Fee (*Cendrillon*) for the Buxton International Festival; Zerlina for Allo Opera; Pot Boy/Child Prodigy (*The Excursions of Mr. Broucek*) for Grange Park Opera and Serpina (*La Serva Padrona*) for Early Music and Education. Season 2023/24 engagements included: Despina, Nanetta (Cover-*Falstaff*) and Yvette (*La rondine*) for Opera North, and Laretta for Grange Park Opera. Season 2024/5 roles included Mary Jane in *Love Life*, Papagena in *The Magic Flute* and *Alice in Wonderland Restored*, all for Opera North. Recent engagements include Christine in Judith Weir’s *The Secret of the Black Spider* with Opera North, and the filming of a children’s version of *The Cunning Little Vixen*.

CAST

CLAIRE PASCOE – WITCH

was born in Hartlepool and, after reading History at Durham University, won an Entrance Exhibition to study with Julie Kennard at the Royal Academy of Music. She attended the Opera School and graduated with a Dip. RAM in Opera. Having joined the Chorus of Opera North in 1996, her roles for the Company include: Rosina *The Barber of Seville*, Dorabella *Così fan tutte*, Mayor's Wife *Jenůfa*, Lucia *The Thieving Magpie*, Lusya *Paradise Moscow*, Third Witch *Dido and Aeneas*, Mercédès *Carmen*, Innkeeper's Wife and Chief Hen *The Cunning Little Vixen*, The Fish Seller *Julietta*, Beggar Woman *Death in Venice*, Virtue *The Coronation of Poppea*, La Ciesca *Gianni Schicchi*, Stage Manager *Kiss Me, Kate*, Witch *Into the Woods* (co-production with West Yorkshire Playhouse), Novice Mistress *Suor Angelica*, Bobylíkha *The Snow Maiden*, Counsel *Trial by Jury*, Ambulance Driver/Father *Not Such Quiet Girls*, Emma Jones *Street Scene*, Witch *Hansel and Gretel* (Whistle Stop Opera), Mrs Anderssen *A Little Night Music* (co-production with Leeds Playhouse), Melissa *Alcina*, Mrs Herring *Albert Herring*, Dame Hannah *Ruddigore*, Mrs Sedley *Peter Grimes*.

ONMYO



OPERA NORTH YOUTH ORCHESTRA

First Violin

Mae Baker Tuxworth
Sophie Wu
Joanne Teo
Jingyi Bai
Lucy Reynolds
Tabetha Pong
Risa Mascarenhas

Second Violins

Christopher Karwacinski*
Charlotte Joos
Bridget Mielniczek-Page
Ethan Lee
Dylan Eldershaw
Taisiia Klymenko
Cerys Athorne
George Florea
Joseph Wells

Viola

Belle Wong
Amelia Sangster
Oliver Crick
Joseph Mason
Beth Willett*

Cello

Gabriel Bailey
Buffy Hughes

Triele Tat

Alex Diack
Samuel Yeung
Óscar Artacho*

Double Bass

Annabel Longhurst-
Woods
George Toms
David Jiang

Harp

Lewis Tang

Flute

Sioned Jones-Blanco
Amelie Sainsbury
Emily Rowe

Oboe

Anson NG
Tom Reeson

Clarinet

Sophie Loftus
Lucy Irving
Sam Lord

Bassoon

Harris Birch
Lauren Walters

French Horn

Tom Farrar
Eli Clegg
Esme MacBride*
Ben Annett

Trumpet

Charlie Cumming
Cordelia Smithers

Trombone

Thomas Davenport
Thomas Arnold

Bass Trombone

Richard Stevens

Tuba

Thomas Pyrah

Timpani

Daniel Vincent

Percussion

Michael McKeague
Luca Paish
Nathen Edwards

*Denotes guest player

ARTISTIC

ARTISTIC TEAM

Musical Director

Oliver Rundell

Talent Development Producer

Felicity Dunk

Pettman Dare Fellow

Anna Gilmour

Assistant Conductor

Jasmine Lee (Dare Intern*)

Opera North Female Conducting Trainee

Beth Fitzpatrick

*Anna & Jasmine are part of the pioneering DARE partnership between Opera North and the University of Leeds which includes research, skills development, public engagement and collaboration.



THANK YOU

We would like to thank the following members of the Orchestra of Opera North and freelancers for their invaluable support with the Youth Orchestra this year in instrumental coachings, sectionals and Side By Side rehearsals: Byron Parish, Tom Greed, Tamsin Symons, Claire Osbourne, Brian Reilly, Oliver Baily, Alison Dixon & Helen Greig (Violin), David Aspin, Anne Trygstad & Lourenco Macedo Sampaio (Viola), Lydia Dobson & Damion Browne (Cello), James Goode & Roberto Carillo Garcia (Double Bass), Luke O'Toole (Flute), Andrew Mason, & Oliver Casanovas-Nuevo (Clarinet), Richard Hewitt* (Oboe), Adam Mackenzie (Bassoon), John Pratt, Sam Yates & Alex Hamilton (French Horn), Seb Williman & David Hooper (Trumpet), Tom Berry (Trombone), Christian Jones (Bass Trombone), Brian Kingsley (Tuba) Michael Harper (Percussion)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Opera North Youth Orchestral Programme is supported by The Liz and Terry Bramall Foundation.

SAVE THE DATE

PLEASE SAVE THE DATES FOR NEXT SEASON'S ONYO CONCERTS:

Sunday 1 November, 3.30pm, Dewsbury Town Hall

Sunday 21 March 2027, 6.30pm, Huddersfield Town Hall

*Indicates Opera North Company member for 25 years or more

opera north



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