



GARSINGTON OPERA
AT WORMSLEY

**80 STUDENTS FROM ACROSS OXFORDSHIRE, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE,
BEDFORDSHIRE AND BEYOND TAKE PART IN YOUTH OPERA PREMIERE**

Garsington Opera's Youth Company consisting of 80 young people aged from 9 to 21 from the local area, will perform in the world premiere of a new opera *The Happy Princess* based on Oscar Wilde's *The Happy Prince*. This new commission written for the Youth Company is composed by Paul Fincham with a libretto by Jessica Duchen and will be performed on the main stage at Wormsley on 2 August 2019.

Many of those involved have no prior experience of music and drama. A number of students are working backstage, in design, lighting and stage management.

The title role will be sung by young professional soprano Lara Marie Müller who won the Garsington Opera 2017 Simon Sandbach Award. There will be a number of solo roles for the youth company and they will be joined by a professional chamber ensemble. It will be conducted by Jonathon Swinard, Head of Music at Garsington Opera, with Karen Gillingham (director), Suzi Zumpe (vocal director) and Ruth Paton (designer).

The Happy Princess is inspired by Wilde's ever-popular story *The Happy Prince*, updated to the present or the near future. The statue of the Princess witnesses her people's suffering and she enlists the help of a Swallow to take to the needy the jewels and gold with which she is encrusted. Together they transform lives – but at a terrible cost to the devoted Swallow.

Paul Fincham read music at Cambridge University where he was music director of Cambridge Footlights and is now a full-time composer having recently moved from a successful first career in the corporate world. He has composed an award winning film score and last year his Christmas carol *Ring the Bells* was published by Boosey & Hawkes. *The Happy Princess* is his first opera.

Jessica Duchen was a music critic for The Independent for 12 years and is the author of six novels. Her librettos include Roxanna Panufnik's *Silver Birch*, Garsington Opera's commissioned People's Opera shortlisted for an International Opera Award in 2018.

Garsington Opera's Youth Company provides local young people aged 9–21 with the opportunity to develop their singing, creative skills, confidence and stage experience through the exciting world of opera. During annual Easter and summer residencies, young singers learn from world-class stage and music directors, leading up to a performance on the main stage for an invited audience at Wormsley. Recent performances include the world premiere of *Silver Birch* (2017), covered by BBC Arts, and a new production of *Eliza and the Swans* (2018).

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PRESS ENQUIRES CLARE ADAMS clare@garsingtonopera.org or 07793 556103

PRESS RELEASE