

THE GIRL FROM ARLES

**SOUTHBANK
CENTRE**
RESIDENT

MUSIC SPEAKS

"My rays glided over the notes, his last farewell engraved on the prison wall – where words fail, sounds can often speak."

Hans Christian Andersen, *What the Moon Saw and Other Tales* (1840)

WELCOME TO OUR 2026 / 27 SEASON AT THE SOUTHBANK CENTRE.

Celebrating 40 fantastic years of making music.

In this, the second of our 40th Anniversary seasons, we explore the ways in which music is endlessly capable of telling the stories that bring us together. Andersen poignantly reminds us that music is unlimited. (His words are often paraphrased as "where words fail, music speaks".) It can encompass a multitude of human experiences beyond even words. Music can animate, as it does so vividly in Bizet's score for *L'Arlésienne* or Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*. It can retell familiar stories, such as the Nativity and Passion, in ways that remind us of their centrality to our shared values. It can speak to the connections of community that inspire us.

The story of the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, and the circle of friendship that has built up around it, is held together by that unique quality of music. That is its soul. In our 2026 / 27 season, as we do every year, we look forward to welcoming back old friends and making new ones, whether that is on stage, in the stalls or school halls.

When we come together to share in live music, we are reminded of what a joy it is to experience it with our fellow travellers. We hope this season will inspire you beyond words.

In Search of The Girl from Arles

Flora Willson



Alphonse Daudet, French writer by Étienne Carjat,
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The first thing you need to know about *The Girl from Arles* is that the title character of Alphonse Daudet's play causes a lot of trouble. The second thing you need to know is that she never once appears onstage. "She's one of the great French absent people on the list alongside Samuel Beckett's Godot and Eugène Ionesco's Bald Prima Donna!" Jeremy Sams exclaims

gleefully. And he should know: the director, translator and lyricist has created the new English-language version of Daudet's play for the OAE's performances, which also feature the UK premiere of Georges Bizet's complete original incidental music for the work. It's now more than 150 years since the first performance of the play and Bizet's score in Paris – which is to say that the Girl from Arles has long been AWOL in the real world as well as within the confines of Daudet's drama.

Dramatically, the fact that we never encounter the Girl from Arles in person only adds to her power. As Sams explains to me, "we are stuck in a village – in a world – and there's this pull from outside. They're a village community and they've done the same things year after year, probably century after century. Then there's Arles – and Arles is for them the big city. And when our hero falls in love with the Girl from Arles, the real problem is not that she turns out to be a trollop, but that she's from Arles! You know why she can't marry him? He'd be marrying out." The Girl, in other words, belongs to another world. Yet it's no exaggeration to say that she unwittingly exerts the single most important force on the plot: she inspires the crisis with which it opens, sustains the tension between Frédéri (who has fallen for her) and his family and friends, and precipitates its tragic denouement.

From a musical perspective, the Girl's prolonged absence is also, sadly, fitting. Today Bizet is a composer known almost exclusively for his final opera, *Carmen*, thanks to its status as one of the most regularly performed and most instantly recognisable works in the repertory. But Bizet was no one-hit



Representation at the Odeon theatre of melodrama in three acts and five paintings *L'Arlésienne* by Alphonse Daudet (1840 – 1897) directed to music by the composer Georges Bizet (1838 – 1874), in *The Illustrious World* 1885. Engraving C19th AD. Stefano Bianchetti / Bridgeman Images

wonder. He had premiered six other operas (and had begun numerous others) before *Carmen* made its debut in 1875. And he also produced two symphonies, various choral works, multiple collections of songs and plenty of piano music before his premature death at the age of 36. In this context it's hardly surprising that Bizet's incidental music for *L'Arlésienne* has largely disappeared from view.

Largely – but not entirely. Daudet's *L'Arlésienne* opened at Paris's Théâtre du Vaudeville on 30 September 1872 and proved an instant flop. It was a last-minute substitution after another work was unexpectedly banned shortly before its scheduled premiere, so rehearsals for Daudet's new work had been rushed and publicity for it was limited. But Bizet was pragmatic and his music had generated some of the rare positive responses to the production; Daudet himself called it "the prettiest music in the world". The composer quickly turned some of the longer numbers into a four-movement suite for full orchestra, which was premiered less than a month after the play closed and would prove his first popular hit. Indeed, Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* suite was performed 15 times in Paris alone before his death thirty months later – a take-up that inspired his publisher to commission a second, posthumous suite of other numbers from the incidental music, premiered in 1880. The combined success of the two *L'Arlésienne* suites actually precipitated a revival of Daudet's play in 1885, which marked a radical shift in its fortunes: the play was now acclaimed, reaching its 500th performance in 1905 and its 1000th in 1951. Today, the two suites are still



regularly programmed by orchestras and arguably constitute Bizet's best known music besides *Carmen*. But there's far more to his incidental music than the handful of memorable tunes in the suites.

The timing of the commission was not ideal: Bizet was invited to a reading of Daudet's new play the day after his son Jacques was born in July 1872. He agreed to produce incidental music for the production shortly afterwards. Despite the significant domestic upheaval – Bizet had predicted in a letter just before the birth that the baby “will be wonderfully distracting” – the composer completed his score in a matter of weeks.

In other respects, *L'Arlésienne* was precisely the right task at the right moment. Bizet had been left dismayed by both the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune. “Music will have no future here,” he despaired in one letter written during the latter's height. “We will have to become expatriates. Shall I go to Italy, England, or America? Germany, the land of music, is impossible for anyone who has a French name and heart. It's all so sad!” By the summer of 1872, something akin to normal life had resumed – but the composer continued to pursue broader musical horizons.

Bizet had already composed operas set in ancient Ceylon (*Les Pêcheurs de perles*) and Cairo (*Djamileh*). Indeed, the future creator of *Carmen*'s Spain was consistently inspired by the “exotic” locations beloved of nineteenth-century Orientalism. The Provence of Daudet's *Girl from Arles* was just the kind of setting that got Bizet's creative juices flowing. As Sams puts it, the play's distinctive, southern rural location is “about as far as you can get from France and still be in French.” Bizet had actually passed through Arles and its Provençal surroundings on his way to Italy as a 19-year old Prix de Rome winner years earlier, so had some sense of the landscape in which Daudet himself had grown up.

But two other experiences were at least as important for his *L'Arlésienne* score. Firstly, he assisted his friend and mentor Charles Gounod on the older man's 1864 opera *Mireille*, which was based on an epic poem by Provençal bard Frédéric Mistral and featured elements of local colour including a lively farandole – the same traditional dance



Score manuscript of *L'Arlesienne*, 1872, France, Paris.
Bibliothèque-Musée De L'Opéra National De Paris-Garnier (Library)
© NPL - DeA Picture Library / Bridgeman Images

that Bizet subsequently featured in his incidental music and first *L'Arlesienne* suite. Secondly, Bizet encountered a collection of Provençal melodies that had been published in Avignon in 1864. He ended up incorporating three of those themes into his own incidental music. The very first tune we hear is the Provençal *Marcho dei Rèi* – also known as the *Marche de Turenne* – while “Èr dou Guet” appears in an arrangement for muted string quartet in the second tableau and the “*Danso dei chivau-frus*” is the melodic basis for Bizet’s own whirling farandole.

Bizet’s ambition was not simply to recreate “authentic” Provençal music, however. While he was fascinated by the creative possibilities of different musical languages and far-off locations (real or re-imagined), he was also drawn to the complex chromatic harmonies and musical innovations associated with his older German colleague Richard Wagner. The incidental music for *The Girl from Arles* unequivocally showcases Bizet’s gifts as a melodist, but it also includes numerous examples of atmospherically adventurous harmonies and risqué dissonances. And the composer also makes distinctive use of musical instruments, scoring his incidental music for an idiosyncratic 26-strong ensemble that includes four first violins, three seconds and just one viola, alongside a hefty five cellos and two double basses – not to mention an alto saxophone (invented less than thirty years earlier) and a traditional Provençal drum.

Sams points out the parallels between Bizet’s musical approach and Daudet’s drama, which he describes as “a mixture of a really modern play, written in really muscular, modern French, and an old-fashioned village play.” He suggests that Bizet must have been sympathetic to that subtle combination “because his music is traditional – it’s got a Provençal hymn in it – but harmonically and instrumentally, I mean... having a sax is like having a synth in your orchestra!”

So how has Sams gone about communicating that characteristic combination of the modern and the traditional in his English translation and staging? “What I’m after is something that doesn’t sound in any way cobwebby,” he says. “This is almost Ibsen

– and Ibsen is where it's heading." But it's also not "ultra-modern, not this year," he clarifies. "I'm setting it in the 1970s, 1980s. In terms of setting as well: unmatching chairs and unmatching clothes and people with dignity and self-respect, but not money."



Portrait of Georges Bizet (1838 – 1875) by Étienne Carjat,
Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Perhaps the largest challenge, though, is coordinating the timing of the music and the drama. Bizet's incidental music has twenty-six separate numbers, the shortest of which is only six bars long. Fourteen are what were known as "mélodrames": passages of music written as underlay for dialogue and onstage action – soundtracks, in other words, albeit decades before the invention of film. Since Bizet tailored his score to fit the conventional pace of acting of his day, Sams has discovered that "French actors then did everything about twice as slowly as English actors do now! It's so interesting because I can actually do the timings and from that I can learn what the melodramatic acting style was..." As a result, Sams has needed to fill out his English version in certain places and in others will allow the music to run on. The vital moments, he tells me, are when Bizet uses music as a cue, since "he puts in the starts very clearly, like any good theatre composer."

Much of the rest of Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* music was written to cover scene changes. "They are literally entr'actes," Sams explains. "And they take quite a lot of time. So quite plainly, they had a lot to build on the set!" By contrast, the Queen Elizabeth Hall is a different kind of performance space and there's no practical need for such lengthy interludes between scenes. "So it's a great chance for me to show the life of the village," Sams grins. After all, rediscovering *The Girl from Arles* in 2026 is also about encountering the pleasures of Bizet's complete score. Sams himself is clear on that front: that "every note that Bizet wrote should be played. First and foremost, that's why we're doing it – and quite right too!"

Synopsis

ACT 1

At a farm in Castelet in Provence, the farmer Francet and the shepherd Balthazar discuss the impending marriage of Francet's grandson, Frédéri, to a beautiful young woman from Arles. While Frédéri is passionately in love, Balthazar has doubts about the match, wishing instead that he would choose Vivette, a local young woman who secretly loves him. Frédéri, his mother Rose and the rest of the family are eagerly awaiting news from Marc, a relative in Arles who has investigated the girl's reputation. Balthazar entertains Frédéri's young brother, who everyone assumes is not fully aware of the world around him, with a story about a goat and a wolf, when Vivette arrives.

Marc's report is favourable, declaring the Girl from Arles' family to be respectable and enterprising. The celebratory mood is broken by the arrival of an agitated stranger, Mitifio. He reveals that the woman from Arles has been his mistress for two years and produces letters proving their relationship. Horrified, Francet confronts Frédéri with the evidence. Frédéri is left devastated, struggling to comprehend what appears to be the incontestable proof that the woman he loved is not who he thought she was.

ACT 2

Time passes and Frédéri remains hopelessly obsessed by the Girl from Arles. Rose and Vivette desperately search for ways to heal him. Rose encourages Vivette to reveal her long-hidden feelings, hoping that a good woman can rescue her son from despair. Vivette confesses her love, but Frédéri, still haunted by the girl from Arles, rejects

her. His suffering deepens to such an extent that Rose fears he may take his own life.

Convinced that only decisive action can save him, Rose even proposes accepting the disgraced Girl from Arles as his bride. Frédéri is deeply moved by his family's change of heart and finally realises the depth of their love. To everyone's surprise, he rejects the woman from Arles once and for all, and turns instead to Vivette. In an emotional reconciliation, he asks her to marry him, and the family rejoices, believing he has finally been saved.

ACT 3

Castelet is garlanded with flowers as the village prepares for Frédéri and Vivette's wedding. Mother Renaud, an elder woman once loved by Balthazar but nobly renounced, arrives with Rose. Their reunion offers a vision of love tempered by duty and endurance. Yet Frédéri's recovery proves fragile and Vivette remains concerned about his true feelings. When Mitifio reappears and speaks of his continuing affair with the woman from Arles, Frédéri's old wound is violently reopened and he puts distance between himself and Vivette.

Rose keeps watch over him through the night, while the once childlike Kid unexpectedly awakens into full understanding and warns that his brother is suffering terribly.

Before dawn, Frédéri finally succumbs to despair. Tormented by visions of the woman from Arles in Mitifio's arms, he rushes from the house and throws himself from the upper window. The family gathers in horror, left to reflect on the tragedy.

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2026 / 27 Season

BIZET BACH HAYDN STRAVINSKY
MOZART VIVALDI HANDEL

**"My rays glided over the notes, his last farewell engraved on the prison wall –
where words fail, sounds can often speak."**

Hans Christian Andersen, *What the Moon Saw and Other Tales* (1840)

A season exploring the ways in which music tells the stories that bring us together. Its power to bring narratives to life. To retell familiar stories. To remind us of the connections of community that inspire us.

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THE GIRL FROM ARLES

9 & 10 October

A staged performance of Bizet's *L'Arlésienne* with Sir Mark Elder

CHRISTMAS ORATORIO

5 & 6 December

All six parts performed over two nights with Václav Luks

A VIENNESE HOUSE PARTY

28 January

Mozart, Haydn, Dittersdorf and Vanhal take centre stage

THE RITE OF SPRING

18 February

Stravinsky's most explosive masterpiece on period instruments with Vladimir Jurowski

ST JOHN PASSION

10 March

JS Bach's intense musical drama with John Butt

VIVALDI FOR MANY

16 April

A programme of Vivaldi concertos that puts the whole ensemble in the spotlight

DEEPER AND DEEPER STILL

16 May

A searing journey through Handel's operas and oratorios with Mark Padmore and Carolyn Sampson



MUSIC SPEAKS

THE GIRL FROM ARLES

L'Arlésienne

7.00pm, Friday 9 & Saturday 10 October
Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall

Music by **GEORGES BIZET (1838 – 1875)**

(complete incidental music Op. 23)

Original play by Alphonse Daudet (1840 – 1897)

Translated by Jeremy Sams

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. Prelude

ACT 1

2. Melodrama I
3. Melodrama II
4. Melodrama III
5. Chorus 'Thank the Lord the sun is shining' and Melodrama IV
6. Melodrama V and Final Chorus

ACT 2

7. Pastorale (Entracte and Chorus)
8. Melodrama VI
9. Melodrama VII
10. Melodrama VIII
11. Chorus
12. Melodrama IX
13. Melodrama X
14. Melodrama XI and Chorus
15. Entracte
16. Finale

– INTERVAL (20 minutes) –

ACT 3

17. Intermezzo
18. Entracte (Carillon)
19. Melodrama XII
20. Reprise de l'intermezzo
21. Melodrama XIII
22. Farandole
23. Entracte and Chorus 'At break of day'
24. Chorus 'Then behold! A chariot of gold'
25. Melodrama XIV
26. Melodrama XV
27. Finale

Please note that the order or inclusion of some musical numbers may have changed during the rehearsal process.

Free pre-concert talk with writer, broadcaster and cultural historian Dr Flora Willson at 6.00pm in Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall Foyer.

Cast and Creative Team

Mercedes Assad

Vivette

Kerill Kelly

Frédéri

Otto Lenssen

The Kid

Helena Lymbery

Rose

Finbar Lynch

Balthazar

Richard Riddell

Mitifio

Simon Slater

Francet

Gay Soper

Mother Renaud

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Matthew Truscott Leader

Choir of the Age of Enlightenment

Sir Mark Elder

Conductor

Joseph Winters

Assistant Director

Set Building and Props Design by

Dreamchasing Young Producers

Jeremy Sams

Director and Translator

Alex Doidge-Green

Set & Costume Designer

Surtitles by

Ruth Hansford

William Vann

Assistant Conductor

Peter Harrison

Lighting Designer

Harmonium provided by

Carl Heslop

The OAE's 40th anniversary seasons in 2025 / 26 and 2026 / 27 are made possible with the support of The Forty Circle.

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Violins I

Matthew Truscott*
Daniel Edgar
Alice Evans
Henry Tong

Violins II

Julia Kuhn
Claire Holden
Debbie Diamond

Viola

Max Mandel*

Cellos

Andrew Skidmore
Catherine Rimer
Ruth Alford
Penny Driver
Ben Michaels

Basses

Cecelia Bruggemeyer
Carina Cosgrave

Flute

Lisa Beznosiuk*

Flute / Piccolo

Emma Halnan

Sopranino recorder

Thomas Pickering

Oboe / Cor anglais

Daniel Bates*

Clarinet

Katherine Spencer*

Bassoons

Fergus Butt
Sally Jackson

Saxophone

Kyle Horch

Horns

Richard Bayliss
Martin Lawrence

Timpani / Percussion

Robert Kendell

Piano

Steven Devine*

Harmonium

Xiaowen Shang

*OAE Principal Players

Choir of the Age of Enlightenment

Sopranos

Sam Cobb
Eleanor Garside
Elen Lloyd Roberts
Daisy Livesey
Kizzy Lumley-Edwards
Betty Makharinsky
Helena Moore
Clover Willis

Altos

Rachael Simone
Best-Babyeju
Jennifer Bourke
Judy Louie Brown
David Clegg
Matthew Farrell
Amy Lyddon
Florence Pettet
Joy Sutcliffe

Tenors

William Anderson
Edward Beswick
Richard Dowling
Sebastian Maclaine

Basses

Gavin Cranmer-Moralee
Peter Edge
Malachy Frame
Adam Green

We are going to start our own orchestra

Jan Schlapp, a founding player, recalls the OAE's beginning

I find it difficult to untangle the many strands of myth and memory that surround the beginning of the OAE. My personal memory is of my late husband, cellist Timothy Mason, coming home after a day of rehearsals in 1985, fired up with enthusiasm, saying "We are going to start our own orchestra and it is going to be player-led.". Busy as I was with two very young children I was initially less than enthusiastic because it seemed an almost impossible idea – where would the money come from? How would we organise it? Who would be involved?

The seed of the idea had been planted by regular conversations between the bassoonist, Felix Warnock, the violinist Marshall Marcus, and Tim, about how to break free from the status quo of London period orchestras. We had little say in any of these orchestras and we felt a bit underappreciated. But more important was the fact that we couldn't tap into what was going on on the continent. The BBC were broadcasting several of the continental giants of period performance such as Harnoncourt, Kjuiken, Bruggen, Leonhardt, Christie and Koopman, but we couldn't access their knowledge and experience. Their way of exploring baroque music was different from our English directors and fascinating to us, because of their intellectual seriousness and their depth of knowledge about instruments, phrasing, repertoire and style. They had been involved in period instrument performance much longer than us and we wanted to be free to absorb it all. At that time we had no way of inviting them to come to work with us in the UK.

Gradually, in discussion with all interested parties, the idea of a player-led orchestra took shape. Sponsorship was found. Everyone would be paid the same, there would be at least three leaders, and there would be an artistic committee elected by the players who would lead on concerts and repertoire. And out of this "organised chaos" as Marshall put it, came our first London concert in the Queen Elizabeth Hall in June 1986 with Sigiswald Kjuiken directing a programme moving from Rameau to Haydn. This marked the beginning of OAE's journey. 40 years on that journey continues today, still with the same ethos and the shared excitement of discovery.

Read Jan's full article about how the OAE was founded on our blog at oae.co.uk/start



In rehearsal with Sir Simon Rattle

A seat with a view

Alexandra Bellamy (Oboe)



I discovered the baroque oboe at Oxford. Before I went to university, I was actually a little bit clueless about the Historically Informed Performance (HIP) movement, but as soon as I got there, it became clear there was a lot going on. I had a boyfriend who was a baroque violinist, and he immediately said, "You should play the baroque oboe". I managed to get hold of one while I was a student, but I didn't do much actual playing because it does take a while to settle in on a baroque oboe, in terms of reeds and things. You can't just pick it up!

But in 1991, I remember going to the Proms to see The King's Consort doing Handel's *Fireworks Music*

with 24 oboes, and that made a huge impression on me. I first played with the OAE in 1993, for a Christmas concert where they needed three oboes for the Bach cantata BWV 140, "*Wachet auf*". And the next time I played with the OAE was in 2015 – an amazing tour of the Canary Islands. I got to play Brandenburg Concerto No. 2 with David Blackadder, our principal trumpet, and we did it about ten times. I mean, I've never done it so many times in succession before or since.

So I really got to know that piece, and it was a lovely group of people – my first proper OAE experience. We had a lovely time, and then on the last night we all went out for dinner. I had a very early flight the next morning, so I left quite early, having had a few of those huge Spanish gin and tonics. Then it turned out that after I'd left the restaurant, everyone who had stayed on got food poisoning. I think it was the prawns!

I'm now on the artistic committee of the OAE – one of five players who decide the programmes and which conductors we might want to invite. There are many factors – who do we want to work with, and who might help us get a tour, for example? We all have to be able to help each other. There are conductors we've liked for years, like Jurowski and Rattle and Adam Fischer, and it's important to keep a good relationship with them. But we're always looking for up-and-coming conductors who might inspire us to play in a different way. That's the eternal challenge!

ALEXANDRA WAS TALKING TO RICHARD BRATBY

Biographies



MERCEDES ASSAD **Vivette**

Mercedes Assad is a British / Egyptian actor born and raised in Nottingham, and trained at LAMDA. **Theatre credits include:** *Women Who Blow on Knots*

(Arcola Theatre); *Julius Caesar* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Red Ellen* (Northern Stage, Nottingham Playhouse & Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh); *Light Falls* (Royal Exchange Theatre). **Television credits include:** *Ted Lasso* (Apple TV); *FBI: International* (CBS); *Amicable* (BBC).



SIR MARK ELDER **Conductor**

Sir Mark Elder is Music Director of the Palau de Les Arts Reina Sofia in Valencia. He was Music Director of the Hallé from 2000 to 2024 and is now Conductor Emeritus. He

is a Principal Artist of the OAE, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Bergen Philharmonic. From 1979 to 1993 he was Music Director of English National Opera. He has worked with many of the world's leading symphony orchestras and has appeared annually at the Proms for over fifty years. He has

enjoyed a fifty-year association with the Royal Opera and has worked regularly for many other prominent theatres including the Metropolitan Opera, Opéra de Paris and Glyndebourne. From 2011 to 2019 he was Artistic Director of Opera Rara, and he has made many award-winning recordings in a wide repertoire with the Hallé. Sir Mark Elder was appointed a Companion of Honour in 2017 and knighted in 2008. In May 2006 he was named Conductor of the Year by the Royal Philharmonic Society, and he was awarded Honorary Membership of the Royal Philharmonic Society in 2011. He is Barbirolli Chair at the Royal Academy of Music.



KERILL KELLY **Frédéri**

Kerill trained at RADA having previously graduated from Drama and Theatre Studies at Trinity College Dublin.

Credits at RADA include: Eric in *Cyprus Avenue*

and Anthony in *Sweeney Todd*. **Theatre credits include:** *Savage* (White Bear Theatre); *Youth's the Season?* (Abbey Theatre); *The Duchess* (Trafalgar Theatre); *Hamlet* (Mill Theatre Dublin); *Much Ado About Nothing* (Utah Shakespeare Festival); *Grease* (Gaiety Theatre Dublin); *Half Light* (New Theatre and Smock Alley Theatre Dublin). **Screen credits include:** *Dunki* (Mango Films, Bollywood) and *Harry Wild* Season 5 (Acorn TV).



OTTO LENSSEN

The Kid

This production marks Otto's debut on stage, apart from his primary school play as Joe in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

Otto chose GCSE

Drama after being encouraged by his teacher, and discovered how much he enjoys the creativity and teamwork involved. Last year, he particularly enjoyed exploring the wider world of theatre and discovering everything that goes into bringing a production to life, from lighting and costumes to production and performance. His Drama teacher asked him to audition for this production, and Otto was lucky enough to land the part. Away from the stage, Otto is mad about sport. He has been competing in gymnastics since the age of six, plays basketball, recently completed a Junior NBA tournament, and also plays football for a local club. In the future, Otto would love to compete professionally in sport and hopes to travel the world, discovering new places and having new experiences. Otto Lenssen is a student from Acland Burghley School.



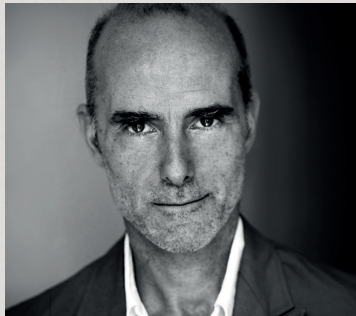
HELENA LYMBERY

Rose

Theatre credits

include: *The BFG* (RSC & Chichester); *Grace Pervades* (Theatre Royal, Bath); *Ballet Shoes*; *Mr Gum and the Dancing Bear*; *Treasure Island*;

This House; *The Cat in the Hat*; ...some trace of her; *Women of Troy*; *Attempts on her Life*; *Iphigenia at Aulis*; *His Dark Materials*; *Wicked Yaar*; *Henry V* (National Theatre); *Richard III*; *Henry V*; *Measure For Measure* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Britannicus*; *Watership Down*; *The Magic Carpet* (Lyric, Hammersmith Theatre); *Run Sister Run* (Soho Theatre / Sheffield Theatres / Paines Plough); *Dear Elizabeth* (Gate Theatre); *Queen Margaret* (Royal Exchange Theatre); *Pity*; *Rough Cuts: God Bless the Child*; *Wolves Are Coming For You* (Pentabus); *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (Original Cast – West End); *We Want You To Watch* (RashDash / National Theatre); *The Secret Agent* (Young Vic / Theatre O); *After Dido* (Young Vic / ENO). **Television credits include:** *Doctor Foster* (Series 1&2), *Father Brown*, *Oliver Twist*, *Alastair McGowan's Big Impression*, *The Inspector Lynley Mysteries*. **Film credits include:** *London Road*.



FINBAR LYNCH

Balthazar

Theatre credits include:

The Deep Blue Sea (Haymarket Theatre); *Our Country's Good*, *Desire Under the Elms* (Lyric Hammersmith Theatre); *The Tempest*

(Ustinov Theatre Bath); *Richard III* (Almeida); *Indecent* (Menier Chocolate Factory); *Girl From The North Country* (Royal Alexandra Theatre Toronto and Gielgud); *The Lady from the Sea*, *Hecuba*, *To The Green Fields Beyond*, *Fool for Love* (Donmar Warehouse); *As You Desire Me* (Playhouse Theatre); *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, *The Hothouse*, *Antony and Cleopatra* (National Theatre); *Antigone* (Barbican / World Tour); *The Fairy Queen* (Glyndebourne / Paris / New York); *The Birthday Party* (Duchess Theatre); *Not About Nightingales* (National Theatre, Circle in the Square); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Julius Caesar*, *Coriolanus*, *Measure for Measure*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Alchemist*, *Amphibians*, *The Virtuoso*, *A Woman Killed With Kindness* (Royal Shakespeare Company). **Television credits include:** *The Cadburys*, *Charlie Bone*, *Industry*, *The Regime*, *Jack Ryan*, *Devils*, *Silk*, *The Mallorca Files*, *The Feed*, *Treadstone*, *DCI Banks*, *Foyle's War*, *Breathless*, *Game of Thrones*, *Inspector George Gently*, *The Musketeers Proof*, *Dalziel and Pascoe*, *Waking the Dead*, *Holby City*, *The Hollow Crown*, *Red Cap*, *Mind Games*, *Small World*, *The Scold's Bridle*. **Film credits**

include: *Banquet*, *The Thomas Crown Affair*, *Jack of Spades*, *Kapodistrias*, *Hedda*, *The York Witches Society*, *Unwelcome*, *Richard III*, *The World We Knew*, *Black 47*, *Property of the State*, *Suffragette*, *Child 44*, *Departure*, *The Numbers Station*, *Mathilde*, *King Lear*, *To Kill a King*.



RICHARD RIDDELL

Mitifio

Theatre credits

include: *The BFG*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *The Homecoming* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Titus Andronicus*, *Comedy*

of Errors, *Gabriel* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Sing Yer Heart Out for the Lads* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Filumena* (Almeida); *After the Party* (Criterion Theatre); *Pastoral* (Soho Theatre); *All Who Pass* – International Playwrights Showcase (Royal Court). **Television credits include:** *House of the Dragon Series 3*, *Foundation Series 3*, *Endeavour*, *Curfew*, *Bodyguard*, *The Terror*, *Scott & Bailey*, *Barbarians Rising*, *Doc Martin*, *Penny Dreadful*, *Vera*, *Misfits*, *Jabberwock*, *The Fattest Man in Britain*, *Krod Mandoon and the Flaming Sword of Fire*, *Merlin*, *Waking the Dead*, *Fanny Hill: Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*; *Heartbeat*. **Film credits include:** *Star Wars VII*, *Legend*, *Robin Hood*, *Blitz*, *Weekender*, *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus*, *55 Steps*, *Between the Lights*, *The Merciless Beauty*, *Act of God*, *Enemy Lines*; *Dogging: A Love Story*. Radio work includes *Home Front* for BBC Radio 4.



JEREMY SAMS **Director & Translator**

Jeremy Sams is a composer, writer, translator and director. He has written and directed and translated theatre and opera all over the world, notably

at the Met in New York (*The Enchanted Island*, *Die Fledermaus*) Covent Garden, and ENO. His West End shows include *The Sound of Music* and *The Wizard of Oz*. His shows on Broadway include *13*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Noises Off*. He has written music for over 50 theatre and TV shows. His movie scores include *Le Weekend*, *Persuasion* (BAFTA award) and *Enduring Love* (Ivor Novello award).



SIMON SLATER **Francet**

Theatre credits include: *Wild Honey* (Hampstead Theatre); *Bloodshot* (St James' Theatre) Nominated for Best Solo Performance at the Equity JEFF

Awards 2017; *Wonderland* (Hampstead Theatre); *Viva Forever* (Piccadilly Theatre); *Chariots of Fire* (Gielgud Theatre, Hampstead Theatre); *Honk, For Services Rendered* (Watermill); *Mamma Mia!* (West End); *Song of Singapore* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Sugar Hills Blues* (Hampstead Theatre); *Forbidden Broadway* (Fortune); *Aspects of Love* (Sydmonton Festival, Farnham); *The Great White Hope* (Tricycle). **Television credits include:** *Holby*

City, *Doctors*, *Passage*, *Casualty*, *Spooks*, *Angel Cake*, *Hotel Babylon*, *Where the Heart Is*, *The Frank Skinner Show*, *Heartbeat*, *Judge John Deed*, *The Cappuccino Years*, *The Armando Iannucci Show*, *In a Land of Plenty*, *Monarch of the Glen*, *Hornblower*, *Invasion Earth*, *Preston Front*, *Fragile Heart*, *The Detectives*, *McCallum*, *Peak Practice*, *The Chief*, *The Return of Psammead*, *Chef*, *Sam Saturday*, *Doctor Who*, *Birds of a Feather*, *Lovejoy*, *Inspector Morse*. **Film credits include:** *My One and Only*, *Mamma Mia 2*, *The Iron Lady*, *The Fool*, *Dealers* and the award-winning short *Detour*. Simon is an Olivier-nominated composer (Constellations-Royal Upstairs / Duke of Yorks West End, London 2013) and has written original scores for over 400 productions for theatre, film, television and radio. He is also an award-winning audio artist, winning an Audie for his recording of Hilary Mantel's *Wolf Hall*.



GAY SOPER **Mother Renaud**

Gay trained at LAMDA and in 2026 celebrates 61 years of her career, which has embraced plays, television, solo cabarets, operettas for Carl Rosa and Opera

Della Luna, and many West End musicals, including playing Madame Thenardier in *Les Misérables* from 1988 to 1991. **Other West End credits include:** *Godspell*, *Billy*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time*, *The Mitford Girls*, *Funny Girl*, *Mother Courage*, *The Mousetrap*. She is known to a generation of children as the voice of all *The Flumps*. **Television credits include:** *Unforgotten*, *Moonflower Murders*, *Holby City*.

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Building creative capacity through collaboration: the OAE's residency at Acland Burghley School

Naomi Winterburn



The future of the UK's arts sector begins long before someone becomes a professional artist. It starts with a child having the opportunity to encounter the arts at school, or in the community. The health of the UK arts sector is dependent, according to the State of the Arts report, on a number of interconnected metrics with arts education positioned as a gateway. We tend to measure this by the numbers taking expressive arts GCSEs, which, although static in 2026, are down 41.7% since 2009. Music GCSE has been

particularly affected, with 54% of schools in the most deprived local authorities having no GCSE music entries at all this summer.

Against this rather unsettling backdrop, there are schools bucking these trends: the music GCSE pass rate at Acland Burghley School – the OAE's home in north London – was 14.6% higher than the music national average this summer at 92%, up from 24% in 2020 (just before the OAE arrived). Nicholas John, the school's Headteacher, credits



this – and Acland Burghley's best GCSE results since the 2017 reforms – to an evolving culture, of which the OAE is a significant part. This culture is built on a foundation of collaborative working – from being part of the local association of Camden schools right through to the OAE residency – and has coincided with better GCSE results, increased staff retention, improving attendance figures and the school being a popular choice for inner London families.

The OAE residency has become greater than the mutual benefit it was first predicated on and the improved music GCSE results are just one indicator of this. For the OAE, CEO Crispin Woodhead describes the residency as an opportunity to catalyse creative instincts and creative capacity – within the school, the local community, and beyond. For Acland Burghley, the residency is something special that brings

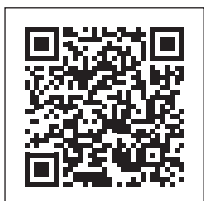
depth, texture and richness; an extra dimension that engenders respect from both staff and students. This translates into opportunities that the school couldn't provide alone; music teachers are able to align the curriculum with the OAE's programme of activity; children with additional needs are involved in projects in a meaningful way; the young producers programme upskills students vocationally and technically whilst ensuring the school's productions also benefit from a little bit of professional magic, and wellbeing initiatives such as monthly staff drinks are organised by the OAE. This is what sustained investment in the arts can look like: not just improved results, a single workshop or a performance, but a relationship that becomes woven into the life of a school, contributing to a culture where the arts are for everyone.

NAOMI WINTERBURN IS A RESEARCHER AND MUSIC EDUCATION CONSULTANT



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