

THE COCKPIT

EO Ensemble
OrQuesta

4th-12th February 2022
7.30pm

Les Indes Galantes Rameau

Marcio da Silva Stage / Music Director
Laura Hensley Assistant Stage Director

Petra Hajduchova Harp/chord

Cédric Meyer Archlute

Kirsty Main, Eloise MacDonald Violin

Alexis Bennett Viola

Erlend Vestby Cello

Joel Raymond Oboe/Recorder

Angela Hicks Hébé/ Phani

Poppy Shotts L'Amour / Zaire

Flavio Lauria Bellone

Helen May Émilie

Kieran White Valère / Tacmas

Anna-Luise Wagner Fatime

Jack-Lawrence Jones Osman / Huascar

John Holland-Avery Ali

www.ensembleorquesta.com

'Handel stripped down and brilliant', Ensemble OrQuesta,
Arcola Theatre. (Fiona Maddocks, The Guardian)
No 4: [The top 10 classical music performances of 2021.](#)

EO Ensemble
OrQuesta

Our 2021 production at Grimeborn was *Handel's Alcina*

'..a rich exploration of Handel's
opera with strong music
performances and an appreciable
contemporary treatment.'
Gaurav Singh Nijjer, 25/08/21
★★★★ North West End

'In a top-quality cast, Poppy
Shotts calls for special mention in
the small role of Oberto'
★★★★ Fiona Maddocks, 28/08/2021

'The instrumental ensemble might
have been small, but it certainly
was not lacking in punch and
drama. From the first notes of the
overture this was a strongly
characterful account of the score.'
★★★★ Robert Hugill, Planet Hugill

★★★★ '..we should applaud and
appreciate both the outstanding
creativity and the musical
authenticity of Marcio da Silva's
invaluable company.'
Owen Davies, Plays to See, 01/09/21

'The balanced and talented cast
produced an array of characterful
performances which drew us into
the drama.'
★★★★ Robert Hugill, Planet Hugill

'..the work is packed with dazzling
arias, many sung by Alcina, here
superbly sung by Helen May,
with Laura Fleur outstanding as
the knight, Ruggiero.'
★★★★ Fiona Maddocks, 28/08/2021

'The ensemble of performers and
musicians deliver a compelling
performance that captures our
attention all throughout...'
Gaurav Singh Nijjer, 25/08/21
★★★★ North West End

'And da Silva's programme notes –
this time available only online – are
once again better than anything
that the Royal Opera offers. '
Owen Davies, Plays to See, 01/09/21

Ensemble OrQuesta was created in 2013 by its artistic director Marcio da Silva. It is dedicated to performing baroque opera in all its richness and diversity to the highest of standards. In recent years we have taken our professional productions to the Grimeborn Festival at the **Arcola Theatre** and to other venues in the UK and abroad. We are passionate about presenting new and exciting interpretations of both well-loved and lesser-known baroque operas to as wide an audience as possible. We have relished the challenge of constantly raising our standards to produce high-grade performances in professional venues.

From the outset, our high-quality productions have secured critical acclaim. We have garnered a host of ★★★★★ and some ★★★★★ reviews from reputable music critics. On **Christmas Day 2021** our production of **Alcina** - 'Handel stripped down and brilliant' - was featured in an article in **The Guardian**, having been chosen as **No 4** in Fiona Maddocks' list of the **Top 10 Classical Music Performances of 2021**. We are also delighted that two singers in Ensemble OrQuesta productions (Helen May, Calisto, *La Calisto*, 2020, and Poppy Shotts, Oberto, *Alcina*, 2021) have received **OFFIE** nominations for Best Opera Performance.

Since 2014 Ensemble OrQuesta has organised a series of highly regarded opera academies each year. The purpose of these academies is to give singers from all over the world the opportunity to perform entire roles in a fully staged opera production, with orchestral accompaniment. Singers benefit from ten days of intensive tuition and training from the Ensemble OrQuesta team of specialists, being coached on style, acting, language, technique and movement. Marcio da Silva is both stage and musical director of the productions but is particularly grateful for Stephanie Gurga's musical expertise and support. The increasing success of these academies has lured singers from all over the world: Ireland, France, Canada, USA, Brazil, Romania, Hong Kong, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Japan, Russia, Georgia, Turkey, Hungary, Poland, Germany, Sweden, Israel, Greece, Austria, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Argentina and across the UK. This production of **Les Indes Galantes** grew out of the 14th Ensemble OrQuesta opera academy, which was held in London in April **2019**.

Ensemble OrQuesta are looking forward to their performances of our 5-star production of **L'Incoronazione di Poppea** at the **Grimeborn Festival** at the Arcola Theatre in **August** (dates to be announced in due course).

We hope you will join us at the Arcola. Please pass on news of our work to interested friends.

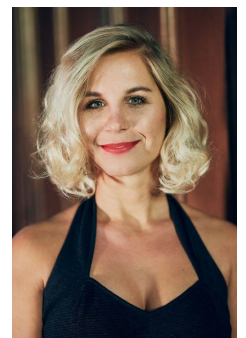
Thank you for joining us and thank you for your ongoing support.

Marcio da Silva



Music Director - born in Brazil, **Marcio da Silva** studied singing, and choral and orchestral conducting at the Conservatoire de Toulouse, France. He received his Bachelor of Music degree in orchestral conducting from the Hochschule für Musik, Freiburg, Germany, before moving to London to undertake a Masters in orchestral conducting at the Royal College of Music. During this time, he was one of three conductors to take part in the London Symphony Orchestra Conducting Master Class with Sir Colin Davis and was one of the three finalists at the Princess Astrid International Conducting Competition. As a guest conductor Marcio has conducted orchestras in Poland, Italy, Czech Republic, Germany, Turkey, Norway, Brazil and Kosovo. Marcio was Music Director of Woodhouse Opera from 2012 until its final season in 2018, and he is the founder of the Ensemble OrQuesta. In these roles he has conducted and directed over 20 fully staged productions of operas ranging from less regularly performed works such as Lully's *Armide*, to popular works such as *Carmen*, *The Magic Flute* and *La Boheme*. In 2021 he stage and music directed Cavalli's *L'Egisto* for Hampstead Garden Opera. He is also music director of the Hastings Philharmonic Choir, Billingshurst Choral Society, and Grange Choral Society, and artistic director of the Hastings Philharmonic Orchestra.

Harpsichord - **Petra Hajduchova** completed her studies at Trinity College of Music, London and was awarded a TCM Scholarship, the Raymond Russel Prize and the June Emerson Wind Music Launchpad Prize. Petra is known for her radio and television work, including a live broadcast on BBC Radio 3, and has recently recorded with The Harmonious Society of Tickle-Fiddle Gentlemen. Petra is in high demand as a soloist (harpsichord, piano and organ), choir accompanist, orchestral and chamber musician and has performed in Austria, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Palma de Mallorca, Spain, Turkey and here in England for leading ensembles such as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, London Mozart Players, National Symphony Orchestra, European Union Chamber Orchestra, The Locrian Ensemble, Trafalgar Sinfonia, London Concertante, Belsize Baroque and others. In addition to performing, Petra enjoys teaching piano and harpsichord and has participated in several educational projects with the English Concert, the Amadè Players and London Piano Masters.





Assistant Stage Director - Laura Hensley is an emerging theatre director who graduated from Bristol Old Vic's MA in Drama Directing in 2020. Since graduating, Laura has directed Martin Crimp's *Fewer Emergencies* for Rose Bruford College, where she also completed her undergraduate degree in European Theatre Arts, and is currently working on developing scripts with new writers for fringe theatre. Laura has experience as an actor, dramaturg and workshop facilitator as well as directing, and she is particularly interested in working with young people, family and community audiences. Her first production with Ensemble OrQuesta was *Don Giovanni* in 2017, and she has worked regularly with the company ever since.

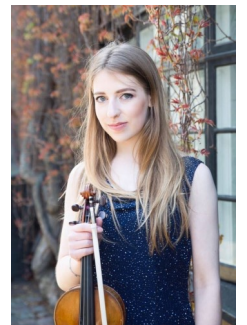
Archlute: Swiss lutenist **Cédric Meyer** was first trained as a classical guitarist at the University of Music Lausanne, and then at the Geneva University of Music. Subsequently he received training on traditional plucked instruments, including the lute and baroque guitar. Cédric performs in a variety of musical projects on modern and historical instruments, as soloist, chamber musician and basso continuo player, in Switzerland, France, Italy, England and Brazil. Alongside his artistic activities, he teaches at the Music Schools of Pully and Renens (Vaud, Switzerland).



Violin I - Kirsty Main graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music with a BMus in violin performance. She specialised in historical performance during her Masters (MMus, Merit) at the University of Glasgow in conjunction with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Kirsty was a Britten-Pears Young Artist on baroque violin where she co-led a performance of Handel's *Theodora* at Snape Maltings. She regularly plays with Eboracum Baroque, Newcastle Baroque, the Bellot Ensemble, the Zimmermann Band and as leader of the Kellie Consort. She is also a member of Convivio who have recently performed at Handel and Hendrix in London and for the Faversham Music Society. Other recent engagements include those with, the Scottish Ballet orchestra, the Scottish Festival Orchestra, Opera Dei Lumi, the Broen Ensemble, the London Contemporary Music Festival Orchestra, and the New Generation Festival Orchestra. Kirsty performs regularly with the Cairn String Quartet.



Violin II - Eloise MacDonald enjoys an active freelance career as a chamber musician and orchestral player (modern and historical violin). In 2019 she graduated with a Master's (Distinction) from the Royal College of Music. She also completed an Erasmus at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris. Eloise has performed at festivals such as the Gstaad Menuhin Festival, Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme, WYE Valley Winter Festival and Roman River Festival, and her performances have been broadcast on BBC Radio 4, ARTE TV, NTS Radio and Resonance FM. Her awards include the International Music Competition London Grand Prize Virtuoso, Jonathan Willcocks Prize and Edward Alwyn String Prize. A keen chamber musician, Eloise has performed in venues such as Buckingham Palace, Southbank Centre and King's Place with the Maconchy Quartet, and she has enjoyed curating the concert series RETAKE which launched on International Women's Day with support from Arts Council England. Eloise is a current a member of Southbank Sinfonia and is looking forward to performances with the London Sinfonietta Academy and Sinfonia Cymru.



Viola - Alexis Bennett. Alexis is a London based composer, performer and academic. He studied music and literature at the University of Edinburgh before postgraduate training at the Royal College of Music, Guildhall School, and Goldsmiths, University of London. He studied viola and medieval fiddle (vielle) at Guildhall and has performed widely with early music ensembles including the Dufay Collective, Florilegium, Istante Baroque, Pumpkinseeds, and London Early Opera, and has appeared at Royal Festival Hall, Barbican, Queen Elizabeth Hall and Cadogan Hall. Alexis has composed music for over 40 short films and 5 feature films, and for commercials, idents, and games. His opera, *The Electrictionary*, written in collaboration with the author Timothy Knapman, premiered at the *Tête-à-Tête* festival, King's Place, 2015. He has also worked as musician and performance coach in major feature films and TV series, including *The Favourite* (Yorgos Lanthimos, 2018), *Mary Queen of Scots* (Josie Rourke, 2018), *Emma* (Autumn de Wilde, 2020) *Mrs Wilson* (BBC, 2018), and *Great British Railway Journeys* (BBC, 2020). Alexis teaches composition, analysis, historical musicology, audio-visual studies, creative research, and media composition at Goldsmiths.



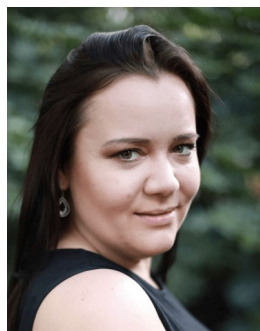
Erlend Vestby - Cello. Erlend holds a Bachelor of Music in Performance from the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, a Postgraduate Diploma in Music Performance from the University of Stavanger (UiS), Norway, and a Master of Music in Performance from the Royal College of Music. An active freelance musician Erlend has played solo, chamber music and orchestra concerts across Europe and Asia. He is currently enjoying membership of the acclaimed Southbank Sinfonia. As a soloist he has performed with various Norwegian orchestras including Bergen Youth Symphony Orchestra and Kjell Seim on tour to Japan (2010), and Saint-Saëns' Cello Concerto No 1 with Vestfold Symphony Orchestra conducted by Eirik Ødegård (2015). At RCM Erlend studied baroque cello with Richard Tunnicliffe. He has enjoyed performances in St. George's Hannover Square, Queen's Gallery Buckingham Palace, Dartington Hall, Cadogan Hall and at the Royal Festival Hall with Florilegium Ensemble. An active composer, Erlend's compositions and arrangements – including equal and creative collaborations for solo cello - have been performed in Northern Europe and Brazil. Erlend teaches privately in London, and since 2017 has been a teaching assistant of Jakob Kullberg at RCM, giving 1-1 lessons and classes on orchestral auditions, chamber music, technique, arrangement writing, performance and performance practice at undergraduate and postgraduate level.



Hebe/Phani - Angela Hicks, is a versatile singer experienced in early opera, oratorio, medieval, renaissance, chamber music and recitals with organ, piano and lute. Since embarking on her musical career, she has performed internationally, and has established herself as a specialist early music singer. Operatic highlights include the roles of Cupid in John Eliot Gardiner's production Handel's *Semele*, performed at La Scala, Milan; the title role of Alcina in Brighton Early Music Festival's latest production *La Liberazione di Ruggiero*; *La Statue* in Rameau's *Pygmalion* (BREMFM). She has sung as a soloist for John Eliot Gardiner, Jeffrey Skidmore and Václav Luks, in some of the foremost concert venues in the UK and Europe, such as La Scala, The Wigmore Hall, Palau de la Musica Barcelona, Berlin Philharmonie, Royal Chapel in the Palace of Versailles, amongst others. She recently returned to Vienna Konzerthaus to sing a staged version, complete with baroque gesture, of Handel's pastoral cantata, *Aminta e Fillide*, with her own ensemble Fair Oriana, in collaboration with Opera Settecento. Prominent recordings include Bach cantata BWV 151, and Cupid's aria from *Semele* with *Soli Deo Gloria*, Fair Oriana's debut album *Two Voices*, with Voces8 Records, and she also appeared on the feature film *The Favourite*.

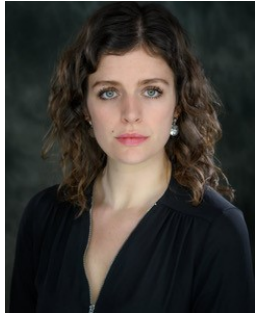


L'Amour/Zaire - Poppy Shotts soprano is a graduate of the Royal College of Music and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Her performances at the 2021 Grimeborn Festival awarded her an OFFIE nomination for *Best Opera Performance*, and a special mention in *The Guardian*. A 2018 Lies Askonas Finalist, National Mozart Competition and Royal Over-seas League Semi-Finalist, and 2019 Somerset Song Prize Finalist, Poppy was the soprano soloist for the 2020 Naxos recording of Massenet's *Visions* with the RSNO. Further solo concert experience includes *Peer Gynt* with the RPO at the Cadogan Hall, and as recurrent soprano soloist with St. John's Chamber Orchestra. Poppy recently undertook the voice work for the digital horror opera *CROCODILE*, which has been picked up for future TV broadcast by Sky Arts. Poppy will be part of a staged production of the work later this year. Opera credits include *Oberto* (Alcina - Ensemble OrQuesta), *Madame Goldentrill* (Pulp Rocket Theatre), *Barbarina*, (RCM Opera School), *Susanna* (Matchbox Opera), *Dew Fairy* (St. Magnus Festival), *Erste Dame* (2018), and *Abigail Williams* in *The Crucible* (2019) with Berlin Opera Academy. Poppy joined the chorus of Scottish Opera in 2020, and will perform in their upcoming production of *Don Giovanni* directed by Sir Thomas Allen this summer.



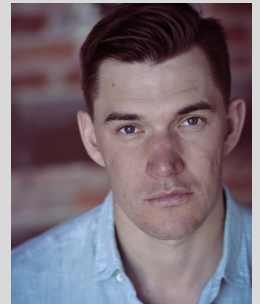
Bellone - Flavio Lauria. Brazilian bass-baritone Flávio Lauria graduated from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro with a Bachelor Degree of Singing. He has been a regular performer in Brasil, Canada and the UK, particularly favouring roles in the operas of Mozart such as Figaro, Leporello (reviews of his performance of this role in Opera Canada comment regarding the aria *Madamina, il catalogo è questo* was that it was "flawlessly performed"), Don Alfonso and Papageno ("amiable Papageno", Hastings and St. Leonards Observer), amongst others. Flavio's operatic repertoire includes also Vodník in Dvorak's *Rusalka*, Aeneas in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Comus in Charpentier's *Plaisirs de Versailles*, Giove in Cavalli's *Calisto*, Melisso in Handel's *Alcina*, Nicholas in Barber's *Vanessa* and Morales in Bizet's *Carmen*.





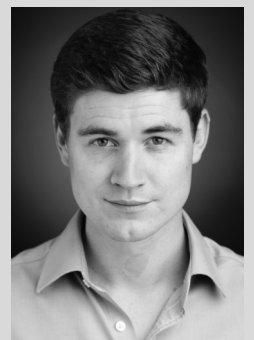
Émilie – Soprano **Helen May** graduated from the Royal Academy of Music with a Master's in Vocal Performance (Distinction) and a DipRAM for outstanding final recital performance. In 2020 she was nominated for an OFFIE Award for her performance as Calisto in Cavalli's *La Calisto* at The Cockpit. Helen has undertaken roles for Woodhouse Opera, Hampstead Garden Opera, Royal Academy Opera, Ensemble OrQuesta, Barefoot Opera, Opera Anywhere, Bury Court Opera, London Opera Players, and Oxfordshire Contemporary Opera. Lead roles have included: Mozart's Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*); Despina (*Così fan tutte*); First Lady (*The Magic Flute*); Contessa and Barbarina (*Le Nozze di Figaro*); Climene (*L'Egisto*, Cavalli); Amastre (*Xerse*, Cavalli); Galatea (*Acis and Galatea*, Handel); Morgana (*Alcina*, Handel); Nerone and Valletto (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, Monteverdi); Diane (*Hippolyte et Aricie*, Rameau); Giannetta (*L'elisir d'amore*, Donizetti); Woodpecker (*Cunning Little Vixen*, Janáček); Nimue (*Merlin*, premiere, Keith Beal); Aisha (*Lizzie Strata*, premiere Simmonds/Willcock); and cover Aurora (*Aurora*, premiere, Noah Moseley). Forthcoming roles include: Mimi (*La bohème*, Puccini); and cover Jenůfa (*Jenůfa*, Janáček). Future oratorio engagements include: Verdi *Requiem*, and Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*.

Valère/Tacmas - British tenor **Kieran White** continues to enjoy success in the UK and is also establishing himself as a sought-after artist in mainland Europe. Recent engagements include his international operatic debut in Poland with Warsaw Opera Kameralna singing the title role of Castor in Rameau's *Castor et Pollux* - "the most convincing was Kieran White, his voice had the brightness appropriate to French music, but also the lightness that is the basis for the performance of this type of repertoire." Jumping in at short notice as Damon *Acis and Galatea* (Handel) for Dorset Opera last summer - "his true haute-contre was possibly the clearest and most focused voice of all the soloists," and performing Oronte (*Alcina*, Handel). for Ensemble OrQuesta at the Arcola Theatre - "a model of clarity and elegance" Opera magazine. He is particularly passionate about music from 16th, 17th and 18th Century, predominantly Bach's Johannes and Matthäus Passion (Evangelist), performing in a number of venues across the United Kingdom and Europe. Kieran graduated from The Royal Academy of Music achieving a Masters with distinction. He is presently a student of renowned *haute-contre* Jean-Paul Fouchécourt. In 2021 Kieran was awarded 2nd place at the Froville International Baroque Singing Competition.



Osman - **Jack Lawrence-Jones** baritone. Jack is a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He is a Britten Pears Young Artist, a London Festival Opera Young Artist, a Garsington Alvarez Young Artist and a Live Music Now Artist. He recently made his Aldeburgh Festival solo debut. Last summer Jack joined Garsington Opera, singing in the chorus for Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and Verdi's *Falstaff*, and playing the role of Diener 2 in Strauss' *Capriccio*, as well as covering the Count. Recent and upcoming roles include Pollux in Rameau *Castor et Pollux* (The Opera Company with Jonathan Williams), Conte in Mozart *Le nozze di Figaro* (St Paul's Opera, Ensemble OrQuesta), Belcore in Donizetti *L'elisir d'amore* (London Opera Productions), Moralès in Bizet *Carmen* (Kentish Opera), Groundhog in Mosley *Aurora* (Bury Court Opera and Grimeborn Festival), Graf (cover) in Strauss *Capriccio* (Garsington Festival) and the title role in Dove *The Enchanted Pig* (Hampstead Garden Opera). Recent outings on the concert platform include Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* with the London Concert Choir, Handel's *Messiah* at Our Lady of the Assumption and St Gregory, Warwick Street and Vaughan Williams' *Serenade to Music* in the Grenfell Tower Benefit Concert at the Cadogan Hall.

Don Carlos - **Samuel Jenkins**. Born and raised in Guildford, Samuel Jenkins is a tenor of 'operatic richness and delectability' (Haddo Arts). He trained at the Royal College of Music, where he was an H.R. Taylor Trust scholar and graduated with Distinction, and now studies with David Rendall and Jo Ramadan. Samuel's recent roles have included Don Ottavio (Don Giovanni) with the Berlin Opera Academy; Tamino (*The Magic Flute*), Remendado (*Carmen*); Dorvil (*La scala di seta*); and Coridon (*Acis and Galatea*). In 2018 he appeared as Don Curzio (*Le nozze di Figaro*), directed by Sir Thomas Allen at the RCM International Opera School. An experienced oratorio soloist, Samuel has performed concert repertoire spanning the music of Monteverdi to Jonathan Dove, appearing with the National Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Oxford Bach Soloists. In 2019 he was a member of Peter Sellars' production of Bach's *Johannespassion* with Sir Simon Rattle and the OAE. Most recently, he made his debut with The Cardinal's Musick at Cadogan Hall.



Fatime - Anna-Luise Wagner soprano. Anna's repertoire spans from early baroque opera to contemporary pieces. Upcoming roles include Juliet/*A rose by another name* (Marginalia) and Belinda/*Dido and Aeneas* (Hampstead Garden Opera). Previous onstage highlights include Susanna/*Le nozze di Figaro* (Hampstead Garden Opera), Sorceress/*Dido and Aeneas* (Ensemble OrQuesta), Dema/*L'Egisto* (Hampstead Garden Opera), Clorinda/*La Cenerentola* (Random Opera), The Artist/Joanna Ward's *hunger* (Edinburgh Festival Fringe), and several roles with Cambridge University Opera including Cleopatra/*Giulio Cesare*, Micaëla/*Carmen*, Amore/*L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Adina/*L'elisir d'amore*, title role/*Sāvitrī*, and Despina/*Così fan tutte*. As a concert soloist, Anna's performances include Mozart's *Coronation Mass* and *Requiem*, and Haydn's *Nelson Mass*. She has also created the title role in Green Opera's lieder opera *Fillu*. Anna has just completed her PhD at the Italian Department of the University of Cambridge. She has also worked as dramaturg and translator on high-profile opera productions in Germany, Austria, Italy, and the US, including the world premiere of Liszt's incomplete opera *Sardanapalo* in 2018 and Barrie Kosky's staging of Offenbach's *Orphée aux enfers* at the Salzburg Opera Festival 2019. Anna has founded Marginalia, an interdisciplinary performance collective dedicated to bringing academic research to life on stage.



Ali - John Holland-Avery baritone has a BA (Hons) in Music from York University and is a former Bass Lay Clerk of St John's College, Cambridge. In 2016 he completed an MMus in Vocal Performance at the Royal Northern College of Music where he won the 2015 Frederic Cox Song Prize (RNCM) and sang live on BBC Radio 3. His studies were generously supported by the Mercers' Company and an Independent Opera Voice Scholarship. John has several professional operatic credits to his name, including Governor in Bart's *Oliver!* (Grange Park Opera); Guglielmo, *Così Fan Tutte* (Woodhouse Opera); Don Alfonso, *Così fan tutte* (Devon Opera); Periarco, Cavalli's *Xerse*; Giove, Cavalli's *La Calisto*; Melisso, Handel's *Alcina* (Ensemble OrQuesta); Step-Out Baritone (cover), Noah Mosley's *Aurora* (Bury Court Opera); Alidoro (cover), Rossini's *La Cenerentola* (British Youth Opera); Dr Falke, J. Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* (Windsor & Eton Opera); Harasta, Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Riverside Opera, London); and Hipparco, Cavalli's *L'Egisto* (Hampstead Garden Opera). John is currently studying with internationally acclaimed Welsh baritone, David Kempster. John is a founding member of Eboracum Baroque, with whom he recorded Handel's *Messiah* (released in 2021) and has performed across the UK as well as in Münster (Germany), Tallinn (Estonia), and in the Mumbai Opera Online Series for Royal Opera House, Mumbai (India).



Director's note - this production of *Les Indes Galantes*

In this production our company become a **'troupe' of artists** in a non-specific world, briefly bringing ten distinctive characters to life. I have focused on the core messages behind each element of the libretto.

Prologue: a path on the floor signifies the journey ahead – different places, different characters, different stories - and our own path through life. Love and Hébè invite three pairs of lovers to fire their flame and live their passions. They comment on the endlessly repetitive cycle of relationships. Bellone (with gusto, but somewhat flippantly) invites them to glory - their response, though sometimes enthusiastic, lacks sustained commitment: despite Bellone's best efforts, our lovers are perhaps too easily distracted.

The **zigzag movement** represents the way that we unwittingly fall into cycles of repeated behaviour and how our lives sometimes follow patterns. This is also reflected in the static choreography performed by the lovers; they repeatedly go through different stages of a relationship, portraying a pattern or cycle. In the duet and chorus 'Traverser', the troupe follow the light and fly into other unknown places to tell their stories.

Entrées - Each story is told in or around a **box** containing experiences, memories, and feelings; characters alternate through the corners of the box to acknowledge different perspectives of the same story.

Turc – the heart of this story focuses Osman's renouncing of his love in favour of Valère and Émilie's happiness. Émilie's anguish and Rameau's storm coincide in a powerful moment of non-linear dramatic action.

Les Incas – this story reminds us that one person's hero is sometimes another's villain. Phani, criticizes the use of religion as a persuasive tool, yet believes in the superpowers of the Spanish who arrive in big ships. Huascar, whilst admittedly vile in his own attempt to persuade Phani to marry him, is arguably justified in criticising the Catholic Spanish for worshipping Gold above God. Huascar's prophetic words: 'each day can be your last', tragically predicts his fate, as well as the fate of his civilisation.

Les Fleurs – amidst the comic elements and cross-dressing, the core message, exemplified in the glorious final quartet, is of love and destiny: those who are meant to be together will end up together.

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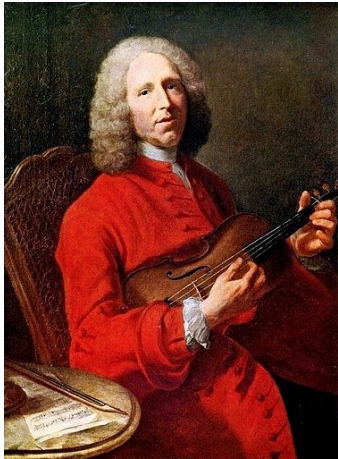


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Rameau's *Les Indes Galantes* ('The Amorous Indies'), was premiered by the Académie Royale de Musique at the Théâtre du Palais-Royal in Paris on 23rd August **1735**. It was a hybrid work written for public entertainment and was performed more than 60 times in its first two years.



Rameau was one of the most important French composers and music theorists of the 18th century, but he was **almost 50** before he wrote the first opera (*Hippolyte and Aricie*, 1733) of the 31 on which much of his lasting reputation now rests. *Les Indes Galantes* was his **second** performed opera.

The integration of instrumental, vocal and dance elements into a single evening's performance, with an exotic setting, sumptuous costumes, and elaborate scenery, was very popular during the Baroque period. Rather than offering a single story in several acts, Rameau and his librettist, **Louis Fuzelier** (1672-1752), opted for a sequence of tales set in far-flung places (the 'Indes' of the title represented any remote and little-known place which was therefore considered to be exotic).

For its original performance there were only **three parts**: a prologue and two acts (or 'entrées', as Rameau called them). The premiere met with a lukewarm reception from the audience, and, at the third performance, a new entrée was added under the title *Les Fleurs*. It is this early formulation of a prologue and three acts, that is used for our current production.

In the event this additional entrée caused further discontent because it showed the hero disguised as a woman, which was viewed by some as an absurdity and by others as an indecency. Thanks to the forbearance of his immensely wealthy new-found patron Alexandre Le Riche **de La Poupelière**, Rameau was able to make a series of further revisions. This makes the task of reassembling the score extremely difficult.

Subsequently the entrée des *Fleurs* was replaced with some new music, and later a fourth entrée - *Les Sauvages* - was appended; this entrée is not included in our production.

A visual guide to the characters and their interactions

EO Ensemble Orquesta

THE COCKPIT

1

2

3

Pasha



Emilie

(slave)

Don Carlos



Phani

(princess)

Tacmas

(prince)



Ali



Fatime

(slave)

Valère



Huascar

(priest)



Zaire

(slave)



Rameau - Les Indes Galantes

Synopsis

Prologue - **Hébé**, goddess of youth, summons her followers to take part in a festival. Young French, Spanish, Italians, and Poles rush to celebrate. The celebration is interrupted by the noise of drums and trumpets. It is **Bellone**, goddess of war, who arrives on the stage accompanied by warriors bearing flags. Bellone calls on the youths to seek out military glory. Hébé prays to **L'Amour** (Cupid) to use his power to hold them back. L'Amour arrives and decides to abandon Europe in favour of the 'Indies', where love is more welcome.

The **first act** - '**Le Turc généreux**' - is set on an island in the **Indian Ocean**. **Osman** Pasha is in love with his slave - a French girl **Émilie** whom he has taken captive, but she rejects him, telling him she was about to be married when a group of brigands abducted her. Osman urges her to give up hope that her fiancé is still alive but Émilie refuses to believe this is true. The sky turns dark as a **storm** develops, (providing the musical focal point of this section). Émilie sees the violent weather as an image of her **despair**.

A chorus of shipwrecked **sailors** is heard. Émilie laments that they too will be taken captive. She recognises one of the sailors as her fiancé **Valère**. Their joy at their reunion is tempered by sadness at the thought they are both slaves now. Osman enters and is furious to see the couple embracing. However, unexpectedly, he announces he will free them. He has recognised Valère, who was once Osman's master but magnanimously freed him. Osman gives Valère gifts and the couple praise his generosity. They call on the **winds** to blow them back to France. The act ends with celebrations as Valère and Émilie prepare to set sail.

The **second act** - '**Les Incas du Pérou**' - is set during a **Festival of the Sun** in **Peru**, and also concerns a love triangle: a Spaniard, an Incan princess, and an Incan high priest. **Don Carlos**, a Spanish officer, is in love with the Inca princess **Phani**. He urges her to escape with him, but she fears the anger of the Incas, who are preparing to celebrate the Festival of the Sun. Nevertheless, she is prepared to marry him. The Inca priest **Huascar** is also in love with Phani but suspects he has a rival and decides to resort to subterfuge.

Huascar leads the ceremony of the adoration of the Sun, which is interrupted by a sudden **earthquake**. Huascar declares that this means the gods want Phani to choose him as her husband. Carlos enters and tells Phani the earthquake was a trick, artificially created by Huascar. Carlos and Phani sing of their love, while Huascar swears revenge. Huascar provokes an eruption of the **volcano** and is crushed by its burning rocks. Musically Rameau's dramatic skill is displayed in his portrayal of the destructive force of Huascar's jealousy (mirroring the fire and rocks hurled from the volcano, and the unleashing of the menacing force of the earthquake).

The **third act** - '**Les Fleurs-fête Persane**' - is set in **Persia** and concerns suspected infidelity. There is intended humour here with disguises, mistaken identities and a concluding fete celebrating a happy outcome of preceding events. Both the text and music have a light-hearted spirit.

The interactions are complex. Prince **Tacmas** is in love with **Zaïre**, a slave belonging to his favourite **Ali**, even though he has a slave girl of his own, **Fatime**. Tacmas appears at Ali's palace disguised as a merchant woman so he can slip into the harem unnoticed and test Zaïre's feelings for him. Zaïre enters and laments that she is unhappily in love. Tacmas overhears her and is determined to find out the name of his rival.

Tensions mount when Fatime enters, disguised as a Polish slave, and Tacmas believes he has found Zaïre's secret lover. Enraged, he casts off his disguise and is about to stab Fatime when she too reveals her true identity. It turns out that Zaïre has been in love with Tacmas all along just as Fatime has been in love with Ali. We hear a beautiful **quartet** (*Tendre amour, que pour nous ta chaine dure a jamais*) – a rarity for Rameau – as the two couples rejoice in this happy resolution. There is a heady chorus to end, as the Persians celebrate the **Festival of Flowers**.

Responses to Rameau's operas

In **France** Rameau's operas are performed often, both at the Paris National Opera and in many of the regional opera houses. He is hailed as one of the country's greatest composers, and his music is promoted and performed with pride by many of its finest musicians, notably **Les Arts Florissants**. By contrast, England focuses much more on Handel and Monteverdi, and Rameau's operas are aired much less frequently.

The issue is that some consider that Rameau's operas lack dramatic weight or perhaps nuance. Yet his defenders argue that his works explore dark and complex themes with sincerity and depth of expression. **Les Indes Galantes** is a case in point. In dramatic terms the stories are multi-faceted with subtle interplays between protagonists, and his characters navigate a complex range of heartfelt emotions even if these are typically baroque in being persistently *in extremis*.

Musically, Rameau offers great riches. He was undoubtedly a revolutionary; his use of harmony and orchestration was way ahead of its time, and his understanding of the harmonic and sonic possibilities of the orchestra is astounding. Indeed, some see Rameau as one of the first impressionists, exploring textures and sonorous string sounds that would lead to Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and inspire Camille Saint-Saëns to edit his works. Berlioz and D'Indy revered him.

There is no doubt that Rameau's music provoked controversy. His first opera, **Hippolyte et Aricie** (1733), caused a stir among the Parisian intelligentsia, dividing opinion between conservatives who declared Rameau's music to be difficult and the work of a theorist, and those who embraced his innovations. Among his advocates, André Campra, one of the leading composers of his time, declared: "There is enough music in this opera to make 10 of them; this man will eclipse us all." When *Les Indes Galantes* was first performed, Rameau was again reproached for the extreme difficulty of his music.

Many of Rameau's advances came from adopting fashionable **Italian techniques** of his day, such as using the full orchestra to accompany sections of recitative. But Rameau took these innovations to new heights, and underpinning his music is a specifically **French sensibility**. The French were said to speak their operas and sing their plays; in Rameau's day, some of the principal singers in his operas would have been thought of as actors as much as singers. In contrast to the Italian composers, the French would not have used castrati and had little time for divas: opera was more egalitarian, with the music shared more equally between soloists, chorus, and orchestra. In *Les Indes Galantes* - and in *Castor and Pollux* (1737) - you can already sense this **social revolution** taking shape. But perhaps most French of all is the way in which Rameau weaves **dance and movement** into the fabric of his work: more than mere *divertissements*, they elucidate character and plot.

Modern audiences

Rameau comes under heavy criticism for *Les Indes Galantes*. Even though the multiple plots take place in a fantasised exotic 'elsewhere', the portrayals of distant lands are seen by critics as a representation of **primitive clichés**. The apparent pervading impression of **Enlightenment superiority** all too easily comes across as propaganda for colonialism. Furthermore, just in case you are somewhat whimsically inclined to see 'love across social divides' as an amiable message within the different plotlines, the **libretto** is intensely problematic, being full of rather offensive moments. For example, when two Persian men fall in love with each other's female slave, one of the masters openly declares, 'Love is necessary in slavery. It sweetens the hardship.'

How do we handle such a reductive world view – do we redact it, or simply avoid it.

Is Rameau's 18th century world view too far removed from ours to have any relevance and do the themes that he explores have any current applicability.

Reluctant though one might be to quote right wing US politicians, Allen West made a valid point when he said: 'History isn't there for you to like or dislike. It's there for you to learn from it. If it offends you, that's even better, because then you're less likely to repeat it. It's not yours to erase or destroy'.

I for one am reluctant to discount such a musical masterpiece on the grounds that Rameau's 18th century perspective is too disconnected from ours to be of interest. His music is **rich** and **powerful**, and the theme of **colliding cultures** that he explores does have modern-day applicability. The opera can challenge us to consider issues of identity and alterity in current society. After all, for all our liberal talk of the beneficial inter-connectivity brought about by increased **globalisation** and the enhanced awareness of equality generated by **multiculturalism**, it is evident that today's world is fundamentally fragmented by long-standing **racism** and shaken to its core by a **xenophobic backlash** against the challenging ramifications of a **refugee crisis** of unparalleled proportions.

Rameau's defenders have suggested that the opera is not in fact just a dose of **French gallantry** conquering all. The audience might be persuaded that the opera can sustain an alternative interpretation. Arguably the core motif holding the acts together is the trope of the '**noble savage**'. This presents indigenous populations, especially people of colour, as holding some innate virtue due to their lack of contact with 'civilisation'. A close observer might propose that the narrative ultimately portrays Turks, Persians, Peruvian Incas, and American natives to be more virtuous than the cynical, greedy, and sometimes rather cruel Europeans. In fact, Rameau's 'natives' seem to be giving the 'civilised' an example of noble feelings, fearlessness, and generosity.

But the stereotyping within this alternative assessment is clearly still problematic, giving us further food for thought. There is no doubt that these two core issues of **the long shadow of colonialism** and **the dangers of latent racial stereotyping** raised by *Les Indes Galantes* are alarmingly current. As we debate over the statutes of slave traders, disagree over the handling of refugees, and clash over our response to #BlackLivesMatter, perhaps this opera can challenge us to ask whether we have really laid to rest the destructive ghosts of colonialisation. Since our daily news is still haunted by inappropriate and clumsy use of racial stereotypes, perhaps we are not as far removed from Rameau's world as we would like to believe.

So where does this leave us? Our artistic task is to find ways to encourage 21st century audiences to view *Les Indes Galantes* through **a fresh lens** and to find joy and meaning therein. Some modern productions – such as *Platée* at the Royal Opera House – opt for the historically accurate approach, with elaborate costumes, extravagantly plumed headdresses, and ornate sets. This is only one view of how Rameau might be performed. Arguably, if we simply try to recreate the past, we turn what surely should be living theatre into a historical curiosity.

That said, it is not our intention to re-invent, re-imagine, or re-interpret simply for the sake of inconsequential impact, but to bring Rameau's creation to life in a dynamic and collaborative way with our artists and in an insightful and meaningful way for our audience. In essence we offer the music and the drama stripped down but vibrant. In baroque times dance was a key element of opera performances, and some modern performances of baroque operas retain dance episodes. By contrast we offer **a distinctive stylised approach**. Simple choreographic gestures are incorporated within the drama, and our singers often move on stage in patterns in a manner that not only recognises the connection between movement and music but also exemplifies character interactions. We hope our minimalist approach leaves the audience free to hear the beauty of the music and enables individuals to develop their own nuanced interpretation.

There is perhaps a final question to be asked as to whether the opera has anything relevant to say to its audience about **human nature and relationships**. Despite the 'exotic', and therefore slightly 'removed', locations, Rameau certainly intended that his audience should see themselves reflected in the human characters and emotional issues that he portrayed: the sultan who declines to take advantage of the highly desirable prisoner; the self-destructively jealous Inca priest; the love games of Persian princes; and the prairie Indians who love faithfully and peacefully. Equally his intention that the furiously portrayed storms and volcanic eruptions should represent their emotional turbulence also has a resonance. On a fundamental level, perhaps human nature and the trials and tribulations of falling in and out of love retain recognisable common denominators, whether the backdrop is the exotic 18th or the everyday 21st century.