

**Vache Baroque assembles a vibrant cast
for a circus-opera, full of revelry, wizardry, parody and
joyous anarchy**

LE CARNAVAL DE VENISE

by Campra

Weekends: 30 & 31 August & 6 & 7 September
5.30-8.30pm with 1-hour supper interval
plus relaxed performance: Sunday 7 September at 11am
The Vache, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire



Léonore Katie Bray
Isabelle Julieth Lozano
Rodolphe Tristan Hambleton
Léandre Themba Mvula
Plutone Giuseppe Pellingra

La Fortune & Soprano Chorus Eleanor Broomfield
Orfeo & Alto Chorus Feargal Mostyn-Williams
Le Chef des Castellans & Tenor Chorus William Searle
Un Musicien & Bass Chorus Adam Jarman
Music Director Jonathan Darbourne
Director James Hurley
Associate Director Rebecca Solomon
Designer Laura Jane Stanfield
Lighting Designer Ben Pickersgill

"Vache Baroque - Newcomer of the year"

Opera Now

"Ingenious stagecraft and expert musicianship"

The Stage

To mark their 5th anniversary over weekends of 30 & 31 August and 6 & 7 September, **Vache Baroque** turns opera on its head, mounting an electrifying circus-opera - **Le Carnaval de Venise** by André Campra - directed by **James Hurley**.

Alongside the Vache Baroque Band, **Jonathan Darbourne**, co-founder of Vache Baroque has assembled an energetic, young cast of opera singers – Columbian-born **Julieth Lozano**, Zambian-raised **Themba Myula**, Italian **Giuseppe Pellingra**, **Katie Bray**, **Feargal Mostyn-Williams** and **Tristan Hambleton**. The stellar opera singers will join in the aerial and technical wizardry of the circus performers lead by **Rebecca Solomon**.



Replete with Venetian masks and commedia dell'arte characters, the production will be full of toe-tapping percussion riffs, folk dances and joyous choruses all unfolding under an atmospheric circus tent in the grounds of The Vache, Chalfont St Giles (at the end of the Metropolitan Line). Capitalising on the success of last year's relaxed performance, which drew in a wide range of newcomers to opera from local community centres and schools on heavily-discounted tickets, Vache is mounting an abridged version for families and those with special needs on Sunday 7 September at 11am.

As director **James Hurley** explains,

"Le Carnaval de Venise is a genre-bending blend of comedy and tragedy, which offered its original audiences something completely new: an immersive voyage through the hedonistic pleasures of Venice, unfolding over a single topsy-turvy day at the city's infamous carnival. Campra's kaleidoscopic vision will be brought to life in-the-round at the Vache in a festive fusion of contemporary circus, dance, and Baroque opera - as an impulsive goddess rips up the script for yet another mythological opera just as the curtain is about to rise on opening night!"

Jonathan Darbourne commented,
"Everyone loves a circus! We've wanted to mix circus elements into a show for a while and Campra's funny and fabulously inventive opera seemed the perfect fit. The music is wonderful, endlessly inventive, and full of surprises, just like a carnival. Earlier this year, we ended our Out of the Deep programme (which we'll be repeating in October at the Brighton Early Music Festival) with the sublime last movement of Campra's Requiem. It's brilliant to be filling our Summer with his stylish and captivating theatrical music. In my opinion, an under-the-radar genius of the era."



Soprano **Julieth Lozano** was the 2023 winner of the Dame Kiri Te Kanawa Audience Prize at **Cardiff Singer of the World** and 2018 recipient of the President's Award given by HM The King. Born in Columbia, she grew up in this colourful, carnival-loving country brimming with all the exuberance of the *Encanto* movie. She only came across opera accidentally while studying industrial engineering. Since visiting Venice, she became obsessed with the Venetian Carnival, adorning her body with a Venetian mask tattoo. Previous productions have seen her crawling through mud, singing with goats and perform circus acrobatics.

Raised in Zambia, **Themba Mvula** is an operatic baritone who discovered his passion for singing during secondary school in North Wales. Working with ETO, Opera Holland Park, WNO and Opera North, Themba has a strong interest in new opera and interdisciplinary collaborations, playing multiple instruments, incorporating puppetry and choreography. Highlights include the Magician / Con Man / Interlocutor in Weill's *Love Life* and Papageno in *The Magic Flute Lite* for Opera North.





Mezzo-soprano **Katie Bray** won the Joan Sutherland Audience Prize at the Cardiff Singer of the World and is known for her magnetic stage presence and gleaming, expressive tone. Described by Culture Whisper in *Semele*: “**Katie Bray discovers a whole new acid as Juno, singing with goddess-like perfection, seemingly limitless in her range and colour.**” Like Lozano, she too has had circus training, as has counter-tenor **Feargal Mostyn-Williams**, a previous member of the National Centre for Circus Arts. Feargal was the first countertenor to train at the National Opera Studio. He is a recipient of the prestigious Daiwa Foundation Scholarship.

Tristan Hambleton, who studied Art History at Cambridge, is in high demand as a bass baritone in opera, oratorio and on the concert platform performing in George Benjamin’s *Lessons in Love and Violence* with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, at WNO, Opera National de Bordeaux under Paul Daniels and at Glyndebourne under Sian Edwards.

Italian bass baritone **Giuseppe Pellingra** has been described as “a charismatic anti-hero, appropriately tall, dark and gruesome. He imbued Ruthven with a seductive evil that was irresistible” by Opera Magazine and “Pellingra’s Ebenezer Scrooge trod a convincing path from bullying to benevolence, acting courageously with voice, body and soul. He found a range of colours to convey the miser’s belligerence and spitefulness, his baritone glowing with a darkness that covered Scrooge’s employees and repelled his relatives.” Opera Today.



Le carnaval de Venise is a “play within a play”, opening with the preparations for the Italian-operatic performance of *Orfeo nell’inferi* (Orpheus in the Underworld). Not even Isabelle’s heart-stopping numbers “Mes yeuz, fermez-vous a’ jamais” and the Italian aria “Mi dice la Speranza” exploring love requited and unrequited, and ultimately lost, can’t dampen the revelry of this carnival. It was first staged at the Paris Opera in 1699. Campra (b.1660- d.1744) was born to an Italian father and French mother, so this bi-lingual frolic is a raucous blend of commedia dell’arte and a parody of both the mournful tragedies of Italian and French contemporaries and opera, be it Monteverdi or Lully. With a comic trio of basso profondo Pluto who makes light of a plaintive Euridice and her charmer Orfeo. Laughter is never far from the tears as the joyous dances return for the final Ball.

Act 1 opens with a stage manager nagging their colleagues for being so behind with the staging of *Orfeo nell’inferi*. Goddess Minerva arrives and shocked at the chaos before her, calls upon the Muses of Music, Dance, Painting and Architecture to help devise a spectacle. As this evolves, two pairs of lovers at cross purposes come together. When the opera finally makes it to the stage, one of the couples elopes.

“Vache Baroque demonstrates that it is fast becoming a valuable forum for imaginative and vital re-engagement with little-known repertoire from [the baroque era]” *Opera Today*

TIMINGS

Vache will open at 3pm for picnicking and exploring before the opera.
Act 1 starts at 5.30pm, followed by an hour-long interval.
Act 2 will start at c.7.30pm ending at 8.30pm.

Vache Baroque

Founded by **Betty Makharinsky** and **Jonathan Darbourne**, Vache Baroque launched in September 2020 in the gardens of the beautiful historic house **The Vache** in Buckinghamshire. From operas and concerts to children’s shows and youth residencies, Vache Baroque aims to connect a younger and more diverse audience to the lesser-known gems of Baroque music and drama while offering young and disadvantaged people opportunities to be creative alongside leading professionals. In the last 2 years, they mounted productions of *L’Olimpiade* and Charpentier’s *Orphée* which was revived in Buxton this summer and described as **“...impeccable in its musical performance qualities and given a twist of modernity by the dance...”** **** by The Arts Desk.



Since it started 5 years ago, Vache Baroque has produced 4 critically-acclaimed operas, 4 multi-disciplinary projects, 2 international tours, 77 in-school workshops, 3 young artist programmes for emerging singers, 15 sessions for learners at Heritage House Special School, 2 projects for deafblind young people in partnership with Bucks Council SEND Service and 24 community workshops in collaboration with Wycombe Refugee Partnership, Wycombe Arts Centre, the Dove Café and One Can Trust. Vache Baroque uses music to inspire, empower and transform lives.

As the Observer wrote,

“Their mission embraces children’s shows, opera, all kinds of outreach, working with some of the best rising star talents – here, countertenor Alexander Chance and tenor Guy Cutting – to achieve the highest standard of historically informed performance.”

Vache Baroque is the only country house opera accessible on the London underground at the end of the Metropolitan Line.

<https://vachebaroque.com/>

For more information on any of the above, please contact

Nicky Thomas Media

Unit 12 The Stableyard, Broomgrove Road, London SW9 9TL

+44 (0)20 3714 7594 | +44 (0)7768 566 530

info@nickythomasmedia.com

www.nickythomasmedia.com