

**Music in the Round presents the
Sheffield premiere of Jonathan Dove's
The Monster in the Maze
on **1 and 2 November****



Friday 1 November 2024, 15:00 / 19:15

Saturday 2 November, 11:00 / 15:00

Crucible Theatre, Sheffield

Jonathan Dove *The Monster in the Maze*

Music-Makers of Sheffield including Ensemble 360, Consone Quartet, Bridge Ensemble, Sheffield Music Hub Senior Strings, Sheffield Youth Choirs & singers from Sheffield

***"Music in the Round is a reminder of what community feels like...
A jewel in Sheffield's cultural crown"***

Thoroughly Good

Music in the Round continues its **40th anniversary** celebrations with the **Sheffield premiere** of **Jonathan Dove's** opera ***The Monster in the Maze*** from **1-2 November** in the **Crucible Theatre**. Showcasing people of all ages from across Sheffield, musicians include **Ensemble 360, Consone Quartet, Bridge Ensemble, Sheffield Music Hub Senior Strings, Sheffield Youth Choirs** featuring **Junior Voices, Youth Voices & Concordia** and singers from across Sheffield.

It will be the **second live performance in the UK** since it was commissioned and **first performed in 2015** by the **Berlin Philharmonic** and **London Symphony Orchestra** with **Sir Simon Rattle**, where it was praised by the *Financial Times* as **"an exhilarating, visceral take on the ancient Greek myth"**.

Written for three professional soloists, a professional actor, an adult community, youth and children choruses, it won the **BASCA British Composer Award in 2016's 'Amateur and Young Performers' category**. Since its premiere, it has been performed around the world and translated into German, French, Taiwanese, Portuguese, Swedish, Dutch and Catalan. Dove comments about *The Monster in the Maze*, *"I went looking for a story that you could tell with groups of children and young people. The exciting thing about writing for amateurs is that they are getting to do something that they don't do every day, all day, so there is a particular energy and excitement which is somehow different to a professional group."*

This will be a new arrangement of the opera in collaboration with Jonathan Dove and the Music Director, John Lyon. The original score has no upper strings, but parts have been created so that the whole of Sheffield Senior Strings can take part, making it a world premiere of this arrangement.

It recounts the tale of the Minotaur but without the character of Ariadne in this version of the myth. Minos, king of the island of Crete, has a labyrinth in his palace in which he keeps the Minotaur, a monster – half man and half bull – which feeds on human flesh. To press home a military victory over Athens, Minos decrees that the Athenians should provide a regular supply of their young people to be sacrificed to the monster. The Athenian hero Theseus joins one of these shiploads, slays the Minotaur, and sails home with the Athenian youths.

Music in the Round Chief Executive Jo Towler comments, *"We wanted to share our 40th birthday with Sheffield music-makers, so we are producing a community opera this autumn, bringing together people of all ages and backgrounds to perform Jonathan Dove's 'The Monster in the Maze' on the Crucible stage. The fact we can do this in collaboration with partners including Sheffield Music Hub, Sheffield College, Sheffield and District African Caribbean Community Association (SADACCA) and singers from across the city is testament to the amount of music-making in the city. This is what community opera CAN be – a true collaboration between music makers of all backgrounds, with professionals and local musicians working together as a company."*

Greatly loved by audiences across the globe, Dove has created a wide catalogue of operatic, orchestral, vocal, and chamber works. Since his breakthrough work ***Flight***, he has written more than 30 operatic works including ***The Adventures of Pinocchio (2007)***, ***Mansfield Park (2011)*** and ***Marx in London (2018)***. His latest community opera, ***Uprising***, will look at the climate emergency and premiere at **Glyndebourne in 2025**.

This opera is just one aspect of Music in the Round's extensive **Learning & Participation** programme, which engages over **10,000** people around the country each year. It presents storybook concerts for young people aged 3-7 through schools' and family events, Close Up concerts for 7 to 11-year-olds and 'Relaxed' concerts, which are adapted to suit people who may prefer a more relaxed environment when attending an event. Another significant project is 'Bridge', which supports young musicians from backgrounds under-represented in chamber and classical music as they embark on their professional careers. This has recently focused on string players, and the current group is a wind quintet that will perform in ***The Monster in the Maze***.

Music in the Round also runs **WeCompose**, a nationwide transformative in-schools creative music project that aims to change how composition is taught in secondary schools. A **five-way learning exchange** between students, teachers, professional composers, professional ensembles and Music in the Round is enabling students to discover and develop their musical creativity at a time that music and the arts are fast disappearing from the state school sector. It provides teachers and composers with the resources and skills to have the confidence to create music in the classroom long into the future, supporting future generations of music-makers. In the last **18 months**, WeCompose has worked with over **750 young people** in **37 schools** in **10 towns and cities** across the UK, collaborating with **12 professional composers** to deliver **29 concerts** and **120 hours of workshops** to create more than **250 new pieces** of music.

Music in the Round

Music in the Round is the leading national producer of chamber music, with a year-round programme of hundreds of events for people of all ages.

For 40 years, Music in the Round has been bringing people and music closer together through its friendly and informative style of 'in the round' performances. It presents concerts and the Sheffield Chamber Music Festival each year at its home venue, the Crucible Playhouse, as well as activity across the city and in partnership with venues around the country.

Music in the Round events are characterised by passion, excellence and proximity. These events connect people to music in intimate venues, where amazing artists play spine-tingling music with their heart and soul, often accompanied by lively spoken introductions.

Music in the Round's resident group, Ensemble 360, comprises eleven of the finest chamber musicians in the country, and is at the heart of the organisation's activity. World-class guest musicians and outstanding young artists also perform in concerts, alongside free or low-cost participatory events led by high-quality workshop leaders and educators. Each year Music in the Round reaches around 25,000 people, from Goole to Portsmouth via Barnsley and Milton Keynes.

www.musicintheround.co.uk

Jonathan Dove

Jonathan Dove's music has filled opera houses with delighted audiences of all ages on five continents. He is one of the most performed living opera composers and few, if any, contemporary composers have so successfully or consistently explored the potential of opera to communicate, to create wonder and to enrich people's lives.



Starting with his breakthrough opera *Flight*, commissioned by Glyndebourne in 1998, Dove has gone on to write more than thirty operatic works including *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (2007), *Mansfield Park* (2011) and *Marx in London* (2018). *Flight*, the most successful modern comic opera, has had over thirty productions to date in Europe, the USA and Australia. His television opera *When She Died...* (2002) was seen by 2.5 million people worldwide.

Dove's work for orchestra has included a Proms commission for the BBC Symphony Orchestra *Gaia Theory* (2014), which takes its inspiration from the ground-breaking writings of scientist and environmentalist James Lovelock. His work for children and family audiences *Gaspard's Foxtrot*, based on the book by Zeb Soanes with illustrations by James Mayhew, was co-commissioned by the Philharmonia Orchestra, Three Choirs Festival Association, Docklands Sinfonia, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic and Royal Scottish National Orchestra and premiered in 2019. A film of the work, featuring the RSNO with Zeb Soanes alongside moving illustrations from the book, had already been seen by 104,000 children in 2022. A second Musical Tale, *Gaspard's Christmas*, commissioned by the RSNO, premiered in 2022. *In Exile* (2021) for solo baritone, solo cello and orchestra, depicts a day in the life of an involuntary exile. Written for Simon Keenlyside and Raphael Wallfisch, it was commissioned by the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra as part of its centenary commission series.

Jonathan Dove won the 2008 Ivor Novello Award for classical music and was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) in the Queen's 2019 Birthday Honours for services to music.

For more information on any of the above, please contact:

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