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The Chairman's Welcome Andrew Claringbull



Honourary Patron Lord Astor of Hever PC DI

Welcome back to another New Aquarian Opera Company production, our second this year following on from Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi" and Last Night of the Proms concert during the summer.

This is our second visit to The Cecil Hepworth Playhouse following Gianni Schicchi in July this year and we would like to thank the Trustees for their support and hard work. As an established pro —am performance charity, we exist to provide opportunities for young aspiring professional singers to get vital major roles in their repertoire. These talented leads perform alongside our amateur chorus to produce high quality, yet affordable operas. Each year we attract several new performers to our membership which hugely enriches the development and progress of our small opera company and we are grateful for your appreciation of their talents.

Today's performances of "La Bohème" marks Aquarian Opera's second celebration of Puccini in this, the centenary year of his death. La Bohème is one of the world's most popular operas and as it is being performed at the Royal Opera House, (although not by us) in January 2025, you get to preview it here at a small fraction of the price, but not a small fraction of the talent. La Bohème is surely a most perfectly formed dramatic opera, contrasting life, love, hope, joy, laughter, camaraderie with heartbreak, tragedy and loss, all delivered through timeless music. The classic ill-fated love story between the seamstress Mimi and the bohèmian Rodolfo who live meagerly in 1840's Paris, will surely stir your emotions to the end. Have your hankies at the ready...honestly, we have all been moved to tears at rehearsals!

Fully staging a grand opera with a live orchestra in a small theatre is an expensive and somewhat uneconomic undertaking, which would not be possible without our wonderfully generous patrons and supporters. The Humphrey Richardson Taylor Charitable Trust has again dug very deep to provide funding, as have Brewers Decorator Centres. Many extraordinary businesses support us through sponsorship and programme advertising and we hope you will support their kindness in return. Last, but by no means least, we are forever grateful for the steadfast support of Lord Astor of Hever, our honourary patron.

Now, please sit back and enjoy being transported to bohèmian Paris, many winters ago...

SPECIAL NOTICE

By order of Surrey County Council, no obstructions, whether permitted or temporary, shall be allowed in any Exit Doors, Exit Ways (whether corridors or staircases), external passageways, gangways, foyers, lobbies or entrance hall. Persons seeking admission shall not be allowed to form queues which obstruct exit doors etc.

SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE THEATRE





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Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924) - Composer

Puccini is one of opera's most popular composers, famed worldwide for the drama and pathos of their plots, wonderful melodies and for the fantastic roles for singers.

Born in 1880 Lucca to a family of church musicians he moved to Milan to study at the Milan Conservatory. Puccini wrote his first opera, the one-act Le villi, for the Sonzogno Competition; though rejected by the judges, its successful 1884 premiere led Giulio Ricordi to take Puccini on. His second opera, Edgar (1889) was a failure, but he scored a major triumph with Manon Lescaut (1893), his first mature work. While completing Manon Lescaut, Puccini began a fruitful collaboration with librettists Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, with whom he wrote arguably his three greatest operas: La bohème (1896), Tosca (1900) and Madama Butterfly (1904). Following the death of Giacosa in 1906 Puccini struggled to find new subjects and collaborators. However, he continued to create impressive works, with the dramatic 'Wild West' opera La fanciulla del West (1910), the tender 'lyric comedy' La rondine (1917) and his most ambitious project, the three one-act operas, that make up Il trittico (1918) which includes Gianni Schicchi as the final instalment, based on Dante's Divine Comedy.

Amanda Holden (1948-2021) - Musician, lyricist and translator

"Translating a text for performance in the theatre is like doing a vast multi-dimensional crossword puzzle while going on a long scenic journey. Its purpose is to sweep away a communication obstruction, but its art is elusive and complex"

Amanda Holden was a celebrated British pianist, librettist, translator, editor and academic teacher. She is best known for translating opera librettos to more contemporary English for the English National Opera, and for writing new librettos, especially in collaboration with Brett Dean. Amanda contributed to encyclopaedias such as the New Penguin Opera Guide. She also translated Mozart's Don Giovanni for Jonathan Miller in 1985. For the ENO, she also translated Handel, Donizetti, Rossini and Puccini.

Amanda's is the only librettist to have received the Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Opera (2001), as well as the only translator to receive an Olivier nomination (2012) in the same category. She wrote more than 60 English texts for stage and concert performance, mostly opera.

Many English translations of opera have clunky diction, don't quite fit the music or flow smoothly for the singer. Aquarian Opera chose Amanda's translation because she clearly understands singers and the voice, as the libretto flows beautifully with the added bonus of being very funny.

Production Team

Melanie Vinall - Artistic Director

Melanie began her musical training whilst at school, when she was chosen to take a lead role in a festival musical at The National Theatre. She later trained and performed as an operatic soprano. Melanie has performed in Italy and the USA and regularly sang in Germany. Her operatic stage experience includes Violetta (La Traviata), Micaela (Carmen), the Dew Fairy (Hansel and Gretel), Donna Elvira (Don

Giovanni) (Contessa) The Marriage of Figaro and Cio-Cio-San (Madame Butterfly). Melanie has provided the singing and speaking voices for radio and tv commercials and was the voice of the Opera Singer in Vodaphone's "It ain't over 'til the fat lady sings" campaign.

As a director, she has worked with several companies including Guildford Opera Company, where she directed Offenbach's operetta La Belle Helene. She has also directed Panto and Musicals, including three shows at The Barn Theatre for Oxted Operatic, The Pirates of Penzance, The Wizard of Oz and for the junior company, Curtain Up! In 2023 she directed Me and My Girl for Molesey Musical Theatre. Melanie is now Artistic Director of The New Aquarian Opera Company, where she directed the English premier of Gilbert and Sullivan's Improbable New Musical: Less Miserable! The Merry Widow, Trial by Jury, The Marriage of Figaro and Gianni Schicchi along with the two concerts "The Last Night at the Proms!" (as part of the Barn Theatre's Centenary), and "A Night at the Opera" at The Cecil Hepworth Playhouse. Melanie is delighted to be working with Guy again, directing La Boheme and she hopes you enjoy the show!

Guy Middlemiss - Musical Director

Guy has been on the musical theatre scene for the last 30 years. Gilbert and Sullivan was one of his first engagements, with the Imperial College Operatic Society (London). He has subsequently been repetiteur, orchestral keyboard player and musical director for a number of companies in the London area, including SEDOS, BROS Theatre Company, Questors Theatre, Wallington Operatic & Dramatic Society, Younger Generation Theatre Group, Oxted Musical

Theatre Company (with my director for this show, Melanie Vinall, The Pirates of Penzance, 2014), Hashtag Opera, Harrow Opera, Brent Opera, Creative Minds Academy, Camberley Musical Society and Lost for Words Theatre Company. In 2021 he was MD for Aquarian Opera's revival launch show, Less Miserable, their first full-length production of The Merry Widow in 2022 and The Marriage of Figaro in 2023. In June this year he was Musical Director for Aquarian Opera's production of Puccini's 1-act opera Gianni Schicchi, combined with the Last Night of the Proms as part of the Barn Theatre's centenary celebrations. He is delighted to be working with Melanie Vinall again and hopes you enjoy the show.

Production Team

Alison Grogan - Stage Manager

A regular at the Barn Theatre for many years. Alison splits her time between backstage, Front of House and treading the boards - her last acting role being Jamie Plum, an antiques expert from Swansea for one of Oxted Players Fringe productions.

Favourite roles include Grace Farrell in Annie, Nellie Forbush in South Pacific and Crystal in Little Shop of Horrors for the Barnstormers. Alison has previously worked as Aquarian's stage manager and is delighted to be doing so once again



Theatre designer from Surrey, currently studying my degree at Nottingham Trent University. I am incredibly passionate about immersive and story-driven theatre and entertainment and have started my career in theatre and immersive experiences, building and scenic painting projects at the Barn Theatre Oxted, Thorpe Park and Lingfield College.



Given the opportunity to design for the classic opera, La Bohème was a really exciting opportunity and I am super happy with how this three day build project turned out!

In my spare time I love exploring other creative forms like a poetry book I have written and a new short film I'm working on called 'Plasters'.

Henry Anderson Creative www.henryandersoncreative.co.uk

La Bohème by Giacomo Puccini

Chamber orchestra version by Smallscores.com

We are grateful to OperaWords Ltd for the provision of Amanda Holden's delightful English translation

Musical Director – Guy Middlemiss Artistic Director – Melanie Vinall

CAST

Mimi - A poor seamstress
Rodolfo - A poet
Marcello - A painter
Musetta - Marcello's mistress
Schaunard - A musician
Colline - A philosopher
Benoît - Landord of the students

Parpignol – Toy seller Alcindoro – Musetta's sugar Daddy Customs Sergeant Tom Lidgley
Mica Liberta-Smith
Vicki Hodges
Will O'Brien
Teyfik Kamal
Peter Snowdon
Julia McCullough
Peter Snowdon
Adam Gammie

Heather Caddick

Chorus

Julie Carson, Janette Cattell, Melinda Cherrett, Andrew Claringbull, Jane Gould Smith, Jenny Roe, John Tolley

Chorus children

Ruby Bastin, Helena Gieniusz, Amelia Gilson, Evie Phillips, Isla Gracie Reynolds,

Supernumeraries

Tom Littleford, Richard Seagroatt, James Vinall

ORCHESTRA

Violin 2 Viola Cello Double Bass Flute/piccolo

Violin 1

Clarinet Bassoon

Keyboard

Andy Laing
Rachel Hess
Nicky Goodwin
Catherine Brooker

Callum Yule Lianne Jeffrey Kate Fish Liz Hesketh

Horacio Lopez Redondo



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- 31st December 2024
- 7 8pm 12.30am
- Tickets: Cecil Hepworth Playhouse Box Office

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2025 marks our centenary year so come and join us for an evening of celebration to see the New Year in at our exciting Fundraising Gala Party. We are delighted to announce that local band, *Jafuso Blue* are providing the entertainment, we have a full buffet, games, a charity auction and our reasonably priced bar.



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La Boheme - Programme Notes

What is it that makes Puccini's tearjerker such an enduringly popular opera?

La Bohème is arguably the simplest of all operas. It contains no superfluous subplots, no complicated backstory, no political intrigue and no villain. A humble young man and woman meet and fall in love, separate and regret it. But their eventual reconciliation comes too late – Mimi's time has run out. It is an opera written by a composer on the brink of middle age about being young and silly, having fun with your friends, and realising that that frivolous, youthful joie de vivre cannot last. The clock is ticking, Puccini tells us, as he reminds us to seize the day.

La Bohème was Puccini's fourth opera. He had become a rich and famous man after the runaway success of his third work, Manon Lescaut, in 1893. Very soon after the premiere of that opera, Puccini seized upon the French author Henri Murger's Bohemian tales as his next project. These had initially been serialised in a French magazine, before being adapted as a play and a novel, Scènes de la vie de Bohème, which was Puccini's point of departure.

His librettists, Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, had to pick and choose episodes from a rambling set of stories in such a way as to create a coherent operatic narrative. The genesis of the opera was not straightforward. Puccini was often distracted by ideas for new works or by travelling around Europe promoting Manon Lescaut. Matters were complicated further by a public dispute with his contemporary Ruggero Leoncavallo – best known for his short opera Pagliacci – who was writing a now-largely-forgotten La bohème of his own. Puccini however, paid no attention he wrote "Let him compose. I will compose. The audience will decide!"

Synopsis

ACT I - An attic, Christmas Eve

Marcello and Rodolfo, an artist and a writer, are trying to keep warm while they work. Their friend Colline, a philosopher, joins them, followed by Schaunard, a musician, who arrives with supplies and food to share.

With their new-gained wealth, everyone leaves to eat out at Café Momus – apart from Rodolfo, who stays to finish an article. He finds no inspiration, but there's a knock at the door: it's their neighbour, Mimì. Her candle has gone out and she needs help lighting it. Rodolfo duly obliges.

Synopsis... continued

ACT II - Café Momus, later that evening

Rodolfo and Mimì go shopping before he introduces her to his friends at Cafe Momus. Musetta, Marcello's former lover, appears with a rich man, Alcindoro. She spots Marcello and tries to get his attention – and to arouse his jealousy. When Marcello finally admits he still loves her, Musetta comes up with an excuse to send Alcindoro on an errand. The others use a passing marching band as a distraction while they escape, and Musetta leaves Alcindoro with the collective bill to pay.

ACT III - Dawn, a tavern, late February

Over the past month, Marcello and Musetta have been living in a tavern free of charge, in exchange for helping around the establishment.

Mimì arrives, looking for Marcello, and tells him that she's worried by Rodolfo's increasing jealousy. When Rodolfo appears, Mimì hides and listens. Rodolfo tells Marcello he can't live with Mimì because she flirts with other men, but Marcello makes him reveal the truth: he's desperately worried about her illness.

Mimì comes out of her hiding place. They try to separate, but agree to stay together until Spring. Meanwhile, Marcello and Musetta have their own problems.

ACT IV - An attic, Spring

Rodolfo and Marcello try to pretend they don't miss Mimì and Musetta. Colline and Schaunard arrive with the meagre food they can afford, and pretend it's much better than it is. Musetta arrives with Mimì, who is seriously ill. Mimì's friends gradually leave to pawn their belongings in order to buy medicine, and gloves for her cold hands.

Finally left alone, Rodolfo and Mimì remember their happier times together. The others return, but it's too late

Heather Caddick - Mimi - Friday 22 November

Heather is a soprano working in Europe and the UK. Having previously lived in Germany and Italy, she is currently based in Surrey and is mum to three little girls. Previous operatic roles include Tamina (The Curious Opera Company), Donna Elvira (Surrey Opera; Hampstead Garden Opera), Mimì (Opera@Stone, Berlin; Grimeborn Festival; Kennet Opera), Elisetta in Il Matrimonio Segreto (Pop Up Opera), Contessa Almaviva (Grimeborn Festival), The Governess (ENO Opera Works), Dido (Opera Alumnus) and Suor Angelica (Co-Opera Co.).



Career highlights include: being a semi-finalist in the 2019 By Voice Alone competition, receiving the 2017 Walter Kaminsky Foundation Prize (Universität der Künste, Berlin), 3rd prize in the 2014 Patricia Routledge National English Song Competitio, and singing in recital with James Bowman. She completed the 2014-15 ENO Opera Works course and currently studies with Roberta Cunningham (Berlin). She holds a BA (Hons) in music from the University of Nottingham.

Adam Gammie – Customs Sargeant

Bass-Baritone Adam Gammie began his musical journey in Scotland before moving to London to study under Eamonn Mulhall at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance. Recent engagements include Count Almaviva in Le nozze Di Figaro, Shakespeare in Trinity Laban's Try Me Good King as well as chorus roles in Verdi's Macbeth and La Traviata. Adam also takes a keen interest in alternative vocal techniques and conducts research work for the International Society for Metal Music



Vicki Hodges - Musetta

Studies (ISMMS).

Vicki Hodges is thrilled to be returning to Aquarian Opera as the vivacious Musetta, having previously delighted audiences as Valencienne (The Merry Widow), Colette (Less Miserable - yes, a G&S parody!), Lauretta (Gianni Schicchi), and the endlessly entertaining Cherubino (The Marriage Of Figaro).



She trained in the Northeast at Newcastle University before honing her skills in Italy at the prestigious Conservatorio Arrigo Boito di Parma. Known for her expressive (and occasionally outrageous) facial expressions, Vicki has become a favourite for comedic roles, but she's just as at home in more serious repertoire... when she can keep a straight face!

When she's not on stage, Vicki balances her passion for music with her work as a life coach and leader of wellbeing singing groups, helping others find their voice—onstage and off

Teyfik Kamal - Colline

Teyfik is a Turkish-British baritone currently pursuing an undergraduate degree in Vocal Studies at the Royal Academy of Music, where he has been awarded a full scholarship. His recent achievements reflect his growing prominence in the classical music world. Notable highlights of Teyfik's career include performing with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra as part of the Philharmonia



Chorus at the Royal Albert Hall for Lord of the Rings in Concert. He also made a significant operatic debut as Silvio and Alfio in a modern production of the Pagliacci and Cavalleria Rusticana double-bill, titled Verismo, with Opera on Location. Under the guidance of esteemed mentors Marie Vassiliou and Marcus Van Den Akker, Teyfik continues to develop his craft and establish himself as a distinguished performer in the field of vocal music.

Mica Liberta-Smith - Marcello

Mica is a Surrey-born non-binary Baritone based in Cardiff. Mica graduated from RWCMD's David Seligman Opera School with an MA Advanced Opera Performance in July 2022 and is now developing a career as an operatic, recital and choral soloist. Recent performance highlights include Collatinus, R*** of Lucretia (British Youth Opera); Alidoro, La Cenerentola (Barn Opera, Vermont USA); Colline, La Boheme (Opera al Mare, Italy); Drebyednyetsov Cherry Town, Moscow (WNO Youth Opera); Frida, The Nine Fridas (Unlimited); Pare



Moscow (WNO Youth Opera); Frida, The Nine Fridas (Unlimited); Parent, Hansel & Gretel (May Street Opera); Figaro, Il Nozze di Figaro (Debut Opera); and Lord Dunmow, A Dinner Engagement (RWCMD). In 2020 Mica was selected to perform Germond's duet scene from La Traviata, working with Maestro Carlo Rizzi and WNO Orchestra at the Wales Millennium Centre. Mica was Joint Winner, Adelina Patti Bel Canto Singing Prize (2020) and Janet Price Opera Prize finalist (2021). Mica is delighted to be performing the role of Marcello for you this evening!

Tom Lidgley - Rodolfo

Born and raised in a small village in Buckinghamshire, Tom is a tenor who is currently studying classical singing at the Royal Academy of Music and is in his 2nd year of Masters, studying with his teacher, Adrian Thompson, with whom, Tom previously studied with at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Tom's operatic experience includes Mayor Upfold in Britten's Albert Herring (Guildhall School), Chorus and Cover Robert Shallow in



Vaughn Williams' Sir John in Love (British Youth Opera) and scenes from Korngold's Die tote Stadt, Floyd's Susannah and Mozart's La Finta Giardiniera and Idomeneo.

Tom has also been involved in operas with Garsington Youth Opera Company, including the premier performance of Roxanna Panufnik's Silver Birch, and has also performed as the tenor soloist in Mendelssohn's Elijah, in a production he organised himself. Tom is thrilled to be playing the role of Rodolfo with the Aquariun Opera Company, as his first major professional role and is so pleased to have been welcomed into such a talented and supportive group of singers and directors.

When Tom is not singing, he can be found working on a family farm, selling produce and looking after livestock. Tom also enjoys Ballroom and Latin dancing where he has competed at a national level.

Julia McCullough - Parpignol

Born in Montreal, Canada, Julia studied Music at McGill University graduating with distinction in Vocal Performance. Roles performed include Ciesca in *Gianni Schicchi* Gianetta in *L'elisir d'amore*, Countess in *Marriage of Figaro* Micaela in *Carmen*, Alisa in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Annina in *La Traviata* Adina and Susanna in concert performances of *L'elisir D'amore* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Milan, Poppea *L'incoronazione di Poppea*



Julia has sung in the ensemble at Opera Holland Park and Opera de Bauge, France and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra Chorus. She performs for the musical charities Music in Hospitals and Lost Chord.

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If you could spare an hour or two, you could be of immense help with the running of the Theatre and help build our community, we'd love to hear from you – please email volunteer@cecilhepworthplayhouse.co.uk

A SMILE IS THE ONLY QUALIFICATION

Will O'Brien - Schaunard

This is Will's second time performing in.La Bohème. He played Marcello with Harrow Opera in 2010. This is also Will's second time performing with New Aquarian Opera. He performed in the company's production of Gianni Schicchi earlier this year. Other roles he has performed include Guglielmoand Don Alfonso (Così Fan Tutte), Leporello and Masetto (Don Giovanni), Papageno (The Magic Flute), Sergeant Belcore (L'Elisir d'Amore), The

Father(Hansel and Gretel), Lindorf and Coppélius(Les Contes d'Hoffmann), Publio (La Clemenza di Tito), Alfio (Cavalleria Rusticana), The Marquis (La Traviata) and Koko (The Mikado). Will has sung bass solos in The Messiah (Handel) and Mozart's Requiem. In July 2023, Will played Richard Hannay in The 39 Steps (just a play, not an opera) at the Oast Theatre, Tonbridge.

Will is originally from Finchley in North London; he now lives in Tunbridge Wells. Will studied Opera performance at Morley College and later at the Associated Studios (both in London). Will has a degree in astrophysics and teaches science. As well as performing on stage, Will enjoys stargazing, playing tennis, playing football, playing poker, socialising, travelling, skiing and many other things.

Peter Snowdon - Benoit & Alcindoro

This is Peter's second production with New Aquarian Opera, having sung Marco in Gianni Schicchi earlier this year. He has performed in Don Carlos (Fulham Opera), Carmen (West London Opera), Pastoral Messiah (Unexpected Opera), Turandot (Kentish Opera) and Salvator Rosa (Dorset Opera). Peter studied with the baritone Russell Smythe, attended the opera course at Morley College in London and the AIMS summer school in Sussex for many years. He was

London and the AIMS summer school in Sussex for many years. He works as a journalist and author in his spare time.





The Humphrey Richardson Taylor Charitable Trust have supported Aquarian Opera with a generous grant

The Humphrey Richardson Taylor Charitable Trust was established in 1997 for the 'Advancement of public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of music and allied performing arts.

The Trust's benefactor, Mr. Humphrey Richardson Taylor, who lived in Cheam, Surrey, and died in 1996, was devoted to music throughout his life and wished to encourage the growth of music-making and live performance by people of all ages.

Since 1997, the Trust has provided financial support for a range of musical activities in the geographical and historical areas of Surrey. Through partnership arrangements with the Royal College of Music, the University of Surrey and certain other national bodies it extends its support to musically gifted British residents beyond its core geographical area.

Typically, help may be given to the following:

Schools - music-related capital projects - purchase of instruments - music computers and software - funding of concerts for special occasions - part-funding of instrumental tuition

Musical Societies and Organisations - annual grants towards the cost of funding live concerts

Individuals - music-related undergraduate studies: scholarship funding - music-related postgraduate studies: scholarship funding - grants towards fees - grants towards purchase of instruments

If HRTCT can assist you

contact: Kate Perry, Administrator - admin@hrtaylortrust.org.uk www.hrtaylortrust.org.uk HR Taylor Charitable Trust 32 Chipstead Station Parade, Chipstead, Coulsdon, Surrey CR5 3TF



Production Team

DirectorMelanie VinallMusical DirectorGuy Middlemiss

Repetiteurs Richard Decker, Anne Osborn, Horacio Lopez Redondo

Stage Manager Alison Grogan
Set Design & Build Captain Henry Anderson
Signage and Set Art Magic Patrick Tricker

Scenic Artists Max Bowling, Amelia Playle

Tech Wizard & Set Wrangler Richard Grogan

Set Build Henry Anderson, Richard Grogan, Richard Seagroatt,

Patrick Tricker, James Vinall

Backcloths Malcolm Le Croissette, Richard Grogan

Stage Crew Richard Grogan, Tom Littleford, Richard Seagroatt

James Vinall

Lighting Design & EngineerNigel TylerBand FixerNicky GoodwinPropsMuriel ListerProduction ArtworkAbi ChapmanProgrammeJames Vinall

Publicity Elise Claringbull & James Vinall

Costumes Mike McKenzie - karamaccostumes@btinternet.com

Acknowledgements

St. Peters Limpsfield - The Musicians Church - for rehearsal space

Justine and Guy Middlemiss - for hosting rehearsals

Elena Vinall for musical assistance, drumming and chaperone The Humphrey Richardson Taylor Trust & our Anonymous Donors

Bruce Reed & Caro Rowley for their continual support John Tolley – for always looking after us so beautifully

Keep in touch with Aquarian Opera

If you want to be kept in touch about future shows, email melanie@aquarianopera.com with your details or look on our website www.aquarianopera.com

Be in the next show

If you want sing with Aquarian Opera or help out behind the scenes, email melanie@aquarianopera.com with your details or give us a call on 07501 984135

Future Productions

The next planned show is Johann Strauss's operetta, Die Fledermaus fully staged in English, by Peter Melville and chamber orchestra at The Barn Theatre, Oxted in November 2025

