NEW AQUARIAN OPERA

PRESENTS

DIE FLEDERMAUS

COMIC OPERETTA

BY

JOHANN STRAUSS II



20th 21st 22nd November 2025

7:30PM

Barn Theatre Oxted

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The Chairman's Welcome

Andrew Claringbull

THE NEW AQUARIAN OPERA COMPANY

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Thank you for coming to see The New Aquarian Opera Company's latest production of Johann Strauss II's "Die Fledermaus". We are absolutely delighted to be returning to the lovely Barn Theatre for our 2025 production of this brilliant comic operetta.

It has been fifteen years since we last staged this operetta at the Barn Theatre. My two eldest daughters, who performed with us back then, have now grown up and flown the coop, but we have some wonderful new performers in their place. Some really exceptional talent!

Over the years it has been heart-warming to see rising stars of the theatre become quite outstanding professional opera soloists. Once again we have so many new faces of all ages and experience who have come to join us this year. Please give them a hearty warm welcome.

Not only have we been well supported by our loyal audiences since we relaunched the company, but we are now well supported by our generous advertisers and sponsors without whom it would not be possible to produce our operas. We are exceedingly grateful to The Humphrey Richardson Taylor Charitable Trust, our Honourary Patron Lord Astor and The Astor of Hever Trust, Brewer's Decorating Centres, all our wonderful advertising sponsors and our anonymous donors, for their very generous support. These much-appreciated resources provide our amazing chamber orchestra musicians, as the beating heart driving our fabulous soloists and talented chorus through the performance you will enjoy tonight.

Please do support our advertisers and sponsors. They have each been selected through their own enthusiasm for all things opera and theatre, and through lasting relationships with us. They very much deserve your support.

Now please relax into the theatre's sumptuous new seats provided by Barn stalwart Mark Wakeford's generous legacy and be swept away by the sublime orchestral accompaniment, soaring vocals and movement of Die Fledermaus set one hundred years ago in Vienna on a cold New Year's Eve....

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.

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Johann Strass II (1858–1924) - Composer

Johann Strauss II (1825–1899) was born in Vienna, the eldest son of composer and orchestra leader, Johann Strauss I. Although his father discouraged him from pursuing music, Strauss secretly studied violin and composition, eventually forming his own orchestra in 1844. Developing his own flair for composition, his career flourished and he toured his lively programmes through Europe and America. Strauss composed over 500 works, including waltzes, polkas, quadrilles, and operettas, which captured the lively spirit of Viennese society. His most famous pieces include The Blue Danube, Emperor Waltz, Tales from the Vienna Woods, the Tritsch-Tratsch Polka and operettas Die Fledermaus and Der Zigeunerbaron.

By the time of his death in 1899, Strauss had revolutionised how music was played, presented and performed while elevating the waltz from popular entertainment to high art. Strauss's melodies continue to enchant audiences worldwide and here tonight

Peter Melville - Translator



Peter Melville was chairman of Guildford Opera for many years and prepared English versions of 14 operas including Die Fledermaus and The Merry Widow, which Aquarian Opera performed in 2022

www.operasinenglish.co.uk/peter-melville/

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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 and Sandman (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, 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 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, Gianni Schicchi and La Boheme 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 Die Fledermaus, her favourite operetta 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, 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 last 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. La Boheme followed in November at The Barn and Cecil Hepworth Playhouse. He is delighted to be working with Melanie 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 is Aquarian's resident stage manager and is delighted to be doing so once again alongside her husband Richard by her side in the wings

Caro Rowley – Lighting Design and Lighting Operation



Caro has been lighting shows at the Barn Theatre since 1981 and has been instrumental in bringing the latest advances in technology for the benefit of audiences and performers.

Caro is a Barn Theatre Trustee and takes a leading role in the management of the theatre. Aquarian Opera are extremely grateful for Caro's ingenuity, advice and support on so many levels, as she makes it all look so easy.

Henry Anderson – Set Design



Henry is an up-and-coming designer whose work is driven by the meaning of the story and how design can support the emotional core of a piece.

With Die Fledermaus, his goal was to create something fun and immersive, something that invites the audience into the party while still holding the fragility at the centre of the relationships onstage.

The sense of instability shaped the scenic design, reflecting a world built on crumbling foundations. Henry says he is incredibly proud of what the whole team has brought to life, and is excited for where this journey takes him next.

Henry Anderson Creative www.henryandersoncreative.co.uk



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Die Fledermaus by Johann Strauss II

Chamber orchestra version especially for Aquarian Opera by Smallscores.com
English translation by Peter Melville with kind permission of Guildford Opera
Tales from the Vienna Woods arranged by Louis Lavater with orchestral arrangement by Guy Middlemiss
Tipsy Aria from La Perichole by Offenbach, translation and orchestral arrangement by Guy Middlemiss
Various ad-libs by the cast!

Musical Director – Guy Middlemiss **Artistic Director** – Melanie Vinall

CAST

Gabriel von Eisenstein	**tenor**	Richard Milnes
Rosalinda, Eisenstein's wife	**soprano**	Heather Caddick
Alfred, Italian opera singer	**tenor**	Tom Lidgley
Dr Falke	**baritone**	Nick Beever
Prince Orlofsky	**mezzo-soprano**	Isabel Hughes
Dr Blind, a lawyer	**tenor**	Simon Ashmead
Adele, Rosalinda's maid	**soprano**	Vicky Hodges
Ida, Adele's sister	**soprano**	Julia McCullogh
Frank, a prison governor	**baritone**	Peter Snowdon
Frosch, a jailer	**speaking role**	Andrew Claringbull
Ivan, Prince's major-domo	**speaking role**	Richard Seagroatt

Chorus
Lexie Wisniewska – Brindisi soprano soloist and Rosalinda rehearsal cover,
Gilly Bishop, Alice Blogg, Melinda Cherrett, Parina Clark Williams, Lucie Edwards, Paul Longden, Kezia Luckham-Down, Richard Seagroatt, John Tolley, Keith Tyler
Nicola Tyler, James Vinall

Supernumeraries
Tom Littleford, James Vinall, Charlie Boreham

ORCHESTRA

Violin 1	Nicky Goodwin
Violin 2	Rachel Hess
Viola	Martin Bloor
Cello	Catherine Brooker
Bass	Katy Furmanski
Flute	Lianna Jeffery
Oboe	Jenny Jaggard
Clarinet	Kate Fish
Bassoon	Phillip Le Bas
Percussion	John McCutcheon

Die Fledermaus - Programme Notes

200 years after his birth, the music of Johann Strauss II is as popular today as it ever was. Premiered in 1874, Die Fledermaus is a sparkling confection of mistaken identity, illicit liaisons, revenge and champagne-fueled mischief set to fabulous music. It has many highlights but is particularly famous for the Laughing song, the Champagne Chorus, Rosalinde's Czardas and the Act II party scene, where traditionally additional entertainment is often included. It is often performed at New Year, probably as champagne features heavily in the story and the operetta has been in the repertoire of major opera houses around the world since its premier.

Following the success of the French composer Jacques Offenbach's operettas, the burgeoning Viennese theatre scene longed for works it could call it's own to compete with the successful imports and turned to the popular Johann Strauss II.
Even though Strauss was much sought after for his dance music and was already known as the "Waltz King", his success with operetta was not a foregone conclusion. However, his gift for melody and wonderful orchestrations made him the ideal candidate to compete with his French counterpart. Indeed, Offenbach himself once remarked to Strauss that he should write operettas! Finally convinced, Strauss gifted us one of the most, beautifully crafted, famous and enduring works of the "Golden Age" of Viennese operettas

Synopsis

Overture – Early Morning in a Vienna park

Young friends Eisenstein and Falke walk home after an all-night fancy dress ball

Act 1 - Eisenstein's Vienna Villa

Outside the home of Gabriel von Eisenstein and his wife Rosalinda, her former suitor Alfred, boldly and loudly serenades his undying love for her in hopes of rekindling their past romance. Meanwhile, Rosalinda's maid, Adele, has been invited to a glamorous party by her sister Ida, but needs an excuse to take the night off. She invents a story about a sick Aunt, but Rosalinda denies her request. Rosalinda fears her husband's sudden return and sends Alfred away, but not before agreeing for him to return later.

Eisenstein arrives with his lawyer, Dr. Blind, after a court session where his sentence for striking a police officer was increased from five to eight days in jail, much to his frustration. He blames Blind's incompetence for his extended sentence and furiously dismisses him. Eisenstein's friend Dr. Falke arrives and convinces him to postpone his sentence and instead join him at a party hosted by the wealthy Russian Prince Orlofsky. Eisenstein, Rosalinda and Adele share a bittersweet goodbye as he pretends to head to jail. Rosalinda gives Adele the night off to visit her 'sick aunt' and receives

Synopsis… continued

the passionate Alfred. However, their reunion is interrupted by Frank, the prison governor, who has come to arrest Eisenstein. To protect her reputation, Rosalinda persuades Alfred to impersonate her husband, and Frank carts him off to jail.

ACT II – Russian Prince Orlofsky's Ballroom

At Orlofsky's, the party is in full swing. Adele arrives, though her sister Ida denies inviting her. Ida worries Adele won't fit in, so decides to present her as an actress, Olga. Falke instructs Eisenstein to pretend to be a French nobleman, Marquis Renard, Eisenstein recognises Adele as his wife's maid, but he is ridiculed for identifying her.

Prison Director Frank has also been anonymously invited by Falke and as instructed poses as Frenchman, Chevalier Chagrin. Rosalinda arrives (also invited by Falke), disguised as a Hungarian countess. When Eisenstein attempts to seduce the mysterious woman (his wife), she manages to steal his prized ladies pocket watch that he has always used for seduction.

Eisenstein entertains the guests with the story of how Falke earned the nickname of Dr Fledermaus: one drunken evening, when he was dressed as a bat for a costume ball, his best friend Eisenstein played a practical joke that left him the laughingstock of Vienna. The crowd toasts drink, love and brotherhood, and dance through the night. As the clock strikes six, Eisenstein and Frank both realise they are late and rush to leave the party.

ACT III - Early morning in the Prison

Frosch the jailer is irritated by Alfred's constant singing from his cell. Prison Director Frank finally arrives for work, extremely hungover. Adele and Ida arrive, both hoping Chevalier Chagrin (Frank) can help advance Adele's dreams of becoming an actress.

Eisenstein stumbles in reporting to serve his sentence. He is surprised to find that someone claiming to be him is already in custody having been arrested yesterday in his house, in his dressing-gown, with Rosalinda. Blind also arrives, ready to defend the man in the cell. Eisenstein, determined to get to the truth, dismisses Blind and disguises himself as his lawyer to confront the imposter. Rosalinda bursts in, revealing that she knows her husband has spent the night at a party with young women, and declares her intention to divorce him. Rosalinda and Alfred are offended when the 'lawyer' seems to defend her husband. Revealing his true identity, Eisenstein accuses them both of infidelity. At this point, Rosalinda produces his watch.

Falke arrives with Prince Orlofsky and the party guests to reveal that this entire charade was all his idea. Eisenstein receives his wife's forgiveness, Falke enjoys "the revenge of the bat" and Orlofsky leads final paean to the joys of champagne.

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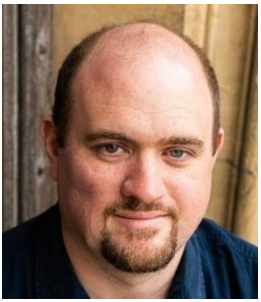
Cast

Simon Ashmead – Dr. Blind



Simon Ashmead is an award-winning British tenor who has performed in the UK, France, Malta, and the Netherlands. He studied at Trinity Laban Conservatoire with Dominic Natoli, earning the Kathleen Creed and Morag Noble Scholarships, and was named Best Male Vocalist at the 2019 International Gilbert & Sullivan Festival.

His soloist roles include Evangelist in Bach's St John's Passion and Elijah, while his operatic roles feature Siegfried and Tamino. Simon also sings with choirs like the Armonico Consort and Beati Consort. He enjoys exploring lesser-known composers, particularly Twentieth and Twenty-First Century English art song.

Nick Beever – Dr. Falke – Die Fledermaus



Nick Beever was born in Oldham and began his musical education at the Oldham Music Centre. At 16 he gained a scholarship to Chetham's School of Music before going on to study at the Royal Northern College of Music graduating with a BMus and LRSM in 2011.

He studied at the Royal Academy of Music before training as a teacher. Nick is a keen choral singer and was formally a Choral Scholar at Truro Cathedral. He also has a passion for art song. His continued forays on the stage would not be possible without the support of his wife Katy.

Heather Caddick – Rosalinda



Heather Caddick is an award-winning soprano, recently moved to Bolzano, Italy! There, she is mum to three little girls and enjoys climbing mountains. Operatic roles include Nedda (Rose Opera), Donna Elvira (Surrey Opera; Hampstead Garden Opera), Mimì (New Aquarian Opera; Opera@Stone, Berlin; Grimeborn Festival; Kennet Opera), Elisetta in Il Matrimonio Segreto (Pop Up Opera), Contessa Almaviva (Grimeborn Festival), Dido (Opera Alumnus) and Suor Angelica (Co-Opera Co.). Other 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), the 3rd prize in the 2014 Patricia Routledge National English Song Competition and singing in recital with James Bowman. She completed the 2014-15 ENO Opera Works course and currently studies with Susan Bullock.

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Cast

Vicki Hodges - Adele



Vicki is thrilled to be returning to Aquarian Opera as the aspirational maid, Adele, having previously delighted audiences as Valencienne (The Merry Widow), Colette (Less Miserable – yes, a G&S parody!), Lauretta (Gianni Schicchi), the endlessly entertaining Cherubino (The Marriage of Figaro), and most recently the strong-willed Musetta (La Boheme).

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, with a 'rare gift for comic performance' (County Chronicle).

When she's not on stage, Vicki runs Sing out Sutton, a wellbeing charity making singing accessible (and fun!) for all adults.

Isobel Hughes – Prince Orlofsky



Isobel is a mezzo soprano from North London, and recent graduate of the David Seligman Opera School at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. Isobel's recent roles include Sesto in CESARE, Somerset Opera's comic reimagining of Handel's Giulio Cesare, and Mother Marie in Dialogues of the Carmelites with Aylesbury Opera.

They were also the recipient of the Best Female Singer Award at the Hertfordshire Opera Gala Awards in summer 2025. In the 2026 season, Isobel looks forward to performing as Hänsel in Humperdinck's Hänsel und Gretel with Uncovered Opera Company, as well as Tisbe in Exeter Opera Group's tour of Rossini's La Cenerentola.

Cast

Tom Lidgley – Alfred



Tom Lidgley is a young British tenor, and is thrilled to be returning to sing with the Aquarian Opera Company as Alfred, after making his professional debut with them last year as Rodolfo in La bohème. Since La bohème, Tom has graduated from the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied with his teacher, Adrian Thompson, and has also been awarded as a 'China-Europe Music Exchange Ambassador', following his trip to China as part of the 'My Music Paradise' cultural exchange programme, this summer.

As well as opera, Tom also enjoys singing Musical Theatre and made his West End debut in May, where he sang in 'Monday at the Musicals 3.0', a charity concert helping to raise over £25k for Children with Cancer UK, at the Lyric Theatre, Shaftesbury Ave. When not singing, Tom can be found working on a local family farm, selling produce and helping look after livestock, he also enjoys Ballroom and Latin dancing, in which he has competed at a national level.

Julia McCullough – Ida



Born in Montreal, Canada, Julia studied Music at McGill University graduating with distinction in Vocal Performance. She has sung Parpignol in La Boheme and Ciesca in Gianni Schicchi both with New Aquarian Opera. Other roles performed include Gianetta in L'elisir d'amore, Countess in Marriage of Figaro Micaela and Frasquita in Carmen, Alisa in Lucia di Lammermoor, Annina in La Traviata. Julia has sung in the ensemble at Opera Holland Park and Opera de Bauge, France and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra Chorus.

She has performed for the musical charities Music in Hospitals and Care and Lost Chord.

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Cast

Richard Milnes - Gabriel von Eisenstein



Richard spent many years singing in chamber choirs, especially the award winning Joyful Company of Singers. Richard now focuses on opera and oratorio as a soloist, studying with Cathy Pope.

In 2025 Richard has appeared in recitals for Rose Opera, in a Schumann song recital for Penge music and in opera as Beppe (Pagliacci) for Rose Opera, and Pong (Turandot) for Instant Opera.

Richard is delighted to be returning to Aquarian Opera and the Barn following his previous appearances in the Marriage of Figaro and Gianni Schicchi.

Peter Snowdon – Benoit & Alcindoro



Peter returns to the Barn Theatre with New Aquarian Opera, having played Benoit and Alcindoro in La Boheme and Marco in Gianni Schicchi last year. Other productions include Don Carlos (Fulham Opera), Carmen (West London Opera), Pastoral Messiah (Unexpected Opera), Turandot (Kentish Opera), Salvator Rosa (Dorset Opera) and The Boyfriend (Edinburgh Festival).

Peter has sung at the BBC Proms with the London Symphony Chorus and attended the opera course at Morley College for many years. In his spare time, he produces podcasts, writes books on politics and sings in a local sea shanty group, The Dockyard Dogs, which raises money for the RNLI.

Lexie Wisniewska – soprano soloist & Rosalina rehearsal cover



Having trained in piano, singing and flute, Lexie's opera journey began with Blackheath Halls Opera chorus, where she honed her operatic craft and embraced the transformative power of fully-staged operas. Lexie trained at Morley Opera School and has trained over the past five years with Neil Baker and recently Alwyn Mellor. Lexie made her solo debut as the High Priestess in "Aida" in 2024 followed by the Plaintiff in Gilbert & Sullivan's "Trial by Jury". In April this year she played Ida in Die Fledermaus with Kentish Opera.

Lexie took a step-up challenge to cover Rosalinda during rehearsals, while supporting the sopranos in the chorus and masquerading as Violetta from La Traviata during Orlovsky's party performing the Brindisi

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We continue to hone our skills on high-performance cars – Warner supports teams in the European Le Mans Series, and at weekends we take our own track cars out for a spin. We've grown-up, but our fascination with engineering remains, whether it's a classic car, family saloon or commercial truck.

Warner Cherrett & Danny Atkins

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Production Team

Director & Choreographer	Melanie Vinall
Musical Director	Guy Middlemiss
Stage Manager	Alison Grogan
Projection & Tech Wizard	Richard Grogan
Repetiteur	Anne Osborn
Assistant Choreographer and Dance Captain	Alice Blogg
Set Design & Build Captain	Henry Anderson
Backcloth and Clock Artist	Patrick Tricker
Scenic Artists	Amelia Playle, Barnaby Johnson
Scenic & Set Build/Painting	Henry Anderson, Barnaby Johnson, Charlie Boreham, Richard Grogan, Malcolm Le Croissette, Bruce Reed, Nigel Conquest, Richard Seagroatt, James Vinall
Backcloths & Flying	Malcolm Le Croissette, Richard Grogan
Stage Crew	Richard Grogan, Tom Littleford, Richard Seagroatt James Vinall, Charlie Boreham
Lighting Design & Engineer	Caro Rowley
Band Fixer	Nicky Goodwin
Props	Muriel Lister, Melanie Vinall
Production Artwork	Elena Vinall
Rehearsal Photographer	Abi Chapman
Programme	James Vinall
Publicity	James Vinall
Costumes	Melanie Vinall

Acknowledgements

St. Peters Limpsfield - The Musicians Church - for rehearsal space
Justine and Guy Middlemiss - for hosting rehearsals
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Bruce Reed & Caro Rowley for their continual support
Alison and Richard Grogan for hours of dedicated hard work and enthusiasm
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

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