



Joanne Thomas Mezzo soprano

Joanne Thomas was born in the Rhondda, and studied at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and the Royal Academy of Music with Beatrice Unsworth. Joanne represented Wales in BBC Cardiff Singer of the World 2001. Operatic roles include Azucena (Il Trovatore), 3rd Lady (Magic Flute), Mme Larina (Eugene Onegin) and Annina (La Traviata) for Welsh National Opera, Witch, Mother and Dew Fairy (Hansel and Gretel) for WNO MAX and Pocket Opera and Mrs Slender (Salieri's Falstaff) for Bampton Classical Opera. Other roles include Santuzza (Cavalleria rusticana), Penelope (Ulisse), Liubov (Mazepa), Marfa (Khovanshchina), Amneris (Aida), Emilia (Otello), Ramiro (Die Gartnerin aus Liebe), 2nd Lady (Magic Flute), Mama (Grace Williams' The Parlour), Charlotte (Werther) and Mrs Peachum (Britten's realisation of the Beggar's Opera).

Joanne has performed in concert in Germany, Malta, Canada, USA, New Zealand, Australia and all over the UK. She has also worked for many years with distinguished pianist Graham Johnson, performing in lieder recitals at the Wigmore Hall and

in Germany and Vancouver. Other notable performances have been the Berio Folksongs with Sinfonia Cymru, Berlioz' Les Nuits d'ete, Elgar's Sea Pictures, and the Britten Charm of Lullabies with BBC National Orchestra of Wales, all broadcast on BBC Radio. Her extensive repertoire of Oratorio includes performances of Verdi's Requiem and Rossini's Stabat Mater, Bach's B minor Mass at St John's Smith Square and Beethoven's 9th Symphony with WNO for the 5th anniversary of the opening of Wales Millennium Centre.

Jo has also performed on a Music Festivals At Sea classical music cruise, travelling around the Canary Islands and Morocco. More recent projects include Opera Bites and 10 Minute Musicals with Leeway Productions and the recording of a new CD called One Life to Live, 100 years of musical theatre including songs by Weill and Rodgers & Hammerstein through to Sondheim and more contemporary composers. Jo is also a facilitator for Mark Llewelyn Evans's ABC of Opera Workshops which introduce the wonderful world of opera to school children. ■



Naomi Harvey Soprano

An experienced concert artist, Naomi has performed at many leading concert halls internationally, including the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, Symphony Hall, Birmingham, Barbican Hall, London, Royal Festival Hall, Ely Cathedral, The Sage, Gateshead, where her repertoire includes Beethoven 9th Symphony, Strauss Four Last Songs, Bruckner and Dvorak Te Deum, Britten War Requiem, Handel's Messiah, Mendelssohn Elijah, Mozart Requiem. Naomi is also a regular guest soloist with the BBC Concert Orchestra for Friday Night is Music Night on Radio 2.

Naomi's previous seasons highlights include Marschallin Der Rosenkavalier, Elisabetta Don Carlos, Leonora Il Trovatore, Giorgetta Il Tabarro, the title role in Tosca, Desdemona Otello, Alice Ford Falstaff, Blanche Dialogues des Carmélites, Violetta La Traviata, Liu Turandot, Mimi La Bohème, Erste Dame Die Zauberflöte, Hanna Glawari The Merry Widow, Marcellina Le nozze di Figaro, and Berta Il barbiere di Siviglia (WNO); Emilia Marty The Markopulos Case, Donna Anna Don Giovanni, Micaela Carmen and Mimi La bohème (ENO); Tina Flight (Glyndebourne Festival Opera); Magda The

Consul and Donna Anna Don Giovanni; Isabella Jobling in the world première of Will Todd's The Blackened Man; Ismene Mitridate; Alice Ford Falstaff; title role in Tosca; Rosalinda Die Fledermaus (on tour in the USA), Ellen Orford Peter Grimes at the Canterbury Festival).

Recent engagements include the title role in Puccini's Tosca; Ines and cover Leonora Il Trovatore; Gertrud Hansel & Gretel, and cover Bard of Germania/Alice the Barmaid/The Queen of the Woods In Parenthesis; Donna Anna Don Giovanni, and the covers of Senta The Flying Dutchman, and Minnie The Golden Girl of the West; the covers of La Comtesse de Coigny Andrea Chénier, Madam Larina Eugene Onegin, La Ciesca Gianni Schicchi, and Domna Saburova The Tsar's Bride; Sara in the world première of James McCarthy's Codebreaker; soprano soloist The World of Opera; title role in Aida; soprano solo Verdi Requiem; and Mahler Symphony No. 8; Beethoven's 9th Symphony under the baton of Carlo Rizzi; a Remembrance Day concert with the Orchestra of Welsh National Opera at St. David's Hall, Cardiff, and Verdi Requiem at Bath Abbey. ■



Simon Phillippo Pianist

Simon Phillippo studied at the Royal Academy of Music and Caius College, Cambridge, where he received a PhD in 2000. A musician with diverse interests, Simon studied conducting with Matthew Taylor, George Hurst and Sir Colin Davis, and he was a prize-winning finalist in the Leeds Conductors Competition in 2009. Simon spent a year studying at the National Opera Studio in London, before joining the music staff of Welsh National Opera, where he worked for fourteen years as staff conductor, chorus master and répétiteur. For WNO Simon conducted over 150 opera performances, and was the chorus master for many WNO productions and recordings, including the first staging in the UK of Handel's Jephtha and the world premiere of James MacMillan's The Sacrifice.

Other opera conducting engagements have included Madam Butterfly and Tosca with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall; Don Giovanni, Carmen, The Barber of Seville, Tosca and La Cenerentola as Music Director of Opera Brava; and La Traviata in the Middle and Far East with Opera and Concert Productions Worldwide. He

has also worked with English National Opera, Opera Europa, Opera Holland Park and the European Chamber Opera. In the concert hall he has led the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the WNO Orchestra, the Orchestra of Opera North, Brandon Hill Chamber Orchestra, Mozart Festival Orchestra, Ernest Read Symphony Orchestra, and the Helios Orchestra, of which he was Artistic Director and Principal Conductor.

Simon has published widely on a range of musical subjects; he has also given talks on BBC Radio 3, and has presented lectures on opera for Welsh National Opera, Liverpool Hope University and Rose Bruford College. He has been an Associate Lecturer at Cardiff University, and is a leading authority on the British composer Robert Simpson, contributing three chapters to a major symposium published in 2013 and currently editing a new edition of Simpson's music for the publisher Ricordi. Always active as a pianist too, Simon has appeared regularly as concerto soloist, chamber musician and accompanist. He was appointed Head of Keyboard Studies at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama in 2015. ■



James Gower Bass Baritone

James Gower was born in Newport, South Wales and studied at St John's College, Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music. He is currently studying with Cathy Pope and Robert Lloyd. James made his English National Opera debut performing Lord Krishna/Parsi Rustomji Satyagraha by Philip Glass. He subsequently joined the ENO Young Singers Programme and performed many more roles at ENO including Mercury/Lictor/3rd Seneca Friend L'Incoronazione di Poppea, Bogdanowitsch The Merry Widow, Notary Der Rosenkavalier, Ormonte Partenope, Nikitch Boris Godunov, Speaker Die Zauberflöte, Ceprano Rigoletto, Sciarone Tosca, Gazella Lucrezia Borgia (broadcast live on Sky Arts) and Farsmane Radamisto. As an associate artist with Welsh National Opera, James performed Un Moine Don Carlos and Second Armed Man Die Zauberflöte. For Glyndebourne Festival Opera he performed Pinellino Gianni Schicchi, (broadcast on BBC TV and performed at the Proms) and Erster Priester/Zweiter geharnischter Mann Die Zauberflöte.

For Glyndebourne on Tour he sang Doctor Pelléas et Mélisande and Doctor Grenvil La Traviata. Other roles include Raimondo Lucia di Lammermoor and Seneca L'Incoronazione di Poppea for Iford Festival, Colline La Bohème for Opera Theatre Company, Monterone Rigoletto for Diva Opera, Bartolo/Antonio Le Nozze di Figaro for the Classical Opera Company, Leporello Don Giovanni, Cambridge Touring Opera and Alidoro Cenerentola, Opera Up Close. Recent concert engagements include Messiah with the RSNO; Christus St John Passion and arias St Matthew Passion Bath Abbey. James has a wide oratorio repertoire and is in demand throughout the country. Engagements outside the UK have included Israel in Egypt, Pagano I Lombardi and Silva Ernani at Dortmund's Konzerthaus. ■



Jeff Stewart Tenor

Jeff Stewart has enjoyed a career spanning over 25 years which has seen him sing an extraordinarily wide range of repertoire, from Mozart and Rossini to Verdi, Wagner and Britten. After training at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the National Opera Studio, Jeff became a regular feature in leading roles for Opera North and English touring Opera before moving on to appear with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, English National Opera and Opera Northern Ireland. He then moved to Europe, appearing in Düsseldorf, Schwerin, Coburg, Bremen, Skopje and Gera as well as at the Komische Oper in Berlin.

Particular highlights have been his critically acclaimed performances as Peter Grimes, The Duke of Mantua (Rigoletto) and Romeo (Romeo et Juliette). He is also a very popular concert and oratorio singer, having appeared all over Europe as well as in China and the USA. Jeff is in great demand as a singing teacher and is a member of the vocal faculties of the Royal College of Music in London and the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. He has given Masterclasses in London, Macedonia and in China. ■

A Summer Evening of Opera Highlights 2019



ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

All of the artists involved in this evening's concert have worked for Welsh National Opera and it is this connection that continues to bring them together for the Opera Picnic.

However, their careers and activities span before and beyond a significant association with one particular company.

