



*presents*

**A Coffin, A Confession,  
&  
A Cautionary Tale**

*Three pieces of Music Theatre, Three London premieres*

Wednesday 31 August 2022

8:20pm

**The Cockpit Theatre  
Marylebone, London**

*Programme*

**A Coffin**

**Alasdair Nicolson**, *text from Craig Raine*

*Last Things*

**Karol Jozwik – Countertenor**  
**Dónal McCann – Piano**

**A Cautionary Tale**

**Samuel Hogarth**, *text after Chekhov*

*The Evils of Tobacco*

**William Purefoy – Countertenor**  
**James Andrews – Piano**

**A Confession**

**Luke Smith**, *text by Michael Burden*

*The Organist's Confession*

**Lindsay Bramley – mezzo soprano**

## *Notes*

### *Last Things*

Last Things was commissioned by New Chamber Opera for its Patron's Concert in October 1993. The words are by Craig Raine and are taken by the poet from his poem *Death Bed*. This performance is the work's (somewhat belated) London premiere. Written for solo countertenor and piano, the idea of the piece is to involve the singers and the instrument in the telling of the tale.

### *The Evils of Tobacco*

The source of *The Evils of Tobacco* is a monologue by Anton Chekhov. It is a parody of an evening lecture, given on what Chekhov describes as 'the platform stage of a provincial club' in which the speaker's text crumbles under the pressure of thoughts of domestic misery. The main character, Markel Ivanovich Nyukin, attends the evening under pressure from his wife who runs a boarding school for girls. The composer, Samuel Hogarth, commented on the piece:

'In writing the libretto I have been forced to reduce the original play considerably, no easy task given the remarkable conciseness of Chekhov's text. In choosing what to include, translating it, and indeed composing the music, my aim has been to preserve what I perceive as the play's principal device: the subtle, almost unnoticed scheme of repetitions and references that so powerfully captures the speaker's stream of consciousness.'

### *The Organist's Confession*

*The Organist's Confession* is a monologue which moves backwards and forwards between hymns, anecdotes, and new incidents.

**I: Hymn 1; II: Anecdote 1; III: Incident 1; IV: Anecdote 2; V: Hymn 2 – An Ecstasy  
VI: Anecdote 3; VII: Incident 2; VIII: Anecdote 4; IX: Hymn 3**

The central character is an organist who has just been sacked by the vicar. Initially her demeanour and her attempt to play a standard hymn suggest that she is not just eccentric, but definitely past it! However, as she reminisces, a more sinister narrative emerges, and we learn of sexual misconduct and murder. On the surface, it seems that the organist's firing has produced a series of flashbacks to her youth, a crisis of recollection, but the audience is never sure whether the stories are true or imagined. References can be found in the work to other pieces of 20<sup>th</sup>-century music theatre, including Birtwistle's *Down by the Greenwood Side* and Maxwell Davies' *Missa super l'homme armé*. Some are intentional - and others unintentional - and include the use of borrowed material and the re-working of the central piece as a dance number.

Michael Burden  
Oxford, 2022

**Biographies**

**Jamie Andrews** is the junior organ scholar at New College where he studies music. He was born in 2001 in Brighton and began learning the piano at the age of 7. Jamie started playing the organ at the age of 12 achieving his grade 8 two years later. He was appointed as the organ scholar of All Saints Church in Hove where he played for weekly services. In this role, Jamie got the chance to accompany the choir on visits to cathedrals including Rochester, Guildford and St Pauls. At the age of 16, Jamie was awarded the prestigious Andrew Lloyd Webber Scholarship to study at Eton College for sixth form. At Eton, Jamie studied organ with David Goode and piano with Libby Burgess and James Kirby. Working with the chapel choir at Eton, Jamie had the chance to attend the choir tour to Hong Kong in April 2019 which included a concert of Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* with the Hong Kong Philharmonic conducted by Leonard Slatkin. Despite the obvious challenges of 2020, Jamie continued to make music and was a finalist in the Sussex Young Musician of the year competition. As organ scholar, he accompanies services and trains choristers alongside organist Robert Quinney.



**Lindsay Bramley** read Music at The Queen's College, Oxford. Originally trained as a pianist, she started singing professionally at university and since then her career has taken her to Israel, Ireland, France, Austria and Canada. Lindsay sang the title role in *The Judgement of Theodora* for ENO's Contemporary Music Studio, *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot*, *The Medium* and Mere d'Iseut in *Le Vin Herbe* for Ardente Opera. Other recent work includes Berta in *Barber of Seville* for Opera Up Close, Baba in *The Medium* for Opera Alegria and *The Silver Swan* at the Tate Modern for ClodEnsemble, a variety of roles at Opera Holland Park and a busy schedule of oratorio. Lindsay first ventured into opera conducting in 2011 and she has since been assistant conductor to Matthew Kofi Waldren for *La Cenerentola* at West Green Opera, conducted *Un Ballo in Maschera*, *Carmen*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Semele*, *Hercules*, *The Magic Flute*, *Acis & Galatea/Don Quichotte chez la Duchesse* and *Trial by Jury* for various community projects. In 2018 she was appointed Chorus Master to Chelsea Opera Group, preparing them for *Mose in Egitto*, *Norma*, *Mefistofele*, *The Demon*, and most recently *Un Giorno di Regno*. She is currently Musical Director of Opera Alegria and Richmond Opera, conducts regularly for Windsor & Eton Operatic Society, and works as a translator producing surtitles for several companies across the country, and creating newly commissioned singing translations of *The Impresario*, *Bastien & Bastienne*, *Count Ory*, *L'Heure Espagnole*, *La Scala di Seta* and *Un Mari a la Porte* for Opera Alegria and bespoke translations of *La Boheme* and *Cavalleria Rusticana* for Paisley Opera. Later this year she will sing Zita in *Gianni Schicchi* at the Atheneum.



**Michael Burden** is Professor of Opera Studies at Oxford. He directs opera from many different periods and has staged many of the Music Theatre classics from 1970s and 80s. These were the inspiration for his text for *An Organist's Confession*.



**Samuel Hogarth**, who came up to New College in 2001 to read music, went on to be director of music at Queens' College, Cambridge, and thence to the National Opera Studio repetiteurs course, while teaching at the Royal Academy of Music Junior Department. Samuel has worked as a repetiteur and conductor at Oper Köln, at the Hamburg Staatsoper, and since 2014, has been Kapellmeister (staff conductor) at the Staatstheater Mainz, where he has conducted a range of opera and concert repertoire including *La Bohème*, *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *Carmina Burana*, *Spamalot*, Gluck's *Armide* and Cherubini's *Médée*, as well as works such as John Cage's *Atlas edipticalis*. His other conducting engagements include work at Glyndebourne (preparatory workshops on Brett Dean's newly-commissioned opera *Hamlet* with singers including Sir John Tomlinson and Allan Clayton); he returned to Glyndebourne to assist Vladimir Jurowski on the world premiere production of *Hamlet* and conduct the cover cast.



**Karol Jozwik** is currently studying at New College, Oxford where he sings with New College Choir. He began his career as a treble in the Schola Cantorum of The Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School, where he was able to feature in the children's chorus of opera productions at the ROH and ENO. During his time in the choir, he also had many solo opportunities with professional orchestras; after his transition to countertenor, these included Bach's *St Matthew Passion*, Handel's *Messiah*, and Mozart's *Requiem*. He then took a gap year, taking up a one-year choral scholarship post at Portsmouth Cathedral, notably playing the character of Isaac in a performance of Britten's *Canticle II*. During his time at Oxford, Karol has been a member of the Oxford Schola Cantorum and a choral scholar in Oxford Bach Soloists. He is taught by Bronwen Mills, has taken part in masterclasses with Michael Chance, Laurence Cummings, and Roderick Williams, and is receiving vocal coaching from countertenor Iestyn Davies. He is excited to expand his horizons into the world of opera, with some upcoming productions with New Chamber Opera.



**Dónal McCann**, who is originally from Belfast, read music at King's College, Cambridge, where he was an academic and organ scholar. At King's, he accompanied the choir in daily chapel services, as well as in recordings, broadcasts and extensive tours, including to America and Australia. Prior to this, Dónal was the Andrew Lloyd Webber Scholar at Eton College, where he achieved the FRCO with the Limpus Prize, subsequently being nominated for the Silver Medal of the Worshipful Company of Musicians. The following year he won the inaugural Dame Gillian Weir Medal at the Northern Ireland International Organ Competition. Dónal studied piano at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin, and organ with Professor Gerard Gillen at St Mary's Pro Cathedral. He has performed as a soloist with the Ulster Orchestra and the Academy of Ancient Music and has given many recitals in the UK and abroad.



**Alasdair Nicolson** was born in Inverness and brought up on the Isle of Skye and the Black Isle. He studied at Edinburgh University and later became Shaw McFie Lang Fellow there working in composition and music theatre. Whilst his first commissions came immediately after he finished his studies, he began his career by combining composition with work in theatre and opera as musical director, conductor and repetiteur. It was in the late 80s and early 90s that he came to wider attention as winner of the IBM Composers' Prize and, following this success, he received commissions from the UK and abroad. Nicolson has gone on to work with some of the world's best orchestras, ensembles, and soloists. His music is widely performed and broadcast and it has won critical acclaim for its clarity, craftsmanship and individuality. He is now regarded as one of Scotland's foremost composers. As well as his compositional work Alasdair has been involved with many organisations as a creative producer. He is currently Artistic Director of the St Magnus International Festival and Director of the St Magnus Composers' Course as well as being Artistic Director of his own ensemble The Assembly Project. He is currently working as a curator for one of SCOT:lands for Edinburgh's Hogmanay. Previously he has worked as Artistic Director of Bath International Music Festival, Sound Inventors, Northlands Festival and Platform Festival.



**Craig Raine** is a poet, novelist, dramatist, librettist and critic. He writes a monthly column for the *TLS*. His last book was *My Grandmother's Glass Eye: A look at Poetry* (2017).



**Luke Smith** is third-year music student at New College, focusing primarily on composition and performance. Before coming to Oxford, Luke studied cello and piano at school. He has since taken up bass guitar and is now a passionate jazz musician and a member of 'The Donut Kings', an Oxford University big band. Luke has also played bass guitar and cello for numerous musical theatre productions in Oxford, as well as performances for National Youth Music Theatre. Luke is currently taught composition by Luke Lewis and plans to continue his study next academic year.

