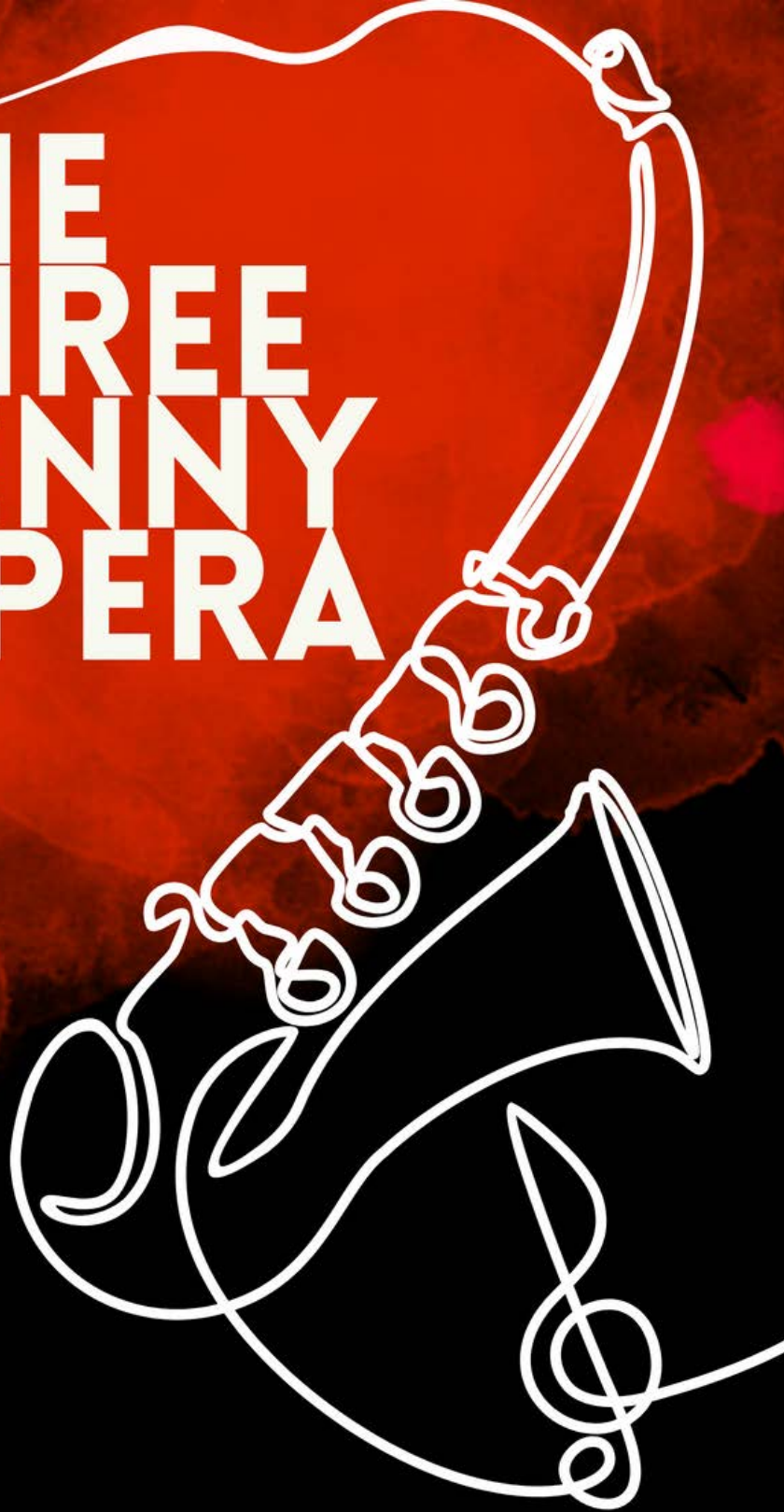



THE THREE PENNY OPERA





A woman with a short haircut is playing a double bass. She is standing in front of a brick wall covered in colorful graffiti. A man in a black suit is lying on his back on the ground in front of her, holding a bow. The background is a vibrant, multi-colored graffiti wall.

THE THREE PENNY OPERA

31st August - 6th September 2023
The Roman Theatre of St Albans

11th - 15th September 2023
The Minack Theatre, Porthcurno

21st September - 7th October 2023
The Cockpit, London

Directed by **Adam Nichols**
Co-Director **Julia Mintzer**
Musical Director and Conductor **Lada Valešová**

By **Bertolt Brecht** (text & lyrics) and **Kurt Weill** (music)
in collaboration with **Elisabeth Hauptmann**

English translation by **Robert David MacDonald** (dialogue)
and **Jeremy Sams** (lyrics)

Running time is approximately 2 hours 15 minutes plus interval

Director's Notes

I first encountered The Threepenny Opera as a 15 year old school pupil, stage managing a production of the show directed by my inspirational drama teacher whose mission it was to turn us all into disciples of Brecht and his theatre practice. My first brush with "Bertie" was very discombobulating, but I went on to study (and fall in love with) his work, and my life as a theatre maker has been profoundly influenced by his ideas.

Threepenny is an oddity of a play – more a series of sketches than a coherent narrative as were many of his later works like The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui and The Caucasian Chalk Circle. This was perhaps a product of its birthing process, which included an incredibly serious of mishaps.

Whilst the original production was being made, a lead actress dropped out due to appendicitis, another was delayed from the start of rehearsals as she tended her husband on his deathbed and a third was unable to learn a crucial solo leading to a song being cut. One of the producers was so appalled by the tunelessness of Weill's other operas that he told his musical director to get hold of the traditional Beggar's Opera arrangements in case the finished score proved unpalatable. The finale was only written during rehearsals and late on the text was found to be three-quarters of an hour too long, leading to massive cuts. The 'Ballad of Mack the Knife' was only added as what turned out to be an inspired afterthought.

And yet, quite unexpectedly, on opening night the creative team found itself with the greatest German hit of the 1920s on their hands.

Looking back nearly a century, we tend to think that Brecht and Weill failed in their political ambitions for the play – after all, we still have poverty, corrupt business practices and a justice system weighted in favour of the rich and powerful. But the play did bring about another sort of revolution – in theatre itself. It remixed aspects of highbrow opera and populist music hall entertainment to create a new kind of musical theatre, broke apart the monopoly of opera and operetta and challenged all the established techniques of acting and singing. The Threepenny Opera can justly claim to be regarded as the world's very first modern "Musical".

In framing the show for 2023, we have tried to directly address and incorporate some of this history in how the play is presented. At the same time, we have been grappling with the challenges that all modern companies face when bringing this work to a modern audience.

Threepenny is didactic. It aims to shock, engage, challenge, mock, disturb and even attack its audience. It mixes beautiful melodies with the darkest and most unsettling subjects. It creates stops in the action for reflection and clearly separates songs from the action of scenes, breaking down the pretence that singing is speaking. Music and dialogue is disjointed, including uncomfortably inconclusive endings to songs and scenes, and there is unapologetic delivery of hard hitting moral messages. Finally, there is a total lack of a hero or heroine – instead, we get an entire cast of antagonists.

None of this is what we expect from a musical. We want prettiness and resolution. If we don't get a happy ending, then at least we want to walk out of the theatre with a clear message.

And if you think this is difficult for an audience, it's no less demanding for us as directors and actors to pull off!

The cast must be entirely unified in a specific style of performance – a style which is foreign to most contemporary actors who have been trained to immerse themselves fully into their character and to fool the audience into believing that they actually are who they say they are. They need to employ a large, archetypal approach to characterisation that nonetheless remains truthful rather than descending into caricature. They also have to step in and out of the action by regularly breaking the fourth wall (the imaginary boundary between actor and audience) and are required to step out of character completely on occasion.

These challenges call for an exceptional troupe of performers, and I'm pleased to say that we have gathered just such a group for this production. It has been a great pleasure to share this epic journey with them, and to create the show collaboratively (and with a certain number of last minute evolutions), just as Brecht, Weill and Hauptmann did nearly 100 years ago.

Enjoy the show – or leave with fire in your belly, depending on whose side you are on!

Adam Nichols

Co-Director's Notes

The Threepenny Opera exists on a paradoxical plane. The piece that was written as a biting marxist critique has become a smash commercial hit. Brecht and Weill meant Threepenny as a scathing attack on capitalism and bourgeois hypocrisy in Weimar Berlin.

But, while the piece was attacked in communist daily The Red Flag for having "no trace of political satire, reflected in the authors' inability to depict revolutionary working class", Rudolf Roessler, a leading theatre journalist of the time, said the play "undoubtedly appealed to the fashionable Berlin public and subsequently to the middle classes throughout Germany... and if it gave them an increasingly cynical view of their own institutions it does not seem to have prompted either them or any other section of society to try to change these for the better."

Though Brecht and Weill were already hugely successful when they wrote The Threepenny Opera, Brecht found its massive commercial success hugely embarrassing. So, if this was never the creator's idea for the piece, we have to ask, why is Threepenny's popularity so enduring? Why does it move us so much?

In preparing this production, Adam and I tossed back and forth the question: In The Threepenny Opera, does Brecht fail at being brechtian, at alienating his audience through the "verfremdungseffekt" for which he is known? Do his words move us emotionally despite ourselves, and do his characters become real people with whom we empathise? Do we really want Brecht to succeed at alienating us from the emotional experience of theatre?

Through the character of Mr. Peachum, the clearest surrogate for Brecht in Threepenny, he makes the point that we have become normalised to violence and injustice, allowing grotesquerie to become banality. So, is the success and repetition of this show increasing this desensitisation in a musical display of poverty porn?

By putting Threepenny on - and enjoying it - again and again, are we increasing the desensitisation that the piece bemoans?

In our production, we want to sit right down in the centre of this tension between what the piece may have been intended to be – how it was written to function – and how it has functioned for audiences through its many commercial iterations over decades.

It's complicated enough to discern intention, when there is no urtext. The Beggar's Opera was written in English, translated into German by Elisabeth Hauptman, Brecht's lover at the time, and then from German back into the English translation we are using, which is one among many.

In later versions of the show, particularly in the 1931 version, Brecht and Weill kept trying to remake it as a stronger marxist critique. But that process spun out of their control, with the Ballad of Mack the Knife being covered by singers from Bobby Darin to Frank Sinatra, and even being co-opted by McDonalds to use as a burger jingle ("Mac tonight!").

The characters in Threepenny have a history of horrifying us, then moving us profoundly, though they frequently step out of being "real people" to speak as Brecht's political mouthpieces, commenting directly to the audience about society's ills and hypocrisies.

Our Threepenny production is set in a theatre-making factory, manufacturing stories and meaning, night after night. In this factory, two people, who will later step into roles in the show, fight over what tonight's performance of The Threepenny Opera is going to be.

Will this performance be the gritty, realistic, portrayal of economic and social injustice that Brecht and Weill intended, or the colourful, shiny, spectacle that has been licensed for production after production?

If our audience, as Brecht calls out, is getting steadily more desensitised, then we'll have to use a heavier and heavier hammer to make our point on them. That hammer might become so heavy it becomes absurdist... like the writers designed the end of the show to be.

Who will ultimately win out to decide what kind of show The Threepenny Opera will be? You'll have to wait and see how it ends!

And enjoy the ride along the way – even if you're not meant to...

Julia Mintzer

Conductor and Musical Director's Notes

At the beginning there was Mack the Knife. I first heard 'Die Moritat von Mackie Messer' or 'The Ballad of Mack the Knife' on an old LP by Louis Armstrong which my father bought in the late 60s after the one and only concert Armstrong gave in Prague, which he was lucky to attend. At the time I didn't know it came from The Threepenny Opera but its swinging, nonchalant, yet edgy quality had me under its spell from the very start. I've later heard it sung in many versions and languages, including in Czech.

When I came to study at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama I saw a production of 'The Beggars Opera' by John Guy and Johan Christoph Pepush, which opened a new gritty, witty, and totally original world to my imagination. The next logical step was to explore and fall under the spell of Weill and Brecht's masterpiece, under which I remain firmly to this day.

Weill's music tells the story in such a direct, often brutal way, yet with great charm and humanity. His score incorporates many influences from the baroque in the overture, to the opera recitative in the third finale, from the music of the cabarets and dance halls with their Foxtrots to a medieval chant in the Gang Wedding Chorus and Peachum's Morning Chorale. Each musical number forms a part of a great mosaic which Weill's genius vision unites into a musical whole in a masterful dramatic arc. The music at once mocks and consoles, with the moments of frenzy, lyrical yet sardonic truths about love, jealous catfights, and unflinching testaments on human condition. It gives the characters another deep dimension and makes us identify and recognise them as one of us, with our shared humanity. It grants these deeply flawed, damaged and abused humans their dignity and complexity, which I find to be one of the most important aspects of the story.

The themes of the Threepenny Opera may capture perfectly the zeitgeist of Brecht and Weill's era, but its message is timeless and resonates through great operatic and literary works from verismo to social realism.

This is the first time that the Kurt Weill Foundation has granted permission for The Threepenny Opera to be performed in an open-air venue, which is a great honour... and even greater responsibility!

We are using a brilliant, witty translation by Jeremy Sams, which makes the piece completely relatable to our audience and allows the lyrics to grab the listeners from the very start.

Our band is a collective of multi-talented actor musicians who between them play 21 instruments. Usually, the musicians remain in the pit while the action takes place above on the stage, but our production makes this 'them and us' formula redundant and eliminates the separation. As a conductor I become a part of the action on stage, which is a rather lovely Brechtian touch! This involves memorising the score, and the band members are also playing many numbers from memory facilitating a complete blend of musical and acting components.

Together with directors Adam and Julia I envisage all of us being constantly part of the drama throughout the story as it unfolds. All these ingredients promise to make this production an exciting and unique experience.

Lada Valešová





Bertolt Brecht

The playwright, poet and director, Bertolt Brecht was born in Augsburg, Germany in 1898. Following a period working as assistant to Max Reinhardt at the famous Deutsches Theater, he established himself as a playwright and director during the 1920s and early 1930s with plays such as *Baal*, *Man Is Man*, *The Threepenny Opera* and *The Mother*. It was during this period that he started to form his theories of epic theatre which informed so much of his later work. In 1930, the premier of Brecht and Weill's *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny*, caused a riot as the increasingly influential Nazi party objected to its morality and critical tone. When Hitler came to power in 1933, Brecht and his wife, actress Helene Weigel, left Germany and lived in a number of European cities before eventually settling in the USA in 1941 where he remained until 1947. During the war years, he wrote many of his best known plays, including *The Life of Galileo*, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, *Mother Courage and her Children* and *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*, and also published an anthology of poetry, *Poems in Exile*. He returned to Europe in 1947 and shortly after his arrival formed the Berliner Ensemble. His post-war plays include *Mr Puntila* and his *Man Matti* and an adaptation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. Brecht died in Berlin in 1956 and remains a hugely influential theatre practitioner throughout the world.



**Elisabeth
Hauptmann**

Elisabeth Hauptmann (1897-1973) was a writer and translator who met Brecht in 1922 and became closely involved with his work. Her German version of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* formed the basis for *The Threepenny Opera* (1928) and she also contributed to Brecht's other works including *St. Joan of the Stockyards*. She lived in America from 1934 to 1949, where she married the composer Paul Dessau. After her return to Germany, she published Brecht's work through Suhrkamp Verlag and worked as dramaturg for The Berliner Ensemble. In 1961, she received the Lessing Award, which the Ministry for Culture of East Germany awarded every year and in 1977 she was posthumously nominated for a Tony Award for her work on *Happy End*.



Kurt Weill

Kurt Weill (1900 – 1950) began his career in the early 1920s, after a musical childhood and several years of study in Berlin. By the time his first opera, *The Protagonist* (Georg Kaiser), was performed in 1926, he was an established young German composer. But he had already decided to devote himself to the musical theatre, and his works with Bertolt Brecht soon made him famous all over Europe. He fled the new Nazi leadership in 1933 and continued his indefatigable efforts, first in Paris (1933–35), then in the USA until his death. Certain common threads tie together his career: a concern for social justice, an aggressive pursuit of highly-regarded playwrights and lyricists as collaborators, and the ability to adapt to audience tastes no matter where he found himself. His most important works: the *Violin Concerto*, *The Threepenny Opera* (Brecht and Hauptmann), *Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* (Brecht and Hauptmann), *The Pledge* (Caspar Neher), *The Seven Deadly Sins* (Brecht), *Lady in the Dark* (Moss Hart and Ira Gershwin), *Street Scene* (Elmer Rice and Langston Hughes), *Lost in the Stars* (Maxwell Anderson). He died of heart failure in 1950, shortly after he and Anderson began work on a musical adaptation of *Huckleberry Finn*, leaving behind a large catalogue of works and a reputation that continues to grow as more of his music is performed. He married actress Lotte Lenya in 1926; they maintained a close relationship throughout his life despite their divorce in 1933 (they remarried in 1937).





**Robert David
MacDonald**

Robert David MacDonald (1929 – 2004) was born in Elgin and originally trained as a musician. He was a translator for UNESCO before becoming assistant director at Glyndebourne and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. He directed plays and operas in Amsterdam, Atlanta, Berlin, Boston, Brussels, Houston, Minneapolis and Vienna and his adaptation of the production of *War and Peace* by his former teacher Erwin Piscator ran for two seasons on Broadway and received an Emmy Award for its television version. He was co-director of the Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow from 1971 to 2003 and directed over 50 plays for the company, wrote 15 and appeared in 8. As translator he translated/adapted over seventy operas and plays from ten different languages, including Marschner's *Vampire!* (BBC), Mozart's *Così fan Tutti* (Hintlesham) and, for WNOG, Handel's *Tamerlano*, Mozart's *Flight from the Harem*, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Verdi's *Aida*.



Jeremy Sams

Writer: *Amour* (Broadway), *Ghetto* (National Theatre and Broadway), *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (West End and Broadway), *The Wizard of Oz* (West End and tour). Translator: *Indiscretions* (Broadway), *The Miser* and *Mary Stuart* (RNT), *The Rehearsal*, *Don Giovanni*, *Figaro's Wedding*, *La Bohème*, *The Magic Flute*, *Wagner's Ring Cycle* (ENO), *Die Fledermaus* and *The Merry Widow* (New York). He wrote and devised *The Enchanted Island* for the Metropolitan Opera of New York. Directorial credits include *Die Fledermaus* (Metropolitan Opera), *The Wizard of Oz* (West End, Toronto, US tour), *The King and I* (Royal Albert Hall), *The Sound of Music* (London Palladium, world tour), *13 The Musical* (Broadway), *Donkey's Years* (Comedy Theater), *Little Britain Live*, *Noises Off* (West End and Broadway), *Passion* (West End), *Wild Oats* (RNT), *The Wind in the Willows* (Tokyo, Old Vic) and the Olivier-nominated *Spend Spend Spend* (West End). As a composer, he has written, arranged and directed music for over 50 shows for theatre, TV and film, including *The Wind in the Willows*; *Arcadia* (RNT and Lincoln Center), *The Mother* (BBC), *Enduring Love* (Pathé), for which he won the Ivor Novello Award, *Hyde Park on Hudson*, *Le Weekend* and *Persuasion* (BBC Films), for which he won a BAFTA.



Cast

Tom Cagnoni	Ensemble, Banjo, Guitar, Hawaiian Guitar
Mark Carlisle	Inventor, Jonathan Peachum
Lee Drage	Tiger Brown, Trombone
Helena Gullan	Ensemble, Banjo, Guitar, Hawaiian Guitar
Emilia Harrild	Ned the Saw, Vixen, Lucy Brown, Cello
Ben Howarth	Filch, Constable Smith, Percussion
Keith Lynch	Matt of the Mint, Dolly, Trumpet
Shona Maule	Weeping Willow Walt, Nelly, Constable, Saxophone, Flute, Clarinet
Carys McQueen	Crook Fingered Jake, Clarinet, Saxophone
Emily Panes	Polly Peachum, Bandoneon
Adrian Salinero	Ensemble, Harmonium, Celesta, Piano, Repetiteur
Faith Turner	Inventor, Low Dive Jenny
Peter Watts	Macheath
Lada Valešová	Reverend Kimball, Conductor
Annette Yeo	Celia Peachum



Tom Cagnoni

Tom trained as a jazz guitarist, before turning his hand to many other instruments including piano, drums and double bass. During his time studying Maths and Music at the University of Leeds he developed a love for musical theatre, performing regularly at the Edinburgh Festival as a member of Hungry Bitches Productions. He joined OVO as Musical Director for As You Like It in 2016, following that up as MD for a new open-air musical every summer since including A Midsummer Night's Dream (twice), Much Ado About Nothing, The Merry Wives of Windsor, Peter Pan, The Winter's Tale, The Importance of Being Earnest, Little Women and Romeo and Juliet. Tom has also composed original music for Peter Pan, The Winter's Tale and A Christmas Carol.



Mark Carlisle

Mark's theatre credits include The Lady Vanishes (Bill Kenwright), Glengarry Glen Ross (West End), Peter Pan (Northcott Theatre), Once (Phoenix Theatre), The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui (Duchess Theatre & Chichester), The Arabian Nights (Manchester Library Theatre), Cinderella (Citizens Theatre Glasgow), The Happy Prince (Sherman Theatre Cardiff), Arabian Nights (Derby Playhouse), Hubble Bubble (Queen's Theatre Hornchurch), Cyrano de Bergerac and Love's Labour's Lost (Oxford Shakespeare Company), West Side Story (Pola Jones), The Herbal Bed (RSC); The Crucible (Sheffield Crucible), Carmen 1936 (Northern Stage Company), Peter and the Captain (BAC). TV includes Doctors, The Crown, Hard Sun, Casualty, Emmerdale and Red Dwarf.



Lee Drage

Lee is an actor originally from Northampton who trained at Guildford School of Acting. As part of comedy duo Omar&Lee, he has performed at VAULT festival, Brighton and Edinburgh Fringe and they were nominated for an Off West End award for their show Shit Samaritans. Theatre includes: Twelfth Night (Shakespeare in the Squares), Aloe Aloe (Bush Theatre), The Spanish Tragedy (Old Red Lion), Chariots of Fire (Gielgud, West End), Oh What A Lovely War (UK tour), The Water Engine (Old Vic), The Hot Mikado (Watermill Theatre), Saturday Night (Jermyn St Theatre). TV includes: Silo (Apple TV) He's looking forward to some open air fun in the beggary business this Summer!



Helena Gullan

Helena trained at the Lee Strasberg Theatre and Film Institute in Los Angeles, Royal Holloway, University of London and at Trinity College of Music, London and has performed all over the UK and worldwide. Theatre includes 101 Dalmatians (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre), Once The Musical (West End and South Korean Tour), Coram Boy (National Theatre), Nashville Live (UK, Australia and New Zealand Tours) and Walk Right Back - The Everly Brothers Story (UK Tour). She has sung on recordings for Hyperion, Naxos and Convivium Singers and played fiddle for various projects that topped the UK Country Music Charts. She appears playing violin in The Power (Amazon Prime TV). Her previous appearances for OVO include The Winter's Tale and Les Liaisons Dangereuses.



Emilia Harrild

Emilia graduated from The Bridge Theatre Training Company in 2020, making her professional debut for OVO as Perdita in The Winter's Tale and following this up with appearances as Gwendolen in The Importance of Being Earnest, Hermia in A Midsummer Night's Dream, Emilie in Les Liaisons Dangereuses and Alice in Vinegar Tom. Other theatre credits include Juliet in Romeo and Juliet (East London Shakespeare Festival), Lady Macbeth in Macbeth (The Three Inch Fools, national tour) and Queenie in This Happy Breed (The Crescent Theatre). Emilia is a professional cellist and vocalist in several folk/rock bands, and regularly works as a session musician. She has performed at St John's Smith Square, The Barbican Centre, The Royal Festival Hall and at the Pantheon in Rome.



Ben Howarth

Ben is a Welsh actor-musician based in London. He graduated from Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in 2018. Since then he has had the pleasure of working with companies including the National Theatre of Wales and the British Touring Shakespeare Company. Ben has studied at the London Clown School, and plays the drums for the Folk-Rock group, The All Night Chemist.



Keith Lynch

Keith is from Northern Ireland. He most recently appeared in the acclaimed production of *Beyond Belief: The Life and Mission of John Hume* as Ian Paisley (Playhouse, Derry). Theatre credits include *Our Jimmy* (NI Tour), *Dani Dives In* (MAC Theatre), *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Cre8 Theatre), *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole* and *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (Bruiser Theatre Company), *Teenage Kicks* (Millennium Forum), *Legends of Ulster* and *Don't Go There* (Balor Theatre). Keith recently recorded for BBC Radio Ulster's *The Long and Short of It* with Tim McGarry. TV includes *Blue Lights*, *Ups and Downs* and *Stepmum* (BBC) and *Cyber Police* (Gallagher Productions). He features in the current *Mental Health Champion* and *MCS Recruitment* advertisements.



Shona Maule

Shona trained as an actor musician at The Guildford School of Acting. Theatre credits include *Marie Curie* (Aria Entertainment) and *Jack and the Beanstalk* (Eva Long Productions). Credits whilst training include: *Anne Boleyn*, *Betty Blue Eyes* and *Our Town*. Shona was seen in OVO's 2022 productions of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Importance of Being Earnest*.



Carys McQueen

Carys trained in Actor Musicianship at Rose Bruford College. Theatre Credits include: *Cabaret* at the Kit Kat Club (Playhouse Theatre, winner of 7 Olivier Awards), *Twelfth Night* (Shakespeare in the Squares), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (UK Tour), *Pardoned* (The Other Palace), *Publico* (Manoel Theatre), *Max and Ivan: Commitment* (Soho Theatre), *Raymond Briggs' Father Christmas* (Lyric Hammersmith).



Emily Panes

Emily trained in Actor Musicianship at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts and at BYMT. Theatre credits include: Twelfth Night, Hay Fever, and Still Life (The Mill at Sonning); Kinky Boots – The Musical in Concert (LMTO, Theatre Royal Drury Lane), The True Adventures of Marian and Robin Hood and Cinderella (The Barn Theatre), Secret Cinema presents Bridgerton, Shape Of You (UK Tour), Rapunzel, and After The Storm (The Garage), Romy and Julian (Vienna's English Theatre), The Wonderful Discover of Witches (Dawn State, UK Tour), The Art of Skipping (King's Head Theatre and cast album). Voiceover clients include Barclays, Three, O2, Levi's, Boots, Just Water, SAP, Deloitte, Mark Hill, Severn Trent Water and De Montfort University.



Adrian Salinero

Adrian Salinero is a Basque Spanish pianist based in London. A 22/23 Young Artist at the National Opera Studio, he has worked in residencies with Welsh National Opera, Opera North, Scottish Opera and English National Opera. Notable productions during his time at the Royal Conservatoire of Antwerp include Don Giovanni (Mozart), Orfeo ed Euridice (Glück) and Hänsel und Gretel (Humperdinck). During his time at National Opera Studio he has had the privilege of working alongside acclaimed conductors such as David Parry, Christian Curnyn, Garry Walker and Wyn Davies and performed in prestigious venues across the UK, including Wigmore Hall, BBC Hoddinott Hall and Wilton's Music Hall.



Faith Turner

Faith has been a regular member of OVO's acting company for 15 years. Highlights have included Professor Francis in Little Women, Jenny in Mosquitoes, the title role in Hedda Gabler, Paulina in The Winter's Tale Malvolia in Twelfth Night, Emma in Contractions, Rosalind in As You Like It, Witch in Macbeth, Beatrice in Much Ado About Nothing, Elizabeth Proctor in The Crucible, Titania in A Midsummer Night's Dream and Gwendolen in The Importance of Being Earnest. Previously, Faith also appeared in numerous productions at York University and the Edinburgh Festival.



Peter Watts

Peter's theatre credits include Glory Ride (Charing Cross Theatre), Alice in Wonderland (New Vic), The Tempest and A Midsummer Night's Dream (Nottingham Playhouse), ear for eye (Royal Court), As You Like It (York Theatre Royal), Crimes, Camera, Action (New Old Friends, UK Tour), Beauty and the Beast and Puss in Boots (Belgrade Theatre, Coventry), Assassins (Pleasance), Pericles (Idle Discourse), The Shearing Gang (Sterts Theatre, Cornwall), The Rain King (Harrogate Theatre), The Heart of Winter (Lyngo Theatre) and Journey's End (Mesh Theatre, Ypres).



Annette Yeo

Annette trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and Mountview Theatre School. She most recently appeared in the original cast of The Great British Bakeoff Musical (Noel Coward Theatre). During her 30 year career she has been part of the original casts of Love Never Dies (Adelphi Theatre), Mamma Mia (Prince Edward Theatre), the award winning City of Angels (Prince of Wales Theatre) and Passion (Queen's Theatre). Other highlights include Madame Giry in Phantom of the Opera (Her Majesty's Theatre), Kate in Kiss Me Kate (Victoria Palace Theatre), Factory Girl/Fantine in Les Miserables (Palace Theatre), Mrs Lyons in Blood Brothers (National Tour), Mrs Walker in Tommy (National Tour). Concert work includes: 25th Anniversary Phantom Concert (Royal Albert Hall), 10th Anniversary Les Miserables Concert (Royal Albert Hall) and The Last Night Of The Proms. She released her own solo album, Once In My Life.



Creative Team

Director	Adam Nichols
Co-Director & Vocal Coach	Julia Mintzer
Musical Director	Lada Valešová
Deputy Musical Director	Tom Cagnoni
Choreographer	Stephanie Allison
Set Designer & Builder	Simon Nicholas
Set Builders	Helena Bold-Davis
	Toulouse Geeson
Scenic Artist	Daisy Mitchell
Costume Designer	Adrian Rees
Costume Maker	Trudy Rees-Marklew
Wardrobe Supervisors	Delga Martineau
	Yasmin Baird
	Marion Harrison
Sound Designer	Michael Bird
Lighting Designer	Mattis Larsen
Lighting Operators	Myles Robinson
	Jack Sykes
Stage Manager	Sarah Cash
Deputy Stage Manager	Grace Currie
Assistant Stage Managers	James Jack Bentham
	Hana Sofia
Production Manager	Emma Wright



Adam Nichols

Adam is the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of OVO. He has directed a quarter of the company's more than 100 productions over the past 20 years, with highlights including *Private Lives*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Roman Theatre of Verulamium); *The Winter's Tale*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It* (Minack Theatre, Cornwall); *Peter Pan* (Alban Arena), *Mosquitoes* (National Tour), *Beginning*, *Middle*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *The 39 Steps*, *Contractions*, *Macbeth*, *The Ladykillers* (The Maltings Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (Rose Playhouse), *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Twelfth Night* (Bridewell Theatre) and *The New World Order* (Edinburgh Fringe). Adam's production of *As You Like It* won the 2016 Minack Trophy and was named as one of *The Guardian's* top shows of 2019.

In 2011 Adam helped to save The Maltings Theatre in St Albans from closure, turning it into a successful producing theatre and community space. In 2014 he co-founded the summer Open Air Festival at the historic 2,000 year old Roman Theatre of Verulamium which has grown to become one of the largest outdoor theatre festivals in the country. He also co-founded Platform, a youth arts centre in Islington, converted from a former public baths.

These days Adam is rarely seen on stage but he had a successful career as a child actor, the highlight of which was being murdered by Antony Sher as one of the princes in the tower in the seminal Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Richard III* in 1985.

In 2020 Adam co-founded the Coalition for Open Air Theatre which was instrumental in persuading the government to reopen theatres after the first Covid lockdown. In 2021 he was named in *The Stage* 100, the definitive guide to the most influential figures working in the UK theatre and performing arts industry today. He also featured in the UK Social Entrepreneur Index in 2019, 2020 and 2022.

Adam is delighted to be reuniting with "Bertie" after a 27 year gap. He previously directed *The Threepenny Opera* as a student at Durham University in 1996, having been wowed by the seminal Donmar Warehouse production (starring a young Tom Hollander) the previous year. Little did his 19 year old self think then that he would be collaborating with librettist Jeremy Sams on new lyrics for the show some three decades later.





Julia Mintzer

An alumnus of the Royal Opera House's Mentorship Programme, Julia has been nominated for two Off West End Awards for Best Opera Production for her direction of *Bluebeard's Castle* and *Der Vampyr* with Gothic Opera. A 2017 National Opera Association Directing Fellow, her interactive theatre piece *Pizza Parlance* was listed in *Nombre Art Magazine's* "5 Must-Sees of Venice Biennale" and revived for NWR-Forum Düsseldorf and the Toronto Museum of Contemporary Art.

Julia's participation in Dutch National Opera's *Towards a New Dramaturgy* workshop was sponsored by Britten Pears Arts, and she recently directed a festival of American opera at the Royal Conservatoire Antwerp. She revived *East West Street* for Nova Touring in Washington DC, starring Katja Riemann.

Development of new work includes *The Wrestling Opera* (supported by a Bogliasco Fellowship), *Sissy is to Bassarid* at the Helsinki Festival, and leading Hooran Studios, a team of Tehran-based animators, on *Zal and the Phoenix*, a multimedia show for children.

In the 2023/24 season, she will direct Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* for Opera Grand Rapids, *Tosca* for Devon Opera, and *L'Elisir d'amore* for Catholic University.

Julia has performed leading roles with Theater an der Wien, Welsh National Opera, Washington National Opera, and the Dresden Semperoper. She holds a Tier-1 Exceptional Talent Visa.





Lada Valešová

Czech / British conductor Lada is a 2023 Off West End Award Winner in Opera Ensemble for Janáček's Cunning Little Vixen with the Hampstead Garden Opera. Also this season she conducted an opera double bill at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire, which included the UK premiere of the orchestral version of Four Sisters, an opera by prominent British composer Elena Langer.

Previous credits include conducting a UK professional premiere of opera Svadba by Canadian/Serbian composer Ana Sokolović for the Waterperry Opera Festival and Eugene Onegin for Opera West Green House. Lada was an Assistant Conductor to Oksana Liniv on production of Tosca at the Royal Opera House, to Stuart Stratford at the Scottish Opera on the instrumental version of Janáček's Diary of One Who Disappeared produced for the Lammermuir Festival.

She opened the 2022 season at Opera Holland Park with a new production of Eugene Onegin, and previously conducted Le Nozze di Figaro as an Associate Conductor with the OHP Young Artists, and assisted Sian Edwards on Tchaikovsky's Iolanta. As a Music Director and pianist for The Diary of One Who Disappeared by Janáček/Annelies van Parys directed by Ivo van Hove for Muziektheater Transparant she has led and performed the production in venues including BAM New York, Beijing International Festival, the Lindbury Studio, deSingel and Vlaamse Opera and Antwerp Muziekgebouw Amsterdam. As a soloist and chamber musician she has performed at the Prague Spring, the Three Choirs Festival, Oxford Lieder Festival and in venues including the Wigmore Hall, Royal Festival Hall, and the Dvořák Hall, Rudofinum Prague.

Lada has curated programmes and released albums exploring connections between the various East and Middle European cultural heritages, and highlighting the voices of unjustly neglected or silenced composers. These include Fata Morgana / Song by Pavel Haas (BBC Music Magazine Award nominee 2018, Europedisc Album of the Year 2017) and Arion: The Voyage of the Slavic Soul (one of the Sunday Times "Best Albums of 2020").

Lada is one of seven conductors on the prestigious Royal Philharmonic Society programme "Woman Conductors Gateshead" and one of only twelve conductors accepted into the first training course for woman conductors at the National Opera Studio, hosted by the Royal Philharmonic Society and The Royal Opera House.

Before her move into conducting Lada has worked as a coach and teacher for the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Teatro Real, Madrid, Kungliga Operan, Stockholm, Staatsoper Hamburg, Norwegian National Opera, Oslo, New Zealand Opera, Opera Holland Park, Garsington Opera and Glyndebourne Festival Opera, BBC Symphony Chorus, LSO Chorus, Philharmonia Voices, CBSO Chorus, Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal Academy of Music.

Stephanie Allison Stephanie studied Drama at Exeter University and specialised in Directing, Choreography and Applied Theatre. She made her debut with OVO in 2014 playing Ariel in *The Tempest* and notable performances since have included Phoebe in *As You Like It*, Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Mrs Marshall in *Playhouse Creatures*, Leah/Laura in *Fugue* and Katie Howard in *The Regina Monologues*. More recently she has been part of the company's creative team - she wrote and Co-Directed *Little Women*, Co-Directed *Poison* and *Scissor Sisters*, was Movement Director for *Peter Pan*, *Mosquitoes* and *Julius Caesar* and Choreographer for *The Winter's Tale*.

Michael Bird Michael is a graduate of the University of East Anglia who has been working with OVO as a lighting and sound technician for many years. He has been part of the technical team at the Roman Theatre Open Air Festival since 2017, working on productions including *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (twice), *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Macbeth*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Henry V*, *The Winter's Tale*, *Peter Pan*, *Private Lives* and *The Railway Children* and has operated sound at all three of OVO's previous tours to the Minack Theatre in Cornwall. He is also the Technical Manager at The Maltings Theatre, where he has overseen lighting and design for numerous OVO productions including *Poison*, *The Father*, *Contractions*, *Fugue*, *As You Like It*, *The 39 Steps*, *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, *Vinegar Tom*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Mosquitoes* and *Julius Caesar*.

Sarah Cash Sarah trained in Theatre Studies at Middlesex University, specialising in technical theatre, at and has worked professionally in the industry for 30 years, most recently as Deputy Stage Manager on the West End production of *Only Fools and Horses the Musical* (Theatre Royal Haymarket). She has toured with The Birmingham Stage Company and worked in stage management on many West End shows including *Mamma Mia*, *Oliver*, *We Will Rock You*, *Grease*, *Fame*, *The Graduate* and *The Golden Globe Awards*. She worked as a chaperone on the London production of *The Railway Children* at The Kings Cross Theatre and Production Assistant on the musical *Bat Out of Hell* in Manchester. For OVO, Sarah was Production Stage Manager on *As You Like It* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Deputy Stage Manager on *Peter Pan*. She is also Administrator and Company Production Manager for Box of Frogs Theatre Academy.

Mattis Larsen Mattis graduated from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in 2021. He has experience in designing lighting for straight plays, musical theatre, dance, devised performances and site-specific plays. In addition, he has specialised in making video content and projection-mapping solutions for live performance and installation art. Recent credits include *Not Now* (Finborough) the award winning *Three Sisters* (Knuckledown) and, for OVO, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *Little Women*, *Mosquitoes*, *Private Lives* and *The Railway Children*. Coming from a musical background, he thrives for that magical moment where light, sound and action play together as one.



Delga Martineau Delga has been a dressmaker and seamstress for over 25 years. She has previously worked as costume designer for OVO's productions of *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Private Lives* and as wardrobe supervisor and scenic dresser for *Little Women*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Winter's Tale*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Peter Pan*, *As You Like It*, *The 39 Steps*, *On Behalf of a Madman*, *The Removal Service* and *Trestle*. She is currently studying Costume Construction at The University Centre, South Essex

Simon Nicholas As a Co-Founder of OVO, Simon pioneered the innovative use of film in the company's work, including *Romeo and Juliet*, *The New World Order*, *The Ladykillers*, and the lockdown Zoom sensation, *Twelfth Night Live*. Most recently we saw his dazzling and atmospheric projections within OVO's productions of *Mosquitoes* and *Julius Caesar*. For the last eight years, Simon has built our theatre inside the remains of the Roman Theatre in St Albans for OVO's annual summer open air festival. He has created the sets for dozens of OVO shows, bringing his imagination to life in building an array of worlds. These have included a life-size VW Campervan, a 1950s American dinner, and a magical fairy land made from hundreds of recycled wooden pallets. This year, he has designed sets for OVO's productions of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Private Lives* and *The Railway Children*.

Adrian Rees Adrian studied Theatre Design at Wimbledon School of Art and has worked extensively across the UK ever since. He was Head of Design at The Belgrade Theatre in Coventry and subsequently, as a freelance designer, his work has been seen in numerous regional theatres including Leicester Haymarket, York Theatre Royal, Plymouth Theatre Royal, The Churchill Theatre, Bromley and West Yorkshire Playhouse. His touring work includes Catherine Cookson's *The Fifteen Streets*, FAME the musical, *Buddy*, the *Buddy Holly Story* and *High Society*. He has also designed in the West End, as well as internationally. Adrian has designed extensively for Pitlochry Festival Theatre, including the sets for *Chimneys*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Snake in the Grass*, *The Queen of Spades*, *The Shop at Sly Corner* and *Barefoot in the Park* (co-production with Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh). Also, the set and costumes for *Kiss Me Kate*, *Cinderella*, *My Fair Lady*, *See How They Run*, *Dear Brutus*, *White Christmas*, *Hello Dolly!*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Passing Places*, *Blithe Spirit*, *The Crucible*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *Home and Beauty*, *Carousel*, *This Happy Breed* (also at Yvonne Arnaud), *Scrooge*, *High Society*, *The Ruling Class*, *Singin' in the Rain*, *Travesties* and *Quality Street*, *The Crucible* and *Blithe Spirit*. In 2021, he was Design Associate for FAITH as part of the RSC/Coventry City of Culture production.

Emma Wright As an actor, Emma's appearances for OVO include Amanda in *Private Lives*, Mother in *The Railway Children*, Laura / Maggie in *Beginning / Middle*, Miss Prism in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Titania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Alice in *Mosquitoes*, La Marquise de Merteuil in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, Emilia / Dorothea in *The Winter's Tale*, Alice Ford in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Witch in *Macbeth*, Hester Collyer in *The Deep Blue Sea* and Mrs Darling / Tiger Lily in *Peter Pan*. Other stage roles include Lola in *Under Electric Candlelight*, Dawn in *Jerusalem* and Miss Cutts in *The Hothouse*. Film credits include Amy in *Yes Man* (4Deuce) and Heather in *Saskia* (FJP Productions).



Credits

We are OVO.

We create bold, imaginative and surprising new versions of classic plays and stories.

We are the creators and producers of the annual Roman Theatre Open Air Festival in St Albans.

Our award winning productions can also be seen on indoor and outdoor stages across the UK.

For OVO:

Chairman: David Widdowson

Trustees: David Berryman, Rob Ferguson, Jane Withers

Artistic Director: Adam Nichols

Operations Director: Martin Sharman

Site Director: Simon Nicholas

Technical Manager: Michael Bird

Marketing: Cecily Batten, Judy Lipsey, Kelly Stewart

Photographers: Elliott Franks, Kelly Stewart

Roman Theatre Front of House: Helena Bold-Davies, Alex Edwards, Vicky Harris, Louise O'Sullivan, Natalie Sharman

Roman Theatre Site Construction: Adam Bottomley, Michael Bird, Helena Bold-Davies, Delga Martineau, Vince McLoughlin, Daisy Mitchell, John Stenhouse

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