

Mahogany Opera announces two new commissions as part of its award-winning [Snappy Opera](#) programme with partners Hull Music Service and North Tyneside Music Education Hub.

Mahogany Opera has already created ten 10-minute *Snappy Operas* with some of the country's most exciting composers and writers and is excited to announce the commission of two brand new *Snappy Operas*, in partnership with Hull Music Service and North Tyneside Music Education Hub, to expand the set. Composer Raymond Yiu and writer Russell Plows will develop their opera with children from Hull and composer Pippa Murphy and writer Karine Polwart will develop their opera with children from North Tyneside.

A Snappy Opera is developed in collaboration with children through two full days of workshop in schools with composers and writers to explore themes, characters and musical ideas. In response to COVID-19, for the first time, the initial stage of development for these magical new operas will happen remotely.

Mahogany Opera has worked closely with composers, writers and partners in Hull and North Tyneside to create fun, engaging activities to gather material from children with the help of digital platforms. The children will be invited to send in creative responses to themes chosen by the composer and writer. This could be a drawing, photographs they have taken, a poem, audio recording, a short video anything that they feel expresses their personal response to the chosen theme. The composers and writers will then use these to spark ideas for their operas. The activities are exclusive to each area with Raymond Yiu and Russell Plows creating something special just for the children of Hull and Pippa Murphy and Karine Polwart for a group of children from five chosen schools in North Tyneside. Raymond Yiu and Russell Plows will then visit a school in Hull and Pippa Murphy and Karine Polwart will visit Holystone Primary School in North Tyneside in the Autumn term to test out their operas with children from a year 5 class.

The operas will receive their world premieres during Mahogany Opera's Snappy Opera Festival in 2021. The Snappy Opera Festival takes place biennially in a minimum of five regions in the UK engaging 25 different primary schools and over 750 children in a celebration of opera and music making in primary schools.

"Our dream at Mahogany is for every child to experience opera before they leave school; not just to foster a life-long love of music and theatre but because of the incalculably positive affect creative expression can have on young people's lives. Within opera lie the fundamental building blocks of human development and Snappy Operas are the most wonderful learning tools to access this." Frederic Wake-Walker, artistic director, Mahogany Opera

mahoganyopera.co.uk
@mahoganyopera

Snappy Opera trailer:

https://youtu.be/DMK_k8_MODM

These two new Snappy Operas are commissioned in partnership with Hull Music Service and North Tyneside Music Education Hub and kindly supported by Dr Joan Hester and the Finn Family Fund.

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For all press enquiries please contact Ally Rosser, ally@mahoganyopera.co.uk, 07986297456

NOTES TO THE EDITOR

Mahogany Opera is a leading commissioner and producer of opera and music theatre. Collaborating with world-class and emerging artists, Mahogany Opera craft new works and reinvents existing ones. Widely varied influences draw communities into their creative process. Mahogany Opera's productions have toured extensively across the UK and internationally. The company is led by Artistic Director, Frederic Wake-Walker who was awarded Best Director at the inaugural Opera! Awards in 2019.

A Snappy Opera is a ten-minute opera for primary aged children (7-11) which introduces all the essential elements of opera – singing, acting and making – in fun, colourful and bite-size chunks. Each unique opera is designed to be performed by a class sized group of children, divided into groups and accompanied by professional musicians. Working with partners & schools across the UK, Mahogany Opera has collaborated with over 2,500 primary school children from across the country through its Snappy Opera programme.

Additional information about Mahogany Opera & Snappy Operas can be found in the attached document: [Mahogany Opera & Snappy Operas - additional info \(PDF\)](#)

ABOUT THE COMPOSERS AND WRITERS:

Hull commission

Raymond Yiu (composer):



Raymond Yiu is a Hong-Kong born, London-based composer, jazz pianist, conductor and writer on music. He is the winner of a BASCA British Composer Award in 2010 (Northwest Wind), and nominated for the same award in 2004 (Beyond the Glass), 2012 (Les Etoiles au Front) and 2013 (The London Citizen Exceedingly Injured) respectively. Originally trained as an engineer, Yiu was self-taught as a composer until he undertook his DMus under the auspice of Julian Anderson at Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 2009.

His early work received the advocacy of the American composer-pianist-conductor Lukas Foss. He has worked with ensembles and artists including BBC Singers, BBCSO, Chroma, Concorde Ensemble, Ensemble 10/10, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, London Sinfonietta, Lontano and LSO. His 'hugely impressive' (The Guardian) Symphony was commissioned by the BBC, and premiered by countertenor Andrew Watts, BBC Symphony Orchestra and Edward Gardner during the BBC Proms 2015. <http://www.raymondyiu.com/>

Russell Plows (writer):



Russell is the Co-Founder and Artistic Director of Hull Urban Opera, a company in the North which aims to address the lack of home-grown opera in Hull, to create an appetite for the power of opera and to generate a roster of singers which will help sustain it. We make opera accessible by performing high-quality and intriguing work, much of it new, in untraditional spaces which are easy to get to, have no stigma attached and allow comfortable entry for disabled people.

Russell has worked as a guest director across the country and has led workshops on stagecraft and on Samuel Beckett in Hull and at Trinity Laban in London. As well as directing, Russell is also a composer and translator. His opera "Christmas Meeting" was Hull Urban Opera's first production and his translation of Gounod's Romeo & Juliet was commissioned by Riverside Opera in London. <https://russellplows.com/>

North Tyneside commission

Pippa Murphy (composer):



Pippa Murphy is a composer, sound designer and arranger living in Scotland. She has been involved in performances, recordings and installations in the UK and abroad, in many different musical and artistic contexts.

She has written for BBC 2, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 3, Scottish Opera, Celtic Connections, Edinburgh's Hogmanay in St Giles Cathedral, Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival, St Magnus International Festival, National Galleries, Edinburgh International Book Festival and numerous contemporary theatre and dance companies including Dundee Rep, Birmingham Rep, Traverse Theatre, Tron Theatre, Eden Court, Citizens Theatre, 7:84, Dogstar, Stellar Quines, Fire Exit and Janis Claxton Dance. She composed Anamchara with writer Alexander McCall Smith performed by over 100 performers and Scottish Opera as part of the Commonwealth Games at the Theatre Royal, Glasgow. <https://pippamurphy.com/>

Karine Polwart (writer):



BBC Radio 2 Folk Singer Of The Year 2018, Karine Polwart is a multi-award-winning Scottish songwriter and musician, as well as theatre-maker, storyteller, spoken-word performer and published essayist. Her songs combine folk influences and myth with themes as diverse as Donald Trump's corporate megalomania, Charles Darwin's family life and the complexities of modern parenthood. She sings traditional songs too and writes to commission for theatre, animation and thematic collaborative projects. Karine is seven-times winner at the BBC Radio 2 Folk Awards, including three times

for Best Original Song. <https://www.karinepolwart.com/>

Frederic Wake-Walker (Mahogany Opera artistic director):



Recent engagements include a revival of La finta giardiniera with the Teatro alla Scala in Shanghai and his much-anticipated return to Glyndebourne Festival in a new production of Fidelio. Previous opera productions include La Finta Giardiniera (La Scala), Peter Grimes (Oper Koeln), The Messiah (Berlin Philharmonie with Deutsche Symphonie Orchester), and Ariadne auf Naxos (Cleveland Orchestra and La Scala).

He is Artistic Director of Mahogany Opera with whom he has created a number of new works – Folie a Deux by Emily Hall and Sjon (Borealis Festival, Kulturhuset Stockholm, Sakrum Profanum Krakow, Spitalfields Festival London), Lost in Thought by Rolf Hind (Barbican London, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg) and Mozart vs Machine by Dominic Robertson (Folkestone Fringe, High Tide Festival Aldeburgh, Sound Festival Aberdeen).

A major part of his work with Mahogany involves working with children. He has created Snappy Operas with composers including Errollyn Wallen, Philip Venables, Gwyneth Herbert, Kerry Andrew and Stephen Deazley. He has also directed UK tours of Brundibar by Hans Krasa and a new version of Rumpelstiltskin called The Rattler.