

The background of the entire page is a large, abstract expressionist painting of a human face. The face is rendered with thick, visible brushstrokes and a palette of muted colors including greys, blues, pinks, and browns. The eyes are a striking, bright blue. The overall style is reminiscent of early 20th-century expressionist art.

Joseph Phibbs
Laurie Slade librettist

Juliana

Zoe Drummond soprano
Rebecca Afonwy-Jones mezzo soprano
Felix Kemp baritone
Nova Music Opera Ensemble
George Vass conductor

Joseph Phibbs (b.1974)

Laurie Slade *librettist*

Juliana

Chamber opera in one act after August Strindberg

Published by G. Ricordi Limited, London

Zoe Drummond *soprano, Juliana*

Rebecca Afonwy-Jones *mezzo soprano, Kerstin*

Felix Kemp *baritone, Juan*

Nova Music Opera Ensemble

Fiona Kelly *flute*

Catriona Scott *clarinet*

George Barton *percussion*

Sally Pryce *harp*

Sophie Mather & Laura Rickard *violin*

Gemma Wareham *cello*

Ben Daniel-Greep *double bass*

George Vass *conductor*

About George Vass:

'The saviour of contemporary classical music'

BBC Radio 3

'George Vass conducts with committed precision. Playing and recorded sound are both excellent. It's a fascinating achievement, beautifully done'

Gramophone

Juliana (2018)

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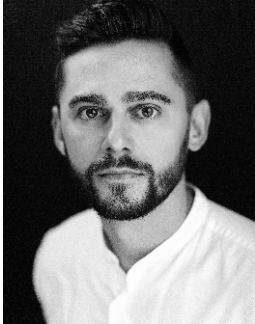
Total playing time [78:43]



Zoe Drummond



Rebecca Afonwy-Jones
(Photography: Tim Dunk)



Felix Kemp
(Photography: Eivind Hansen)



George Vass

Miss Julie

August Strindberg's *Miss Julie* now has iconic status. The first public performance was banned by the censor, so the premier was a private performance at the Students' Association in Copenhagen, on 14 March 1889 – with Strindberg's wife Siri playing Miss Julie. The play aroused horror and revulsion, but Strindberg's staging was highly praised. Later, he wrote a preface for the first published version of the play which was a radical manifesto for a new approach to theatrical production. It still resonates today.

Productions in Berlin and Paris followed. In 1906, *Miss Julie* received a triumphant production on tour in Sweden, and then in Stockholm, where it was applauded by the public and finally recognised by critics as the timeless drama we now know it to be. However, its capacity to shock endured – it was banned in the UK until 1939, and was not published uncensored in Sweden until 1984, almost a century after it was written.

Juliana

In a contemporary setting, the power of aristocracy is replaced by that of plutocracy. Strindberg's Count, an unseen but malevolent presence, becomes the Boss, a multi-millionaire businessman. Miss Julie becomes Juliana, a spoilt little rich girl in thrall to her father. Jean becomes Juan, an immigrant servant, his status insecure – a member of today's under-class. Juliana and Juan live on the edge emotionally. Kerstin, the housekeeper, is caught in a triangular conflict with them both – but she's also a chorus figure, bearing witness to events onstage and off from the more compassionate perspective found in Strindberg's later work.

The role of Juliana is assigned to a soprano, with Kerstin a mezzo and Juan a baritone. While the traditional notion of aria and recitative is not used explicitly, much of the work can be divided into expansive, lyrical meditations on a given situation, while more fleeting, discursive music serves to propel the narrative forward. Recurring instrumental themes often highlight the dramatic context at various points (for example, the natural world, described by Kerstin in the opening, finds expression through a soft, multi-layered string texture; and the Boss's business affairs, as described by Juan in Scene Two, are underpinned with punchy, motoric figuration

in the clarinet and percussion), and these themes attach themselves – often in different guises – to each of the three characters.

The work is through-composed and runs without an interval, its thirteen scenes divided roughly at mid-point by a short instrumental interlude. It is scored for an ensemble of flute (and piccolo), clarinet (and bass clarinet), two violins, cello, double-bass, harp and percussion, a number of whose players are assigned to ‘shadow’ the three roles at various key points: the vibraphone and flute/piccolo in the case of Juliana (as well as her pet canary), the clarinet and percussion with Juan, and strings with Kerstin.

Juliana was jointly commissioned by Nova Music Opera and the Cheltenham and Presteigne festivals, with funding from the John S Cohen Foundation and the Arts Council of Wales. The premiere took place on 15 July 2018 at the Parabola Arts Centre, Cheltenham as part of the 2018 Cheltenham Music Festival.

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Libretto

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Characters

JULIANA

Daughter of a mega-rich global capitalist

JUAN

An immigrant servant

KERSTIN

Cook/housekeeper

BOSS

Juliana’s father – an offstage presence

The kitchen of a mansion near Stockholm. Opens onto a patio with a view over water. Entrances on one side from the rest of the mansion, on the other from the servants’ quarters.

Modern Scandi-style kitchen units and equipment. A kitchen table with chairs. Boss’s shoes on the floor.

1. Scene One *Evening light outside.*

KERSTIN stands at patio entrance. She wears a household uniform.

KERSTIN: Midsummer’s eve.

The long day ends.

Where does it come from

This peace?

Some say it’s a state of mind.

Some say it’s the beauty of nature.

I say it’s a gift

A gift from God.

Juan laughs when I talk of God.

Juan.

Where is he?

Why is he not back?

Offstage – Juliana’s canary trills.

JULIANA *offstage*: Little bird

Little man

Little yellow bird man.

If only real men

Could sing as sweetly as you.

KERSTIN: Juliana?

Why isn’t she

Out with her friends?

Offstage, a speedboat approaches and fades.

Kids on a boat

In the last light

Trailing waves of gold

Radiate carefree delight.

Juliana

Should be out there with them.

She goes to the counter, starts preparing a sandwich.

The speedboat approaches – closer, louder – and fades.

2. Scene Two *Light fading outside.*

JUAN comes from the patio. He wears a dark suit and tie.

JUAN: Hola Kerstina!

The Boss is away.

Left us to play.

He rips off jacket and hangs it on a chair. Rips off his tie.

KERSTIN: Did his flight leave on time?

JUAN: I saw him go through.

KERSTIN: He said you should wait.

JUAN: He’s gone off to make

A million more million

Krona pesetas dollars or pounds

From the sweat of others like us.

JUAN picks up Boss’s shoes.

You lick one boot

I lick the other.

Money is power

Money is freedom

Money makes money

Always more money

Krona pesetas dollars or pounds.

Throws the shoes down.

Que importa?

He’s gone for today

Time for you

To lead me astray.

JUAN chases KERSTIN, tries to kiss her.

KERSTIN puts the sandwich on the table.

KIRSTEN: I made you something to eat.

JUAN: Bonita Kerstina

You know how to keep your man on a string.

Offstage – the canary trills.

Are you waiting for me

To sing the right song

To win you as my mate?

KERSTIN: You say you want me.

But you want her more.

JUAN: Not that spoil little niña.

KERSTIN: Then eat.

JUAN: Está bien!

Bring out the vino.

Soy un Latino!

He sits. She brings an opened bottle and a glass.

Don't force me to drink on my own.

*She gets another glass.
They do a high five.*

Bueno!

JULIANA comes in from the mansion.

3. Scene Three *Twilight outside.*

JULIANA: I'm sorry. It's late.

JUAN stands.

KERSTIN: Can I help you Miss?

JULIANA: Alone in this house
I'm frightened
Nowhere to hide
From the dying light
The gathering darkness
Outside.

KERSTIN: The sun will surely rise tomorrow
And this is the shortest night.

*An arc of sound as they hear the speedboat
approach – closer than before – and fade.*

JULIANA: Can I sit with you?

She looks at JUAN.

JUAN: At your service Miss.

JULIANA: Juliana.
Call me Juliana.

JUAN: As you wish.
Would you like a drink
Juliana?

JULIANA: I thought you would never ask.

She sits – kicks off her sandals.

JUAN: Another glass Kerstin.

He sits. KERSTIN turns away.

Won't you join us?

KERSTIN: Not when I'm serving the Boss's daughter.

JULIANA: Then you can go.

KERSTIN doesn't move.

That's an order.

KERSTIN: I know how you miss your mother
How lonely you've been since she died
No one cares for you the way she did
Though God knows we have all tried
But if you want company
Go to your friends.

Indicating JUAN.

That man walks in shadows.

JULIANA: You're jealous.
KERSTIN: Be careful.

JULIANA: I don't need you
To mother me.
I can mind myself.
Now go.

KERSTIN: As you wish.

She goes off to the servant's quarters.

4. Scene Four *Darkness outside.*

JUAN: You deserve better

Than this cheap vino.

JULIANA: I can do better.

Producing a wrap of cocaine

You do Charlie?
Top grade Charlie?

JUAN: Coca bush is my family tree.

JULIANA: Let's swing from the branches tonight.

JULIANA & JUAN: Let's swing from the branches tonight.

*JUAN tastes the coke.
Rubs it round his gums.
Waits to feel the effect before pronouncing –*

JUAN: Qué rico bazulco!

*He quickly clears the table.
Gets a marble slab.
JULIANA produces a credit card.
JUAN takes the card, chops the
coke on the marble, preparing lines.
JULIANA rolls a banknote.
She snorts.
He takes the roll and snorts.*

JULIANA: I'm brightening up already.
We need music.
Where's the music?

JUAN claps and stamps his foot.

JUAN: I make the music.

5. Dance Sequence
*JUAN claps a rhythm, dances, takes a whistle
from his pocket for accompaniment.
JULIANA dances with him.
They get louder – stamping, clapping.*

KERSTIN (*offstage*): Too loud! Too loud!

JULIANA: Stuff your ears Kerstin!

*They continue dancing.
JULIANA stops.*

JUAN: Que pasa? What?

JULIANA: Too tame. Too tame.
Let's raise our game.

She picks up her credit card – drops it on the floor.

How careless. You dropped my card.

She sits.

Pick it up Juan.

JUAN hesitates.

That's an order.

JUAN: As you wish.

He kneels to pick up the card.

JULIANA: Kiss my foot Juan.

JUAN hesitates.

That's an order.

He kisses her foot.

Suck my toes.

He sucks her toe.

Lick my heel Juan
My calf
My thigh.

*He runs his hand up the back of her leg.
Licks her heel.*

Higher.
Higher.
Higher.
Lick my –

JUAN bites her heel.

Aah!

She slaps him.

You bit me.

JUAN: Where I come from
We have a saying
When the scorpion stings your ankle
You must dance away the pain.

*JUAN pulls her up.
As they dance together –*

When the scorpion stings your ankle!
When the scorpion comes to play!
Stamp the scorpion in the gutter!
Dance the scorpion pain away!

JULIANA: Dance dance –

JULIANA & JUAN: Dance the scorpion pain away!

KERSTIN: (offstage) Too loud!
Too loud!

JULIANA & JUAN: Dance the scorpion pain away!
Dance dance dance
Dance the scorpion pain away.

KERSTIN: (off) Too loud.

JULIANA & JUAN: Dance dance –

KERSTIN comes in.

KERSTIN: Too loud.

JULIANA and JUAN stop.

JULIANA: I ordered you –

JUAN: Cool it Juliana.

He puts his arms round JULIANA.

We make the music.
You are my music.
I am your music.

JUAN & JULIANA: We make the music.
The music.

*They embrace – KIRSTEN watching.
An arc of sound as the speedboat
approaches – even closer – fades.*

KERSTIN: Racing speedboats
In the dark.
Don't they realise the danger?
The rocks?
The treacherous currents out there?

*She sees what's on the table – clears it to the sink.
She looks again at JULIANA and JUAN – lost in each other.*

Don't they realise the danger?

She goes.

*JUAN and JULIANA kiss more passionately.
They become increasingly aroused.
They're onto the table together – intensely sexual.*

6. Scene Five *Moonlight from the patio*
JUAN breaks it.

JUAN: Not here.
JULIANA: Your room is closer.
JUAN: Why hurry?

A gentle kiss.

This was my dream
For this beautiful night
To be here with you.
They gaze at each other.
Beautiful miss
Do you have dreams too?

They gaze at each other.

JULIANA: I dream
I keep dreaming
I'm high on a pillar.
I can't get down.
My senses are spinning
Too frightened to jump
Longing to fall
To bury myself in the earth

They gaze at each other.

JUAN: I dream
I keep dreaming.
I'm under a tree
Trying to climb
To the highest branch
I know there's an infinite view.
But the trunk is too smooth
I can't get a grip
I keep slipping back.

JULIANA: You want to rise.

JUAN: You want to fall.

JULIANA: What if we pass in midair?

JUAN: Then I'll catch you
And hold you

JULIANA: Hold me

JUAN: I'll hold you

JULIANA: I'll hold you

JUAN: We'll stay there

JULIANA & JUAN: Forever
We'll stay there

JUAN: Together we'll stay there

JULIANA/JUAN: We'll stay there together
Stay there forever
Yes
When we meet in midair
We'll stay there forever
Stay there together
Forever together stay there.

Holding hands, they go off to the servants' quarters.

7. Interlude

8. Scene Six *The night is serene.*
*An arc of sound as the speedboat approaches – closer
and louder than ever before.*
A sudden crash.
*KERSTIN runs on, pulling on clothing.
Runs out onto the patio.*

KERSTIN: Dear God.
I knew that would happen.
Racing speedboats in the dark.
What did they think they were doing?

*She runs in, gets a torch from a cupboard.
She sees JULIANA's sandals on the floor.
Looks towards the servants' quarters.*

Dear God
Can't you save us
From the danger we are to each other
The damage we do to ourselves?

Runs off from the patio.

9. Scene Seven *The serenity of the night returns.
First light of dawn.
JULIANA comes on – dressed, hair a mess. Puts on her
sandals. Offstage – the canary trills.*

JULIANA: Little bird
Little man
Little yellow bird man
Is this my new start?
Midsummer morning
A new day dawning
When I'm happy to be alive?
It feels too good to be true.
Can I rise
Without falling
Soar high
Without stalling?

JUAN comes on – wearing t-shirt and jeans.

Have I found a man
Who sings as sweetly as you?

They kiss.

JUAN: Vamos. Lets go.

JULIANA: Where are we going?

JUAN: South to the Med
South to the sun.
Anywhere

So long as I'm with you.

JULIANA: What
What will we do?

JUAN: Start a business together
A café or bar.

JULIANA: I guess I will need
Some suitable outfits to wear.

JUAN: We must travel light.

JULIANA: I guess that presents
A new kind of challenge for me.

*JULIANA goes off to mansion.
JUAN goes off to servants' quarters.*

JUAN & JULIANA: (*offstage – opposite sides*)
Travelling light
Together forever
Independent and free.

10. Scene Eight *Daylight strengthens.
KERSTIN appears at the patio entrance.*

KERSTIN: Two lie dead
Dead on the shore.
One girl
One boy
Dead on the shore.
Youth and joy are no more.
The loss.
The waste.
Two lie dead.
Dead on the shore.

JUAN returns. He carries a grubby backpack and leather jacket

JUAN: Hola Kerstina.
This is goodbye.

KERSTIN: Where are you going?

JUAN: Give me one last kiss.

KERSTIN: I'm too tired
To play games like this.
Two lie dead
Dead on the shore.

JUAN: What's it to you?

KERSTIN: There was nothing for them I could do.

She goes.

11. Scene Nine *Reality dawns
Offstage – the canary trills.
JULIANA returns, smartened up. Carries a designer
holdall, a jacket, and a cage with the canary.*

JULIANA: Vamos.
Let's go.

JUAN stares at her baggage.

I'm travelling light.

JUAN: With a bird in a cage?

JULIANA: I can't leave
My little yellow bird-man.

The canary trills.

JUAN: Impossible.

JULIANA: If I leave him here
Papa will make him suffer.
I'd rather kill him myself.

JUAN takes the cage – sets it on the table.

What are you doing?

*She watches with mounting horror and excitement,
as JUAN gets a kitchen cleaver.
He takes the canary from the cage.
The canary trills with increasing agitation.
JUAN chops off its head.
Blood on the table.*

JULIANA: Aah!

JUAN: Free.
Your yellow bird-man
Is now free.

JULIANA sits – stunned.

JULIANA: Yellow
Bird
Man

JUAN: Is now free.

*JUAN tears off sheets of kitchen-paper. He wraps
remains of the canary, uses the bundle to wipe the
table, dumps bundle in a waste bin.*

Vamos.
It's our turn.

She stares at him.

Let's go.

JULIANA stands.

JULIANA: As you wish.

JUAN: Have you cards?
Your passport and cash?

JULIANA: You want cards?
Here they are.
They won't last long.



Papa will stop them all.
You want cash
I found this
In Papa's desk drawer.

JUAN: You have no cash of your own?

JULIANA: I have what he gives me
When he finds me gone
Papa will stop it all.

JUAN: Mierda!

JULIANA: You said
You will care for me
Said we'll be
Together forever and free.

JUAN: Without money?
What do we live on?

JULIANA: So you only want me
For my money.

JUAN: You
I want you
To live with you
Marry you

JULIANA: For my passport and money.
You don't want me
Not me.

JUAN: If I can't have it with you
I'll have it without you
I'll work for myself
I'll have it without you.

JULIANA: You want what you want.
You don't want me.
Not me.

JUAN: We're not going anywhere.

JULIANA: No.

12. Scene Ten *Daylight strengthens*

JULIANA: So remember
You're still my servant.
I am your mistress.
Do as I say.
You will run
You will jump.
You will kneel if I say so.

JUAN: Juliana

JULIANA: Miss
Call me Miss.
Down on your knees.
That's an order.

JUAN: I cannot kneel
To any woman I've screwed.
Don't think
You can crack the whip at me.

JULIANA: Don't think you can disobey me.
Down.
Down.
Down on your knees.
That's an order.
Remember who's Boss
Papa's the Boss
He'll have you deported -

JUAN tenses.

Back to Bolivia –

He reacts fiercely.

Isn't Bolivia

A nice place to be?

JUAN: You think it's nice
To live in Bolivia?

He laughs.

I was born in San Pedro
That's in La Paz
A prison that's like a town.
My dad was a convict
My mother lived with him
I grew up as a dealer
Kids make good dealers
They're cunning and quick
But I was too smart
I grew up and grew greedy
I stitched up the big guys
They told me there was
A lesson I needed to learn.
When my birthday came round
They sent me a box
And I found in the box
My mother's head –

JULIANA: Stop!

JUAN: A message
Stuck in her mouth
'La prosima es tuya'.
'The next head is yours.'

JULIANA: Stop!
You're making this up.
Stop making this up.

JUAN: What's it to you
If I'm truthful or lie?
What's it to you
If I live or I die?
I'm only your servant
Your alien servant

Here to take orders
What are your orders
What are your orders today
Miss?

JULIANA: Juliana.
Please.

JUAN: That country
Murdered my mother.
They'll murder me
If I give them the chance.
I will never go back.
Nunca!
Nunca!
Never!

JULIANA: I'm sorry.
Please
Please forgive me.
I'm sorry.

She kneels.

I kiss your foot.

She kisses his foot.

I want you
I need you
To stay alive
Need your strength
Your will to survive.
Write your desires on my body
Take control of my mind
I'll do what you want
Be what you want
As you wish
As you please
At your service.

They come together with increasing erotic intensity.

13. Scene Eleven *Retribution threatens*
Smartphone rings.
JUAN has the phone in his pocket – takes the call.

JUAN: Yes Boss?

He pushes JULIANA away.

Le pido perdon.
I should have waited.

He cuts the call.

Papa's flight was delayed
His meeting's been cancelled.
He's on his way back.

Picks up his backpack and jacket.

JULIANA: Don't leave me.

JUAN: Get that cash
Back in his desk
Before I'm accused of taking it.

JUAN goes off into the servants' quarters.

JULIANA: Don't leave me to Papa.

JUAN: Remember who's Boss

(offstage) Papa's the Boss.

Alone onstage, JULIANA feels overwhelmed.

JULIANA: Mama!
Mama!
Why did you leave me?
Why did you leave me to him?

She weeps.

Mama
Can't hear me
Mama
Can't save me
Save me from Papa –

Her weeping subsides.

He says I'm her living image
He dresses me
In her clothes
I take her place
At receptions and parties
Nights at the opera
In hotel suites
And nights back here
In their room
On their bed
He strips me slowly –

She freezes for a moment –

If I try
If I cry
If I tell him to stop
Stop stop stop
He says he'll destroy me
Says I'll have nothing
Be nothing
I'm nothing
Juliana the junkie
Juliana the whore
I'm dirty
Disgusting
A mess
I'm a miss
Off the scale
Don't exist
I'm nothing.
Nothing.

14. Scene Twelve *Daylight brightens*
– the sun coming up.
JUAN comes back – wears his suit trousers,
clean shirt, knotted tie. Carries a razor.

JUAN: Cut loose
From that animal pervertido.
JULIANA: I can't.
JUAN: Fly free.

JUAN lays the razor on the table in front of her.

Like your little yellow birdman.

JULIANA: You mean?

JUAN indicates the line of the radial artery in each arm.

Does it hurt?

JUAN takes a bottle of brandy from a cupboard.
Puts it on the table beside the razor.

JUAN: Run a hot bath.
Knock back some pills.
Down them with brandy.
Relax in the foam
The comforting steam.
Let your thoughts drift.
Let yourself dream.
You're floating
Flying
You're happy you're dying.
Cut clean.
Cut deep.
If it hurts
Take the hit.
Pain is the price of freedom.

JULIANA closes the door of the cage.

JULIANA: Little bird

Little man
Little yellow bird man
Yes I found a man.

She kisses her hand and holds it up to JUAN.
He kisses his hand and touches hers.

JUAN: Adiós.

She picks up the brandy, the razor, her bag, and goes.
He has a sudden pang, calls after her –

Be brave!
Be brave
Juliana!

15. Scene Thirteen *Morning light.*

KERSTIN: *(offstage)* Midsummer morning.
No trace of a breeze
On the desolate bay.
The stillness of grief
When God turns his face away.

JUAN gets newspaper and boot polish, lays them on the floor.
He takes the Boss's shoes, sits, and begins applying
polish to one shoe.

JUAN: I'm sorry Boss.
She was lonely.
Depressed.
I didn't get
She was in such pain.
Couldn't cope
Lost all hope
I blame duff cocaine.
High on trash
She was bound to crash
Didn't you know?
She was hooked.

Takes the other shoe.

Kerstin and me
We did what we could
To cheer her up
But she ordered us to bed.
We couldn't start ordering her instead.

Switches brushes, starts buffing the first shoe

I didn't get
She'd taken my razor.
I didn't get
She'd do something crazier.
I'm sorry Boss.
I'm sorry.

He switches shoes, buffing and spitting

Money is power. *(spit)*
Money is freedom. *(spit)*
Money makes money. *(spit)*
Always more money. *(spit)*

His phone rings. He answers.

Yes Boss?

KERSTIN comes from the servants' quarters, in her uniform.

As you wish.

He cuts the call.

KERSTIN: Still here?

JUAN puts on his jacket, picks up the shoes.

I heard the Boss come in.
I'll make him his –

She sees the cage.

What's this
Blood on the table?
What have you done?

She picks up a cloth and wipes the table.

JUAN: Miss Juliana
Said she was not to be disturbed.
Leave her waking
For the Boss.

He goes off into the mansion.

*KERSTIN looks at blood on the cloth – more than
ever came from the canary.*

KERSTIN: What have you done?

The thought overwhelms her.

[Ends]

Joseph Phibbs (composer)

Joseph Phibbs was born in London, and studied at the Purcell School, King's College London, and Cornell University. His teachers have included Param Vir, Sir Harrison Birtwistle and Steven Stucky.

Described by *BBC Music Magazine* as 'one of the most successful composers of his generation', his works have been premiered by leading conductors including Edward Gardner, Gianandrea Noseda, Sakari Oramo, Vassily Petrenko, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Leonard Slatkin. *Rivers to the Sea* received widespread critical acclaim following its premiere, later winning a British Composer Award, and was the first of three orchestral commissions for the Philharmonia Orchestra over the last decade, the most recent being a Clarinet Concerto for Mark van de Wiel.

Other orchestras and ensembles which have performed his music include LSO, London Sinfonietta, Britten Sinfonia, and BBC Symphony Orchestra, for which he has written five major works to date, including *Lumina* (Last Night of the Proms) and *Partita*. Chamber works include three string quartets, the most recent received its premiere at Carnegie Hall in 2018 by Belcea Quartet, a Violin Sonata (2020) and a Cello Sonata for Guy Johnston and Melvyn Tan (2021). His

choral music is performed regularly by leading choirs around the world, including The Sixteen and Tenebrae.

Laurie Slade (librettist)

Laurie Slade was born and raised in Kenya. Theatre has always been a central focus in his life. He initially qualified as a lawyer, but postponed starting a legal career to work his Equity ticket as stage manager in monthly rep. He went on to stage manage at Chichester, in the West End and with London Weekend Television. Since then he has worked in other fields, in Kenya and the UK, as a teacher, lawyer and as a psychotherapist in private practice in West London.

His writing includes: Theatre: *The Liberty Truck* (Middle Temple Hall, 2018); New versions of Strindberg's *The Father* (Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, 2012 and Trafalgar Studios, London, 2015) and *Gogol's Marriage* (Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, 2013); *The Specimen* (Drill Hall, London, 2010); *Joe & I* (King's Head, London, 2005); two pieces based on the African writing of Karen Blixen: *Out of Africa* (Phoenix Theatre, Nairobi, 1988) and *Tales from Karen* (Karen House, Nairobi, 1996). Radio: *The Father* (BBC Radio 3, 2013). Forthcoming: *Supermoon* (scheduled for production by Presence Theatre in 2022).

Rebecca Afonwy-Jones (mezzo soprano) studied at the Guildhall School, London and in 2010, graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland with a Masters degree. She began her career at Scottish Opera, in the title role of *Carmen*, subsequently making her company debut for Opera North at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2012. In 2013, Rebecca made her debut for Welsh National Opera as Countess Geschwitz (*Lulu*) and was invited to remain with the company as their associate artist, returning as a guest in their acclaimed Elijah Moshinsky production of *Cavalleria Rusticana*. She has made notable debuts for Grange Park Opera, Festival Opera New Zealand and in the Longborough Festival *Der Ring des Nibelungen* as Wellgunde, which culminates in 2024.

Other engagements include the premiere of Joseph Phibbs' *Juliana* for Nova Music Opera at the Cheltenham Festival, the British premiere of Mendelssohn's realisation of Handel's *Israel in Egypt* at the Three Choirs Festival, *The Dream of Gerontius* for the RTÉ and Falla's *El sombrero de tres picos* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Rebecca has been artist-in-residence at the Presteigne Festival and sang in the world premiere of Oliver Tanney's *St Mark Passion* at the St Endellion

Festival. She enjoys a close partnership with the Norwegian Wind Ensemble, with whom she has recorded Handel's *Messiah*, conducted by David Hill for Resonus Classics. Rebecca has also recorded Judith Weir's special commission *Sleeping-Mat Ballad*. She performs regularly for the JAM on the Marsh Festival, most recently in a virtual recital broadcast with pianist Anna Tilbrook. Rebecca's latest release on Resonus, Hugh Wood's *Beginnings* with the Presteigne Festival Orchestra conducted by George Vass, was selected as a *Sunday Times* CD of the Week.

Australian soprano **Zoe Drummond** made her international debut with English National Opera in 2019 stepping in to perform Papagena *The Magic Flute*. She has performed Clorinda *La Cenerentola* for West Green House Opera, the lead role of Giroflé in pastiche operetta *Two Weddings, One Bride* for Opera Australia, and Despina *Così fan tutte* for Waterperry Opera Festival. This year Zoe covered Sophie and performed the role of Adelige Waisen in *Der Rosenkavalier* for Garsington Opera, Woglinde *The RhineGold* for Birmingham Opera Company and Fiametta *The Gondoliers* for Scottish Opera. She is a graduate of London's Guildhall School, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, the Melba Opera Trust and is the proud winner of the 2018 Australian Singing Competition.

Felix Kemp (baritone) has worked with companies including the Royal Opera Covent Garden, English National Opera, Welsh National Opera, British Youth Opera, English Touring Opera, Grange Park Opera, Longborough Festival Opera and Wexford Festival Opera. His repertoire includes Papageno *Die Zauberflöte*, Masetto *Don Giovanni*, Malatesta *Don Pasquale*, title role *Eugene Onegin*, Don Fernando *Fidelio*, Giove *La Calisto*, Spencer Coyle *Owen Wingrave* and Melot *Tristan und Isolde*.

Felix appears regularly in concert at venues including Cadogan Hall, Holywell Music Room, Royal Festival Hall, Snape Maltings and at cathedrals throughout the UK. His repertoire includes the Bach passions, requiems of Brahms, Mozart and Verdi, Handel's *Messiah* and Mendelssohn *Elijah*. He has performed with ensembles including Britten Sinfonia, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the Israel Camerata Jerusalem.

A Britten-Pears Young Artist and a Momentum Artist, Felix performs recitals for festivals including Oxford Lieder and London Song. Felix has recorded the roles of Pierrot in Ethel Smyth's *Fête Galante* (Retrospect) and The Herald in Stanford's *The Travelling Companion* (Somm). He has also broadcast for BBC Radio 3.

Respected English conductor **George Vass** studied at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire and at London's Royal Academy of Music. In 1992, he was appointed Artistic Director of the internationally renowned Presteigne Festival in Wales, is founder Artistic Director of Nova Music Opera and Orchestra Nova.

As a guest conductor he has worked with the BBC NOW and the Bournemouth Symphony, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, Royal Scottish National and Ulster orchestras and has broadcast for BBC Radio 3; his ever-expanding discography includes over thirty commercial recordings for Dutton, Guild, Champs Hill, Lyrita, Naxos, SOMM and Toccatà of works by British composers.

In his dual career as conductor and festival director, Vass maintains a strong interest in the performance and promotion of contemporary music. Over the last thirty-five years he has commissioned and premiered a variety of new works from composers including Martin Butler, Gabriel Jackson, Paweł Łukaszewski, David Matthews, John McCabe, Cecilia McDowall, Paul Patterson, Robert Saxton, Peter Sculthorpe, Huw Watkins and Hugh Wood.

For the opera stage, Vass premiered Thomas Hyde's *That Man Stephen Ward* (Hampstead and Highgate Festival, 2008; Nova Music



Joseph Phibbs
(Photography: Malcolm Crowthers)

Opera revival, 2015) and for Nova Music Opera: Sally Beamish *Hagar in the Wilderness* (2013), Stephen McNeff *Prometheus Drown'd* (2014), Cecilia McDowall *Airborne* (2014), Charlotte Bray *Entanglement* (2015), Joseph Phibbs *Juliana* (2018) and Luke Styles/Benjamin Britten *Awakening Shadow* (2021). He has also conducted *Curlew River* (Nova Music Opera, 2013; Hampstead and Highgate Springfest, 2009) and *Savitri* (Nova Music, English Music Festival, 2010).

Nova Music Opera

A relatively young organisation, Nova Music Opera has established itself as a leading commissioner of new work, working with singers and instrumentalists of the highest calibre. Its focus being on artistic excellence and simple production, but always with music at its heart.

The brainchild of respected conductor and festival director, George Vass, and founding producer Alison Porter, Nova Music Opera presented its first independent fully-staged production at the 2010 English Music Festival – Gustav Holst's *Savitri*, performed together with Frederick Delius's incidental music to Hassan.

Nova Music Opera began a long-standing relationship with director Richard Williams

in 2013, when it celebrated the Britten centenary with a national tour of *Curlew River* and a specially commissioned companion piece from Sally Beamish – *Hagar in the Wilderness*. The company has gone on to successfully commission and premier a collection of chamber operas from British composers: Charlotte Bray *Entanglement* (2015), Cecilia McDowall *Airborne* (2014), Stephen McNeff *Prometheus Drown'd* (2014), Joseph Phibbs *Juliana* (2018) and Luke Styles/Benjamin Britten *Awakening Shadow* (2021). The company has performed at St John's Smith Square, LSO St Luke's, the Cheltenham, Canterbury, Presteigne and St Andrew's Voices festivals, at the Barber Institute in Birmingham and for Music at Oxford.

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Cover image: Detail from *Head of a Woman* by Alvar Cawén (1886–1935)

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