



ROYAL
OPERA

MUSIC DIRECTOR **SIR ANTONIO PAPPANO**
DIRECTOR OF OPERA **OLIVER MEARS**

ALCINA

OPERA IN THREE ACTS

MUSIC **GEORGE FRIDERIC HANDEL**
LIBRETTO **ANTONIO MARCHI** AFTER LUDOVICO ARIOSTO'S *ORLANDO FURIOSO*

PERFORMANCE MATERIALS FOR *ALCINA* EDITED BY SIEGFRIED FLESCHE,
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CONDUCTOR **CHRISTIAN CURNYN**

DIRECTOR **RICHARD JONES**
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ORCHESTRA OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE
CONCERT MASTER **SERGEY LEVITIN**

A CO-PRODUCTION WITH THE METROPOLITAN OPERA, NEW YORK

8 | 10 | 14 | 18 | 22 | 26 MAT NOVEMBER 2022

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Music preparation
RICHARD HETHERINGTON,
ANDREW GRIFFITHS,
MARK PACKWOOD,
EDMUND WHITEHEAD,
ERIKA GUNDESEN,
BERNARD ROBERTSON,
ANDRÉ CALLEGARO*

Assistant Directors
DANIEL DOONER,
MATHILDA DU TILLIEUL MCNICOL*

Language Coach
EMMA ABBATE

Surtitle translation and Surtitler
KATY READER

Assistant to the Movement Director
BRIDGET LAPPIN

Sound effect
SARAH ANGLISS

Opera Stage Management
EMMA TURNER,
SARAH WALING,
ELLEN DAWSON,
TOBIAS MILLARD,
JESSICA STANTON

Production Manager
SARAH O'CONNOR

Assistant Production Manager
LUCY KEVILL

Model Room Draughtsperson
WILL RAWLINS

Costume Production Manager
SHARON MARLOWE

Assistant Costume Production Manager
EMMA HOLLOWS

Scenery construction and painting
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DASHA POMERANZ @ MRS POMERANZ.COM,
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STEN VOLLMULLER,
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WELCOME



This production of *Alcina* is the latest in The Royal Opera's cycle of works by Handel that the composer wrote for Covent Garden. In this opera, Handel was inspired both by the possibilities of a brand-new theatre and by his collaboration with John Rich – who encouraged him to

incorporate magic, spectacle and dance (the latter provided by the pioneering dancer and choreographer, Marie Sallé). The result was one of his most beguiling and extraordinary creations. It was also one of the earliest Handel works to be revived at the Royal Opera House, in a famous 1962 production starring Joan Sutherland and directed by Franco Zeffirelli.

Richard Jones's new production, designed by Antony McDonald, embraces the colour, humour and extravagance of the work's origins while finding space for a deeper psychological exploration of one of Handel's most fascinating characters. Christian Curnyn conducts a fine cast including Lisette Oropesa, Emily D'Angelo, Mary Bevan, Varduhi Abrahamyan, Rupert Charlesworth and José Coca Loza.

We would like to thank Julia and Hans Rausing, The Estate of Mrs Gertrude Mary Looi, Charles Holloway and the Royal Opera House Endowment Fund for their generous philanthropic support of this production.



Oliver Mears, Director of Opera*
Antonio Pappano, Music Director of The Royal Opera**

*Position generously supported by SIR MICK AND LADY BARBARA DAVIS
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CAST

ALCINA

An enchantress
LISETTE OROPESA

RUGGIERO

Alcina's lover,
Bradamante's husband
EMILY D'ANGELO

MORGANA

Alcina's sister, romantically
involved with Oronte
MARY BEVAN

BRADAMANTE

Ruggiero's wife, disguised
as her brother, 'Ricciardo'
VARDUHI ABRAHAMYAN

ORONTE

Alcina's steward,
in love with Morgana
RUPERT CHARLESWORTH

ATLANTE

Ruggiero's elder, disguised
as 'Melisso', a sailor
JOSÉ COCA LOZA

OBERTO

A boy, searching for his father,
Astolfo
MALAKAI M BAYOH
8 | 14 | 22 NOV
RAFAEL FLUTTER
10 | 18 | 26 MAT NOV

DANCERS

ASHLEY BAIN
LAUREN BRIDLE
JORDAN CORK
SEBASTIEN KAPPS
BRIDGET LAPPIN
MICHAEL LARCOMBE
GARETH MOLE
RYAN MUNROE
LUKE MURPHY
ANTHONY PEREIRA
JAY YULE

CONTINUO ENSEMBLE

Cello
HETTY SNELL

Theorbo
SERGIO BUCHELI
ELIGIO LUIS QUINTEIRO

Harpsichord
ANDREW GRIFFITHS
BERNARD ROBERTSON



SYNOPSIS

Alcina, an enchantress, has lured many lovers to her island. When she tires of them, she transforms them into animals. Ruggiero is her latest lover – and his wife, Bradamante, has vowed to rescue him.

ACT I

Bradamante has disguised herself as her brother, Ricciardo, and travelled to Alcina's island with Atlante, who is disguised as 'Melisso', a sailor. They are greeted by Morgana, Alcina's sister, who is immediately attracted to 'Ricciardo'. Alcina tells the visitors they may stay on the island, and expresses her love for Ruggiero. They meet Oberto, a boy. Oberto is searching for his father Astolfo (Bradamante's cousin). Bradamante and 'Melisso' suspect the boy's father has been turned into a wild animal by Alcina.

When Bradamante and 'Melisso' question Ruggiero about his former life, Ruggiero – who has only a dim memory of Bradamante – scorns them. Morgana and her jealous lover, Oronte, argue fiercely; Bradamante recognizes her own feelings of resentment and pain in their dispute. Fuelled by his jealousy, Oronte tells Ruggiero that Alcina loves 'Ricciardo', hoping Ruggiero will rid him of his perceived rival.

Enraged by Oronte's malicious charge, Ruggiero lashes out at Alcina, who is hurt by his accusation. Alcina assures Ruggiero of her love, but he is tormented by doubt. 'Melisso' barely prevents the unhappy Bradamante from revealing her true identity to Ruggiero. Ruggiero, who is now deeply uncertain of Alcina's love, decides that 'Ricciardo' is half-mad with desire for Alcina, and insists that he, Ruggiero, and Alcina are passionate lovers with eyes only for each other. Oronte's plan has worked: Alcina intends to prove her love for Ruggiero by turning 'Ricciardo' into a beast. Morgana warns Bradamante to escape and rejoices in her love for 'Ricciardo'.

ACT II

'Melisso' reveals himself as Atlante. This jogs Ruggiero's memory, and makes him realise the extent of Bradamante's suffering. Ruggiero's love for Bradamante is reawakened, and he longs to leave the island and see her again. However, during his reunion with his wife, Ruggiero is suddenly seized with doubts: he suspects that Bradamante is Alcina in disguise and rejects her. Bradamante is infuriated.

Alone, Ruggiero is torn between Alcina's enchantments and his newly-remembered love for Bradamante. Alcina prepares to transform 'Ricciardo' into a beast but is interrupted by Morgana and Ruggiero, who insists there is no need for her to prove her love in this way. Alcina withdraws her spell. With Alcina's permission, Ruggiero leaves to go hunting, ambiguously declaring his devotion to his lover.

To Alcina's dismay, Oronte informs her that Ruggiero has left her. Morgana refuses to believe Oronte when he informs her that 'Ricciardo' is leaving too – and she rejects him again. Morgana witnesses the happy reunion of Ruggiero and 'Ricciardo'. As Ruggiero bids farewell to the island, Alcina tries to prevent him from leaving with a spell, but her powers have abandoned her.

ACT III

Morgana begs for Oronte's forgiveness, but Oronte is conflicted. Ruggiero meets Alcina and explains why he must leave. Ruggiero defeats Alcina's forces in battle. As Alcina's powers wane, Oberto denounces her. Bradamante vows to remain on the island until all Alcina's victims have been restored to freedom.

All approach the urn that protects her magical powers. With Bradamante, Atlante, Oronte and the animals beside him, Ruggiero smashes the urn. The island's enchanted creatures – including Oberto's father Astolfo – are restored. They celebrate their return to human form, and ponder the loss of the animal ways that they have experienced.

‘A NECROMANCER IN THE MIDST OF HIS ENCHANTMENTS’: MAGIC AS METAPHOR IN HANDEL’S *ALCINA*

Alexandra Coghlan



In April 1735 Handel began rehearsals for a new opera. Mary Pendarves – a keen supporter and cultural observer – looked on as the composer accompanied his leading soprano at the keyboard, and was struck by what she saw. Writing in a letter she explained: ‘Whilst Mr Handel was playing his part, I couldn’t help but think him a necromancer in the midst of his own enchantments...’

It’s a striking choice of image – the composer as sorcerer, conjuring not just sounds but illusions from his fingers – but also a curious one. For Handel here is not just any sorcerer but a necromancer, a sinister figure whose particular business was the reanimation of the dead.

If Italian opera in London wasn’t quite cold in its grave in 1735, it was certainly in its death-throes. Just six years later Handel would premiere *Deidamia*, his final example of the genre, before shifting his focus entirely to oratorio. *Alcina* reflects the priorities of an artist-impresario forced to battle ever harder to fill his theatres; a composer fighting for his artistic life.

The city that had welcomed the arrival of a young Handel and his first London opera *Rinaldo* in 1711 was a very different prospect to that which the veteran composer now faced. For more than two decades Handel had enjoyed a near monopoly in Italian opera, turning it from foreign novelty into home-grown fashion, successfully seeing off the competition until his own works and enterprises were all but ubiquitous.

But discontent – both among Handel’s singers and his aristocratic patrons – began to build. ‘There is a spirit got up against the Dominion of Mr Handel,’ John West, the 2nd Earl De La Warr, wrote to the Duke of Richmond in January 1733, ‘a subscription carry’d on and Directors chosen...’ From the funds raised by these new subscriptions, a rival company – the Opera of the Nobility – was born, championed by the Prince of Wales and headed by none other than Senesino, Handel’s star castrato at the Royal Academy of Music.

By 1735 the difficulties had intensified. Not only was Handel now forced to share London’s audience, that audience itself was dwindling, passion for Italian opera on the turn. John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera* (1728) had caught the public imagination, offering theatre-goers a viable English-language alternative to the Italian opera it so pointedly satirised. But it was as much a product as the cause of shifting tastes. Handel himself confessed to Charles Jennens that ‘There is no certainty of any scheme for next season,’ while later that year *The Old Whig* newspaper reported that ‘Handel...has this Winter sometimes performed to an almost empty Pitt,’ speculating as to the ‘great sum’ of his losses. Charles Burney, meanwhile, estimated his rivals’ losses (the Opera of the Nobility barely survived its own coup, and was itself dissolved in 1737) at a vast £12,000.

This was the backdrop to *Alcina* – Handel’s biggest success of the Season and, perhaps not coincidentally, his final ‘magic opera.’ Sorcery had been a regular theme in his early London operas – at the forefront in *Rinaldo*, *Teseo* and *Amadigi*. Now, chasing an audience hungry for sensation and novelty, with all the cutting-edge technical tools of John Rich’s Covent Garden Theatre newly at his disposal, Handel returned to the fantastical, the exotic, the magical.



Pendarves's image, and its elision of music and magic, is typical of the age. French author Abbé Prevost, writing at a similar time, speaks of the 'spell' that draws London's audiences to celebrated castrato Farinelli, while Handel's earliest biographer John Mainwaring, speaking of the conflict rife among England's newly formed political parties at the turn of the century, describes the composer as 'a person capable of charming down, by the magic of his melody, that evil spirit of faction and party which fortunes seem, at this time, to have conjured up...' The anonymous 'Philharmonick' of *The Grub-Street Journal* goes one step further in his verses, comparing the opera's heroine to its composer. 'Or she improves his wondrous lay / Or he by a superior spell / Does greater melody convey,' he writes. Here Handel and his sorceress Alcina become one: musical creator and creation two symbiotic halves of a single magical whole.

It's an idea borne out by the opera itself – a piece whose headlines may appear to be the barren desert transfigured before our eyes into a verdant island paradise, a sea that floods the stage and men transformed into animals – but whose interest is less in the spectacle of magic than its psychology and symbolism. Just as Handel's contemporaries

discuss music in terms of enchantment, so here we see the composer doing the reverse: using magic to speak of music.

Handel scholar Winton Dean writes of *Alcina*: 'The magic is no mere scaffold to support the plot; the flavour of enchantment...suffuses the entire score.' Where do we hear it? Most obviously in the glitter of Morgana's 'Tornami a vagheggiar' (Return to me swiftly), Ruggerio's musical transfiguration from lover back to warrior, but more subtly in Alcina's own music. The collapse of her supernatural power is mirrored in a vivid musical collapse that takes her from the structural certainty of da capo arias in Act I through the complete disintegration of form of Act II. Aria gives way to free-form arioso and recitative, culminating in the 'Ombre pallide' (Pale shadows) sequence; just as the spirits refuse to answer the sorceress's summons, so musical authority also abandons her, leaving Alcina darting down harmonic blind-alleys, clutching at melodies that dissolve in her grip.

And then there's Ruggiero's 'Verdi prati' (Verdant meadows), the aria over which Handel famously went to war with Carestini. Burney and others describe the castrato's violent disdain for



its simplicity – hardly an obvious showpiece or star-vehicle – but also the composer's adamant insistence that it remain. Why?

In an opera unusually wedded to musical form – every aria follows either *da capo* or *dal segno* structure – closed forms that return, respectively, to the start (ABA), and to a set point (ABA1) – 'Verdi prati' is the sole exception. That this strikingly simple, exquisite rondo should fall at the moment that the knight is freed from Alcina's spell, renouncing the illusory pleasures of her island, is surely no coincidence. If the closed form of the *da capo* aria – all artifice and artful suspension of disbelief – is the essential building-block of *opera seria*, then to step outside it is to break the fourth wall. The shattering of the urn in the final scene may mark Alcina's official defeat, but this musical disintegration is the moment it becomes inevitable.

Despite Carestini's reservations, 'Verdi prati' proved itself a showstopper after all. But it's not just about the aria's beauty; it's the tension within it, the battle we hear playing out between that seductive refrain and each musical episode in which Ruggiero tries to turn away. It seems to mirror the conflict of a composer preparing to quit the theatre – far from willingly.

After the urn is shattered, Alcina's victims are restored to their original human form, coming together in the final chorus 'Dopo tante amare pene' (After so many bitter pains) in which (they sing) suffering gives way to consolation, evil to good. The music Handel writes for this joyful moment of triumph is striking. There isn't another page like it in all the score: a relentless sequence of crotchets in all parts, moving rigidly up and down a scale (then up and down again). A less convincing setting would be hard to imagine. Rationality and enlightenment may have won the day, magic will give way to truth, opera to oratorio, sorceresses to prophets. But there is no real victory here, just the hollow musical laugh of a composer and his last – and greatest – enchantress.

— Alexandra Coghlan is a music journalist, critic and author, writing for publications including *The i Paper*, *Prospect*, *The Spectator*, *Opera* and *Gramophone* magazines. She has given lectures and written programme notes for the Barbican, Salzburg Festival, Scottish Opera, ENO and The Royal Opera, and makes regular appearances on Radio 3 and 4. She is Glyndebourne's Opera Specialist.

MR HANDEL AT COVENT GARDEN

Adrian Mourby

George Frideric Handel arrived in London in 1712. A popular story runs that this young Hanoverian law-student-turned-composer had fallen out with George the Elector of Hanover who had appointed him Kapellmeister. Finding the post a dull cul-de-sac, Handel sought employment elsewhere. Initially he took himself to Italy, but probably his eye was always on London. As the German composer Johann Mattheson wrote in 1713:

‘In Italy and France there is something to be heard and learned; in England something to be earned.’

London, post-Restoration and Great Fire, was growing rapidly thanks to its increasing domination of international maritime trade. There was indeed money to be earned, partly because the land-owning aristocracy had their winter homes in the city. The British nobility – unlike many of their European counterparts – wielded very little actual power. So they enjoyed themselves, spending money in Jermyn Street and St James; and seeking out entertainment in the city’s theatres and music halls.

A theatre had stood on Drury Lane since 1663. Vanbrugh’s Queen’s Theatre opened in 1705 and the more obscure Lincoln’s Inn Theatre had been

founded in 1660. There was intense competition between these venues. What mattered most – even more than securing aristocratic patronage – was staging the next opera that would dominate the public discourse. Handel’s contemporaries knew that they could quite happily re-use music from their previous works because they were soon forgotten in this insatiable and musically disposable society.

Into this maelstrom of music and rampant entrepreneurship strode the 27-year-old Handel at the invitation of the Earl of Manchester. He quickly made a good impression. After composing a *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* (1713) to celebrate the Peace Treaty of Utrecht, Handel was rewarded with £200 a year by Queen Anne.

For much of his time in London, Handel was regarded as the premier composer of Italian baroque opera. He soon entered a partnership with the Swiss entrepreneur John Jacob Heidegger whose Queen’s Theatre, Haymarket (soon to be renamed The King’s after that same Hanoverian Elector, George I) had staged Handel’s *Rinaldo* even before the composer arrived in England. 24 operas followed at Haymarket, ending in January 1734 with *Ariana in Creta*, after which Handel and Heidegger dissolved their partnership. Many theories exist about why the two men ended an apparently successful run of operas,

Alcina
an
OPERA
as it is Perform'd
at the
THEATRE ROYAL
in
Covent Garden.
Compos'd by
M^r. Handel.

London. Printed for and Sold by I. Walsh, Musick Printer and Instrument maker to his Majesty, at the Harp & Hoboy in Catherine Street in the Strand. N^o 619

but to this day we genuinely do not know what prompted the decision.

Some contemporaries assumed that Handel, now a wealthy man of 49, would retire, but he remained driven by his musical muse. He even found the time – between passionate bouts of late-night composing – to investigate the possibility of taking over the Haymarket lease himself. In the end, he was beaten to it by a wily Venetian entrepreneur called Nicola Antonio Porpora, who acquired the theatre and made it the home of his newly-established company, the Opera of the Nobility.

At this time the prolific and successful Mr Handel was not just a composer and businessman but he was also acting as notional music director of the Theatre at Lincoln's Inn Fields under its manager, John Rich. In 1728 Rich had achieved huge success with *The Beggar's Opera* and on those proceeds had built a second theatre: His Majesty's, Covent Garden. Not one to be outflanked by Porpora's schemes, Handel moved to Covent Garden as Rich's composer-in-residence and opened his tenure with a premiere of a new opera, *Oreste*, in December 1734.

Over the next two-and-a-half years at Covent Garden, Handel wrote and premiered seven operas, including *Ariodante* (1735), *Alcina* (1735), *Atalanta* (1736) and *Arminio* (1737). These Italian operas placed Handel in direct competition with Porpora's Opera of the Nobility, which had poached much of Handel's audience and several of his singers. Rich encouraged Handel and the French choreographer Madame Marie Sallé to woo the London public by inserting dance spectacles into his new operas. Madame Sallé obliged by famously performing without her corset – although her main innovation was to create expressive dance sequences that informed the plot and the composer's music, rather than old-fashioned displays of athleticism.

Alcina was an Italian *opera seria*, tenuously based on a *canto* of Ariosto's epic poem, *Orlando furioso*. But rather than drawing on the original source, Handel chose to rely on an 18th-century libretto, *L'isola di Alcina*, written by Antonio Fanzaglia. It had already been set to music by Riccardo Broschi in Rome some seven years earlier, and the likelihood is that Handel obtained a copy of the text on his Italian tour of 1729.

Handel adapted Fanzaglia's libretto to suit his English audience. Florid recitatives were abbreviated because they were less popular in London than in Rome; arias were tailored to suit the specific

singers for whom Handel was writing; pretexts for dances were provided to keep Sallé's dance company occupied. In addition, every opportunity was taken for scenic transformations that would show off Covent Garden's stage machinery to best effect. Handel also added in a new character: Oberto, a young boy who is looking for his father, Astolpho, at Alcina's magical court. Astolpho himself appears in the original 16th-century poem, transformed by Alcina into an animal. But Handel wanted to showcase the talents of his new discovery, William Savage. The boy had been enormously successful as Joas, King of Judah in a performance of Handel's recent oratorio *Athalia*, so he invented the part of Oberto at the last moment to capitalise on the boy's growing popularity.

Alcina premiered on 16 April 1735, and had a total of seven outings – but like so many of Handel's operas *seria*, it quickly disappeared from public performance. The tide of popular taste was turning as the genre of Italian opera was increasingly denigrated as 'Popish' by London's Protestant establishment.

Ultimately, though, the competition between Handel and Porpora was to prove ruinous for them both. Handel's Covent Garden venture failed to make headway, and on 1 June 1737 the theatre closed with debts of £10,000 after the final performance of Handel's *Berenice*. Rumour had it that the composer was fortunate not to end up in a debtor's prison. Ten days later, the King's Theatre also collapsed with debts of £12,000 – much to Handel's delight – and his Venetian competitor left Britain in disgrace.

From 1735 until his death in 1759, Handel presented annual programmes of his works in London, though latterly his oratorio output dominated. In his will Handel bequeathed his organ to fellow entrepreneur John Rich. It was installed in a prominent position on the stage of Covent Garden, but sadly it perished, along with many other valuable items, in a fire that destroyed the theatre on 20 September 1808. With that blaze, Handel's material association with Covent Garden ended but his musical association continues.

— Adrian Mourby is a writer and producer who has won numerous awards for his work with BBC radio and television. These days he writes extensively on opera and art. He also leads tours to Italian opera festivals. Among his own productions are several Mozart operas, Handel's *Semele* and a celebration of Purcell's music, *The Grave's A Fine & Private Place*. He has also written many plays and had six works of fiction published.

Rich encouraged Handel and the French choreographer Madame Sallé to woo the London public by inserting dance spectacles into his new operas. Madame Sallé obliged by famously performing without her corset – although her main innovation was to create expressive dance sequences that informed the plot and the composer's music, rather than old-fashioned displays of athleticism.



Right: *Portrait of a Dancer* (Mademoiselle Marie Sallé) by Nicolas Lancret, c.1735
© Hansrad Collection/Alamy

GIRLS WHO LIKE BOYS DRESSED AS BOYS WHO LIKE GIRLS

Jessica Walker



Handel's *Alcina* is set in a world of magic, in which most people aren't quite who they seem to be. At the heart of the multiple deceptions and disguises on this enchanted island are the two cross-dressed characters of Bradamante and Ruggiero, formerly betrothed, but whom Alcina has torn apart by putting a spell on Ruggiero. Now in thrall to her, he has entirely forgotten his past intended.

As has become traditional in performances of Handel opera since the demise of the castrato singer, in this production, Ruggiero is a male character played by a mezzo-soprano. The contralto Bradamante, however, is a female character, who appears on the island disguised as her brother, Ricciardo, in order to discover what has happened to Ruggiero, and to win him back. It is in her male

guise that she attracts the attention of Morgana, Alcina's sister, who immediately falls for him (her), discarding her former lover, Oronte, with alacrity.

So far, so baroque opera – until one considers how much the context for this kind of gender disguise has changed from Handel's time to the present day, and the degree to which this influences our perceptions of such characters and their relationships. As contemporary audience members, we are far more likely to enjoy the frisson of Morgana's knowingly transgressive desire for Ricciardo/Bradamante than we are to accept, as 18th-century audiences surely would have, that she simply hasn't noticed her love-object is a woman. Certainly, if we track back to the inaugural production of *Alcina* at Covent Garden,

we gain an insight into what polite society made of unsanctioned cross-dressing at that time: in one of the ballet sections of the piece, ballerina Marie Sallé caused such a scandal with her male-attired Cupid that she was pronounced too unattractive and indecent ever to work there again.

Throughout history gender disguise on both the operatic and the popular stage has been celebrated and reviled in equal measure, depending on the politics and mores of the time. In American Variety theatre of the 1880s, at the height of the male impersonator craze, Annie Hindle, famed for her 'man about town' songs, caused upset when it was discovered she had secretly 'married' her female dresser in a private ceremony. It wasn't the marriage itself that perturbed her adoring public, but the fact that she gave her name as Charles. If *she* was a *he* after all, rather than the subversive cross-dresser they had followed for years, they no longer wanted to see her act. It was the end of her career.

In Victorian England, by contrast, male impersonator Vesta Tilley understood that her singing persona was only acceptable if she deliberately and publicly distanced herself from being masculine offstage. She loudly dismissed the legions of women who proposed marriage to her as 'silly'; and in a 1904 newspaper article denounced 'women who wore male clothing exclusively, as well as women who adopted a mannish style'. This was a time in which the distasteful notion of the 'invert', and its association with female suffrage, was gathering pace. One of the highest-paid entertainers of her day, Tilley knew better than to test the boundaries of Victorian morality. She retired to Monaco with a Tory lord and a diamond collection.

In 1911, at around the same time as Tilley was singing her famous number, 'I'm the Idol of the Girls' on music hall stages, the curtain was rising on perhaps the most famous post-coital love scene in all opera – the cross-dressed Octavian (played by a mezzo-soprano), in bed with the Marshallin in Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*. The fashion for the pure-voiced, idealised young man in opera arguably reached its most seductive moment with this image, but from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* onwards, with its love-sick, cross-dressed page Cherubino, the illicit thrill of a woman's trousered silhouette has been a mainstay of the operatic stage. In the relatively permissive early 1800s, contralto Lucia Elizabeth Vestris made a name for herself cross-dressing on both the operatic and popular stage, playing the highwayman Macheath in John Gay's *The*

Beggar's Opera, and creating the role of Don Giovanni in William Moncrieff's burlesque, *Giovanni in London*. The key to her particular allure was summed up succinctly by one Regency fan – 'What a breast! What an eye! What a foot, leg and thigh!'

It was in the Weimar cabaret scene of 1920s Berlin that the popularity of onstage gender confusion reached its zenith. Some years before Marlene Dietrich put on a tuxedo and kissed the girl in the 1930 film *Morocco*, lesbian cabaret artist Claire Waldoff appeared in a suit and tie and sang of Hannelore, the 'sweet and lovely little creature with cute and boyish features,' with the punchline that 'no-one knows or understands if she's a woman or a man.' The particular freedoms of that brief period in Germany were cut short by the rise of the Nazis, and their persecution of difference. Waldoff was labelled *entartete* – degenerate – her work was banned, and most of her recordings destroyed. Forced to escape Berlin for a remote part of Bavaria, she died in poverty in 1957.

Today's conversations around gender identity inevitably make us question theatrical choices about cross-dressing on stage. Joan of Arc, for example, has been reinterpreted in recent plays as non-binary and as a drag king in new works staged respectively at Shakespeare's Globe and Ovalhouse. Such bold reappraisals of historic figures can be fascinating, but they also eschew the sexiness at the heart of operatic cross-dressing and its more popular historic counterparts, in which it is often a sense of tacit deception that creates the erotic charge between performer and audience. Left undefined, the myriad forms of gender disguise we witness in *Alcina* engineer a kind of electricity.

While attitudes to cross-dressing on stage have changed dramatically over the time since Handel's opera was written, *Alcina's* magical island of masquerading characters continues to offer the potential for a bewitching array of gender twists, alternative realities and revelations.

— Singer/writer Jessica Walker creates and performs work for opera companies, theatres and festivals alike. Explorations of gender and sexuality onstage include *The Girl I Left Behind Me* with Neil Bartlett, *All I Want is One Night* (Royal Exchange Theatre), *Not Such Quiet Girls* (Opera North and Leeds Playhouse) and *Scene Unseen* with director James Dacre (Royal and Derngate and ETO at Home). Future plans include *Coming up for Air* for Oper Leipzig.

While attitudes to cross-dressing on stage have changed dramatically over the time since Handel's opera was written, *Alcina*'s magical island of masquerading characters continues to offer the potential for a bewitching array of gender twists, alternative realities and revelations.



PRODUCING HANDEL OPERAS IN LONDON, 1710-37

David Hunter



The many forms of love drive the story of *Alcina* (1735) and these Handel vividly portrays through music and action, with a magic wand, a ring with special powers, sharp weapons, fantastic scenery, a corps de ballet, and miraculous transformations. Even without special effects, opera was prodigiously expensive to produce in Handel's London. Raising the money was a complex endeavour, which connected the composer, like many of his contemporaries, to the slave trade.

In Catholic countries such as the Italian states and France, opera productions typically were limited

to Carnival (Epiphany to Shrove Tuesday) or a special holiday. In these circumstances, the leading local noble family or churchmen, city government, or (in capital cities) the monarch would fund it. Expenses were manageable. By contrast, in London, companies of actors in possession of a royal patent played from September to June (known as the Season), three or four times a week. The opera company to which Handel first contributed scores (for *Rinaldo*, *Il pastor fido*, *Teseo* and *Amadigi*) tried to emulate this model of frequent performances over the course of this long Season but without the financial resources to do so. The finest music,

alas, was not going to pay the bills, and the company limped to a halt, folding in 1717.

Two years later, a group of 58 nobility and gentry at the top of the political, social, and economic elite established the Royal Academy of Music (RAM) with the seal of approval from King George I. The three main goals were: to put on 50-60 performances a year at the King's Theatre, to employ the best performers from Europe and London, and to make a profit. Sadly, the latter of these aims proved unachievable: after only eight Seasons the RAM exhausted its pledged capital of £20,000 (c.£51 million nowadays) and ceased operations. Even with an annual royal bounty of £1000 (c.£2.5 million) and frequent royal attendance, box office receipts were insufficient to cover expenses. The number of audience members able to afford half a guinea per seat (c.£1350) twice a week was small and the number of Season subscribers even smaller. The largest cost was the singers, notably the castrati and sopranos who came from Italy.

Given the prominence of the publicly chartered merchant, exploration and slaving companies leading up to 1720, it is not surprising that a high number (54 of 172 persons, or 32%) of the RAM's directors and/or subscribers and their associates had investments in the the Royal African Company. Set up in 1672 following the collapse of an earlier venture, the RAC was led by James, Duke of York (later King James II), and intended to encourage trade with Africa through forts that it established along the West African coast. Gold, ivory, and enslaved peoples were its chief 'commodities.' Though shocking, Handel owned some shares during 1720, which he exchanged for cash within several weeks. James Brydges, Duke of Chandos, a leading director of the RAM, also became the largest investor and deputy governor of the Royal African Company. Chandos was Handel's patron from 1717-18 and it was at his request that Handel wrote *Esther*. The Duke seems to have used the company's stock as a form of payment to Handel, perhaps for *Esther's* composition or for a grand performance of it put on at Cannons (the Duke's lavish mansion) in North-West London in the summer of 1720, or for the composition of *Radamisto*, the first opera Handel wrote for the RAM. In 1735 *Esther* was performed along with six other works prior to *Alcina*.

Following the demise of the RAM, Handel and the impresario John James Heidegger sought to continue regular Seasons of opera at the King's Theatre. After a few years it became clear that not all the nobility and gentry, nor the musicians, were aligned with their vision and practices. In 1733 the relationship between Handel and leading castrato Senesino broke down irreconcilably (according to a French commentator) and the singer established a new company supported by many of the nobility who had previously sustained Handel and Heidegger. That initial Season of the so-called Opera of the Nobility, 1733-34, was the first time Handel had been seriously challenged as a producer of *opera seria*.

After ruinous competition both sides refused to see sense and geared up for another Season. A newspaper in late 1734 estimated the expenses for the year to be £12,000 (c.£34 million nowadays) at the King's Theatre, and, for Handel, in John Rich's Covent Garden theatre, £9000 (c.£25.5 million). Inevitably, and despite the almost unprecedented run of 18 performances of *Alcina*, Handel was forced to draw upon his savings,



Terrestrial Paradise (oil on copper) by Jan Brueghel the Elder (1568-1625)
© Bridgeman Images

held in an account at the Bank of England that was opened in August 1732 with £2300 (c.£6.6 million). That money had come to him from 1725 to 1732 in recompense for, as far as we can tell, his work as the director of the RAM orchestra (the payments may have been in arrears). It was paid in the form of shares in the South Sea Company, the other official slave trading company. Handel withdrew £1300 (c.£3.7 million) from the account in 1734 to cover costs incurred during the 1733-34 Season. In 1735 he took out £450 (c.£1.3 million).

The ways in which the profits from slavery became part and parcel of the British economy, and how they are manifest even today in physical remains such as stately homes and gardens, art and object collections, and businesses, are increasingly being revealed. Consciences have been pricked at the Church of England, the Bank of England, the National Trust, universities such as Glasgow, colleges such as Balliol, Oxford, and insurance companies such as Lloyd's. While performance organizations are starting to incorporate some of the information, histories of the visual and auditory arts have been slow to recognize that profits from trading enslaved people, and from the use of their labour in fields, factories, and homes, made the creation of some artistic works possible. Although Royal Academician Sir Joshua Reynolds may have supported the abolitionist movement towards the end of his life, he also profited from painting individuals (such as members of the Beckford and Lascelles families) who got great wealth through exploitation of enslaved people.

Handel was one of the very few musicians in Britain during the 17th and 18th centuries sufficiently wealthy or well-connected that investment in the slave-trading companies might be anticipated. While it may make for uncomfortable reading, the revelation of Handel's connections to the slave trade – uncovered only in 2013 – gives pause for thought. As a work of theatre, *Alcina* remains as moving and entrancing as ever. But as the world shifts around it, so does our understanding of the complex forces – surrounding composer, musicians, opera company, and audiences – that conjured it into being.

— David Hunter is the author of *The Lives of George Frideric Handel* (Boydell Press, 2015). He contributed 27 articles to the *Cambridge Handel Encyclopedia* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). After 30 years as music librarian and senior lecturer at the University of Texas at Austin he took early retirement in 2017 to devote himself to researching the links between music and slavery in the Atlantic world from c.1660 to c.1800.

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PERFORMANCE NOTE

Alcina had its premiere at Covent Garden on 16 April 1735. The cast was Anna Maria Strada (Alcina), Giovanni Carestini (Ruggiero), Maria Caterina Negri (Bradamante), Cecilia Young (Morgana), John Beard (Oronte), Gustavus Waltz (Melisso) and William Savage (Oberto). There were 18 performances in the first Season, three in 1736 and two in 1737. It was not staged in England again until the Handel Opera Society revived it for the 1957 St Pancras Arts Festival. The Stockholm Royal Opera gave two performances of *Alcina* at Covent Garden in September 1960.

Franco Zeffirelli's production (previously seen at La Fenice, Venice, and in Dallas) was performed four times at the Royal Opera House in March 1962. Alcina was sung by Joan Sutherland, Ruggiero by Margreta Elkins, Bradamante by Monica Sinclair, Morgana by Elizabeth Vaughan, Oronte by Kenneth Macdonald and Melisso by Forbes Robinson. The conductor was Bryan Balkwill. In 1993, a new Royal Opera production was conducted by John Fisher, with Stephen Wadsworth directing a cast featuring Yvonne Kenny as Alcina, Ann Murray as Ruggiero, Kathleen Kuhlmann as Bradamante, Judith Howarth as Morgana, Anthony Rolfe Johnson as Oronte and Stafford Dean as Melisso. There were seven performances in total. The current production marks the first performances of the opera by The Royal Opera for 29 years.



Emily D'Angelo in rehearsal for *Alcina* ©2022 Tom Parker



BIOGRAPHIES



CHRISTIAN CURNYN Conductor

Christian Curnyn is one of the UK's leading conductors specialising in Baroque and Classical repertoire. He founded the Early Opera Company in 1994 with whom he has given performances throughout the UK and abroad, along with multiple award-winning recordings for Chandos. A regular at English National Opera, Curnyn's opera credits also include acclaimed productions for Scottish Opera, Garsington Opera, Opera North, The Royal Opera, as well as with Komische Oper Berlin, Oper Frankfurt, Landestheater Salzburg, Oper Stuttgart, Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, Halle Handel Festival, Opera Australia, New York City Opera, Glimmerglass Opera and Chicago Opera Theater. Curnyn has conducted the Academy of Ancient Music, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin, Bournemouth Symphony, The English Concert, Essen Philharmoniker, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, The Hallé, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Swedish Chamber Orchestra, Stavanger Symphony Orchestra, Ulster Orchestra, Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra and West Australia and Adelaide Symphony Orchestras.



RICHARD JONES Director

Born in London, he has directed operas and plays for the international stage for over thirty years. His most recent productions include *Samson et Dalila* and *La clemenza di Tito* for The Royal Opera, *Die Walküre* as part of a new *Ring* cycle for English National Opera, *Judgment Day* for Park Avenue Armory, New York, and *Endgame* for the Old Vic. Awards include three Olivier awards in opera for *Hansel and Gretel* (Welsh National Opera), *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk* (ROH), and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (English National Opera) which, along with his production of *Káťa Kabanová* (ROH), also won the South Bank Show Award. He received the Evening Standard Award for Outstanding Artistic Achievement for his Royal Opera *Ring* cycle. Previously for The Royal Opera: *L'heure espagnole*, *The Gambler*, *Anna Nicole*, *Il trittico*, *Gloriana*, *Boris Godunov* and *La bohème*. He was made a CBE in 2015.



ANTONY MCDONALD Designer

As a director-designer his credits include the world premiere of Gerald Barry's *Alice's Adventure's Underground* (ROH), *On the Town* (Hyogo Performing Arts Centre), *Hansel and Gretel* (ROH, San Francisco), *Werther* (Bergen National Opera), *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Nederlandse Reisopera), *Rusalka*, *The Queen of Spades* and *Fiddler on the Roof* (Grange Park Opera), *Lohengrin* (WNO, Polish National Opera, Greek National Opera), *Powder Her Face* (Irish National Opera), *Maria Stuarda* (Opera North), *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (Bolshoi), *Tristan und Isolde* (Opéra national du Rhin), *The Importance of Being Earnest* (NI Opera), *Die Gezeichneten* (St Gallen) and *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Scottish Opera, Opera Holland Park). He has co-directed and co-designed productions with Richard Jones, and designed opera productions at leading venues for directors including Tim Albery, Richard Jones, Deborah Warner and Andreas Homoki. He has also designed for the RSC, Royal Court, Old Vic, Almeida, NT, Second Stride and Scottish Ballet among others. His awards include Best Set Designer at the 2013 International Opera Awards. He is a Royal Designer for Industry.



LUCY CARTER Lighting Designer

Lucy Carter has worked as a lighting designer for over 20 years. Opera includes *Le nozze di Figaro* (Paris Opera), *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Orphée*, *Salome*, *The Dream of Gerontius* (ENO), *Werther* (Bergen), *Káťa Kabanová* (ROH, Rome), *Mavra/Pierrot lunaire*, *Hansel and Gretel* (ROH), *La finta giardiniera* (Glyndebourne, Milan) and *Peter Grimes* (Aldeburgh beach). Recent dance productions with Wayne McGregor include *The Dante Project*, *McGregor + Mugler*, *Autobiography*, *Multiverse*, *Woolf Works*, *Obsidian Tear*, *AfteRite*, *Yugen* and *Chroma*. Theatre includes *The Time Traveller's Wife: A New Musical* (Chester Storyhouse), *Much Ado About Nothing*, *Home I'm Darling*, *Husbands & Sons*, *Medea*, *Emil and the Detectives* (National Theatre), *2:22 A Ghost Story* (West End), *Persuasion* (Rose Theatre), *Force Majeure* (Donmar Warehouse), *Wicked* (Hamburg), *Coriolanus* (Crucible Theatre), *On the Town* (Hyogo Japan), *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* (Apollo Theatre, UK tour), *Fiddler on the Roof* (Grange Park Opera) and *Oil* (Almeida). Her awards include two Knight of Illumination Awards (for *Chroma* and for *Woolf Works*).



SARAH FAHIE Movement Director and Choreographer

Born in Australia, she trained at London Contemporary Dance School. For Richard Jones, her movement director credits include *Peter Grimes* (La Scala), *La clemenza di Tito*, *Frankenstein!*, *Káťa Kabanová*, *The Gambler*, *Il tabarro* and *Suor Angelica* (The Royal Opera), *The Valkyrie*, *Don Giovanni* and *Rodelinda* (ENO, Theater Basel), *Der Rosenkavalier* (Glyndebourne, Tokyo Nikkai Opera Theatre), *La damnation de Faust* (Glyndebourne) and *Rumpelstiltskin* (Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, also Revival Director). Additional movement director credits include *The Trial* (Young Vic), *Rough for Theatre II* and *Endgame* (Old Vic); and engagements as revival choreographer include *Falstaff* and *Der Rosenkavalier* (Glyndebourne). Further opera choreography credits include *Don Giovanni* (Bergen National Opera, NI Opera), *4.48 Psychosis* (The Royal Opera at Lyric Hammersmith), *La Gioconda* and *Capriccio* (Grange Park Opera), *The Skating Rink*, *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Semele* (Garsington Opera), *Aida* (Royal Albert Hall) and *Cendrillon* (Glyndebourne). Plans include *The Rhinegold* at ENO (as movement director) and *Giant* (as director) at Aldeburgh Festival.



SERGEY LEVITIN Concert Master

Born in Russia, he studied at St Petersburg State Conservatory and the Conservatory for Music and Performing Arts, Vienna. In 1996 he was appointed Concert Master for the Kirov Orchestra at the Mariinsky Theatre by Valery Gergiev. He has appeared as a guest leader with the LSO, BBC SO, LPO, Philharmonia, RPO, WDR SO, Cologne, and Tonhalle Orchestra, Zurich. As a soloist he has performed at the Usher Hall, the White Nights, Edinburgh and Cortona festivals and throughout Russia, Europe and the USA under conductors including Gergiev, Pappano and Nosedá. He has won several awards in Italy and Spain and was a member of the Hermitage String Trio. He has recorded the world premieres of several violin concertos with the Royal Northern Sinfonia under Martin Yates (Dutton Epoch). He joined the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House as Associate Concert Master in 2003, was made Co-Concert Master in 2009 and Concert Master in 2018.



VARDUHI ABRAHAMYAN Bradamante

Franco-Armenian mezzo-soprano Varduhi Abrahamyan was born into a family of musicians. Recent engagements include a return to Bayerische Staatsoper for Carmen, her house debut at the Metropolitan Opera for *Rigoletto* and *Eugene Onegin*, *Don Carlo* at Opéra de Marseille and *Norma* at Liceu, Barcelona. Additional highlights include Carmen (Teatro Regio di Torino, Paris Opera, Zurich Opera, Palermo, Atlanta, Barcelona, Hamburg, Munich), *La forza del destino*, *Falstaff*, *Un ballo in Maschera*, *Eugene Onegin*, *L'italiana in Algeri*, *Giulio Cesare*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and *Pique Dame* (Paris), *Semiramide*, *Nabucco*, *Samson et Dalila* and *La donna del lago* (Rossini Opera Festival, Marseille), *Alcina* (Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Zurich) and *Benvenuto Cellini* (Rome Opera). Plans include *Alcina* in Monte-Carlo, *Die Walküre* at Teatro di San Carlo and *Maometto II* and *La favorite* at Opéra National de Bordeaux.



MALAKAI M BAYOH Oberto

Malakai has been a student at Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School since 2020. Under the tutelage of his music director Mr Price and the school's team, he has had the opportunity to take part in various productions including *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *The Magic Flute*, *Macbeth*, *La bohème* and *Carmen*, and school productions of *Les Misérables* and *Tosca*. He also sings with the Schola Cantorum at Cardinal Vaughan Memorial School and across different venues. He loves travelling and making friends and has been passionate about singing ever since he joined St George's Cathedral Choir, at age 8.



MARY BEVAN Morgana

Mary Bevan's engagements for the 2022/23 Season include *LIGHT: Bach Dances* with the Hofesh Shechter Company at the Philharmonie de Paris, Eurydice (*Orfeo and Eurydice*) at Teatro La Fenice and her debut with the Bayerische Staatsoper in the title role of *La Calisto*. Recent highlights include her debut with the Royal Danish Opera, Dalinda (*Ariodante*) at Bolshoi Theatre and with the English Concert, Weill's *Street Scene* for Opéra de Monte-Carlo and the world premiere of James MacMillan's *Christmas Oratorio* (LPO). For ENO, roles include Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) and Eurydice (Offenbach's *Orpheus*). For The Royal Opera, engagements include David Bruce's *The Firework-Maker's Daughter*, Turnage's *Coraline*, Rossi's *Orpheus* and Barbarina (*The Marriage of Figaro*). Recent concert highlights include tours with the English Concert, OAE and Kammerorchester Basel, and her return to the BBC Proms. She was made an MBE in the 2019 Queen's birthday honours list.



RUPERT CHARLESWORTH Oronte

English tenor Rupert Charlesworth studied at King's College, Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music. His awards include the Jury and Audience Prizes at the 2013 Handel Singing Competition and the 2014 International Singing Competition for Baroque Opera Pietro Antonio Cesti. Opera appearances include Emilio (*Partenope*) and Tamino (*The Magic Flute*) for ENO, John/Angel 3 (*Written on Skin*) for Bolshoi Theatre and Aix-en-Provence Festival, Renaud (Lully's *Armide*) and Celidoro (Scarlatti's *I Portentosi*) for Musikfestspiele Potsdam Sanssouci, Lysander (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) for Beijing Music Festival and Aix-en-Provence Festival, Oronte for Paris Opera and Jonathan (*Saul*) and Bob Boles (*Peter Grimes*) for Theater an der Wien. Concert appearances include Messiah with Le Concert Spirituel, Septimius (*Theodora*) and the Brockes Passion at the Göttingen International Handel Festival, Damon (*Acis and Galatea*) for Beaune's Baroque Opera Festival and Bernstein's *A Quiet Place* with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. He made his Royal Opera debut in the 2016/17 Season as Marzio (*Mitridate, re di Ponto*).



EMILY D'ANGELO Ruggiero

A 2020 Lincoln Center Emerging Artist, Canadian-Italian mezzo-soprano Emily D'Angelo is a former member of the Canadian Opera Company's Ensemble Studio and of the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artists Development Program. Recent role and house debuts include Ottavia (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*) at Zurich Opera; Cherubino at Berlin State Opera; Idamante (*Idomeneo*) at Bayerische Staatsoper; Angelina in *La Cenerentola* at Semperoper Dresden; Prince Charming in *Cinderella* at the Metropolitan Opera; Dorabella and Donna Elvira at La Scala and Siebel and Rosina at Paris Opera, among others. D'Angelo is a Deutsche Grammophon exclusive recording artist. She released her debut album *enargeia* in 2021 and received JUNO and Gramophone awards in 2022. Plans include her house debut as Sesto (*Giulio Cesare*) at DNO as well as role debuts in the title role of *Ariodante* in Paris and as Juno (*Semele*) for the Bayerische Staatsoper summer festival. Previously for The Royal Opera: Sesto (*La clemenza di Tito*).



RAFAEL FLUTTER Oberto

Rafael is 12 and studies singing with Alastair Brookshaw. He is a member of the National Youth Boys' Choir and Finchley Children's Music Group (FCMG). Rafael sang Arthur in the world premiere of *A Kind Man* (New Palace Opera 2022). Royal Opera roles include First Boy in *The Magic Flute* (2021) and treble soloist in *The Intelligence Park* (2019). He sang Young Nicolas and one of the Pickled Boys in *Saint Nicolas* (Barbican live broadcast 2021) and was the treble soloist in *Chichester Psalms* (Covent Garden Chorus 2022). With FCMG he appeared in *The Silver Tassie* (Barbican) and Britten's War Requiem (English National Opera). Rafael has made several recordings and is a member of the music department at Dame Alice Owen's School.



JOSÉ COCA LOZA Atlante

Zurich-based Bolivian bass José Coca Loza's 2022/23 Season highlights include his Teatro Real, Madrid debut as Licomede (*Achille in Sciro*), Masetto and Il Commendatore (*Don Giovanni*) in Salzburg and Fiorello (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) in Monte Carlo. Recent highlights include his Vienna State Opera debut as Alidoro (*La Cenerentola*), the Bass part in Handel's Messiah (Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Salzburg), gala concerts at Teatro Olimpico and with Ensemble Matheus, Caronte (*L'Orfeo*) with L'Arpeggiata, Lesbo (*Agrippina*) at The Royal Opera, Astolfo (*Orlando Furioso*) at Tchaikovsky Hall, Haly (*L'italiana in Algeri*) at Salzburg Festival and Opéra Royal de Versailles, Alidoro on tour with Cecilia Bartoli, Clistene (*L'Olimpiade*) at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Mustafa (*L'italiana in Algeri*) in Granada and Truffaldino (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) in Gran Canaria. He has studied with Silvana Bazzoni since 2014.



LISETTE OROPESA Alcina

A Cuban-American soprano, her ROH roles include Gilda (*Rigoletto*), Violetta (*La traviata*) and Lucia (*Lucia di Lammermoor*). She began her career at the Metropolitan Opera with roles including Violetta, Gilda, Susanna and Massenet's Manon. Engagements elsewhere include Violetta (Teatro Real, Madrid, Liceu, Barcelona, Rome Opera, Arena di Verona, Bayerische Staatsoper), Konstanze in *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Vienna State Opera, Bayerische Staatsoper, Paris Opera), Gilda (DNO, Rome, Los Angeles Opera, Paris, Madrid, Vienna, Verona), Norina in *Don Pasquale* (Glyndebourne Festival), Lucia (Madrid, Vienna, Zurich, Salzburg Festival), Rodelinda (Barcelona), Marguerite in *Les Huguenots*, Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Adina (Paris), Amalia in *I Masnadieri* (La Scala), Elvira in *I Puritani* (Teatro di San Carlo, Naples) and Theodora on tour across Europe. Concert appearances include with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago SO, the Cincinnati SO, the Amsterdam Concertgebouw and Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia. Recordings on Pentatone include *Ombra Compagna* (2021), *La traviata* (2022) and *French Bel Canto Arias* (2022).