

Create Reach Inspire


2018/2019 Annual Review

Croeso

2018/2019 has been another incredible year for Welsh National Opera. This year we have created some of our boldest and most ambitious work. We have reached further – touring across England, Wales and beyond, working in some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged parts of our local communities, and provided even more opportunities to inspire the next generation of performers, practitioners and creative leaders.



War and Peace. Full cast. Photo by Clive Barda



**We believe in the power
of opera to transform
lives. In 2018/2019 we
reached over 145,000
people through our
live performance and
outreach work.**

'It seems a contradiction to say that I feel we are entering a new era as I take on the privileged role of chairing the Board of an opera company that will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2021. However, with a new General Director in Aidan Lang and five new board members, the texture and flavour of the leadership of the Company has a freshness and optimism for the future. Our mission has always been to bring opera to as many people as possible in Wales, England and beyond. Touring is in our DNA and work in communities, schools

and outside of the theatre is an important and valued element of our activity. We will continue this with an increased vigour, using the tools of technology and social media to enable people to access our work in new and varied ways to attract new and varied audiences. We will also continue to inspire and attract the most talented artists of the day, and look forward to seeing the Company going from strength to strength.'

Yvette Vaughan-Jones
WNO Board Chair



'I am delighted to be able to introduce this Annual Review, my first as General Director. It has been six months since I returned to Cardiff to join the team at Welsh National Opera, the place where my opera career really began, where my perspective on 'what opera should be' was first formed and the company that I have always considered to be my artistic home.

The past few months have served as a reminder that WNO is able to speak to so many audiences through its touring, which in turn provides us with a tremendously exciting opportunity to engage with different communities around the country and to understand how a huge range of people can all be excited by opera. Add to this the sheer variety of activity presented throughout the year by our Youth & Community department, our orchestral concerts and the mid-scale tour, and one sees so clearly the breadth of work that we do, and the skill and versatility of our presenting teams. It is an extremely strong foundation in which to build our future plans.

As we look back to the many successes of 2018/2019, from *War and Peace* to the FREEDOM Season I cannot but help be excited for the future of the Company.'

Aidan Lang
WNO General Director

'In 2018/2019, the WNO Orchestra and Chorus have confirmed their top artistic form throughout the whole year.

For me particularly, the Autumn Season was a time of working on a profound musical drama – Prokofiev's *War and Peace*. It was a really successful Company achievement, and the energy created on stage and in the pit found a great appreciation from the audience. In contrast, Rossini's *La Cenerentola* gave great joy to everyone who took part, and WNO Orchestra proved their high skill levels in switching between these different styles every night.

In December, the Company travelled to Brno for a very special event, performing *From the House of the Dead* at the international Janáček Festival. The artistic level of this performance, as well the press and public appreciation it received, could be considered as one of the highlights of WNO's international presence, representing not only WNO but also Cardiff and Wales on an international stage.

In the Summer, I was privileged to work with Sir David Pountney and the members of WNO'S Youth Opera on *Brundibár*, a piece originally performed by the children of the Theresienstadt concentration camp during the Holocaust. In the face of a Nazi regime attempting to steal their hope and prepare them only for death, *Brundibár* allowed the children to breath, to experience human dignity, friendship and beauty. All children, no matter the circumstance, deserve to feel the sunshine that the arts and creative freedom can bestow.'

Tomáš Hanus
WNO Music Director



105,000

worldwide live opera
and concert audience

40,000

people engaged through youth,
community and digital work

53,000

social media followers

125

live performances

120,000

TV and radio broadcast
audience

202,000

unique website users

101,000

YouTube views

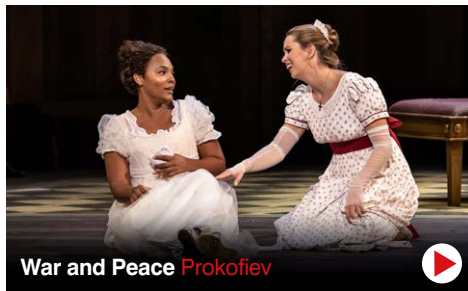
36

touring venues



Create

From bold new productions addressing some of the most challenging socio-political issues of our time, to staging some of the best-loved music and theatre ever imagined, or even re-setting a timeless comic opera classic in a kebab van – **Welsh National Opera creates art that is for everyone.**



Reach

Aberdare, Bangor, Birmingham, Brecon,
Bristol, Brno, Cardiff, Dubai, Haverfordwest,
Hereford, Liverpool, Llandudno, London,
Milford Haven, Milton Keynes, Mold, Newport,
Newtown, Northampton, Norwich, Oxford,
Plymouth, Saffron Walden, Shrewsbury,
Southampton, St Asaph, St David's, Swansea,
Swindon, Winchester, Yeovil

Touring is our lifeblood. This year our productions and concerts reached even more towns and cities across England, Wales and beyond.



Inspire

Every year, our Youth & Community team helps to inspire tens of thousands of people across our communities, from aspiring young talent to some of the most vulnerable people in our society. There is only one condition: **Everyone is welcome.**



'What an amazing performance... still getting over it!'

Alyson Macdonald
WNO Youth Opera parent



'Words cannot really describe how I feel – we put it into music. I am incredibly proud of our Community Chorus.'

Rob Guy Conductor –
WNO Community Chorus North

'WNO brings a level of excellence in the arts and this is really important particularly in an area of great social deprivation. The arts are for everyone and these kinds of opportunities break down the barriers between social groups.'

Mrs Meehan St Chad's Catholic Primary School



Over **1,000** young people took part in our **WNO Youth Opera** groups and taster sessions in Cardiff, Birmingham and Llandudno, performing to over **1,600** people across the year.

Over **80%** of our **WNO Youth Opera Birmingham** participants were from black, Asian and minority ethnic groups.

Our schools programme of workshops, events and concerts worked with over **4,500** pupils across **118** schools in England, Wales and overseas.

1,600 attended our **Family Concerts** in Birmingham, Cardiff and Southampton.

380 singers took part in our **North and South Wales Community Choruses**, performing to over **5,000** people.

1,700 people took part in our free **Come & Sing** events.

13,000 people visited our digital experiences across the country.

WNO's Youth, Community and Digital activity is supported by generous donations from Andrew Fletcher, Clive & Sylvia Richards, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation and Hodge Foundation.

Chorus and Orchestra

This year, WNO received over 60 four and five star reviews across local and national press.

WNO Chorus and Orchestra are the musical and artistic backbone of the Company. This year saw them fighting at the battle of Moscow in our critically acclaimed new production of *War and Peace*; bringing a taste of 19th century ballrooms to theatres across Wales with our *A Night in Vienna* concert tour; and quite literally dancing with death in the second instalment of our Verdi Trilogy *Un ballo in maschera*.

Learn more about the incredible work of the WNO Orchestra [here](#).

La traviata
Verdi

‘a magical orchestra and those rippling, rousing vocals, all combined to pull the audience in so close that they truly engaged...’

Jonathan Sutton
Buzz



War and Peace
Prokofiev

‘This is the chorus of Welsh National Opera, after all. You just know they’re going to slay, and they do.’

Richard Bratby
The Spectator

Un ballo in maschera
Verdi

‘... conductor Carlo Rizzi presides over a cast and orchestra on terrific form.’

Rian Evans
The Guardian



La Cenerentola
Rossini

‘The orchestra under the baton of Tomáš Hanus, are in their element as they whizz along with the sometimes breakneck speed of the libretto, whilst the chorus are at their playful best throughout.’

Mark Rees
South Wales Evening Post

★★★★★ Buzz

★★★★★ The Stage

★★★★★ The Morning Star

Doner PASQUALE

Pasquale's Kebabs
'Once Eaten, Never Beaten'

Seen by over 4,000 people

Aberdare, Bangor, Birmingham, Brecon,
Hereford, Milford Haven, Mold, Newport,
Norwich, Oxford, Shrewsbury, Swansea,
Winchester, Yeovil

In Summer 2019 we brought our rollicking new version of Donizetti's classic comic opera *Don Pasquale* to mid-scale theatres across England and Wales, continuing our commitment to reach more people in more places. Set in and around Pasquale's doner kebab van, **this was *Don Pasquale* like you've never seen or heard before.**

Cast and Creative

Don Pasquale Andrew Shore

Ernesto Nico Darmanin

Norina Harriet Eyley (WNO Associate Artist)

Malatesta Quirijn de Lang

Director Daisy Evans

Music Direction Stephen Higgins

'A gleefully anarchic production.'

Steph Power The Stage

'You know I am still laughing!'

Michael Kelligan Theatre in Wales

Get behind the grease and mustard stains
in our riotous Behind the Scenes film. ▶

Don Pasquale, Nico Darmanin (Ernesto). Photo by Robert Workman

Supported by Colwinston Charitable Trust





RHYDDID FREEDOM


FIVE
OPERAS

SEVEN
TALKS, DEBATES
AND DISCUSSIONS

SIX
EXHIBITIONS
AND DIGITAL
INSTALLATIONS

ONE
INCREDIBLE
SEASON

In Summer 2019 we presented WNO FREEDOM, an ambitious Season of operas, talks, debates, discussions, exhibitions and digital projects addressing the issues of justice, freedom and human rights. Join us, as we take a look at some of the many highlights.

Find out more 

During the Season we welcomed over

2,400

opera attendees

12,000

exhibition visitors

200

talks, debates and
discussion participants

WNO would like to thank all of our FREEDOM Season partners & supporters:

ABP South Wales, Amnesty International UK, BBC Cymru Wales / Research and Development, Cardiff University School of Modern Languages, Chapter Arts Centre, Children's Commission for Wales, The Darkley Trust, David Seligman in memory of Philippa Seligman, The Edith Rudiger Gray Trust, Gibbs Charitable Trust, National Assembly for Wales, Oasis Cardiff, University of South Wales, Wales Millennium Centre, Welsh Centre for International Affairs, Welsh Refugee Council

Sponsored by  ASSOCIATED
BRITISH PORTS

Lester Lynch in *The Prisoner*. Photo by Richard Hubert Smith



Opera



From Jake Heggie's gritty portrayal of violence and redemption; Dallapiccola's expressionist study in the torture of hope; and Hans Krása's charming folk-tale of good triumphing over evil – whose performance history is tragically bound up in one of the darkest chapters in the human experience – this FREEDOM Season showcased WNO at its boldest and most daring, receiving critical acclaim in the process.

Nominated for
the 2019 Royal
Philharmonic Society
Award for Concert
Series and Events

Dead Man Walking Heggie
'A performance of harrowing intensity.'

Steph Power **The Stage**



The Prisoner | Fidelio Act II
Dallapiccola | Beethoven

'The WNO Chorus and Community Chorus, combining gloriously in the jubilant finale.'

Rian Evans **The Guardian**



The Consul Menotti

'Perfectly delivered by a strong cast, in an emotional way that provided a heartfelt experience for the audience.'

Melissa Compton **Cardiff Times**

Brundibár Krása

'Conducted by the son of a Terezín survivor, (Tomáš Hanus, WNO Music Director) WNO Youth Opera gave their all in an overwhelming production of Hans Krása's children's opera.'

Fiona Maddocks **The Observer**



Experience

As part of our **FREEDOM Season**, we were privileged to present a specially curated multi-media exhibition featuring international work from a wide range of acclaimed artists and filmmakers who were inspired and influenced by stories of resilience, identity, hope, liberation and displacement. Find out more ▶

TERMINAL 3

Asad J. Malik

An augmented reality project exploring contemporary Muslim identities in the USA through the lens of an airport interrogation.

THE LAST GOODBYE

Gabo Arora, Ari Palitz

The moving testimony of holocaust survivor Pinchas Gutter's final visit to the Majdanek Concentration Camp, told through a fully immersive virtual reality film.

FUTURE ALEPPO

Mohammed Kteish, Alex Pearson and Andy Overton

A virtual reality film documenting one boy's attempt to reconstruct, in paper, the memory and spirit of the home he was forced to leave behind.

FREEDOM 360

BBC Wales, Welsh National Opera

A fully immersive collaboration between WNO and the BBC highlighting the personal stories of five refugees who were forced to flee from their homes before finding a new life in Wales.

FLUORESCENCE

Carys Lewis, WNO Filmmaker in Residence

A collaboration with Syrian artist, Kianna Issa, this film documents the voices of some of the women whose lives have been impacted by immigration.

THE GIRLS OF ROOM 28

Hannelore Brenner

An exhibition created in collaboration with the survivors of Theresienstadt concentration camp to remember the young girls who lived with them in Room 28 and were murdered in the Holocaust.



'BBC Wales was very happy to be involved in the exhibition alongside WNO's Freedom Season. It was surely a first for Cardiff, to have this range of quality VR/AR experiences together in one place, and can only be good for the prominence of the growing Immersive technology sector in Wales.'

Robin Moore Head of Innovation, BBC Wales



Community

In 2018/2019, WNO embarked upon a five year partnership with the Welsh Refugee Council. Our aim is to develop collaborative projects with local refugee and asylum seeker partner organisations; create new opportunities for musicians and artists within this community to develop and showcase their work; and to create work that is fully representative of the diverse communities we serve.



During this year, we have taken up residency at the Oasis Centre, Cardiff, bringing together refugees, asylum seekers, WNO practitioners and music students to create a new composition influenced by their different languages and cultures, *Hope has Wings*. We also brought together professional and aspiring artists from local refugee and asylum seeker communities in Cardiff to create a piece of developmental theatre *Beyond the Rainbow*, exploring the myths that mainstream media have created surrounding refugees and asylum seekers.

‘Welsh Refugee Council is thrilled that artists with experience of displacement are being offered the chance to develop and share their creative skills with WNO, to learn from arts industry leaders, to gain access to employment opportunities and to share stories more widely with theatre audiences.’

Rosie Leach
Welsh Refugee Council

‘The partnership was formed to help refugees and asylum seekers to gain access to the arts and develop their skills. It’s great to see these sorts of projects being led by a renowned opera company like WNO. It helps highlight the idea that communities from different backgrounds and skill levels can help each other.’

Mehdi Razi
Emerging Producer for
Beyond the Rainbow

Beyond the Rainbow is supported by the Darkley Trust

Hope Has Wings and *Beyond The Rainbow* Samuel Gosrani (Kumar) & Imran Chaudhry (Nawfel). Photos by Polly Thomas and Tess Seymour



Talent

As part of our ongoing commitment to developing new talent, the **FREEDOM** Season brought together every element of the performing company, from our stunning WNO Chorus and Orchestra to our Community Chorus and award-winning WNO Youth Opera.

Dead Man Walking

Featured an incredible cast of international professionals, **WNO Youth Opera** alumni and members, students of the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and a **WNO Youth Opera** chorus of 12 children aged 8-12, all accompanied by the full might of the WNO Orchestra.

[Click to view our behind the scenes video.](#) 

Fidelio

Saw 60 members of **WNO Community Chorus** South Wales perform alongside the WNO Chorus and BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

Brundibár

In a first for the Company, members and alumni of the **WNO Youth Opera** performed as part of a main scale season led by our Artistic Director Sir David Pountney and Music Director Tomáš Hanus.

[Click to view our behind the scenes video.](#) 

'Welsh National Opera saved its mightiest blow, as touching and joyful as it was painful, until last.'

Fiona Maddocks
The Observer



'To say I am truly overwhelmed at yesterday's performance is an understatement.'

Angharad Horsey,
WNO Youth Opera parent



Brundibár was supported by David Seligman and in memory of Philippa Seligman, The Gibbs Charitable Trust and the Edith Rudinger Gray Trust.

WNO Youth Opera: *Brundibár*. Photo by Johan Persson



RHYDDID
FREEDOM

Health

This year we continued to develop our work in health and wellbeing, providing weekly **Come & Sing** sessions at University Hospital Wales and our regular dementia friendly cinema screenings with Theatr Colwyn and Pontio. In addition, we piloted our new **Cradle** project in Swansea, an intergenerational creative arts project designed to increase dementia awareness in young people and provide a place for those affected by dementia to spend quality time with friends and family through song.

‘...What a wonderful and mutually beneficial activity for both generations, so important. Thank you for asking us to be involved. Hearing how the children had grasped a better understanding and awareness of dementia is fantastic.’

Nicola Williams Care Home Manager, Hengoed Court/Park Care Home



Cradle Choir

We offered weekly sessions for those either living with or affected by dementia and their families to come together and sing in a relaxed, friendly setting.

Cradle Schools

We established an educational programme with two Swansea primary schools, providing a combination of dementia awareness sessions, creative writing, music workshops – led by practitioners from both WNO and Alzheimer's Society – and a visit to Hengoed Court/Park Care Home, which gave the children a chance to meet and spend time with people living with the condition.

The two groups joined together in a final sharing of their music, song and poetry – joined by members of WNO Orchestra – at the Taliesin Arts Centre, Swansea.

To find out more about Cradle, please watch our film *Dementia and Us*.



Creative Partners

Collaboration is at the heart of what we do, alongside a programme of performances, youth, community and digital events, WNO forges artistic partnerships with opera companies and cultural partners around the globe.

4-Wood TV & Film Construction, Aberdare Coliseum, All Scene All Props, Allens Croft Primary School, Alzheimer's Society, Amnesty International UK, Anglesey Primary School, APOLLO UK Productions Ltd, Arts Connect, Aston Manor School, ATG Productions Ltd, Barry Memo Arts Centre, Bay Productions, BBC Cymru Wales / Research and Development, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, BBC Online, BBC Radio 3, BBC One Wales, BBC Two Wales, Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham MAC, Birmingham Town Hall, Black Country Music Hubs, Blessed W. Davies Primary School, Bodnant Gardens, Brecon Theatr Brycheiniog, Bristol Hippodrome (ATG), Brno Pavilion, Bryntirion High School, Cann Bridge Special School, CânSing, Cardiff University School of Modern Languages, Cardiff West Community High School, Centre for Musical Arts, Chandos Primary School, Chapter Arts Centre, Chapter Arts Centre, Cherry Orchard School, Cherryoak School, Chichester Festival Theatre, Children's Commission for Wales, Christchurch CP School, Colmore Junior and Infant School, Council Chamber, Glamorgan Building, Dementia UK, Dickens Heath Primary School, Dubai British School, Dubai Opera House, Eisteddfod, Elburton Primary School, Elliott and Harper, English National Opera, Erdington Hall Primary School, Forget Me Not, Fundació Del Gran Teatre De Liceu, Galeri, Galeri Caernarfon, George Dixon Junior and Infant School, Glyncoed Primary, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Glyndwr University, Good Chance Theatre, Great Hall, Greenholm Primary School, Grove & St Chad's Schools, Grove Primary School, Hawthorn Primary School, Hengoed Park Care Home, Herbert Thompson Primary School, Hereford Courtyard, Heronsbridge School, High Street Primary School, High Street Primary School Plymouth, Hoddinott Hall, Holte Comprehensive School, Houston Grand Opera, Injan Cyf, John Frost High School, John Hansard Gallery, Kiln Theatre, Lansdowne Primary

School, Liverpool Empire Theatre (ATG), Llandrillo yn Rhos, Llandudno Venue Cymru, Llangyfelach Primary, Lozells Primary and Junior School, Maes Ebbw School, Maes Y Coed Primary School, Maesteg Comprehensive School, Marlborough Primary School, Maryvale School, Mayfield School, Meadowbank School, Meena Centre, Milford Haven Torch, Millbank Primary School, Milton Keynes Theatre (ATG), MM! The Party Limited, Moor Hall Primary School, Moorland Primary School, Mount Wise Community Primary, Musical Memories, National Assembly for Wales, National Dance Company Wales, National Eisteddfod of Wales, National Theatre, National Theatre Productions Limited, Nelson Mandela School, Newport Riverfront, Nonsuch Primary School, Northampton Royal, Norwich Playhouse, Notre Dame Secondary School, Oasis Cardiff, Opera North, Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School, Our Roots, Oxford New Theatre (ATG), Oxford Playhouse, Parkland Primary School, Pen y Fro Primary School, Penrhyn New Broughton School, Pierhead Building, Pilgrim Primary School, Plymouth School of Creative Arts, Plymouth Theatre Royal, Plympton Academy, Pontio Bangor, Q3 Tipton, Queensbury School, Quinton Church Primary School, R G S Springfield School, Raddlebarn Primary School, Regents Park Community Primary School, Riverbank Special School, Royal Opera House, Royal Shakespeare Company, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama, Rydal School Penrhos, Ryders Green Primary School, Salesman We 2019 LTD, Saltash. net School, Shireland Hall Primary Academy, Sketty Primary School, Somerville Primary School, Southampton Mayflower, Southampton University, St Andrews Primary School, St Asaph's Cathedral, St Bernadette's Primary School, St Chad's Primary School, St Christophers School, St Clare's Primary School, St Cuthbert's Primary, St Cyres High School, St David's Cathedral, St David's Hall, St George's Primary School, St Helen's Primary

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Diolch

Welsh National Opera would like to express its deepest gratitude to all its supporters in 2018/2019. It is your generosity that enables us to continue to create, reach and inspire. Thank you for being part of our story.

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War and Peace

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What's next?



Carmen

Jo Davies' new production, set in 1970s Central America, will bring all the passion and drama expected from this iconic opera in our Autumn 2019 and Spring 2020 Seasons.



Les vêpres siciliennes

WNO's successful Verdi Trilogy – *La forza del destino* (2018), *Un ballo in maschera* (2019) – concludes in Spring 2020 with the thrilling *Les vêpres siciliennes*.



Così fan tutte aka School of Love

In Summer 2020, Welsh National Opera takes us back to school with a brand new production of Mozart's comic opera, set in a secondary school in the early 1970s this show will tour mid-scale theatres across Wales and England.



The Black Spider

In April 2020, members of our award-winning WNO Youth Opera will stage a performance of Judith Weir's *The Black Spider* at the Memo Arts Centre, Barry.



Beethoven 250

As part of Beethoven 250, Welsh National Opera has teamed up with BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales, St David's Hall, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama and Sinfonia Cymru to programme a series of events to celebrate the life and work of the composer.



The Nightingale | Bluebeard's Castle

Summer 2020 sees the return of WNO alumni Sir Bryn Terfel in the title role of Bartók's haunting *Bluebeard's Castle* in a contrasting double bill with the enchanting fairy tale, Stravinsky's *The Nightingale*, for a run of performances at Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff and Royal Opera House, London.



Five Year Anniversary of our Regular Schools Work

To celebrate the five year anniversary of our regular schools programme in South Wales, all of the pupils currently participating in the scheme will come together with the WNO Orchestra to stage an amazing showcase performance in Summer 2020.

Keep in touch with WNO wno.org.uk



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