

# 2015/2016 Annual Review



# Making opera matter, NOW

Welsh National Opera believes that opera matters now. It can entertain, engage and bring people together. Over the course of the 2015/2016 Season we showed just what opera can do.

We are committed to ensuring that opera remains a thriving, living, breathing art form. For us, opera doesn't simply offer great nights out but can also stimulate debate and ask essential questions about the world in which we live. Our themed season programming and two new world premières were proof of our artistic ambition. Critical and audience acclaim for our performances recognised the Company's exceptionally high artistic standards.

We believe that opera can have value for everyone and make a real difference to people's lives. In 2015/2016 we reached more people in more ways through our performances, our work with young people and in local communities, digital activity and social media reach. Last year we provided more opportunities than ever for children and members of the community across our touring regions to take part in WNO projects and workshops. Our activities included innovative education projects and community choirs.

WNO works hard to make the most of every pound of public investment. Throughout 2015/2016 we supplemented that income in many different ways including ticket sales, fundraising and hiring opera productions to other companies.

No project in 2015/2016 better demonstrated what WNO and opera can do than *In Parenthesis*:





'Welsh National Opera is carrying the flag for new work like no other company.' Rian Evans, The Guardian on In Parenthesis

'Hats off to Welsh National Opera, which for the second time this season has presented the world première of a new work with considerable musical quality and immediate audience appeal. So it can be done; the book of opera is not yet complete.'

Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph on *In Parenthesis* 

'lain Bell's *In Parenthesis* was a landmark for 14-18NOW, the first major opera commissioned to mark the centenary of the First World War. An inspired response to David Jones's great poem, *In Parenthesis* played a key part in the UK's commemorations of the first day of the Battle of the Somme.'

**Nigel Hinds, Executive Director, 14-18NOW** 



Making opera matter, NOW **Great opera, NOW** Reaching further, NOW The future, NOW Together, NOW Great value, NOW

# In Parenthesis CASE STUDY

The resonance of the opera's themes and subject matter meant that In Parenthesis was the perfect platform for a broader programme of work seeking to reach beyond opera audiences and engage children and communities. In totality, this work offered a broad audience who would not normally encounter WNO, an opportunity to experience the Company and reflect on the events of The Battle of the Somme.

The world première performance was a poignant occasion. Over 80 serving and veteran members of the armed forces, from the Royal Welsh Regiment, joined us for the performance and the opening ceremony for WNO Field.

'This is opera created for and with the community; not just in Wales, though its honouring of the Royal Welch Fusiliers exudes grace. Retaining Jones' poetic sensibility, it is a powerful act of remembrance for all "the many men so beautiful" who fought at Mametz.'

**Steph Power, The Independent** on In Parenthesis

'The opening of *In Parenthesis* on 13 May was an incredible evening. The combination of production, Chorus, principals and Orchestra made for a very moving experience. The attendance of so many members of the Royal Welsh Regiment and the Royal British Legion, together with the opening of the Field installation made the whole evening incredibly poignant'.

lan Douglas, WNO Company Manager

In Parenthesis world première



iOS users can view this video here.

Photo by Kirsten McTernan





# **In Parenthesis** CASE STUDY

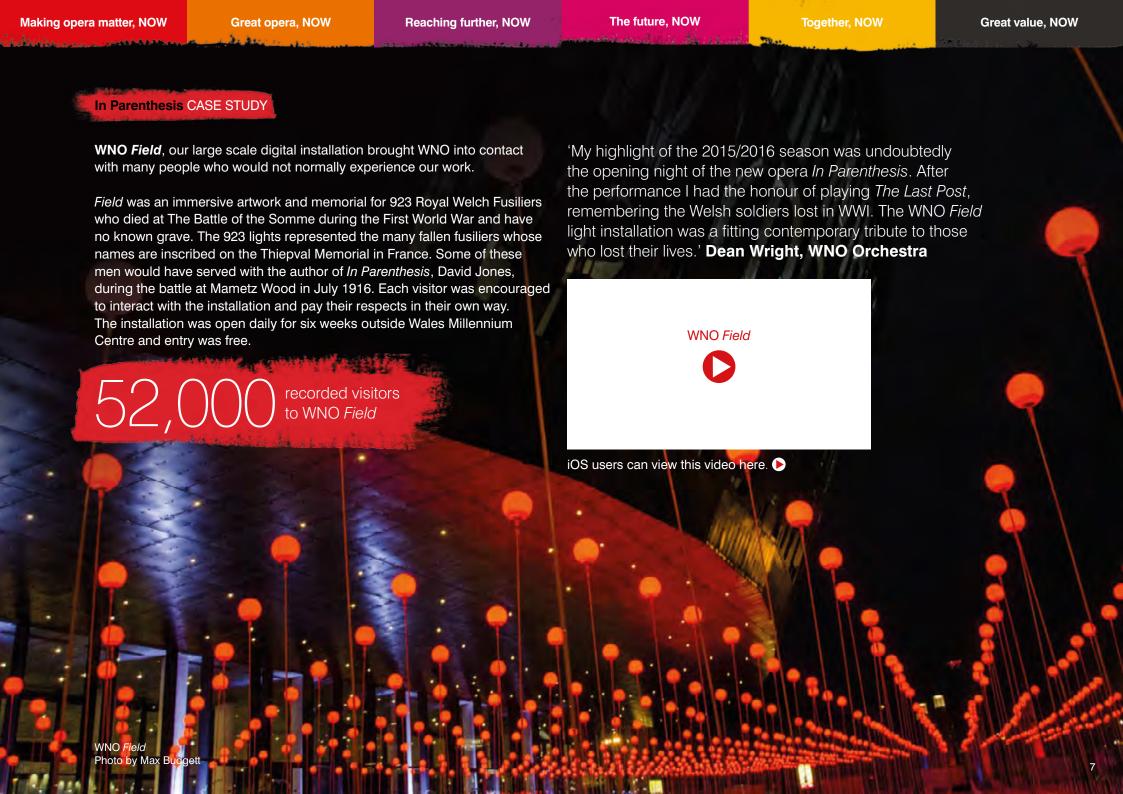
Our programme of work around *In Parenthesis* engaged children, families and worked with communities that wouldn't usually get access to opera. The projects reached far and wide from across South Wales to North Wales and into England.

We gave people with little or no performance experience the opportunity to join together with WNO through a love of singing in the latest of our Come & Sing projects. Participants performed at pop up events in a variety of major locations and events including at National Museum Cardiff, the International Eisteddfod and in the foyer at Wales Millennium Centre on the opening night of *In Parenthesis*.

We connected with communities in towns and cities as diverse as Caernarfon and Southampton, which is where some of the battalions of the Royal Welch Fusiliers were based in WWI. Participants were able to undertake their own acts of remembrance by researching their own WWI family history and then co-creating a short opera based on that research. They were then able to share the opera with their family and friends at a special showcase event. The project was delivered in Southampton in partnership with Mayflower Engage and in Caernarfon with Cofis Bach. Working in partnership with Literature Wales and their Writing Squads in the South Wales Valleys and Newport, we helped to develop the participant's writing skills with an introduction to writing a libretto for opera.

Photo by Kirsten McTernan





# Great opera, NOW

We continue to ensure that opera remains vibrant and alive. In 2015/2016 our innovative themed season programming brought together rarely performed great works, major new operas, a music theatre piece and popular classics. We presented a total of seven new productions including two world premières.

The year consolidated our reputation for inventive, thought-provoking productions and exceptional performances from our two ensembles – the WNO Chorus and Orchestra, music staff as well as guest artists and conductors. Audiences and company members bade a fond farewell to Lothar Koenigs as his hugely important and influential tenure as as WNO Music Director came to an end.

In Autumn 2015, our Madness Season brought together three very different works (I puritani, Orlando and Sweeney Todd). Together these three pieces explored the effects of emotional and mental turmoil both on those who directly endure them as well as the world around them. In Spring 2016, the Figaro Forever Season gave audiences the opportunity to follow the adventures of one of opera's best-loved characters in new productions of two classic operas and a world première (The Barber of Seville, The Marriage of Figaro and Figaro Gets a Divorce by Elena Langer). The three productions were performed on the same monumental set designed by one of the icons of post-war theatre, Ralph Koltai. In Summer 2016, we celebrated our 70th anniversary with 70 Years of WNO.

We looked back to our very first production with performances of Elijah Moshinsky's much-loved productions of *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*. We also looked forward with an operatic adaptation of David Jones' WWI prose poem *In Parenthesis* by Iain Bell.

# **World premières**

Figaro Gets a Divorce, In Parenthesis

# **New productions**

I puritani, Orlando, Sweeney Todd, The Barber of Seville, The Marriage of Figaro

# Revival

Cavalleria rusticana & Pagliacci

40 five star ratings in print and online

1,961 press mentions

97 opera performances in 10 towns and cities across Wales and England

I puritani thrilled critics with an intelligent, highly charged production by Annilese Miskimmon and a breathtaking performance by fast-rising soprano, Rosa Feola.

'Since I joined WNO in December 2015 I have been struck by the extraordinary and committed collection of singers. musicians, craftspeople, technicians and administrators that make WNO what it is. Commissioning the brand new opera In Parenthesis as part of our 70th anniversary celebrations and to mark the centenary of The Battle of the Somme was a perfect example of what the totality of the Company does. A huge array of accompanying arts, digital, community and school activities and various partnership projects not only extended the WNO audience, but made a real difference and ensured wide-ranging engagement. It demonstrated the relevance of Welsh National Opera as it continues to cement its place as an integral part of our artistic and civic society and of communities across Wales and beyond.'

**Leonora Thomson, Managing Director, Welsh National Opera** 

'...Annilese Miskimmon's absorbing new staging' **Richard Morrison**, **The Times on** *I* **puritani**  'Rosa Feola spun Elvira's winding melodies into gold.' **Steph Power, The Independent on** *I* **puritani** 







In 2015/2016 WNO presented two critically acclaimed world premières. In addition to *In Parenthesis* we presented *Figaro Gets a Divorce* in Spring 2016.

With music by Elena Langer and libretto by David Pountney, *Figaro Gets a Divorce* picked up the adventures of opera's favourite barber to create a poignant meditation on lives caught up in the social upheaval of war and revolution.

- '..that rare thing: a modern opera that exerts an immediate emotional impact' **Rupert Christiansen, The Telegraph** on *Figaro Gets a Divorce*
- '...a gorgeously scored new opera.' **George Hall, The Stage** on *Figaro Gets a Divorce*

'The highlight of the year for me was the première of Elena Langer's *Figaro Gets a Divor*ce. With this performance WNO demonstrated its commitment to new work, and produced an opera which celebrated characters familiar from *The Marriage of Figaro* in a taut new dramatic plot which built towards a touchingly tender conclusion which our audiences found genuinely moving.' **David Pountney, WNO Artistic Director** 



'The performances underlined the excellence of this world-class opera company which can look forward to more success in the next 75 years, especially as it aims to deepen its relationship with the Welsh communities out of which it grew'

Peter Collins, The Western Mail on Cavalleria rusticana & Pagliacci

Alongside the world première of *In Parenthesis* we celebrated 70 years of WNO in Summer 2016 with a revival of the first operas we ever performed – *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*.

'I worked on a wide range of projects in the 70th anniversary year, conducting the rarely performed *I puritani*, lain Bell's new work *In Parenthesis*, the classic *Cavalleria rusticana* & *Pagliacci* (that WNO performed in its first season back in 1946) as well as a memorable concert with the WNO Community Chorus. Such variety demonstrates the great strength of WNO, innovating and reaching new audiences while also honouring the past and stimulating public involvement. Welsh National Opera is an exceptional opera company, created by the people for the people and, as a past Music Director and now Conductor Laureate, it gives me immense joy to come back to conduct here.'

Carlo Rizzi, WNO Conductor Laureate





# 15,933

total number of people who attended a WNO concert

orchestra concerts in nine locations

# 900

children were estimated to have attended our Family Concert

**Family Concert** 



iOS users can view this video here.



# Beyond the main stage

The WNO Orchestra is always busy and its concert activity helps to ensure great performances are never out of reach across our touring regions. Our Orchestra was in demand at festivals and concert halls across the UK. Their performances at St David's Hall, Cardiff were a key part of the Hall's International Concert Series, performing popular work alongside new commissions.

Another highlight was the rapturously received concert performance of *Tosca* starring Bryn Terfel which was part of Wales Millennium Centre's 10th anniversary celebrations.

Our new programme of Family Concerts will give many children a first taste of opera and classical music. The first, hugely fun concert welcomed around 900 children and their families. Using digital technology, pre-show activities and encouraging a relaxed atmosphere, this was an engaging, interactive and magical experience. Ticket prices were set to ensure a family could attend for no more than £40, with under 5s attending free of charge.

'A fantastic afternoon for us adults and our children (aged from 6 to 11). Really inspired and captivated them. You all did a great job.' **Family Concert attender** 

The future, NOW Making opera matter, NOW Great opera, NOW Reaching further, NOW Together, NOW Great value, NOW



'We are proud to support Welsh National Opera, a company which is celebrating its 70th anniversary and continues to be at the heart of a thriving national arts scene. WNO provides extraordinary experiences by premiering new work and reinventing the old. They prove to audiences, at home and beyond, that opera is a vibrant, truly contemporary art form. By providing a stage to some of our best singers, technicians, designers, musicians and composers, WNO is also crucial to our creative economy.

Phil George, Chairman, Arts Council of Wales

'Arts Council England is proud of our long term relationship with Welsh National Opera and its touring programme in England. The milestones and innovative productions over your glorious 70 years are too numerous to name but we wish you many more of them.' Peter Phillips, Midlands Area Chairman, **Arts Council England** 

# Reaching further, NOW

In 2015/2016 WNO reached more people in more ways. With a large number of new attenders, a growing digital audience, cinema screenings, digital broadcast and other projects, we have connected with audiences far beyond the theatre.





Over the course of the 2015/2016 Season we achieved high profile media coverage with a sustained and continued presence in both national and local press. We found new ways to communicate our messages including providing digital content as part of British Airways' in-flight entertainment. The broadcast of a BBC Wales documentary focussing on our production of In Parenthesis, as well as broadcasts on Radio 3 and The Opera Platform, capped a year in which we reached more people in more places digitally.



total social media audience (total number of people following us on our different social media channels)

visitors to our website

37,003 169,431 152,455 87,070

total number of social media engagements (total number of likes, shares and comments across our social media streams)

Facebook likes

YouTube views

1,267

Instagram likes

120,542 4,745

new followers on Twitter

# Engaging communities, NOW

Opera brings people together. Singing has many benefits and we want to share them with more people. Our Youth & Community department was busier than ever, offering more opportunities for people from different backgrounds to participate in our projects.

Welsh National Opera's roots lie in the local community. In honour of these roots in our 70th year and to bring people together who love to sing, this year, a new community chorus was formed. The WNO Community Chorus gives participants an opportunity to take part and be involved in the community at WNO. This new project kicked off with foyer performances at Wales Millennium Centre and at National Museum Cardiff.

The WNO Community Chorus was at the heart of a special, celebratory 70 Years of WNO concert. They performed alongside the WNO Orchestra, Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama soloists and Forget-me-Not Chorus, a charity that supports people with dementia and their families through weekly singing sessions. This concert was part of Wales Millennium Centre's Festival of Voice during which we also took part in the Access All Arias project which brought opera into everyday situations and environments.

Our work in communities reached out across our touring regions. Come & Sing projects took place in Cardiff, Llandudno and at the London Welsh Centre, as well as Opera Engage community

'Thanks for all you and your team did for us. A great experience from start to finish.' Helen Timms, WNO Community Chorus member

'Thanks for making the experience such a wonderfully memorable one. I think we all felt very privileged to have taken part and grateful to be treated in such a professional way.' Sarah Driscoll, WNO Community Chorus member

16,699

total number of participants

2,686

total number of Youth & Community audience members

283

total number of participatory sessions

8

Youth & Community performances



# Engaging children, NOW

It's our ambition to ensure children across our touring regions from all social and economic backgrounds have easy, regular access to opera. We aim to be in Community First areas every week inspiring children in Cardiff and beyond. Our education projects don't just give children a memorable first experience of opera. They make innovative use of digital media to tap into and unleash the innate creativity of every child, as well as boosting their digital literacy.

The Sweeney Teach education project engaged children aged between 7 and 11 years old across South Wales including Communities First areas.

The children worked with a digital animator to develop a storyboard for an animation based on *Sweeney Todd*. Through workshops they then helped compose the soundtrack for the feature. All 180 children were invited to WNO to see the finished product and take pride in their achievement.

We also supported learning through the creation of bilingual opera resources. These resources were made available for free on the CânSing website and were utilised by 12,500 users across Wales and England.

'Today's event has been fantastic; it's been an opportunity for our students to learn about different arts and the way that they've been able to construct something together. So they've been able to put that together in the school itself and they've been able to see the finished product here today...'

Steven Davies, Head Teacher, Willowbrook Primary School, Cardiff

Sweeny Teach



iOS users can view this video here.





# The future, Market Mark

We have to invest in opera today to ensure it has a strong future. Our WNO Youth Opera, Associate Artist scheme, Side by Side programme and work placements do just that, by nurturing young talent across a broad range of skill sets.



WNO is committed to nurturing young opera talent, inspiring young people and unleashing their creative potential. Our Youth Opera programme gives young people aged 10 – 25 unique opportunities to sing and perform. Participants benefit from the warm and expert support offered by WNO professionals to help develop their talent.

Each age group regularly has chance to perform and showcase their work to an invited audience. Every two years, the 18 – 25 group present a major production. Over the years the ensemble has built a reputation for exceptionally high musical standards. This year, they presented a new production of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies' *Kommilitonen!* at MEMO Arts Centre, Barry which was acclaimed by both audiences and critics.

Our well established Associate Artist programme gives emerging professional artists unrivalled opportunities to develop their craft. This year Gyula Nagy, our Associate Artist, performed the role of Silvio in *Pagliacci*.

'Thank you so much from Nora and me for the opportunity to continue to attend the YO classes for the third term. Nora improved her confidence on stage, made a few friends and of course, is singing her heart out at every occasion. We are very grateful. Also we wanted to wish you all the best for your amazing performances. Those are great days to remember for the kids and their family. Thank you for all your hard work!'

Raffa PerraCarta (parent 10 – 14 age group)

'...this brilliant production...documentary opera at its most compelling...Polly Graham's inclusive, immersive, promenade-style staging, almost cinematic in its boldness...a sterling team effort.'

Rian Evans, The Guardian on Kommilitonen!



# Together, NOW

WNO is at the centre of the arts community across our touring regions. In 2015/2016 we worked with a huge number of arts organisations to reach more people and make the case for the arts.

Welsh National Opera has many friends across the world. Our relationships with other opera companies internationally help us to stage great opera.

'I couldn't imagine a better company to work with on Bellini's *I puritani* than WNO. The musical, dramatic and technical expertise of the team there made it an easy decision not only to direct, but co-produce the opera with my team at Danish National Opera. The show travels on to Barcelona in 2018 – all three companies involved have found a productive and collaborative way of producing a theatrically challenging, expensive piece at a grand scale. This is international opera co-producing at its most fruitful'. **Annilese Miskimmon Artistic Director, Danish National Opera** 

# Co-productions in 2015/2016

West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds **Sweeney Todd**Danish National Opera, Aarhus, Denmark *I puritani*Grand Théâtre de Genève, Geneva, Switzerland
The Barber of Seville, The Marriage of Figaro,
Figaro Gets a Divorce

**Cardiff Theatrical Services (CTS)**, a wholly owned subsidiary of WNO, is one of the most in demand scenery building operations in the UK.

In 2015/2016 CTS provided services for many different organisations including:

BBC Worldwide, English National Opera, Headlong Impossible Touring Ltd, Importance Of Being Ernest Ltd, Lyric Theatre Hammersmith, Lyric Opera Chicago, National Theatre Wales, Old Vic Productions, Opera North, The Royal Opera House, Royal Court Theatre, The Royal Shakespeare Company, Sonia Freidman Productions, National Theatre, Vaudeville Productions, Chichester Festival Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Young Vic, Wales Millennium Centre and Walk the Plank.

the number of co-productions we presented

the number of co-productions presented by other opera houses

the number of opera companies who hired our productions.



# Partnerships

**Arts Active** 

Throughout 2015/2016 we worked with organisations of all sizes to reach audiences and champion the best of the arts. Those organisations included:

**Artworks BBC National Orchestra of Wales Birmingham Conservatoire Birmingham Hippodrome CADW CânSing** Chapter Cofis Bach, Caernarfon **Forget Me Not Chorus** Galeri, Caernarfon **Literature Wales Liverpool Empire Theatre Lumen Prize Mayflower Engage Mayflower Theatre, Southampton Milton Keynes Theatre National Eisteddfod National Galleries Wales National Library Wales National Museum Wales New Theatre, Oxford Opera Engage Opera Europa** Pontio, Bangor **Rawffest, Youth Arts Festival Wales Reseo Opera and Dance Network Royal British Legion Royal Welsh College of Music** & Drama

**South Central Education Works** St David's Hall **The Bristol Hippodrome** The Opera Platform



# Great value, NOW

Across all of our work at WNO we make the most of every penny of the public investment we receive. We work hard to supplement this income with ticket sales, fundraising, production hires and other commercial activity.

'WNO is one of Wales' most extraordinary institutions, growing over 70 remarkable years to become an internationallyrecognised opera company with a world-renowned reputation. As well as live opera performances the Company is intent on reaching yet wider and more diverse audiences digitally and through a range of schools, youth and community projects in England and Wales. We can be justifiably proud of the Company's success, the value it creates and the contribution it makes culturally, socially and economically.

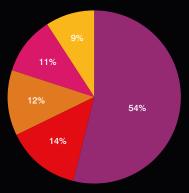
Mark Molyneux, Chairman, **Welsh National Opera** 

'David Pountney's imaginative programming has kept the company amongst the leaders of UK opera production. I have become increasingly aware of the huge contribution WNO makes to Welsh culture and society with its Youth and Community programme, which was well illustrated by the summer production of Kommilitonen! in Barry.

# **Andrew Fletcher, WNO Supporter**

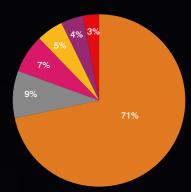
'We are pleased to be working with WNO because as a premium Welsh brand ourselves, Penderyn aspires to represent "Wales to the world" and we seek out partnerships with organisations that can do the same. The process of making Single Malt Welsh Whisky is a wonderful combination of art and science. We celebrate WNO as part of Wales' rich artistic heritage and because WNO continues to deliver a world class experience to its audiences and reflects our own premium brand values.'

**Stephen Davies, Managing Director, Penderyn Whisky** 



## Income

- Public grants from Arts Council England and Arts Council of Wales
- Other earned income
- Box office income
- Fundraising
- Cardiff Theatrical Services sets for third parties



# **Expenditure**

- Opera
- Cardiff Theatrical Services sets for third parties
- Support costs
- Marketing and audience development
- Youth and Community projects
- Fundraising costs

# Thank you

Great opera, NOW

# **Welsh National Opera** would like to express its gratitude to its supporters in 2015/2016:

Arts Council of Wales Arts Council England 14-18 NOW: WW1 Centenary Art Commissions, supported by the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England and by the Department for Culture Media and Sport

# **Business Partners and Sponsors**

Arts & Business Cymru Associated British Ports **Capital Apartments** Chewton Glen Hotel and Spa Eversheds LLP Champagne Laurent Perrier MAC Cosmetics Mosimann's Penderyn Distillery Lexus Cardiff Welsh Government Walpole Go Compare Institute of Directors **Business in the Community** 

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2 anonymous

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Patron: Bryn Terfel CBE

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**WNO Idloes Owen Society** 

**WNO Friends** 

**American Friends of WNO** 

Looking forward

Highlights to look forward to in 2016/2017 include:

New productions including Macbeth, The Merchant of Venice, Kiss Me, Kate, Le Vin herbé and Der Rosenkavalier

Classic revivals including Madam Butterfly, La bohème and Die Fledermaus

The first productions conducted by the new WNO Music Director Tomáš Hanus (Die Fledermaus and Der Rosenkavalier)



**Keep in touch with WNO** 

wno.org.uk









Great value, NOW











