

Welsh National Opera Design Challenge 2018-19

Information pack for tutors

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What is the Design Challenge?

The Welsh National Opera Design challenge is an opportunity for students in National Skills Academy colleges and universities to apply their skills and creativity to a set design task set by industry professionals working for the Welsh National Opera.

Who is it for?

The Design Challenge is set exclusively for students in education member institutions of the National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural. Applicants can be from any subject discipline and need no prior knowledge or experience of set design or theatre. They just need to follow the brief and create a response.

When does it run?

Following feedback given by colleges in previous years, the challenge will now run in the Easter term. There are two stages to the challenge.

Stage 1: 2D design – to be submitted by 8th April.

Stage 2: Shortlisted candidates announced by Monday 15th April – who will then be asked to submit a 3D model box of their design by 28th June 2019.

Who judges the entries?

Entries to the challenge will be judged by industry professionals from Welsh National Opera, including members of the technical and creative teams.

What do I need to do?

Tutors from any subject area are invited to work with their students on this challenge. This could be within the curriculum, or extra-curricular. This tutor pack contains a brief for the students to follow. The brief outlines the two-stage process for the challenge (2D and 3D creations), provides a brief synopsis to this year's opera as well as Director's Visions to inspire the creative responses.

Entries within stage one will be welcomed as paper-based or digital entries, but should be 2D (i.e. not a 3D built set). These can be as creative as the student wishes them to be, as WNO are looking for new ideas, designs and originality. We do not expect every college to have set design courses, so we encourage any discipline to get involved whether that be graphic design, technical theatre, illustration etc

Entries can be submitted electronically or by post by 8th April 2019 to Welsh National Opera. A stage one judging process will take place, and then **three individuals** will be invited to create their design in one of WNO's model set

boxes which will be sent to the college. The three set boxes will be judged and the winner announced by 5 July 2019 (tbc)

What support will I get?

In addition to this tutor pack, there is a film available on WNO's website <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQXIINztnTM> There will also be webinars at several points within the process to support tutors with structuring their approach, and to answer any questions that tutors may have. These will take place using a video link which will be circulated in advance. Dates to be confirmed with participating colleges for these webinars but will be approximately:

Webinar 1: Concept – End of January

Webinar 2: Design – February

Webinar 3: Any questions? – March

Webinar 4: Building a set box – End of April – NB only for shortlisted stage-two participants

What does the winner receive?

As we know that entries will be from students from a multitude of disciplines, we would like to tailor the prize to the individual winner. We would like to invite them to meet industry professionals within their area of interest. There will also be a small trophy given to the winner and a written recommendation of their skills by WNO.

How do I get involved?

To register your interest and receive updates, please email sarah.hughes@ccskills.org.uk

When are the deadlines?

2D DESIGN SUBMISSION: 8 April 2019

SHORTLISTED CANDIDATES ANNOUNCED: 15 April 2019

3D MODEL BOX SUBMISSION: 28 June 2019

WINNER ANNOUNCED: 5 July 2019

The Brief

Students are asked to design a set for the popular opera *Rigoletto*.

The design should be 2-dimensional (paper-based or digital), and should focus on an original, creative response to the synopsis and Director's Visions (below).

Applicants do not need to have any experience of opera or set design, but must be prepared to create a design that could be scaled up to a set box (dimensions: 1:25)

We would like to see the following areas have been considered:

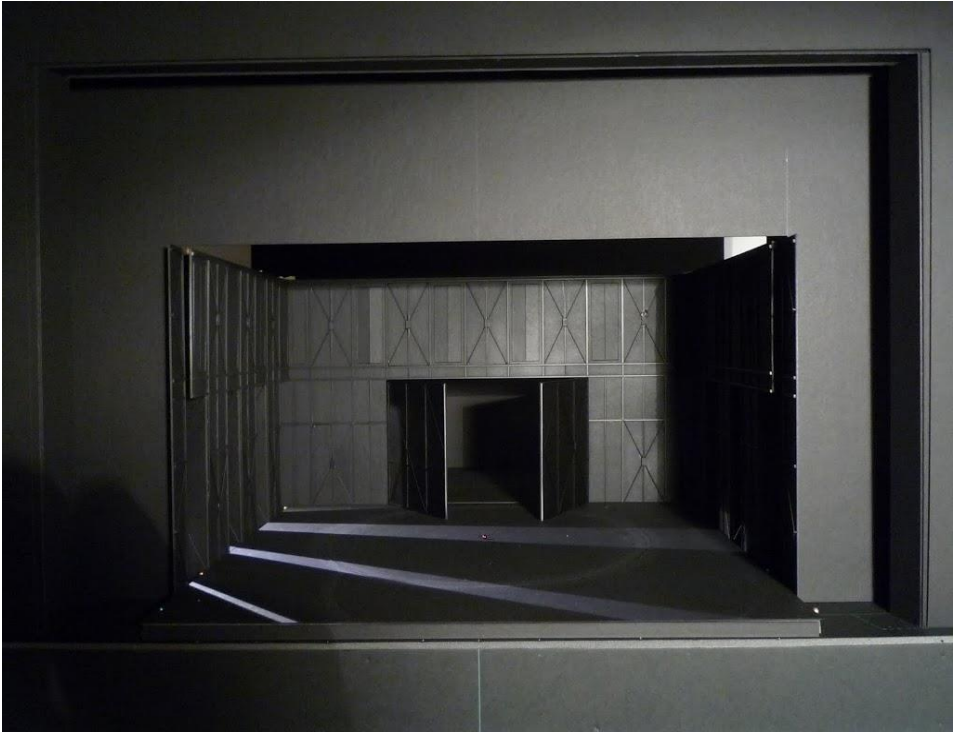
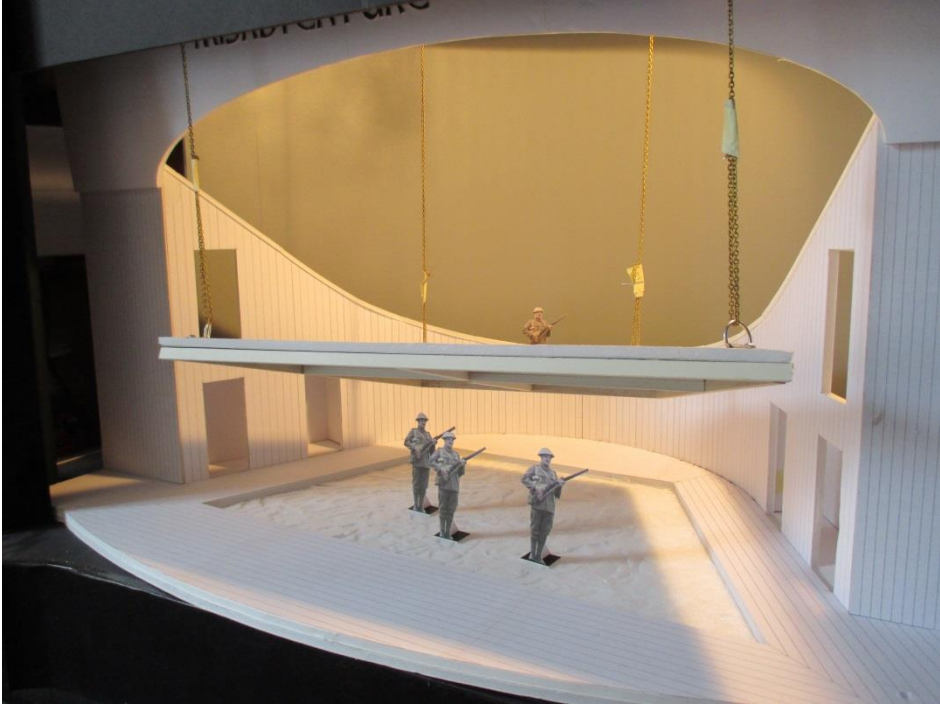
- What materials would be used to build the set (e.g wood, metal, cloth)
- If any parts of the set move, how do they move?
- Where would the lights need to be to highlight key points of the design?
- How could the set be constructed and deconstructed if it is large?
- Considerations of set size adaptations to fit into smaller touring venues

There is no right, or wrong answer to the brief. We are interested in seeing the creative responses from all applicants.

Example Set Boxes

Here are a few examples of set designs and boxes which have been created by professionals. This is purely to give an idea of what we are looking for, we appreciate that the designs may not have this level of detail.





Opera Synopsis

Brief overview.

Rigoletto, jester to the Duke of Mantua, abets his master's serial seduction of women to the court. Rigoletto has a daughter, Gilda, who he keeps hidden away, unknown to the courtiers, who suspect him of hiding a mistress. Monterone, whose daughter has been violated by the Duke, curses Rigoletto. An assassin, Sparafucile, offers Rigoletto his services. Rigoletto returns home to Gilda, but goes out again, leave Gilda to an assignation with the Duke, who has come disguised as a poor student. When the 'student' has gone, the courtiers abduct Gilda, intending to present her to their master. Rigoletto searches the court for his daughter, but the Duke has already taken her to bed. Rigoletto swears revenge, and pays Sparafucile to assassinate the Duke. The Duke arrives at Sparafucile's hut, lured by his sister Maddalena. Gilda and Rigoletto watch through the walls. Gilda learns what her father plans to do, and returns in disguise to offer herself as Sparafucile's victim. Rigoletto collects the sack with the body, and finds - too late - that it contains his dying daughter.

A Director's Vision for *Rigoletto* OPERA

1) In the first act of the opera Rigoletto mocks the father of one of the Duke's conquests and he is cursed by the father in return. Verdi wrote to his librettist Piave "that the whole subject (of the opera) lies in that curse". It is Rigoletto's attempts to escape the curse that drive the story.

Create a design that depicts a world in which the role of fate makes sense. It is probably not a modern setting, as we live increasingly secular lives today, but it might be, or it might be a fantasy setting, depicting a society whose rules and mores we can invent.

2) Rigoletto's world is dark and dangerous. His behaviour is brutish, whilst his boss is charismatic and fickle. I envisage the Duke as an underworld crime lord surrounded by people with an eye to the main chance. Rigoletto tries to keep his daughter separate from that world in order to protect her and only in that sanctuary does he believe that they are safe.

The first act has two main settings, the "court" and Gilda's home. I would like a design in which it is possible to be able to move smoothly from one to the other (i.e. no big scene change) and for the design to reflect how Rigoletto feels in the two different environments.

3) We can, and should, learn lessons from the past, and theatre can help us to do that. Rigoletto is an ambiguous tale about morality, or even the lack of it and it has at its heart the abuse of power (not only the obvious power of the Duke but also Rigoletto's power to injure those less fortunate with his words).

Create a setting in which the audience can find parallels between a world they know and recognize and the mediaeval world of the original story. A world of absolute power that can operate as it pleases without regard for the rights and the feelings of others.

Appendix:

Background to Welsh National Opera

Welsh National Opera is Europe's largest touring company. Annually, WNO gives more than 120 performances of eight main stage operas to a combined audience of around 150,000 people. It gives regular performances in Cardiff (Wales Millennium Centre) and Llandudno (Venue Cymru) in Wales, and Bristol (The Bristol Hippodrome), Birmingham (Birmingham Hippodrome), Liverpool (Liverpool Empire Theatre), Milton Keynes (Milton Keynes Theatre), Oxford (New Theatre Oxford), Plymouth (The Lyric, Theatre Royal Plymouth), and Southampton (Mayflower Theatre) in England.

A designer is usually asked to produce a set-model no later than six months before an opening night. From this model the Production Manager calculates if a design can actually work, how feasible it is and what changes may need to be made for the variety of venues WNO visits. The model is also used to present to other members of the company. The Publications and Marketing Departments need to see it so that programmes and publicity material correspond accurately with new productions. Singers and performers also see it, usually on the first day of rehearsals, so they are able to place themselves, artistically, in the production.

Theatrically reproducing the detail for a set from the model box is the next task; firstly the set-model is dissected and costed. The technical team must then work very closely with builders, suppliers, making and technical departments ensuring everything is completed ready for the beginning of the rehearsal period. Co-ordinating all these elements in preparation for a first night takes many months of intense work.

Judging Criteria

The designs submitted on 8 April will be judged on their concept and initial design process, with the shortlisted entries going forward to a model box stage.

Judging will give equal measure to the research and design experimentation process, as well as the technical practicality of the design. There will be three areas that each design will be judged on.

- 1 **An informed design process:** showing related research into the theatrical form, opera text, and context of the director's vision.
- 2 **Creative interpretation:** showing that the theatrical form has been explored and experimented with, and that the design is relevant to a contemporary audience.
- 3 **Technical and staging practicality:** a basic overview of construction, build and operation has been considered and explained.

1 An informed design

- Has shown a coherent journey between research, experimentation and final design.
- Has shown research related to the chosen director's vision.
- An understanding has been shown of set design formats, and the chosen approach has taken into consideration other design elements such as lighting, sound and costume.

2 Creative interpretation

- Director's vision has been translated into the physical stage space.
- The design process has experimented with proscenium arch possibilities.
- Evidence that contemporary theatre design has been explored.

3 Technical and staging practicality

- Consideration has been made to the design fitting into New Theatre, Oxford and Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff (WNO's smallest and largest venues) with any related construction decisions.
- Consideration has been made to any practicalities for actors and stage crew during the running of a performance.

Presentation of work

The design can be presented in any format as long as it accurately reflects the vision and concept of the process, and the below criteria are adhered to:

- Up to 800 words or a 90 second video pitch of the design. It should reference your research and the materials that are being presented, to help demonstrate how you have responded to the brief and the director's vision, including:
 - Why you picked that specific director's vision.
 - Notes on how it would be constructed, including ensuring the creation of a safe working environment for technical crews and performers.
- A range of process drawings, from research, experimentation to final design, either in hard copy or digital.
- Applicants should also deliver a mood board to demonstrate the feel and style of the production design.

All sent items need to be able to fit into an A3 envelope or on a memory stick. This is to allow for easy storage and for items to be sent back.

Please send to the following address:

Stephanie Jenkins
 Welsh National Opera
 Wales Millennium Centre
 Bute Place
 Cardiff
 CF10 5AL

Terms and Conditions

- 1 The competition is only open to members of the National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural. Membership must be active for the duration of the project.
- 2 The closing date for paper / digital based designs will be 8 April 2019.
- 3 Only shortlisted entries will be cultivated to a model box stage by Welsh National Opera after this date.
- 4 Each shortlisted candidate will present their completed Model Box Design to the judging panel in Cardiff on 28 June 2019.
- 5 Only entries by individuals will be considered. Any group entries will not be considered.

- 6 Any contact details supplied will be used solely for administering the competition and will not be published or provided to any third party without the explicit prior permission of the entrant.
- 7 By submitting an entry for this competition, the entrant agrees to Welsh National Opera having exclusive licence to use entries for all media for the purposes of administering, performing and promoting the competition including unlimited limitation streaming on the internet.
- 8 By submitting an entry for the competition, the entrant warrants and represents that the work is their original work and does not infringe the copyright or any other right of any other person.
- 9 By submitting an entry to the competition, the entrant will ensure a completed media permission form is completed by any models used within the design representation.
- 10 The competition is not open to employees of, or close relatives of employees of, Welsh National Opera.
- 11 The decision as to winners of the competition is final and in the absolute discretion of the Welsh National Opera panel. No correspondence will be entered into.
- 12 Winners will be contacted via their College by email, telephone or by mail. Where a winner cannot be contacted after reasonable attempts have been made, Welsh National Opera reserves the right to offer the prize to another entry.
- 13 Welsh National Opera takes no responsibility for late or lost entries due to the postal service or any other event beyond the control of Welsh National Opera.
- 14 Welsh National Opera reserves the right to cancel this competition without notice at any stage if it is deemed necessary in the absolute discretion of Welsh National Opera or where events beyond its control prevent the proper administration of the competition.
- 15 By submitting an entry for this competition, the entrant indicates their unconditional assent to these terms and conditions and agrees to be bound by them.
- 16 This competition is administered by Welsh National Opera in partnership with the National Skills Academy for Creative & Cultural.