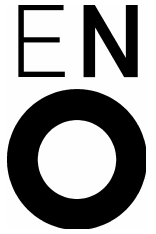


Press Release



ENO at the Young Vic - A Dynamic Collaboration

In Spring 2008 ENO presents an exciting contemporary opera season at the Young Vic, producing two new productions of work by living composers as part of ENO's **Sky Arts 2007/08 Season**. ENO Artistic Director John Berry has devised an innovative programme of two provocative works - including a UK premiere - in close collaboration with David Lan, Artistic Director of the Young Vic. ENO, working with one of London's boldest and most thought-provoking theatres, provides creative opportunities for British and international talent, with ENO Music Director Edward Gardner leading the *Punch and Judy* forces. Both productions are presented in the intimate, flexible space of the Young Vic's main theatre, ideal for medium scale work.

This partnership with the Young Vic gives ENO the opportunity to develop an adventurous strand of programming for a new performance environment as part of an overall ENO artistic policy to present innovative productions with artists from multidisciplinary arts.

The two pieces selected for the ENO/Young Vic Season differ in genre, yet both have stimulated fierce debate since their individual premieres. Whilst Olga Neuwirth's *Lost Highway*, premiered in 2003, represents the ultimate in 'avant garde' music today, Harrison Birtwistle's 1968 *Punch and Judy* was considered equally audacious in its own time, attracting considerable praise and a good deal of outrage. Both pieces provide rich and often disturbing material for our creative teams to explore.

Lost Highway (Olga Neuwirth) – a **Sky Focus** production New Production opens Friday 4 April 2008

'Sucking the listener into an inescapable vortex'. Composer Olga Neuwirth

As ENO Season Sponsor, **Sky Arts** is particularly keen to nurture productions that are fresh, inventive, and reach new audiences. Following last Season's *Satyagraha*, ENO is pleased to announce that *Lost Highway* has been chosen as this Season's **Sky Focus** production. Sky Arts will also be producing a short behind the scenes programme on *Lost Highway*, titled *Sky Arts at ENO's Lost Highway*, to be shown on Sky Channel 267 throughout the run of the production.

ENO/Young Vic's first new production features one of Europe's leading young composers, Austrian Olga Neuwirth, in the British premiere of *Lost Highway*. The libretto is by the composer, together with Nobel Prize winning playwright and novelist (*The Piano Teacher*) Elfriede Jelinek, based on the 1997 cult film created by David Lynch and Barry Gifford, who granted them free use of their original screenplay.

In the words of film maker David Lynch (whose films include *Blue Velvet*, *The Elephant Man*, *Eraserhead*, *Wild at Heart*), *Lost Highway* is 'a meditation on the mysterious nature of identity'. His psychological thriller is a surreal masterpiece, in which the characters exist in a crisis of parallel identities where time is out of control. The central character, Fred Madison, (a jazz saxophonist in the film, changed to a trumpet player in Neuwirth's version), suffers from a mental disorder, 'psychogenic fugue', a state in which the subject leaves his identity and takes on a new one elsewhere without recall, but haunted by the same fears.

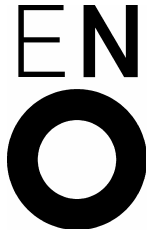
Mirroring the structure of Lynch's film, Olga Neuwirth employs her extraordinary sound patterns in the musical 'fugue' form, in which one is caught 'in a time loop', to conjure up parallel universes rather than linear time. Speaking of her approach she says: '...it was clear from the start that I had to conceive music and video (the two forms of art that deal with time) simultaneously so that I would be able to match the famous film with a new arrangement of sound and image.*' Described as 'one of the beacons of the avant-garde' (*Suddeutscher Zeitung*), Neuwirth says 'My music must always be a riddle'.

Her score for *Lost Highway* - live 27-piece ensemble, interplay of live and pre-recorded sound, sampler/live electronics, echoes of Monteverdi, Weill, Porter and jazz - evokes moods of danger and surprise.

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Conductor Baldur Brönnemann makes his ENO debut. He has worked extensively with many of today's living composers and conducted in many of Europe's contemporary music festivals, in addition to his regular engagements with major UK and European orchestras in standard repertoire.

Diane Paulus makes her UK directing debut with *Lost Highway*. Her innovative theatre work includes creating and directing *The Donkey Show*, a disco adaptation of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, which ran for six years off-Broadway with subsequent touring dates including London. She directed *Best of Both Worlds*, a gospel/r&b adaptation of *A Winter's Tale*, and *The Karaoke Show*, which set *A Comedy of Errors* in a karaoke bar, as well as award-winning productions of *Running Man* (a music theatre piece set to jazz and poetry). She has directed Wagner's *Lohengrin*, two of Mozart's operas, Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and all three Monteverdi operas – in collaboration with conductor Jane Glover – at Chicago Opera Theater, where she will return to direct a further Mozart opera, *Don Giovanni* and the world première of Tod Machover's *Death and the Powers*.

With the exception of lighting designer Mimi Jordan Sherin, the creative team is new to ENO. Production design is by Riccardo Hernandez, while video designer Philip Bussman (famous for his work with William Forsythe and the internationally renowned Wooster Group) and Markus Noisternig create the video and sound design, which are crucial elements in this piece. '...the video, together with the sound, is to form a constantly flickering space of sound and imagery'.* Markus Noisternig specialises in real-time digital audio effects and live electronics for contemporary music performance. He devised the original sound design with Olga Neuwirth and creates 'surround sound' for this new production in the Young Vic space.

The dual role of Renee/Alice is sung by soprano Valérie MacCarthy in her ENO debut. A specialist in the French repertory, Ms MacCarthy has performed at the Tanglewood and Ravinia Festivals and with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. She created and performed a one-woman touring show, *Off the Hook*, which is her personal interpretation of Menotti's *The Telephone* and Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine*. She made her Broadway debut as Musetta in Baz Luhrmann's production of *La bohème*.

Vocalist David Moss takes the demanding dual role of Mr Eddy / Dick Laurent, which he performed in the world premiere production of *Lost Highway* and on the recording. Dutch baritone Quirijn de Lang sings Pete Dayton, while Mark Bonnar is Fred Madison, whose anxiety and suspicion regarding his wife's fidelity lead to his psychological breakdown and loss of identity. Counter-tenor Christopher Robson makes a welcome return to the Company as the Mystery Man.

This ENO/Young Vic new co-production is a **Sky Focus** production.

To hear the director and video designer talk about the production and for a weekly six part video series offering an insight into different aspects of this work go to: www.eno.org and click on **ENO Interactive**

There are **six** performances only at the Young Vic: 4 / 5 / 7 / 8 / 10 / 11 April at 7.30pm. All tickets £30 (concessions under-30s only: 50 @ £9.50 every performance). **Not suitable for under-16s**

Book online: www.eno.org/youngvic or call: 020 7922 2922

Olga Neuwirth's *Lost Highway* is available on CD - recommended recording: Kairos 0012542KAI

For a full blog of Olga Neuwirth visit: www.boosey.com/neuwirth and for further information and articles on *Lost Highway* visit Boosey & Hawkes' main website: www.boosey.com from which some of the quotes are sourced and reproduced here with their kind permission.

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Notes to Editors

- David Lynch and Barry Gifford granted free access and use of their original 1997 film script *Lost Highway* to composer Olga Neuwirth and her co-librettist Elfriede Jelinek for their music theatre piece based on the film.
- In the first section *Lost Highway* is mostly spoken or whispered; it is then entirely sung in the 'psychogenic fugue' when the characters assume new identities.
- 'Psychogenic fugue', now known as Dissociative Fugue, is a disturbing mental disorder. Those affected by this medical condition may depart their identity without being aware of it and take on and exist in a new one, having no memory of their past. The state is not brought on by alcohol or drugs but may be stress related e.g. due to guilt or to the sufferer trying to escape a situation which he or she finds intolerable. However, resolution of the situation proves just as difficult in the new identity (cf the character Fred Madison/Pete Dayton in *Lost Highway*). Commenting on this state, Olga Neuwirth has said 'No matter what, you remain a prisoner of your body and mind. You can't escape from yourself, your fears, your inner mind.' (quoted by Robert Hilferty, *New York Times*)
- *Lost Highway* is Olga Neuwirth's second opera and was premièred in Austria at the Graz Festival, October 2003 with great success, followed by the Swiss premiere in Basel, May 2004. The New York City premiere was held in the Miller Theatre, Columbia University in February 2007. Her first full length opera, *Báhlamms Fest* (1999), also written in collaboration with librettist Elfriede Jelinek, was awarded the Ernst Krenek-Preis at the Vienna Festival. She is the recent recipient of the Heidelberg Artist's Prize (Heidelberger Künstlerinnenpreis) 2008 for her trumpet concerto '....miramondo multiplo'.

* Composer's Notes: Afterthoughts on *Lost Highway* (Olga Neuwirth, July 2003 www.boosey.com)

Press quotes:

'The resulting score is enigmatic and labyrinthine, constantly morphing from one thing to the next. Ms Neuwirthknows how to bend and twist sound like no other.' (*Robert Hilferty, New York Times, 2 Nov 2003*)

'*Lost Highway* entertains, challenges our perceptions of opera, and demands to be experienced.' *Larry L Lash, Financial Time, 2003*

'A deep, disturbing film has met its operatic match....' *Los Angeles Times, 2007*

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Punch and Judy (Harrison Birtwistle / Stephen Pruslin) New Production opens Saturday **19 April 2008**
A tragical comedy or a comical tragedy

'We play like children, murder like animals, love like lovers': Director Daniel Kramer on *Punch and Judy*

The second co-production in ENO/Young Vic's season is the arresting one-act *Punch and Judy* by Harrison Birtwistle (scenario and libretto by Stephen Pruslin) in the 40th anniversary year of its composition. ENO Music Director Edward Gardner conducts a new production by the brilliant young theatre director Daniel Kramer in his ENO and opera debut.

Billed as 'a tragical comedy, or a comical tragedy', librettist Stephen Pruslin says that he and Birtwistle sought to create 'a stylized and ritualistic drama for adults....' Examining the primal themes of play, kill, love as they are endlessly re-enacted, Birtwistle displays in this, his first opera, his love of repetitive narrative so typical of his work. The recurrent action-cycles (for example Punch 'murders' Judy four times) are expressed in the repeated word games and chorales in the score. Director Daniel Kramer finds a complementary visual style in the ritual of Commedia dell'Arte. Punch as the Pulchinella figure is Everyman, taking on roles of Ringmaster, undertaker, lover, creating and acting out an endless stream of situations and routines in an unending cycle.

Punch and Judy is conducted by ENO Music Director Edward Gardner (19 / 25 / 27 April) and Leo Hussein (21 / 23 April). The strong cast is led by Andrew Shore as the schizoid Punch, veering from 'unbridled savagery' (Gavin Thomas www.compositiontoday.com) to romantic lover, all the time in collusion with the audience. He is joined by Lucy Schauer (Judy), Gillian Keith (Polly), Graham Clark (Lawyer) and Ashley Holland Choregos.

Daniel Kramer's production team comprises designer Giles Cadle, lighting designer Peter Mumford and choreographer Quinny Sacks

Performances are in the **Young Vic Main Theatre** on **19, 21, 23, 25 & 27 April 2008**. **50 tickets available for every performance at £9.50 under-30s only**. All other tickets £30. **Not suitable for under-16s**
Book online at: www.eno.org/youngvic or call: 020 7922 2922

This new ENO/Young Vic co-production of *Punch and Judy* is **supported by the English Opera Group** and is part of ENO's **2007/08 Sky Arts Season**.

Media Notes

Commedia dell'Arte

The art-form Commedia dell'Arte originated in Italy during the Renaissance and represents a specific attitude to performance. Characteristically the actor sets up a stage personality in advance in collusion with the audience, thereby establishing a direct rapport with the audience and allowing them to share ownership of his stage character, into which the performer moves in and out. Director Daniel Kramer has studied the history of the Punch & Judy story, which has fascinated him since childhood and he is engaged in a long-term project to develop a full scale production with actors. He trained in Italy with the world-renowned authority on Commedia dell'Arte, the legendary teacher and director Antonio Fava, whose own father was a famous Pulchinella

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Harrison Birtwistle - bio notes

Birtwistle's first opera, *Punch and Judy*, was commissioned for the Aldeburgh Festival, where it premiered in 1968 in a production which visited the Edinburgh Festival and Sadler's Wells the same year. In 1982 it was staged in London in a memorable new production by Opera Factory. *Punch and Judy* is the second of Birtwistle's operas to be produced by ENO, which staged the world premiere of *The Mask of Orpheus* in 1986.

His operas include *Gawain*, *The Last Supper*, *The Second Mrs Kong*. His new opera *The Minotaur* will be premiered in April 08 by the Royal Opera. He is the recipient of many awards and honours including a Knighthood in 1988 and a British Companion of Honour 2001. He currently holds the post of Director of Composition at the LRAM.

Birtwistle's music is strongly rhythmic; often described as 'brutal or violent' in his desire to evoke violence, especially if applied to his first opera, *Punch & Judy* with its explicit violence, more immediately shocking as performed by performers than in the puppet show of the original story.

Harrison Birtwistle is published by Boosey & Hawkes. Visit: www.boosey.com/birtwistle

Daniel Kramer – bio notes

Daniel Kramer has been Associate Artistic Director at London's Gate Theatre, Notting Hill. His critically acclaimed production of *Woyzek* transferred from the Gate to St Ann's Warehouse, New York and for this and *Hair*, also at the Gate, he was nominated for the Evening Standard Outstanding Newcomer Award. He revived the first UK production of *Angels in America, Parts 1 & 2*, which opened at the Citizens Theatre at the end of April 2007 and then transferred to the Lyric Hammersmith in late June. His other UK productions include *Sweet Charity Too* for the RSC (where he was a creative associate), a revival of *Bent* (Trafalgar Studios) and he is engaged in developing a full scale *Punch and Judy* project, which has been work-shopped with Simon Callow and Marcello Magni among others, for which he received an Arts Council grant.

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