

# MADAME X

MUSIC & LIBRETTO BY  
TIM BENJAMIN

PROGRAMME

# RADIUS

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# MADAME X

**MUSIC & LIBRETTO BY  
TIM BENJAMIN**

21 AUGUST 2014  
**HIPPODROME THEATRE  
TODMORDEN**

22–23 AUGUST 2014  
**SQUARE CHAPEL CENTRE FOR THE ARTS  
HALIFAX**

25–27 AUGUST 2014  
**ARCOLA THEATRE  
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# WELCOME

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this production of my new opera, *Madame X*.

I began writing the opera with the simple visual idea of a painting that remains on-stage throughout, and around which the plot develops. This idea has echoes of both *Lulu* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but in *Madame X* the painting is different again. It is at the same time a malevolent presence yet also a saviour; a portal to heaven and a gateway to hell. On which side of the portal the action takes place is an open question.

Inevitably as one begins to write, the idea develops, and the complete *Madame X* has within it many hidden (and not-so-hidden) symbols and meanings. Superficially it is an opera about a struggling artist, but it's also about money, power, and love: forces which have had a profound effect on art (including music) over the centuries. More particularly, a key inspiration for the opera is the artistic trope of "Vanitas" paintings, which highlight the transience of human life and the vanity of earthly possessions and wealth in the face of the great equaliser, death.

The libretto – which I wrote with the enthusiastic assistance of our company mentor and this production's dramaturg, Anthony Peter – itself plays with meaning and symbolism in language. One character speaks entirely by reference to famous works of art, and another emits an endless stream of aphorisms and proverbs. Other characters begin as stereotypes but offer hidden depths: as in the real world, people are most interestingly described by the ways in which they defy rather than conform to caricature and simple classification.

The opera's design, too – by the wonderful Lara Booth – is heavy with symbolism: the performance space is defined by a picture frame, empty frames hang from the blackness above, and two windows stare out blankly into nothingness. It isn't simply a shabby apartment. Are we, in fact, within the artist's skull, the props and players nothing but figments of his subconscious?

The final ingredient, however, is the most important: you, the audience. Without you, there can be no performance. Thank you for coming, and I hope you find plenty within *Madame X* to enthrall, intrigue, and excite you.



**TIM BENJAMIN**

Tim Benjamin  
Artistic Director, Radius

## SYNOPSIS

*The opera is set in the studio apartment of Masetto and Zerlina, a young couple settling in a new country.*

### **ACT 1**

*Masetto, a master portrait painter, is holding an exhibition of paintings, all featuring his muse and lover, Zerlina.*

*They are joined by Masetto's dealer and agent Botney, Mr Wilmore (a wealthy capitalist), Lady Brannoch (an equally wealthy aristocrat) and members of the public.*

*Mr Wilmore, infatuated by Zerlina, buys all the paintings. Lady Brannoch commissions a grand portrait.*

*After the party, Botney goes through the "takings"; Lady Brannoch arrives for her sitting. Later, Mr Wilmore pays a visit, with an indecent proposal for a Saturday night.*

— Interval: 20 minutes —

### **ACT 2**

*Sunday morning. Masetto is woken by worshippers at church; Zerlina is missing in disturbing circumstances...*

*Botney arrives to check on the progress of the painting, and explains how the terms of the commission have changed.*

*Masetto, mad with grief and anger, plots his revenge.*

### **ACT 3**

*Vengeance is a drink best served cold...*



# IS IT MODERN? IS IT RENAISSANCE?

*Anthony Peter on the libretto and Jacobean "revenge" drama*

One of the pleasures of putting the libretto of *Madame X* together with Tim was discovering what it was about. Although the outline of the plot was always clear, what the story might amount to became clearer in the process of development. I say "might" because I think *Madame X* still offers its audience a broad range of interpretations.

At first, the opera was called *Arcadia* (was it a dark Pastoral?), and incorporated inter-scenic dream sequences of advertisements selling financial products (was it a Satire?).

Then we found ourselves discussing the meaningful creative lives of the artist and his muse in contrast to the vapid existence of the other characters. We talked about Ecclesiastes, and the working title became *Vanitas*. Was it a Morality Play?

And what should we call the characters? We had names we liked that happened to suggest different dramatic genres: the Wildean Lady Brannoch; the Restoration man about town, Wilmore; the upstart wide-boy art agent, Botney, who might have come out of a Joe Orton farce, and the significantly unnamed husbands and wives. And, finally, Masetto and Zerlina, representing an exploited but talented immigrant community, who seemed to come as much from docu-drama as from *Don Giovanni*.

We argued a lot about the Sunday morning church service juxtaposed with the discovery of the murder and Masetto's response to it – would it not be too obviously moralising? And that ending – was it pure Jacobean Revenge Tragedy or a dark version of a late Shakespearean Romance? Or both? And if both, what was the point it was making?

Tim had an advantage over me in all this. He was the composer. In the same way as a set of bizarre Bowie lyrics can, when put to music, take on a meaning or shape an emotional response that an audience can recognize as significant, Tim saw his libretto as part of a total dramatic experience, not something to be fully understood on its own. The libretto certainly provides a narrative, but the music delivers its meaning. Thus the point is whatever it is.

But it is too easy to leave it as open as that. For me the most important thing going on in the opera exists on the socio-political level. There are the dashed hopes of the young, gifted, hopeful immigrants; there is the overbearing, self-assumed privilege of the plutocrat and the aristocrat, and the class system that intimidates and renders the trusting poor impotent; and there's the predatory, avaricious upstart's ruthless exploitation of the talents of others, especially those whose command of English and



**VANITAS**

Pieter Claesz (1772)

business-speak is weak. And the two nameless couples suggest the way good art is wasted on those who collect it as an accessory to their socialite, celebrity-status selfie-conscious world.

This contrast between the powerful and the powerless is evident in the libretto's two most distinctive characterizations. On the one hand there is Masetto, the foreign painter, who speaks entirely in the titles of paintings as if unable to articulate his thoughts in English. At the same time, this may suggest the intensity of a life engaged with painting. It may also mark him as a kind of Asperger's genius. On one occasion, however, when in grief-stricken adoration of his lost love, he is given a text first set by John Dowland that shows us the depth of his sensitivity that allows him access to a means of expression usually so much beyond him.

On the other hand there is Botney whose dialogue consists almost entirely of reassuring proverbs, bereft of meaning by their being platitudes and clichés, and delivered in the manner of a briskly confident, avuncular self-seeking con-man. He represents someone wholly without a sense of what it means to be alive and fully human. His only meaning lies in his belief that *surripio ergo sum* and that his *raison d'être* is "to see and be seen", preferably with money and the moneyed.

At worst, this absence of personal meaning and obsession with self are manifested as amorality, an amorality which, combined with power, leads to theft, murder, and would-be seduction, and which has no regard for the laws, written and understood, that facilitate the common good. It is these laws that the off-stage Sunday morning service reminds us of. This key feature of Act 2 activates our consciences and, in the world of the drama, stirs Masetto to seek redress for being both swindled and bereaved of his muse. However, Zerlina's murder clearly deranges him, and we find him seeking a redress that does not require any reference to the law of the land. Rather, what he opts for is that "kind of wild justice" Bacon writes of in his essay "Of Revenge", the kind of justice that Vindice seeks in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, as he contemplates the rotting skull of his lover, poisoned by the Duke whose sexual wishes she would not gratify:

*Hum: whoe'er knew  
Murder unpaid? Faith, give revenge her due...  
Advance thee, O thou terror to fat folks,  
To have their costly three-pil'd flesh worn off  
As bare as this.*

Bacon did not approve of revenge. The furthest he managed to allow for it was "for those wrongs for which there is no law to remedy". For Masetto, the law, of course, does exist, but he is no position to avail himself of it, and his actions (and Zerlina's) in Act 3, though unjustifiable in law, are ones we tacitly struggle not to approve of. Thus we find ourselves forced to consider the social circumstances that can drive individuals both into madness and into desperate acts of illegal "natural justice". Or, as Masetto says, "Justice and Divine Vengeance Pursuing Crime".

And in this respect, the opera, despite its variety of dramatic genres, is predominantly a Revenge Tragedy, perhaps even the purest of its kind in so far as the entire cast is dead by the end. Yet this does not mean you are in for a heavy evening. There is plenty of humour in the piece, mostly ironic or based on a traditional comedy of manners.

But there is another kind, which Nicholas Brooke has called the "horrid laughter" of Revenge Tragedy. Brooke sees such tragedy as derived from late medieval morality plays in which "sardonic humorists mocked and derided" any pretensions of humanity to secular glory, and describes the Jacobean tragedians' take on this tradition as "violent moral farce". In particular, Brooke found that the tendency of 20th century presentations of Revenge Tragedy to suppress an audience's opportunities for laughter to have been misguided, for they did not allow the audience the chance to "participate" in the play, to engage with it as moral arbiters – even if their judgment is one that is directed by the playwright. It is encouraging, therefore, to see that recent productions of Jacobean Tragedy are restoring the audience's opportunity to laugh at the moral emptiness of those for whom the self-importance of position and the absurdities of

social form have overcome their capacity for compassion and an understanding of love.

So, what does this make *Madame X*? Clearly, my take on it is that it is a modern reworking of Jacobean Revenge Tragedy with many of the same moral concerns. But the opera could equally be read as a satire on money, or an investigation of the role of the artist in society, or a meditation on “all flesh is as grass”, a political drama on immigration or simply an exercise in narrative, intertextuality and the possibilities of recitative. In fact, it opens itself to a variety of interpretations, a multiplicity of meanings. In this way, it is the more pleasingly ironic and artful: after all, it creates its meanings from the lives of those who, in its moral universe, are meaningless and who brutalise those others who strive to make life more beautiful for themselves and society.

*Anthony Peter is the dramaturg and company mentor to this production*



**JUSTICE AND DIVINE VENGEANCE PURSUING CRIME**

*Pierre-Paul Prud'hon (1808)*

# SYMBOLS AS SIGNS

*Adrian Benjamin, Prebendary Emeritus of St Paul's Cathedral, on Codes and Clues in Art*

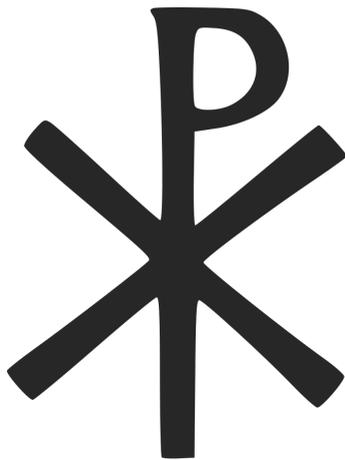
**X**: a sign of contradiction.

Used by a teacher to mark something wrong; used by a voter to vote for one thought to be right.

A holiday maker puts an **X** on a postcard to show their hotel – “Wish you were here!” – but the **X** of the crosshairs hovers over the target for a marksman or assassin.

A person unable to write signs a document with **X**; yet **X** is also used for one whose identity is being withheld. Today we have *The X Factor* which gives a performer not mystery, but fame.

Wilhelm Röntgen named his discovery “**X**-rays” because the source of the radiation was unknown. Hermann Henking named his “**X** element” for its unique properties; it was entirely and remarkably coincidental that what is now known as the X chromosome was later revealed by microscopy to resemble (like all the chromosomes, bar the Y) an **X**.



**X** marked the spot for Long John Silver; except it was not at first an **X** but the **+** of intersecting lines of longitude and latitude on the map that Robert Louis Stevenson and his stepson drew, and which went on to inspire *Treasure Island*. The crossed lines – revealing what is hidden – became an **X**, and the lines in turn became bones with a skull hovering above – the Jolly Roger – marking Flint’s hoard.

Today this is a warning for poison, or perils generally; but in antiquity the device did not signify danger but hope, for before the pirates of the Caribbean hoisted their flag the emblem flew above the galleons of the raiding Mediterranean Templar knights, who sailed originally under the sign of Christ.

The first letter of the Saviour’s name in Greek, *Chi*, is our **X** (as in Xmas). With the second letter *Rho* superimposed upon it, the skull appears above crossed bones, signifying victory over death: with an allusion also to the six pointed Star of David, or our asterisk, used to give emphasis (or, on the other hand, to indicate something, like an expletive, deleted).



*Chi-Rho and the Jolly Roger*

What makes iconography fascinating and codes riveting is the way they can, like the simple **X**, have a multitude of meanings. Employed by artists, their very ambiguity forces the viewer to think twice. An **X** is also a kiss. Depictions of Judas kissing Jesus in Gethsemane show the sign of love being profaned, but look again at such pictures and ask who is kissing whom: the two faces reveal not betrayal but forgiveness.

Similarly the kiss depicted in pictures of "Death and the Maiden" may originally have been graphic *memento mori* images, mortality seducing beauty; but they evolve to become – like Adam's skull so often painted at the foot of the cross at Calvary – a portrayal not of destruction but redemption. Look at the intertwining of arms in Munch's version and again ask who is kissing whom: the maiden appears to be welcoming Keats' "easeful Death" and so disarming him.

Heraldic emblems, the Highway Code, graffiti in pyramids or public toilets: they have all employed the language of symbols as shorthand. **X = Y**, where **Y** stands for something more long-winded than the simple **X**. In art, however, iconography starts working the other way round. At first glance it seems that the reality of **Y** is being represented by the artificiality of the artist's **X**; but as the viewer, or audience, continues to take in the artist's **X** they are taken in by it, led on to see the face beneath the mask, the skull beneath the face, the soul within the skull.

The **X** factor of symbolism in art is thus akin to what Keats termed "negative capability". The poetic imagination leads one into a hollow hall of reflecting mirrors, one image after another creating a labyrinth to which, if they are kind, or cunning like Ariadne, the artist leaves us the odd clue.



**DEATH AND THE MAIDEN**  
Edvard Munch (1894)

# BUT WHAT IS IT?

*Tim Benjamin on the music of Madame X*

“What is Art?” – I am sure many of us have chewed over this intractable question.

In *Madame X*, I attempt to address the question by putting it slightly differently: “What is art for?” The question has been famously addressed by Oscar Wilde, who concluded that all art is “quite useless” – and the more useless, the better it is.

In addition to Masetto (a painter) and Zerlina (his lover), there are three major characters who exploit art (via Masetto): Mr Wilmore (representing “new money” or perhaps the “new world”), Lady Brannoch (representing “old money” and the “old world”), and Botney, who is much more temporal, representing commerce, business, and corruption. We also have “the public”, represented by two couples, who come to see Masetto’s exhibition and make all the kinds of comments that one overhears in art galleries (and during the interval at the opera...), the kind of comments that make your toes curl, your hackles rise, or your coffee come out of your nose.

All of these characters are “users” or consumers of art, exploiting art for their own ends and viewing and interpreting it through their own eyes, with their own agenda.

The painter, too, is another “user” of his own art: why does the artist create art? My character Masetto only ever speaks (sings) the titles of well-known paintings (“The Laughing Cavalier”, “Liberty Leading The People”, etc). Why? Well, we (along with the on-stage characters) are then forced to interpret Masetto, in a similar way to how we instinctively try to interpret paintings and music, whether or not those works are intended to be interpreted, even, and inevitably contrary to any intention of the artist creator.

The only character in the opera who is not a “user” of art is Zerlina. That’s because she’s the *subject* of all the art in the opera: Masetto is incapable of depicting anyone else. This has far-reaching consequences as the plot unfolds to its grisly climax...

As an opera “about art”, I began with high art and specifically painting because when you say “art” to people, they immediately think of paintings. Of course, they then start to think of all the other types of art, and then you end up arguing about “what is art?”, and if you are really lucky you then argue the question “what is music?”.

In *Madame X*, I have used a wide variety of musical starting-points, in a similar way to Masetto’s use of famous paintings. You might spot *Don Giovanni* instantly from the names of Masetto and Zerlina, but the dominant musical influence is that of the Baroque. In particular, I have re-visited that era’s “doctrine of affections”, the principle of using well-known reference points to trigger an “affective state” or *Affekt* in the listener,

and to play with these *Affekte* to do something unexpected, to trip up the listener and reveal something new.

It's not just the Baroque in *Madame X*, though: in addition to Handel, Purcell, and Dowland, you'll perhaps also be reminded of Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Strauss (J and R!), Britten, and others, including much more recent music. After all, no tour through the history of art can be complete without visiting the avant-garde!

These musical touch-stones are familiar, and that's the point: we think we know them, and what they mean, although really we don't and in truth we can never know them. The illusion of being on firm ground is a ripe opportunity for me as a composer to play on and subvert expectation, to use the essence of "affect" in new ways. This also allows me to build up many layers of meaning in the opera: on the surface, the music is playful and apparently recognisable, but beneath lurk symbols both familiar and new, ultimately, perhaps, to shed some light on the question of art's purpose.

*Tim Benjamin is the composer of Madame X and the director of this production*



**I MUSICI**  
Caravaggio (1595)

# MADAME X

Masetto

**TOM MORSS**

Zerlina

**LAURA SHEERIN**

Botney

**JON STAINSBY**

Mr Wilmore

**MARC CALLAHAN**

Lady Brannoch

**TAYLOR WILSON**

The Public

**REBECCA MOON**

**SOPHIE DICKS**

**EDWIN PITT MANSFIELD\***

**OWAIN BROWNE**

*\*also The Vicar*

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Music Director

**ANTONY BRANNICK**

Director

**TIM BENJAMIN**

Design

**LARA BOOTH**

Company Mentor & Dramaturg

**ANTHONY PETER**

Flute

**LYNDA ROBERTSON**

Clarinet

**RACHAEL GIBBON**

Violins

**CHARLOTTE DOWDING**  
**CLÉMENCE HAZAEL-MASSIEUX**

Viola

**STEPHANIE GORDON**

Cello

**ALISTAIR HOWES**

Harpsichord / Organ

**JENNY SHELDON**

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Stage Manager

**ANJALI VYAS-BRANNICK**

Technical Manager / Lights

**JAMES CLAXTON**

Construction

**MARK FIELDEN**

Production Assistant

**SHANNON SAUNDERS**

Design Assistants

**LUCY CLAYTON**

**CLAIRE LILLEY**

# TODMORDEN HIPPODROME

From the 1850s travelling theatres visited Todmorden erecting their wooden structures on the market place or on Stansfield Road near the railway. From 1875 touring companies used the Town Hall to stage their plays and music hall shows, but attempts to sustain a permanent purpose-built theatre had failed until the Hippodrome was built. It was the brainchild of Richard Dewhirst, who took land abutting his shop and printing works on Halifax Road on which to build his theatre.

An ambitious project which, although it was scaled down from the original design of stalls, circle and gallery, could still seat 1000 when it opened on 5th October 1908 with Hardie and Von Leer's Company in *Two Lancashire Lassies in London*. Before long, silent films were being screened before the main performance and during the interval. Sadly, Richard Dewhirst had overstretched himself and in 1911 he became bankrupt. The theatre was sold and, in September 1912, passed into the hands of the Hartleys. They had theatre and cinema interests in Nelson and Burnley. The Hartleys ran the Hippodrome throughout the changes from live theatre (Stan Jefferson, later known as Stan Laurel, played here) and silent films to the "Talkies" and Technicolor.



The Hartleys were always sympathetic to local societies, who had used the stage for musicals and plays as early as 1909. In 1956 changes in lifestyles, television, and the motor car forced the Hartleys to close the Hippodrome, whereupon it was leased by the Todmorden Operatic Society who, along with the Todmorden Players, continued to perform there although it was financially always a struggle. In 1986 Todmorden Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society came into being as the two societies merged.

The addition of a substantial foyer and bar area reduced the capacity to 480, and today the Hippodrome is one of the largest community-run theatres in the UK, and features local productions as well as visiting (and home-grown) professional shows, including the world premiere of Tim Benjamin's *Emily* in 2013.

[www.todhip.org](http://www.todhip.org)

## **SQUARE CHAPEL**

In 1988 six local theatre lovers bought a run down Square Chapel for just £25. Their vision was to turn it into a vibrant Centre for the Arts for professional artists and the community.

Built in 1772, Square Chapel is a beautiful red brick Georgian Chapel and one of only a handful of square churches ever built. Years of neglect had taken its toll on the Grade II\* listed building, which had fell into a state of dangerous disrepair and remained seriously threatened with demolition until it was bought by the Square Chapel Trust. It was structurally unsound with no windows, half a roof and a wall on the verge of collapse, and an ambitious renovation plan was undertaken.

Fast forward to the present day and Square Chapel attracts almost 40,000 people per year to events and activities and has gone from being run by volunteers back in 1995 to employing 20 full and part time staff. Square Chapel has presented shows such as Mugenkyo Taiko Drummers, the comedians Phil Jupitus, Rhod Gilbert and Jerry Sadowitz, and folk musicians Ralph McTell, Maddy Prior and Waterson:Carthy; it supports rising stars, new theatre companies and young talented musicians, provides the community with workshops, lectures and a versatile space, and is home to the Orchestra of Square Chapel.

[www.squarechapel.co.uk](http://www.squarechapel.co.uk)

## **ARCOLA THEATRE**

Since being founded in 2000 by Artistic Director Mehmet Ergen and Executive Producer Leyla Nazli, Arcola Theatre has taken thousands of theatergoers on a theatrical journey by producing and presenting some of the most diverse and challenging work for the London stage. The theatre has presented plays, operas and musicals that have rarely seen the light of day, as well as revisiting more contemporary playwrights and presenting the finest international work. Arcola has championed new writers and emerging directors by offering them a platform on which to continue their journey.

Housed in a converted paint factory in Hackney, it is a favourite of established theatre literati as well as young, upwardly mobile innovators. The theatre has become well known for the variety of its programming – from new writing to classic drama, music and comedy. Arcola is much more than just an arts venue, and runs one of the most extensive multi-cultural community and youth programmes in East London.

[www.arcolatheatre.com](http://www.arcolatheatre.com)

# BIOGRAPHIES

## TIM BENJAMIN

*Composer / Director*

Tim Benjamin specialises in opera. His previous works include *Emily* (the critically acclaimed world premiere production ran in West Yorkshire in 2013), *Le gâteau d'anniversaire* (commissioned by CNIPAL and first performed at Opéra de Marseille in 2010), *The Corley Conspiracy* (commissioned by and first performed at the 2007 London Design Festival), *Mrs Lazarus* (first performed at the Southbank Centre, London, 2009), and *A Dream of England* (first performed at Wigmore Hall, London, also 2009). His one-act chamber opera, *The Rosenhan Experiment*, previously performed in London (South Bank, 2008) and later on tour in the South-West, has recently toured again (2013) with a new orchestration.

Tim won the BBC Young Musician of the Year Composer's Award in 1993, at the age of 17, with his work *Antagony*, performed by the London Sinfonietta under Martyn Brabbins and broadcast on national radio and TV. He also won the Stephen Oliver Trust's Prize for Contemporary Opera, for his first opera *The Bridge*, which has been produced twice, in Manchester at ISCM World Music Days and in London at the Covent Garden Festival.

He studied composition with Anthony Gilbert at the Royal Northern College of Music, privately with the late Steve Martland, and with Robert Saxton at Oxford University where he received a doctorate. Tim also climbs mountains, creates electronic music, plays trombone, piano, organ and viola, and teaches music theory. [www.timbenjamin.com](http://www.timbenjamin.com)

*A favourite painting:* **AN OLD MAN IN RED**

Rembrandt van Rijn, c.1652

## ANTONY BRANNICK

*Music Director*

Antony took piano lessons from the age of 6 and sang as a boy treble in his local church choir in Oswestry. However, he chose not to follow a career in music. He attended Atlantic College in south Wales where he obtained the International Baccalaureate and when he graduated with a law degree from Cambridge University his fate was sealed. His working life has been as a solicitor and for many years has practised in the area of family law.

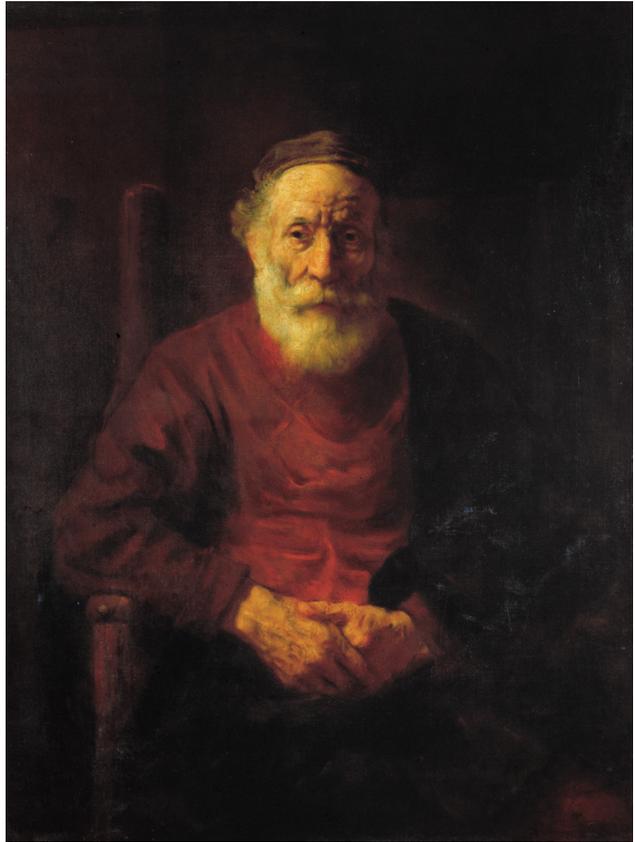
Antony has always been involved with choral music, singing tenor in chamber choirs, madrigal groups, choirs specialising in church music, and large scale choral societies. Since moving to Todmorden and the county of his birth in 1995 he sang with the Todmorden Choral Society, becoming its Music Director in 1999. He has returned to his love of piano music and performance, running a series of informal chamber music recitals under the heading "Antony and Friends".

*A favourite painting:* **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

William Holman Hunt, 1853-54

## AN OLD MAN IN RED

Rembrandt van Rijn, c.1652



## LARA BOOTH

*Design*

Lara Booth is a costume and set designer with an interest in both period and contemporary adaptations for story telling. Lara graduated from Bristol Old Vic Theatre School with Distinction in 2004. As a designer she aims to explore space and create environments and costumes that will serve the actors and the text as well as bring an immersive experience to the audience. Each work is different and comes with its own set of challenges, and the design should enhance the production but not overtake the integrity of the story telling. Design is just one element of a whole collaborative process that is needed to create good theatre.

Opera: *Emily* (Radius); *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria*, *Albert Herring* (RNCM); *Red Riding Hood* (Opera North). Musical Theatre: *Into The Woods* (Royal Lyceum); *Salad Days* (Bristol Old Vic). Theatre: *The Double Bass* (New End Theatre); *The Red Shoes* (Library Theatre, Manchester); *Hubbard and Son*, *The Last Cinderella* (Edinburgh Festival); *The Revengers Tragedy* (Southwark Playhouse). [www.larabooth.co.uk](http://www.larabooth.co.uk)

*A favourite painting:* **THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA**

Edmund Dulac, 1911

## TOM MORSS

*Masetto*

Tom Morss completed his post-graduate studies at the RNCM in July 2013 where he was tutored by Thomas Schulze and is now a freelance singer based currently in Manchester. Notable performances in the last two years include the title role in a production of Britten's *Albert Herring* (RNCM), a role which he repeated for Mid Wales Opera as a young artist and cover; Vogelgesang in a concert performance of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (Halle) and Pan in Cavalli's *La Calisto* (Hampstead Garden Opera).

Roles in 2014 include First Soldier and Nutrice in *l'Incoronazione di Poppea* at Ryedale, Lammermuir and Grimeborn Festivals and *Albert Herring* (HGO). Tom is a busy concert soloist, with bookings throughout the UK in the coming months.

[www.tom-morss.net](http://www.tom-morss.net)

*A favourite painting:* **RAFT OF THE MEDUSA**

Théodore Géricault, 1818–19

## LAURA SHEERIN

*Zerlina*

Laura Elizabeth Sheerin graduated with a Bachelor of Music Performance in 2009 and completed her Master's in Solo Performance with Distinction in 2011 both from the Royal Northern College of Music studying with Peter Alexander Wilson, and receiving the Yamaha Vocal Scholarship 2009/10 and a Headley Trust Bursary 2010/11. Laura then went on to complete the Young Artists' Programme with Northern Ireland Opera in 2012-13, performing several full scale and touring operatic roles and frequent recitals throughout the year.

On the operatic stage Laura has performed the roles of Geraldine (*A Hand of Bridge*), Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*), Dew Fairy (*Hansel and Gretel*) with NI Opera, cover Venus (*Orpheus in the Underworld*) with Scottish Opera & NI Opera, and Susan (*A Dinner Engagement*) with Wexford Festival Opera. Laura also premiered (UK) the role of Marie (*Le gâteau d'anniversaire* – Benjamin) with Radius.

Most recently, Laura has performed operatic scenes at the Italian Opera Summer School in Puglia, Italy and at the Mediterranean Opera Studio throughout Sicily in July.

Laura studies with Nelly Miricioiu and is the grateful recipient of a Young Musician's Platform Award from the Arts Council of Northern Ireland for 2013-2015.

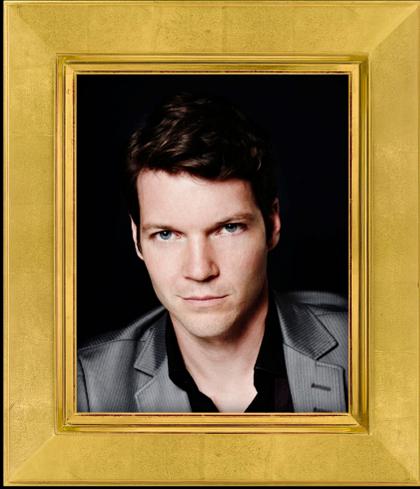
Laura's upcoming engagements include a concert tour entitled 'Songs, Games and Dances' with the Quercus ensemble in October and November. She will also perform a Christmas opera gala with L'Orchestra dell'Arte in Manchester in December.

[www.laurasheerin.com](http://www.laurasheerin.com)

*A favourite painting:* **MAPPA DELL'INFERNO**

Sandro Botticelli, c.1485

MARC CALLAHAN



TAYLOR WILSON



TOM MORSS

JON STAINSBY



LAURA SHEERIN



## RAFT OF THE MEDUSA

*Théodore Géricault, 1818-19*

## MARC CALLAHAN

*Mr Wilmore*

Marc Callahan trained at Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, the Ecole Normale de Musique, and the Scola Cantorum.

Performances include: *Whale How the Whale Became*, Royal Opera House; *The Accuser Madam Mao* (world première), Santa Fe Opera; *Bobinet La Vie Parisienne*, Théâtre du Capitole and Opéra National de Lyon; *Starveling A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Opéra National de Lyon; *Frédéric Lakmé*, Opéra de Montpellier; *Le Carnaval Le Carnaval et la Folie*, Opéra Comique (Le Concert Spirituel); *Don Giovanni*, Théâtre Royale de Versailles; *Artemidore Armide*, Théâtre des Champs Elysées (Les Arts Florissants); and *Sid Albert Herring*, Opera North.

Other roles include: Mercutio, Guglielmo, Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Papageno, Morales, Escamillo, Harlekin, Passagallo (*L'opera seria*), Belcore, and Ramiro (*L'heure espagnole*).

[www.marccallahan.com](http://www.marccallahan.com)

*A favourite painting:* **WHITE AND GREENS IN BLUE**

Mark Rothko, 1957

## JON STAINSBY

*Botney*

Jon Stainsby completed a doctorate in English literature at the University of Oxford before studying at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland's Opera School, where he took principal roles in operas by Prokofiev, Britten and Otto Nicolai. Since graduating from the RCS in 2013 he has sung Count Almaviva (Hampstead Garden Opera) and Don Alfonso (Pavilion Opera), and has worked extensively in the field of contemporary opera: he created the role of The Director in Edward Lambert's new chamber opera *Six Characters in Search of a Stage*, took the baritone role in Claude Vivier's *Kopernikus* for Dutch National Opera, and will perform in the new sound installation *The Hand that Takes* by Cheryl Frances-Hoad and CJ Mahony at Cambridge Junction. He has been a Britten Pears Young Artist three times, and has participated in Graham Johnson's Young Songmakers Programme; his work as a recitalist has included a performance of songs by Schubert and Kilpinen with Malcolm Martineau at the RCS, and a solo recital at Steinway Hall for the Delius Society, following their award to him of the 2012 Delius Prize. Forthcoming engagements include a return to Hampstead Garden Opera to sing Sid in their production of Britten's *Albert Herring*.

*A favourite painting: **LESENDE***  
Gerhard Richter, 1994

## TAYLOR WILSON

*Lady Brannoch*

Taylor Wilson, mezzo-soprano, studied voice at The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, opera studies at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and read modern languages at Strathclyde University (French, German, Italian). Opera roles include Bradamante (Handel's *Alcina*), Mother (*Noyes Fludde*), Orfeo (Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*), Cherubino (Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*), Noble Orphan (Strauss's *Rosenkavalier*) and Bird Seller (Massenet's *Manon*) with Scottish Opera, Carmen (Bizet's *Carmen*), Flora (Verdi's *La Traviata*), Siebel (Gounod's *Faust*).

Taylor performs regularly in both recital and oratorio - solo engagements include a Dutch radio performance in Hertogenbosch, Holland, recitals in Schloss Munchenwiler, Switzerland, Los Angeles, Denmark and Hong Kong, Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* in Wiesbaden, Mozart's *Requiem* in Ireland and Körpper's *Schöpfer Geist* in Hannover.

Taylor has enjoyed international success as chanteuse with her one-woman show and is a champion of contemporary music, which is often written especially for her (whilst at conservatoire she worked closely with Judith Weir). She created one of three solo roles in a modern chamber opera, *Flightpaths*, for the Cultural Olympiad, performed extracts of Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in Hong Kong and she recently worked with James Macmillan on his piece *Raising Sparks*, for mezzo-soprano and ensemble. .

[www.taylorwilson.com](http://www.taylorwilson.com)

*A favourite painting: **MADONNA***  
Edvard Munch, 1894–95

## REBECCA MOON

*The Public: 1st Woman*

Brought up in Cornwall, Rebecca began her training with the National Youth Ballet and National Youth Music Theatre before continuing her vocal studies at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Karlsruhe Musikhochschule.

Roles include Ida *Die Fledermaus* (Philharmonia); Jennifer *Do I hear a waltz?* (Charles Court Opera), Celia *Iolanthe* (G&S Opera Company), 1st Witch *Dido and Aeneas* (Opera North), Rose Maybud *Ruddigore* (Opera North), Lolo *The Merry Widow* (Philharmonia), Kate *The Yeomen of the Guard* (Philharmonia/RLPO), Musetta *La Bohème* (Go Opera), Cat and Fish *Just So* (Tête à Tête), Maddalena *Monteverdi's Flying Circus* (Armonico Consort), Marie *Peter the Great* (Opera South), Mary Turner *Of Thee I Sing & Let 'Em Eat Cake* (Opera North; BBC Radio 3 Live Broadcast; recipient of Sadler's Wells Dame Hilda Bracket Award for comedy in opera for the role of Mary), cover Lidochka *Paradise Moscow* (Opera North), Mabel *The Pirates of Penzance* (G&S Opera Company / Carl Rosa Opera), Papagena *The Magic Flute* (Longborough Festival Opera/Kentish Opera), Barbarina *The Marriage of Figaro* (Opera Brava).

Future engagements include Guest Soloist at the Last Night of the Proms (Minack Theatre) and Innamorato *L'Ospedale* at Aldeburgh (Solomon's Knot).

[www.rebecca-moon.com](http://www.rebecca-moon.com)

*A favourite painting: WANDERER ABOVE THE SEA OF FOG*

Caspar David Friedrich, 1818

## SOPHIE DICKS

*The Public: 2nd Woman*

Sophie Dicks is a twenty-three year old mezzo-soprano who has just graduated from the Royal Northern College of Music under the tutelage of Ann Taylor. She would like to thank the Opera Awards foundation and the Seary charitable trust for their generous support of her studies.

Since starting at the RNCM, Sophie has been a regular member of the College's opera choruses, having performed in Mozart's *La clemenza di Tito*, Offenbach's *La belle Hélène*, Bizet's *Carmen*, and Samuel Barber's *Vanessa*. She has also sung the roles of Hansel, Lucretia and Cenerentola for Opera Scenes. The first full role Sophie studied was the role of Vara in Shostakovich's *Moscow, Cheryomushki* and this year she sang the title role in Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* for the RNCM. She has just completed a season in the chorus for Buxton Festival where she also covered the role of Lotinka in Dvorak's *The Jacobin*. Awards include the Freckleton and Doherty Cup for singing in 2011 and the Annie Ridyard Scholarship for Mezzo-Sopranos in 2013.

In September, Sophie will be moving to London to continue her training at the Royal College of Music under the guidance of the renowned soprano, Janis Kelly.

[www.sophiedicks.com](http://www.sophiedicks.com)

*A favourite painting: BLUE DANCERS*

Edgar Degas, c.1899

**WANDERER ABOVE THE  
SEA OF FOG**  
*Caspar David Friedrich, 1818*



**EDWIN PITT MANSFIELD**

*The Public: 1st Man / The Vicar*

Edwin has worked as a professional musician since graduating from Trinity College of Music, studying with Omar Ebrahim and Sophie Grimmer.

As a performer Edwin works with many of the UK's opera companies with credits including Opera Holland Park, *La fanciulla del West*, *I gioielli della Madonna*, *Rigoletto* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Opera Anywhere *Pirates of Penzance* (Pirate King) and *The Mikado* (The Mikado), Raymond Gubbay's *Carmen* at the O2, Nightingale Opera with the Chelys Consort's *Dido and Aeneas* (Aeneas), Opera de Bauge, *Carmen* (El Dancairo) and Iris Theatre *L'enfant et les sortilèges* (L'Hortage Comtois and Le Noir Chat). Edwin is Cantor at St James West Hampstead, regularly sings with many of London's professional church choirs and has performed with The Armonico Consort.

Upcoming engagements include further performances of *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Mikado* for Opera Anywhere and *Aida* for South Downs Opera.

[www.edwinpittmansfield.com](http://www.edwinpittmansfield.com)

*A favourite painting:*

**CORRIDOR LINKING THE CHURCH OF THE GÉSU TO ST IGNATIUS CHAPEL, ROME**

Andrea Pozzo, 1681–86

## OWAIN BROWNE

*The Public: 2nd Man*

Baritone Owain Browne is from Suffolk and is a graduate of Magdalene College, Cambridge and the Alexander Gibson Opera School at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. While there he created the title role of Kaspar Hauser in an opera by Scottish composer Rory Boyle to great critical acclaim.

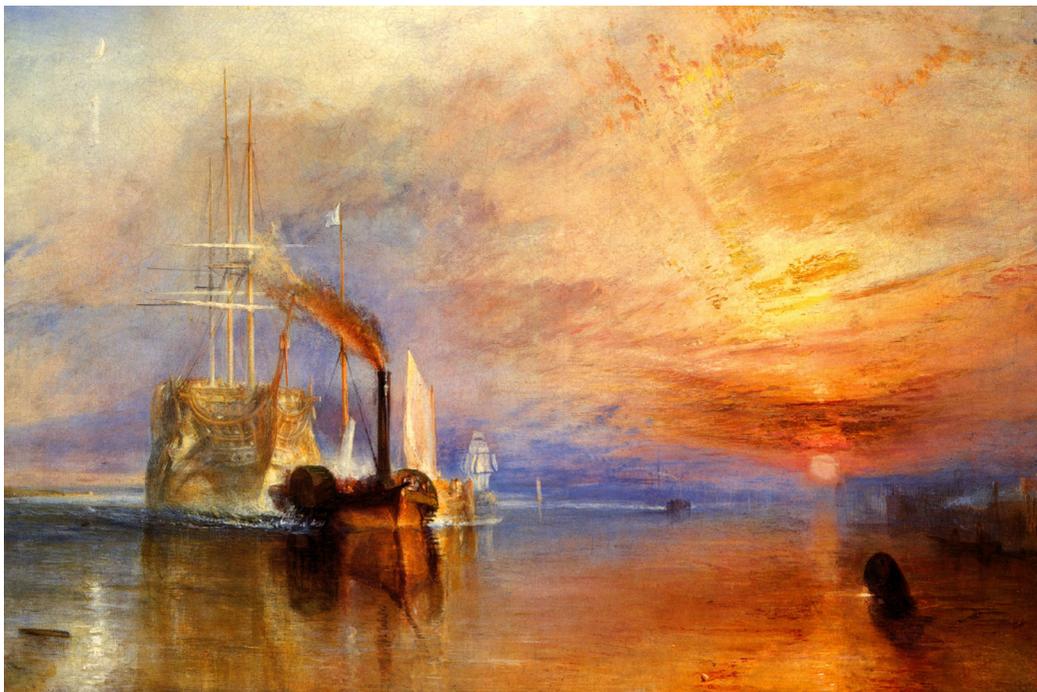
In 2010 he made his proms debut as a soloist in Vaughan Williams's *Serenade to Music* with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Donald Runnicles at the Royal Albert Hall and covered the roles of Morales and Dancaire for Scottish Opera's touring production of *Carmen*.

Recent concert performances have included Vaughan Williams' *Five Mystical Songs* in St. David's Hall, Cardiff, Christ in Bach's *St. John Passion* at Llandaff Cathedral and Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony* at Snape Maltings, and, as a Britten-Pears Young Artist, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and *Ode to St. Cecilia* directed by Christian Curnyn. Recent opera performances have included Marcello for New London Opera Players' touring production of *La bohème*, The Miller for Mike Christie's *The Miller's Wife* at the Grimeborn Festival, Pooh Bah for Co-Opera Co.'s *Mikado*, and Masetto in *Don Giovanni* for Alden Biesen Zomeropera.

Owain is currently studying at the Flanders Opera Studio in Ghent and learns with Glenville Hargreaves. [www.owainbrowne.com](http://www.owainbrowne.com)

*A favourite painting:* **THE FIGHTING TEMERAIRE**

JMW Turner, 1839



## CHARLOTTE DOWDING

*Violin*

British violinist Charlotte Dowding has performed throughout the UK, Europe and North America, appearing as a soloist and a concerto soloist on several occasions.

After attending Chetham's School of Music and (aged 13) reaching the semi-finals of the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition, Charlotte continued her studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, where she was granted both the college and Leverhulme scholarships. Besides her many solo appearances, she has often led the college's several orchestras. She is currently continuing her postgraduate studies at the RNCM with Professor Yair Kless. Most recently, she has been working with the BBC Philharmonic orchestra, having competed for a place on their professional access scheme.

Charlotte has contributed tracks on commercial CD's such as for Andrew Keeling's latest CD *Bells of Heaven* and most recently recorded tracks for Tim Bowness' recent chart success *Abandoned Dancehall Dreams*.

She has just returned from Salzburg, where she has been giving recitals in their annual music festival based at the Mozarteum Academy.

*A favourite painting:* **THE BELOVED ("THE BRIDE")**

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1865–66

## CLÉMENCE HAZAEL-MASSIEUX

*Violin*

Clémence has recently successfully completed a Master's degree in violin performance from the RNCM, where she held the Stuart Grey Scholarship, studying with Gina McCormack and Pavel Fischer. She received a BMus Performance First Class Honours from the London College of Music where she studied with Stéphane Tran Ngoc.

Her recent solo appearances include premiers of contemporary works, including a performance with the RNCM Brand New Orchestra and a performance of her own composition for solo violin at the RNCM Sound Histories at the British Museum, which she repeated at the New Music North West festival. She has performed in masterclasses for Renaud Capuçon, Yair Kless, Jack Liebeck, Gérard Poulet, Andrey Baranov, James Clark and Madeleine Mitchell. Recital appearances include performances in Manchester, London, Paris, Gerardmer (France), notably a performance of Sibelius *Violin Concerto* with I Maestri Orchestra in London.

Clémence is also an active chamber music player and is a founding member of the Diaphane Quartet, which recently won the RNCM Weil Prize and appeared at the RNCM Chamber Music Festival in collaboration with Jan Talich of the Talich Quartet. In this summer season, they took part in the Festival Cordes en Ballades, under the direction of the Quatuor Debussy in France, where they were supported by a scholarship kindly offered by Aouat and Rouveyre Society.

*A favourite painting:* **LA SAINTE VICTOIRE**

Paul Cézanne, 1885–7

## STEPHANIE GORDON

*Viola*

23 year old Stephanie Gordon began playing the violin at the age of 5 under the tutelage of Helen Browne. During this time Stephanie was a member of the Brighton Youth Orchestra in which she was the first person to lead all three of their orchestras. In 2007, Stephanie won their annual concerto competition and played the Bruch *Violin Concerto* on their tour to Prague, playing in several venues both there and in Brighton and Hove. In 2009, Stephanie gained a place at the Royal Northern College of Music where she studied the violin with Leland Chen and where she has now completed her undergraduate degree.

In September Stephanie will be beginning her Postgraduate Diploma with principal study being the viola. Stephanie is a keen chamber musician and is the violist in several quartets all of which have upcoming performances and competitions.

*A favourite painting: M-MAYBE*  
Roy Lichtenstein, 1965

## ALISTAIR HOWES

*Cello*

Alistair gained a place at the Royal Northern College of Music in 2009, where he now studies under Gillian Thoday. While at the Royal Northern College of Music, Alistair won the RNCM Schubert Prize and RNCM Nossek Prize for chamber music. Alistair reached the final of the RNCM Concerto Competition in 2012 and was a finalist in the RNCM Sir John Barbarolli Cello Prize, RNCM Hirsh Prize and Christopher Roland Prize. In 2013 Alistair achieved a place on the Professional Access Scheme with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, which included rehearsals and concerts throughout the year including live broadcasts on BBC Radio 3.

Alistair is grateful for the generous financial support from Help Musicians UK, The Royal Philharmonic Society, The Countess of Munster Trust, The Stephen Bell Charitable Trust, and the Rowland Hardy Award for Cello. Alistair currently plays on a fine William Forster cello kindly on loan to him from the Royal Northern College of Music.

*A favourite painting: THE HAY WAIN*  
John Constable, 1821

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**THE HAY WAIN**

*John Constable, 1821*





**THE ANCIENT OF DAYS**

*William Blake, 1794*



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## JENNY SHELDON

*Harpichord / Chamber Organ*

Jenny is very excited to be involved in *Madame X*, following on from the success of *Emily* last year. By day she runs her very busy property renovation business, Brocklyn Designs Limited, but likes to find time to play piano for Todmorden Choral Society and Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society, to lead the viola section of Todmorden Orchestra and to teach piano.

*A favourite painting: FROM A WINDOW AT 45 BROOK STREET, LONDON W1*

Cedric Morris, 1926

## LYNDA ROBERTSON

*Flute*

Lynda Robertson studied Music at Huddersfield University, majoring in Flute Performance, and gaining First Class Honours in 2002. She teaches the flute, clarinet and saxophone to students of all ages and levels and finds it immensely rewarding to see her students (two of whom have recently gone on to study music at university) grow in confidence through making music.

Lynda also performs regularly in various ensembles in and beyond West Yorkshire, including the Todmorden Orchestra and the Slaithwaite Philharmonic Orchestra, which recently presented Bizet's *Carmen* in Huddersfield Town Hall to celebrate the Tour de France passing through the town in early July.

*A favourite painting: SORROW OF THE KING*

Henri Matisse, 1952

## RACHAEL GIBBON

*Clarinet*

Rachael trained at The Royal Northern College of Music, where she majored in Academic Studies. In addition to this, she holds a PhD in Music from the University of Manchester.

She tutors at the Junior RNCM and for Leeds College of Music. She plays with a variety of different chamber groups and she performs on the B flat, A, Bass and E flat clarinets. She also plays concertos with orchestras, including performances of the Bruch *Double Concerto for Clarinet and Viola* and the Weber *Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F Minor*, which are scheduled to take place in the coming months.

*A favourite painting: THE ANCIENT OF DAYS*

William Blake, 1794



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## ANJALI VYAS-BRANNICK

*Stage Manager*

As an actor normally found on stage, Anjali was baffled and confused by the lack of light and audience when she found herself bumbling around backstage on Tim's previous opera, *Emily*. She soon took to it though, like a bat to a cave, and she's back for this production.

*A favourite painting:*

### **PORTRAIT OF CATHERINE II THE LEGISLATOR IN THE TEMPLE DEVOTED TO THE CAT**

Svetlana Petrova after Dmitry Levitsky, 2013

## JAMES CLAXTON

*Technical Manager / Lights*

Educated at Leeds University (BA Performance Design 2008), James has been involved with local and regional theatre for around twenty years. This is his third opera venture with Radius, assisting this production with lighting design and technical support. Notable acting credits: The Reporter in *Emily* (2013) and L.Cpl Jones in *Dad's Army* (2011) Chuck Cranston in *Footloose* (2011). James has also directed several productions and is proud to be at the helm of the forthcoming Todmorden Hippodrome production of *Night Must Fall*: a disturbingly amusing adaptation of a classic 1930's drama. Previous directing credits include: *Nobody's Perfect* by Simon Williams (2012) and *Breaking the Code* by Hugh Whitemore (2005)

*A favourite painting:* **COMPOSITION VIII**

Wassily Kandinsky, 1923

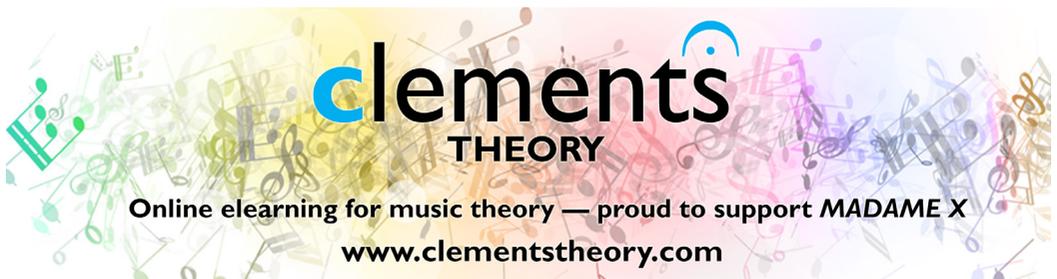
## ANTHONY PETER

*Company Mentor / Dramaturg*

Ant taught English for 37 years, and was involved with directing drama for all of them. However, his relationship with opera was dysfunctional owing, he thinks, to seeing, when he was a teenager, *Carmen* and *The Queen of Spades* sung in Turkish, and *Don Giovanni* directed badly enough for his teachers to find nothing good to say about it. Recent encounters with opera at the RNCM as well as working with Tim Benjamin on *Emily* have helped render this art form less arcane for him, and the power of professional singers' voices and acting has made him – dare he say it? – enthusiastic. He hopes you enjoy *Madame X* as much as he has.

*A favourite painting:* **VENUS AND MARS**

Sandro Botticelli, c.1485

The image is a promotional banner for Clements Theory. It features a background of colorful, semi-transparent musical notes and staves in shades of green, yellow, orange, and purple. In the center, the word "clements" is written in a large, blue, lowercase sans-serif font, with a blue arc above the 's'. Below it, the word "THEORY" is written in a smaller, black, uppercase sans-serif font. At the bottom of the banner, the text "Online elearning for music theory — proud to support MADAME X" is written in a black sans-serif font, followed by the website address "www.clementstheory.com" in a larger, bold, black sans-serif font.

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## VENUS AND MARS

*Sandro Botticelli, c.1485*



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Robert Schumann: *Frauenliebe und Leben*

EMMA BRADLEY MANTERO, soprano; GIACOMO BATTARINO, piano

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GIACOMO BATTARINO, piano; Agnes Langer, violin; Hyoung Joon Jo, cello

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