

OPÉRA NATIONAL
DE LORRAINE



PRODUCTION DOSSIER

Heroin

Sancta Susanna, Paul Hindemith

Bluebeard's Castle, Béla Bartók

The Dance of the Dead, Arthur Honegger

CAST & PRACTICAL INFORMATION

DATES

From August 26th to
October 12th

Dress Rehearsal
4th of October

Performances
6th, 8th, 10th and 12th
of October 2024

HEROIN

Sancta Susanna, Paul Hindemith (1922)

Bluebeard's Castle, Béla Bartók (1911)

The Dance of the Dead, Arthur Honegger (1938)

Musical direction Sora Elisabeth Lee

Stage direction Anthony Almeida

Lighting Franck Evin

Scenography, Costume design Basia Binkowska

Movement Rosabel Huguet

Sancta Susanna, Solo alto Anaïk Morel

Judith, Klementia Rosie Aldridge

Bluebeard Joshua Bloom

Maid, Solo soprano Apolline Raï Westphal

Knecht, Solo baritone Yannis François

Choir and Orchestra of the Opera national de Lorraine

FOREWORD BY ANTHONY ALMEIDA

Reacting to the famous phrase “well behaved women rarely make history”, *Heroin* is a world premiere evening structured as a triptych of powerful opera stories that will be used to track four rebel women at pivotal moments of making choice in their lives. Our production is structured as an inter-generational family epic. A little 8 year old girl looks back at the struggles and strategies of the great women in her maternal family-line to search for a way to live her best life. This young girl – our “Alice in Wonderland” – uses the “magic box” of the set design as her playhouse to look back at her mother (Susanna), grandmother (Judith), great grandmother (Catherine). Each woman is on a mission for survival based around a pivot “life choice” moment. They seek to live freely and with abandon. How is this possible? We witness the battles and joys they face on their quests.

Ours is a stage where multiple timelines and worlds coexist. The onstage World is a dream space: a psychological, emotional space. This is a World where ancestors are alive; where the boarder between life and death is so thin as to be barely there at all.

The core of the visual staging is organised on three key human rites of passage – the rituals of: Birth (and Baptism); Life (and Marriage); Death (and Funeral). These are all major events that lie in the Girl’s future.

In *Sancta Susanna*, we meet a Susanna – a young, novice nun: struggling for acceptance and love. Susanna is trying to make sense of essential, disturbing feeling she has buried deep. How, during adolescence, does a young woman balance her desire, fear of- and hunger for life?

In *Bluebeard’s Castle*, we meet Judith – a middle-aged, married woman. Judith is intensely and dangerously in love. Love can be the greatest power, but it’s intensity can also be cannibalistic. She goes on a quest to discover whether loving another is the answer to healing her private traumas.

In *The dance of the dead* we meet Catherine – an aged, dying woman. Catherine is battling to confront and accept her own mortality. She much rather hide and seek comfort and salvation from Divine providence. But in a Godless world, is it possible that the End of Life, can also be a beginning?

Susanna. Judith. Catherine. These are three women who seek their sense of self from an external relationship, with either their God, their Husband, or their Dogma. Each journey is a battle with expectations and rules. During their conflict, each women discovers their own internal relationships to themselves; that self love and self acceptance is the most freeing way to live. This is the most rebellious action of all.

In a “post COVID”, “post Europe” climate, where the storm of political, global, economic and environmental chaos is making daily life increasingly precarious and fraught, we are desperately seeking ways to feel secure. We want to find a way to live with hope and prosperity. Our young girl has her whole life before her. Therefore she will thread our whole Evening together on her quest to discover how she will navigate the chaos of living a life well lived.

Heroin is staged as a love letter to anyone who has struggled against the Big Life Choices. The piece is saying: I see you, we will rise someday, and float above it all. Our production – at its very core – is about recovery and survival; the Girl, Susanna, Judith and Catherine being the beacons of hope. My focus is staging an emotional, atmospheric reality, not a literal one – a visceral and lyrical fable: a tale that is anxious about what it is to be alive – how we experience intense joy and sharp struggle. A staging full of vigour and danger to match the spontaneity and prowess of the hauntingly sublime music of Hindemith, Bartok, and Honegger.



SANCTA SUSANNA, HINDEMITH

TYPE

Opera in 1 act

LENGHT

25 minutes

HISTORY

Sancta Susanna is the final part of a triptych of one-act operas composed by Paul Hindemith (1895-1963). A spokesman for the new generation and close to the German avant-garde in 1920s Berlin, Hindemith created considerable scandal with his three «miniature» operas, each devoted to the search for expression through the resolution of a formal problem. It wasn't until 1922 that an opera director was finally bold enough to program this sulphurous twenty-minute work.

Composed in two weeks on the threshold of 1921, the work was the result of the young Hindemith's interest in a play by German poet and playwright August Stramm (1874-1915), a contributor to *Der Sturm*, the cultural magazine of Herwarth Walden, leader of the Expressionist movement. The subject violently clashes morality and religion, dealing with the frustration and sexual fantasies of a nun who overhears a couple's noisy lovemaking on a fine May night. Written for three female soloists, two spoken roles and a women's chorus, *Sancta Susanna* is rarely performed, due to its extreme brevity, which means it has to be combined with another work.

SYNOPSIS

One night in a convent, Susanna, a young nun, prays before the altar in the chapel. Susanna's attention is suddenly drawn to the cries of pleasure of a couple in love. Both fascinated and deeply shocked, Susanna curses the servant and valet who have dared to make love in the garden near the chapel. Klementia, an older nun, tells her the story of a nun who was once walled up alive for being caught naked embracing a crucified Christ. Christ's loins have since been covered. Convinced that she hears the voice of this unholy nun, and driven in turn by an irrepressible desire, Susanna removes her clothes and the cloth covering Christ's loins to embrace him too. The nuns, horrified, ask Susanna to acknowledge her sin, but she refuses. She is cursed by her companions with the cry of «Satan», victim in her turn of the damnation she had uttered against the valet and the maid.

BLUEBEARD'S CASTLE, BARTÓK

TYPE

Opera in 1 act

LENGHT

45 min

HISTORY

Bluebeard's Castle is a one-act opera by Hungarian composer Béla Bartók, and it is the only piece he wrote for opera. The libretto, by Béla Balász, is based on the famous tale of Bluebeard by Charles Perrault, intertwining elements from the drama *Ariane et Barbe-Bleue* by Maurice Maeterlinck (a prominent Belgian playwright whose work *Pelléas et Mélisande* had already inspired another great composer: Claude Debussy). The psychoanalytic approach to the drama brings about narrative changes that invite the audience on an introspective journey, where violence takes the shape of suffering. Thus, both Bluebeard and his wife Judith, the only two singing roles, become symbols of self-discovery.

SYNOPSIS

A morbid curiosity drives young Judith to open the seven locked doors she discovers in a large room of her mysterious husband Bluebeard's castle. She opens them all, despite the pleas of her husband, who is left alone in the despairing darkness after Judith's disappearance and the closing of the last door.



THE DANCE OF THE DEAD, HONEGGER (POEM BY PAUL CLAUDEL)

TYPE

Oratorio

LENGHT

30 minutes

Visiting Basel in May 1938 for the premiere of *Jeanne au bûcher*, Arthur Honegger's oratorio for which he wrote the eleven scenes, Paul Claudel was struck by the many «dances macabres» to be found in the city (museum, bas-reliefs, fountains). The famous Danse Macabre by Holbein the Younger, an early 16th-century painter, particularly impressed him.

Claudel conceived the idea of a short Oratorio, a Christian meditation based on a popular macabre representation. Honegger, a lifelong friend with whom he had just written *Jeanne au bûcher* and a Protestant with a passion for biblical texts, immediately accepted the proposal.



BIOGRAPHIES



Sora Elisabeth Lee

Musical direction

Young Korean conductor Sora Elisabeth Lee began studying music at an early age. After learning the drums, flute and organ, she chose to study piano, performing as a soloist from the age of 8. She went on to win numerous prizes in national competitions, before graduating in piano in Seoul in 2011. She then decided to pursue her studies in Europe, specializing in conducting in Bruno Weil's class at Munich University of Music and the Arts. She decided to devote herself fully to this field, perfecting her skills with conductor Alain Altinoglu at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse in Paris.

She also trained with conductors and teachers such as Jorma Panula (Panula Academy), Stefan Asbury (Tanglewood Music Festival), Lawrence Foster, Mark Heron, Clark Rundell, Ed Spanjaard, Ekkehard Klemm and Alexander Liebreich. She is also very interested in choral conducting and vocal accompaniment. She works regularly with singers in *Lieder*, melody and opera. In 2014, she was awarded the prize for best accompanist of *Lieder* and melody at the Joseph Suder International Competition.

Since 2012, she has conducted the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra, Ensemble Intercontemporain, Orchestre Les Siècles, Orchestre de Chambre de Paris, Munich Symphony Orchestra, Dresden Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, MAV Budapest Symphony Orchestra, Orchestre Régional Avignon-Provence, Opéra Orchestre National Montpellier and Hungarian Symphony Orchestra Miskolc.

During the 2021-2022 season, she joined the Opéra Studio de l'Opéra national and conducted the French premiere of Walter Braunfels' *Les Oiseaux*.

In 2022-2023, she was assistant conductor to music director Klaus Mäkelä at the Orchestre de Paris, and was invited to conduct the Orchestre national d'Île-de-France and the Orchestre Padeloup.



Anthony Almeida

Stage direction

Opera and Theatre director Anthony Almeida was the winner of the European Opera Directing Prize in 2022 and he was nominated in the Rising Star category at the International Opera Awards.

He will direct a new production of *The Turn of the Screw* for the Royal Danish Opera at the start of the 2023/24 season. In March 2023 Anthony will direct Bertolt Brecht and Hanns Eisler's *The Decision* (*Die Maßnahme*) for the Birmingham Opera Company, and in June 2023 at the Park Armory, New York he will direct *The Doctor* by Robert Icke (after Arthur Schnitzler) - a production he brought into the Duke of York's Theatre in the West End in the Autumn of 2022 with Juliet Stevenson returning to her Olivier Award winning performance.

In 2022, Anthony made his debut at The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, directing a double bill of Stravinsky's *Mavra* and Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* - between 2017-19, Anthony was the inaugural "Link Artist: Stage Director" at the Royal Opera House.

Anthony was awarded the 2021 Genesis Kickstart Fund Grant, nominated by Almeida Theatre - where he has a new production in development - and he was announced as the winner of the Sir Peter Hall Director Award in 2019, and he went on to direct Tennessee Williams's *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* at Curve, Leicester in a co-production between Curve, Liverpool Everyman and Playhouse and English Touring Theatre.



Franck Evin

Lighting

Franck Evin was born in Nantes. At the age of 19, he begins to accompany singers on the piano at the café-théâtre Le Connétable. He also begins to take an interest in lighting, and turns to a new path: combining music and technical aspects. Thanks to a grant from the French Ministry of Culture, he gets an opportunity at the Opéra de Lyon as assistant to the chief electrician. This enables him to work with Ken Russell and Robert Wilson, among others.

He begins to work as a lighting designer at Düsseldorf's Schauspielhaus in 1986. A close relationship with Werner Schröter and experimental projects in abandoned industrial sites in the Ruhr with Eberhard Kloke and the Bochumer Symphoniker help him to gain a certain reputation. Afterwards, he works in Nantes, Strasbourg, Montpellier, Paris, Lyon, Vienna, Bonn, Brussels and Los Angeles.

From the 1995-1996 season, he was artistic director of lighting at the Komische Oper in Berlin, directed by Harry Kupfer, with whom he worked on all productions. From then on, regular collaboration with Andreas Homoki, Barrie Kosky, Calixto Bieito and Hans Neuenfels propelled him onto the international stage: Oslo, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Tokyo, Amsterdam, Munich, Graz, La Monnaie in Brussels, Opéra national de Paris (*Boris Godounov* directed by Francesca Zambello, *Lear* with Calixto Bieito), La Scala in Milan, Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Opera Ballet Vlaanderen and finally the Bayreuth Festival.

From 2012, Franck Evin is responsible for lighting at the Zurich Opera under the direction of Andreas Homoki. In 2006, he received an "OPUS" German Stage Award for the lighting design of *Così fan tutte*, directed by Peter Konwitschny. In 2010, the German TV-Station ZDF Theaterkanal produced a documentary on the work of lighting designers in the *Die Theatermacher* series, featuring a portrait of Franck Evin.



Basia Binkowska
Scenography, Costume design

Basia Binkowska is a scenographer currently based between London and Poland.

In 2017, she won the Linbury Award for her set design for the Lyric Hammersmith's production of *Othello* and *Macbeth*, which took place at HOME Manchester and at the Lyric the following year. Since then, she has worked internationally as a set designer. Her designs range from theater (*Ivan and the dogs* at Young Vic, *Mephisto [a Rhapsody]* at Gate Theatre, *Crooked Dances* at the Royal Shakespeare Company) to opera: *La Bohème* at Nevill Holt Opera, *Il Piccolo Principe* at Teatro alla Scala Milan, *L'incoronazione di Poppea* at English Touring Opera.

Basia Binkowska is constantly interested in projects that challenge visual dramaturgy and allow her to develop ideas, landscapes and spaces.

In 2022, she completes her master's degree in interior design at UAP – Magdalena Abakanowicz University of the Arts in Poznań.



Rosabel Huguet

Movement

After training as an actress, Rosabel Huguet decided to study dance, and movement became a labyrinth of wonder for her, stimulating her curiosity and broadening her work to embrace everything that lies between gestures, words, silences, space, time, experiences, compositions, dramaturgical thoughts, spontaneous actions, installations, temperatures, the invisible and the unthinkable. Because movement is everywhere. Since 2010, she has been based in Berlin and works internationally as a freelance performer, stage choreographer, dance dramaturge and artistic collaborator. Her artistic practice is open and interdisciplinary: she is interested in the variety of possible representations, in particular the transformation, migration and translation of movement into other forms, the cross-fertilization of diverse artistic practices and participation - creating a space for encounters and exchanges.



Anaïk Morel

Sancta Susanna, Solo alto

After studying singing at the Conservatoire national supérieur de musique et de danse de Lyon with Françoise Pollet, Anaïk Morel joined the Opera Studio of the Munich Opera in 2006 for two years, and became a member of the Munich Opera company from 2008 to 2012, where she sang the roles of Mercedes (*Carmen*), Fenena (*Nabucco*), Meg Page (*Falstaff*), Hansel (*Hansel and Gretel*), Soeur Mathilde (*Dialogues des carmélites*), Silla (*Palestrina*) and Carlotta (*La Femme silencieuse*). Since then, she has appeared in Munich in Péter Eötvös' *La Tragédie du Diable* and as Federica (*Luisa Miller*) at the Staatsoper Berlin and La Scala in Milan (*La Walkyrie*), at the Opéra national de Lorraine (Lazuli in *L'Étoile*, Boulotte in *Barbe-Bleue*), in Lyon and Bari (Mère Marie in *Dialogues des carmélites*), at the Opéra de Paris (Siébel in *Faust*), in Saarbrücken and Stuttgart (Marguerite in *La Damnation de Faust*) and at the Salzburg Festival (creation of *Charlotte Salomon* by Marc-André Dalbavie).

More recently, she made her debut in the title role of *Carmen* in Stuttgart, which she retook in Zurich, Montpellier and at London's Royal Opera House. She was Preziosilla (*La Force du destin*) in Basel, Fenena (*Nabucco*) in Munich, Charlotte (*Werther*) in Klagenfurt and Zurich, Didon (*Didon et Enée*) at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Sesto (*La Clémence de Titus*) in Klagenfurt, the Composer (*Ariane à Naxos*) in Toulouse and Hamburg, Jocaste (*Œdipe* by Enesco) at the Salzburg Festival, Mère Marie (*Dialogues des carmélites*) in Toulouse. She made her debut at the Opera national du Rhin as Charlotte (*Werther*) in 2018.

Her current projects include *Carmen* at the Hamburg Opera, *La Damnation de Faust* at the Elbphilharmonie, *Don Giovanni* (Donna Elvira) in Hanover and *Werther* in Nice.



Rosie Aldridge

Judith, Klementia

Rosie Aldridge made her debut at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as Praskowja Osipovna, and Social Commentator in *The Nose* directed by Barrie Kosky, and returned since in the roles of Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*), Aksinya (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*), the Beggar Woman (*Death in Venice*) and Angrboda (*The Monstrous Child*).

Other operatic appearances include *Kabanicha* (*Kátia Kabanová*) at Gran Teatre del Liceu Barcelona, the Witch (*Hänsel and Gretel*) at Staatsoper Stuttgart, Baba the Turk (*The Rake's Progress*) and Marcellina (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) at Glyndebourne Festival, Mrs Sedley (*Peter Grimes*) at Teatro Real Madrid, Prascovia Osipovna and Social Commentator (*The Nose*) at Komische Oper Berlin, Nellie Dean (*Wuthering Heights*) at Opéra national de Lorraine and Gertude (*Hänsel and Gretel*) and Aksinya (*Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*) at English National Opera. She has worked with conductors such as Sir Antonio Pappano, Sir Mark Elder, Simone Young, Kirill Petrenko, Mark Wigglesworth and Semyon Bychkov, and many directors including Deborah Warner, Dmitri Tcherniakov, Sir David McVicar, Richard Jones, David Alden, Claus Guth and Barrie Kosky. This season, Rosie Aldridge will perform at the Canadian Opera Company as Mary in *The Flying Dutchman*. She will also return to the Glyndebourne Festival as Hippolyta (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), the Royal Opera House as Mad Margret (*Wozzeck*) and the Staatsoper Stuttgart as the Witch (*Hänsel and Gretel*) and to Opéra national de Lorraine and Teatro Real Madrid.

She will also make her debuts at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Staatsoper Hamburg, Deutsche Oper am Rhein, Dutch National Opera and the Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin.



Joshua Bloom

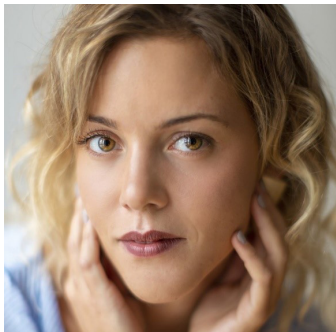
Bluebeard

Joshua Bloom was born in Australia to musician parents and studied cello and double-bass as well as being a chorister at St Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne. He went on to study History at the University of Melbourne and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts. After his professional debut in opera in an OzOpera production of *The Barber of Seville*, he joined the Young Artist Programme of Opera Australia in Sydney, and later the Merola and Adler Fellowship Programmes at the San Francisco Opera.

Highlights of recent seasons include performances of Fidèlami (*Die Vögel*), Vodnik (*Rusalka*), the Ghost of Old Hamlet/Gravedigger (Brett Dean's *Hamlet*), and Pharaoh (*Moses in Egypt*) at Oper Köln, Ramfis and the King (*Aida*) at New Israeli Opera, Leporello (*Don Giovanni*) at Welsh National Opera, the Governor (*Count Ory*) at Garsington Opera, Méphistophélès (*La Damnation de Faust*) in Birmingham, Hunding (*Die Walküre*) in Lisbon, Swallow (*Peter Grimes*) at the Enescu International, Bottom (*The Midsummer Night's Dream*) at English National Opera, the title-role in *Château de Barbe-Bleue* in Dublin, Kaspar (*Der Freischütz*) in the International Hyogo Festival of the Performing Arts, Japan.

He made his house debut at the Royal Opera House in the world premiere of Gerald Barry *Alice's Adventures Underground*. The 2022/23 season sees him in his role debut as Cadmus (*Sémélé*) at the Opéra de Lille and as Bottom at the Opéra de Rouen-Normandie. In concert, he performs Handel's Messiah with the Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Rambo in *The Death of Klinghoffer* at Concertgebouw, in Amsterdam.

Joshua Bloom appears on the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall broadcast of *Grand Macabre*, and the LSO Live recording of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* both conducted by Sir Simon Rattle.



Apolline Rai-Westphal

Maid, Solo soprano

Apolline Rai-Westphal is a young French soprano whose repertoire ranges from early music to contemporary creations. She recently made her debut at the Opéra Comique in Glück's *Armide* (Phénice / Lucinde), conducted by Christophe Rousset, where she has also appeared in recital. Next season, she will perform the roles of Phénice, Mélisse and Sagesse in Lully's *Armide*.

Apolline Rai-Westphal recorded the roles of Melpomène and Mélisse in Lully's *Atys* with Les Talents Lyriques, an opera to be performed at the Opéra Royal de Versailles and the Wiener Konzerthaus. With them, she has just given her first Handel recital at the Pontoise Baroque Festival. She has just performed the role of Belinda under Leonardo García Alarcón, and will reprise the same role at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, where she will make her debut in 2024.

In contemporary creation, she played Chloé in Joséphine Stephenson's *Narcisse* at the Opéra d'Avignon, a role she will sing again this season at the Opéra de Rennes. She recently appeared in recital with Bertrand Chamayou, and will also give a recital accompanied by Anne Le Bozec at Toulouse's Théâtre du Capitole, with a program dedicated to Mozart. Apolline Rai-Westphal trained at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris, and recently won the Académie Ravel prize and 6 other prizes at the Concours International de la Mélodie de Gordes.



Yannis François

Knecht, Solo baritone

Born in Guadeloupe, French-Swiss bass-baritone Yannis François began his career as a dancer with Léna Blou. He then joined the École-Atelier Rudra Béjart in Lausanne, Switzerland, and later the Béjart Ballet (Compagnie M). During the singing lessons that were part of the dance school curriculum, Maurice Béjart noticed Yannis's voice and encouraged him to pursue a singing career alongside that of a dancer.

He studied with Gary Magby and obtained a Master's degree in Lyric Singing at the Haute-École de Musique de Lausanne. On stage, Yannis François has sung the title role in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Sorceress in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* at the Berlin Staatsoper (Sasha Walz, Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin), Peter Quince in Britten's *A Midsummer night's dream*, Sasha in Shostakovich's *Moscow, Cheryomushki*, Melisso in Handel's *Alcina*, Isacius in Telemann's *Richardus I* (Giessen, Michael Hofstetter), Seneca in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and Plutone in Monteverdi's *Orfeo*, both conducted by Leonardo García Alarcón, Le chef des Matelots in Marais' *Alcyone* conducted by Jordi Savall at the Opéra Royal de Versailles...

In concert, Yannis François sings the solo bass part in several oratorios, such as the *Mass in B minor* (Václav Luks, Collegium 1704, Ambronay) or the *St John Passion* by J. S Bach (Ton Koopman).

CONTACT

Julien Achaintre

Technical and production director

julien.achaintre@opera-national-lorraine.fr

+33 (0)6 17 50 26 04



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