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##### Press Release

7 February 2024

**SCOTTISH OPERA’S REIMAGINED PRIMARY SCHOOLS TOUR ENSURES ALL PUPILS IN SCOTLAND HAVE ACCESS TO THE PERFORMING ARTS**

Scottish Opera’s award-winning Primary Schools Tour, which goes on the road this month for the rest of the academic year, with the newly created show, *Vikings! The Quest for the Dragon’s Treasure*, has been re-imagined and expanded to make it even more accessible and adaptable for all schools in Scotland to take part.

*Vikings!,* whichdelivers aspects of A Curriculum for Excellence, is designed for primary 5, 6 and 7 pupils, and schools can now engage with the production as a digital only learning and teaching experience, using online resources currently available on Scottish Opera’s website, to prepare the children for all aspects of presenting a performance to an audience.

This online delivery method — which includes Scottish Opera singers appearing on screen in classrooms to sing alongside the class — makes the project even easier and more affordable for teachers to engage with, particularly in those schools without specialist music teachers at primary level.

With 50-plus years of experience in classrooms, Scottish Opera’s Outreach and Education Programme has developed this approach because it recognised that the in-person learning Primary Schools Tour experience reaches capacity very quickly each year, so a complementary strand of the programme has been created in the form of a set of exclusivelyonline resources — so many more schools across Scotland can participate — and at a much lower cost per pupil.

For schools that are already signed up for the hybrid version, the same high quality teaching resources that teach the music and movement, as well as offering a range of subject related activities that can enrich the cross curricular learning experience, are used to prepare the pupils to enjoy a day-long workshop with Scottish Opera’s team of highly experienced arts education animateurs and performers. On the morning of the workshop, they and the pupils spend just four hours together, rehearsing then performing an all-singing, all-dancing 30-minute show in their school for classmates, friends and family, complete with fabulous costumes and props, backed by a fully orchestrated soundtrack.

By providing these two complementary opportunities for pupils to engage in outstanding musical experiences, Scottish Opera is cognisant of the crucial need to support music teaching in Scottish schools which, as the research carried out by The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland into music education in Scotland between 2018 and 2019, and also the report by the Music Education Partnership Group (MEPG) published in February 2019[[1]](#endnote-1), shows, there has been a decline in the number of specialist music teachers in schools, because of a perceived devaluation of music compared to other subjects.

From 5 February to 7 July, the fully booked, in-person *Vikings!* tour will be visiting schools in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fife, Moray, Aberdeenshire, East and West Dunbartonshire, North and South Lanarkshire, West Lothian, Dumfries & Galloway, Stirlingshire, East Renfrewshire, Angus, the Scottish Borders, Clackmannanshire, Argyll & Bute, South Ayrshire, Inverclyde and Newcastle. (Full list of schools below.)

With music by **Alan Penman** and lyrics by **Natalie Arle-Toyne**, *Vikings!* takes pupils on a magical journey of magic and mystery. An ancient prophecy sends the Viking Queen and her swashbuckling band of warriors off to steal gemstones from the legendary Ice Dragon, while the sneaky Sorcerer Supreme stays behind, planning to seize power. The wise Villagers foresee that stealing the gems is just the start of their troubles. Soon the Sorcerers, Vikings and Villagers must work together to restore balance to the land, for they’ve stolen treasure more precious than gold or silver, and the stakes are higher than they could possibly have imagined.

**Jane Davidson** MBE, Scottish Opera’s Director of Outreach and Education said: ‘In 2024 - the year of the Chinese Dragon - Scottish Opera Education is thrilled to welcome another magical flying beast into its repertoire. A tale inspired by Norse legends, our dragon is more closely related to the creatures who feature in Cressida Cowell’s ‘How to Train Your Dragon’ books, or the ones created by JK Rowling and J.R.R. Tolkien. We hope that pupils in primary schools across Scotland will delight in this original story, where the Vikings learn that not all treasure consists of gold and jewels, and that living in harmony with the land and the seasons is a lesson they’d be silly to ignore!’

*Vikings!* forms part of a suite of Scottish Opera’s digital offerings for schools, which includes *The Curse of MacCabbra Opera House,* featuring music from composer **Alan Penman** and lyrics from writer and director **Johnny McKnight**.

Rachel Evans, class teacher at Hillhead Primary in Glasgow, which staged *The Curse of MacCabbra Opera House* last year using the digital resource pack said: ‘Sometimes a school show can be a big undertaking, but the resources make it so much easier and so much more manageable. It helps with workload because it’s all there for you. The songs are so catchy and so engaging for the kids.’

Teachers from Taynuilt Primary in Argyll & Bute described performing *The Curse of MacCabbra Opera* house as ‘fantastic’, adding that for some of the children ‘it has ignited what may turn out to be a lifelong interest in live music and performance’. They also praised the ‘very user-friendly and comprehensive’ learning resources.

Find out more about *Vikings!* and Scottish Opera’s other Primary Schools productions at [www.scottishopera.org.uk/join-in/opera-for-schools/](https://www.scottishopera.org.uk/join-in/opera-for-schools/)

-ENDS-

You can follow Scottish Opera on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Tik-Tok and YouTube **@ScottishOpera**

***Vikings!* creative team**

**Music** Alan Penman

**Lyrics** Natalie Arle-Toyne

**Illustrations** Iain Piercy

**Teaching pack** Scu Moncur & Nicola Fisher

**Costume design and maker** Trish Kenny

**Performance diary**

5 February Flora Stevenson Primary, Edinburgh

6 February High School of Glasgow

7 February Garrowhill Primary, Glasgow

8 February Castleton Primary, Glasgow

9 February St Cuthbert’s Primary, Glasgow

15 February Keith Primary, Aberdeenshire

16 February Airyhall Primary, Aberdeen

19 February Broomhill Primary, Glasgow

20 February Dalry Primary, Edinburgh

21 February Jordanhill Primary, Glasgow

22 February Shawlands Primary, Glasgow

23 February St Michael’s Primary, West Dunbartonshire

26 February Stockbridge Primary, Edinburgh

27 & 28 February Clyde Primary, Glasgow

29 February Lairdsland Primary, East Dunbartonshire

1 March Mosshead Primary, East Dunbartonshire

4 & 5 March Hermitage Park Primary, Edinburgh

6 March Our Lady of Loretto Primary, West Dunbartonshire

7 March Corpus Christi & Calderbank Primaries, North Lanarkshire

8 March Our Lady of Loretto Primary, West Dunbartonshire

11 March Fraserburgh South Park, Aberdeenshire

12 March Cluny Primary, Buckie

13 March Seafield Primary, Elgin

14 March Hopeman Primary, Elgin

15 March Mosstowie Primary & partners, Moray

18 March Sheuchan Primary & St. Joseph’s RC Primary, Dumfries & Galloway

19 March Rephad Primary, Dumfries & Galloway

20 March Belmont Primary, Dumfries& Galloway

21 March Leswalt, Kirkcolm, Portpatrick, Sandhead, Drummore Primary Schools Dumfries & Galloway

22 March Glenluce, Castle Kennedy, Kirkinner, Port William Primary Schools,

Dumfries& Galloway

25 March Kettle Primary, Fife

26 March Ladybank & Pitlessie Primary, Fife

27 March Tayport Primary, Fife

28 March Burnside Primary, Angus

15 April Hoddom Primary, Dumfries & Galloway

16 April St Peter’s Primary, Edinburgh

17 April Currie Primary, Edinburgh

18 April South Morningside Primary, Edinburgh

19 April Carronshore Primary, Falkirk

22 April Knowepark Primary, Selkirk

23 April Langlee Primary, Galashiels

24 April Linlithgow Primary, West Lothian

25 April Towerbank Primary, Edinburgh

26 April Milngavie Primary, East Dunbartonshire

29 April Albyn School, Aberdeen City

30 April Northmuir Primary, Angus

1 May Timmergreens Primary, Colliston Primary, Carmyllie Primary, Arbirlot

Primary, Angus

2 May Inverbrothock Primary School, Angus

3 May Dollar Academy, Clackmannanshire

7 May Taynuilt Primary, Argyll & Bute

8 May Dunbeg Primary, Argyll & Bute

9 May Kirn Primary, Argyll & Bute

10 May Strachur Primary, Argyll & Bute

13 May Wardie Primary, Edinburgh

14 May Queensferry Primary, Edinburgh

15 May Corstorphine Primary, Edinburgh

16 May Brunstfield Primary, Edinburgh

17 May St Bartholomew's, Glasgow

20 May Holmston Primary, South Ayrshire

21 May Springfield Primary, West Lothian

22 May Riverbank Primary, Glasgow

23 May Wellshot Primary, Glasgow

24 May Wallacestone Primary, Falkirk

27 May Strathdearn & Daviot Cluster, Highland

28 May Lochardil Primary, Highland

29 May Bishopmill Primary, Moray

30 May Aberlour Primary, Moray

31 May Turriff Primary, Aberdeenshire

3 June Duncow, Hollywood, St. Teresa’s R.C, New Abbey and Kirkbean

Primaries, Dumfries & Galloway

4 June Lincluden Primary, Dumfries & Galloway

5 June North West Community Campus, Dumfries & Galloway

6 June Georgetown Primary, Dumfries & Galloway

7 June Locharbriggs, Aimsfield and Collin Primaries, Dumfries & Galloway

10 June Westquarter Primary, Falkirk

11 June Trinity Primary, Edinburgh

12 June St Elizabeth’s, South Lanarkshire

13 June Kirkhill Primary, East Renfrewshire

14 June Fettes College, Edinburgh

17 June East Calder Primary, West Lothian

18 June Aileymill Primary, Inverclyde

19 June Leith Primary, Edinburgh

20 June Low Port Primary, West Lothian

21 June Moorfoot Primary, Inverclyde

24 June Fyvie Primary, Moray

25 June Durris Primary & partners, Aberdeenshire

27 June Whinhill Primary School, Inverclyde

1 July Ravenswood Primary, Newcastle

2 July Cragside Primary & Chillingham Road Primary, Newcastle

3 July West Jesmond Primary, Newcastle

4 July Benton Primary, Newcastle

5 July Hotspur Primary, Newcastle

Notes to Editors

<https://www.scottishopera.org.uk/join-in/opera-for-schools/vikings-the-quest-for-the-dragons-treasure/>

Scottish Opera

Scottish Opera is Scotland’s national opera company and the country’s largest performing arts organisation. The Company was founded in 1962 by Sir Alexander Gibson ‘to lay the treasures of opera at the feet of the people of Scotland’.

Scottish Opera’s repertoire ranges across five centuries, from the earliest operas to newly commissioned world premieres. For mainstage and concert productions, the Company collaborates with the world’s finest singers and creatives, The Orchestra of Scottish Opera, and choruses for each opera. Recent accolades include a South Bank Sky Arts Award, a Scottish Award for New Music, Sunday Herald Culture Awards, a 2017 UK Theatre Award, and a 2020 RPS Award. The 2023/24 Season sees productions first staged at Scottish Opera appearing in Paris, Cardiff, Detroit, Vancouver, and Toronto.

The Company tours extensively to ensure performances are within reach of as many of Scotland’s dispersed population as possible. Specially adapted Pop-up Opera performances bring shortened classics and original works to thousands of people each year. *Opera Highlights* presents arias and ensembles from across the repertoire in new narratives. This is one of the most extensive touring programmes of any European opera company and a much-valued contribution to Scotland’s cultural life, particularly in remote and island communities. In the 2022/23 60th Anniversary Season, performances were staged in over 60 locations across Scotland, and the same is achieved in 2023/24.

The Company’s Outreach & Education programme, the longest running in Europe, includes in-person and digital Primary Schools Tours, bringing children the opportunity to perform their own specially commissioned piece alongside professional singers. Around 120 schools and 9,000 pupils take part in the live tour each year. Scottish Opera aims to be inclusive and affordable through availability of free and subsidised tickets, audio-described performances, and specially devised Access performances with Dementia Friendly values at their core.

Scottish Opera is committed to presenting opera at the highest possible standards across Scotland as well as online to UK and worldwide digital audiences. The Company’s 2021 production of *The Gondoliers*, filmed live at Festival Theatre Edinburgh, is available on BBC iPlayer. Eight On Screen operas are available to watch at www. scottishopera.org.uk/what-s-on/opera-on-screen. These include Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore*, Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, Menotti’s *The Telephone*, and Samuel Bordoli and Jenni Fagan’s *The Narcissistic Fish*.

Scottish Opera is core funded by The Scottish Government.

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**For additional press details please contact:**

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1. The report was entitled “What’s Going on Now?” This was a follow up to research conducted in 2003. The report identified some perception of a devaluation of music compared to other subjects and a lack of specialist music teachers in primary schools. The numbers of primary school music teachers fell by 50 per cent from 98 in 2008 to 49 in 2019. Government figures from the October 2019 intake showed that targets for music trainees were missed by 37 per cent. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)