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##### Press Release

19 February 2025

**SCOTTISH OPERA PRESENTS THE SCOTTISH PREMIERE OF *JOSEFINE*, ITS FIRST EVER ANIMATED OPERA, AT GLASGOW SHORT FILM FESTIVAL THIS MARCH**

Scottish Opera is delighted to present the Scottish premiere of its first-ever animated opera short, *Josefine*, at Glasgow Short Film Festival on March 21.

Screening at Grosvenor Picture Theatre, this 14-minute film, inspired by Franz Kafka’s last short story ‘Josefine the Singer’, is produced in partnership with Maestro Broadcasting, and directed by the Company’s resident filmmaker **Antonia Bain**. The UK’s first newly commissioned opera made specifically for animation, it is composed by former Emerging Artist Composer-in-Residence **Samuel Bordoli**, with a libretto co-authored by Antonia.

The soundtrack features 2022/23 Emerging Artist soprano **Zoe Drummond**, a chorus, and **The Orchestra of Scottish Opera** conducted by **Susannah Wapshott**.

By combining the mediums of opera and animation, *Josefine* promises a new and exciting way to experience and explore both art forms. It takes place in a desert world designed and animated by a team headed by **Sophie Bird**. Here, a creature’s unearthly voice attracts sprites who are enthralled by it. The piece explores the complicated relationship between the singer and audience and the ever-more-relevant question of art’s place in times of crisis.

Following an introduction by Scottish Opera General Director, **Alex Reedijk**, and a screening of the film, audiences will have the chance to watch a behind the scenes documentary about the making of *Josefine,* and hear Antonia Bain, Samuel Bordoli and executive producer Gemma Dixon in conversation about how the animation came together. There will also be a short excerpt performed from *Josefine*, accompanied on piano by Susannah Wapshott.

At last year’s Messina Film Festival – Cinema & Opera, *Josefine* was chosen from 1400 entries to receive the Emi Mammoliti Award for best short film. This award adds to the growing list of laurels for Josefine which was the Mannheim Arts and Film Festival Winner for Best Family and Children Friendly, and received an Honourable Mention in Animation. It has been screened at festivals all over the world, including Vienna’s Rathausplatz and the Venice Biennale.

**Alex Reedijk**, Scottish Opera General Director said: ‘We're delighted that *Josefine* will have its Scottish premiere at Glasgow Short Film Festival. Renowned for championing bold, experimental filmmaking, GSFF is the ideal platform for our first venture into animated opera. *Josefine* represents our commitment to pushing creative boundaries and finding new ways to present opera, and The Grosvenor Cinema provides the perfect setting to introduce audiences to this exciting new way of experiencing this wonderful art form.’

Director **Antonia Bain** said: ‘*Josefine* was born as a response to arts place in a time of crisis. It’s also a story about parenthood, a child discovering their talent, nurturing creativity, how to search for hope within when there seems to be only darkness outside, and most importantly the beauty of the voice and the overwhelming power of music to nourish the human soul.

‘Loosely inspired by Franz Kafka’s last short story ‘Josefine the Singer’, which looks at the relationship a singer has with her impoverished audience who find solace in her singing but have no time for her creative demands, was first introduced to me by my collaborator, the composer and librettist Samuel Bordoli.

‘We were both compelled to write this story especially during 2020 when many art forms and artists were struggling to find a meaning and a place in the world, and it seems even more relevant now as the arts struggles in an ever changing landscape of budget cuts.

‘We also wanted to go on a new journey, to bring the mediums of music, dance and animation together to inspire young people, entertain families and also show those who love the arts how it could be transformed into something original and refreshing.

‘Creating *Josefine* has been a dream come true for our whole team and we all fell in love with this beautiful little character. Helping her to grow up, creating a world for her to discover, pushing her story to be better at every opportunity and overcoming the challenges of animating the ever-morphing Shoalsprites has been my proudest achievement as a director, and I can’t wait for *Josefine* to be seen by everyone from the very young to the very old across the world.’

To buy tickets for *Josefine*, and for the full GSFF programme visit [glasgowshort.org](https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fglasgowshort.org%2F&data=05%7C02%7Cemily.henderson%40scottishopera.org.uk%7C6ca17d239b014f48f72408dd4cfa94f2%7Cbb8a0f04f12b4e7294dc794e17ac244f%7C0%7C0%7C638751361311502561%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Q8xWXzgOJwkQEaOxya07jkBWCuS0dnVOtgBSgiCqSDs%3D&reserved=0)

To find out more, and watch the *Josefine* trailer visit [www.scottishopera.org.uk/shows/josefine/](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk/shows/josefine/)

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***Josefine* cast and creative team**

Conductor  **Susannah Wapshot**

Josefine **Zoe Drummond**

Shoalsprites **Osian Wyn Bowen, Phil Gault, Jane Monari,**

 **Frances Morrison-Allen, Colin Murray, Sarah Power,**

**Christian Schneeberger, Sarah Shorter**

**The Orchestra of Scottish Opera**

Written and created by **Antonia Bain** & **Samuel Bordoli**

Director **Antonia Bain**

Animation Director **Sophie Bird**

Executive Producer **Gemma Dixon**

[www.scottishopera.org.uk](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk)

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

Notes to Editors

**Scottish Opera**

Scottish Opera is Scotland’s national opera company and the largest performing arts organisation in Scotland. The Company was founded in 1962 by Sir Alexander Gibson with the goal ‘to lay the treasures of opera at the feet of the people of Scotland’, opening with performances of *Madama Butterfly* and *Pelléas et Mélisande*. The 2022/23 season marked its 60th Anniversary.

Scottish Opera’s performance repertoire ranges across five centuries, from the earliest operas to newly commissioned world premieres, balancing favourites with under-explored works. The Company collaborates with the world’s finest singers and creatives, together with The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and choruses for each opera. Recent accolades include an International Opera Award 2023 Nomination for *Il trittico*, 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 Company took operas to Brooklyn in 2017 and Adelaide in 2020, and the 2022/23 season saw productions first staged at Scottish Opera appearing in Santa Fe, Madrid, Toulouse, and Los Angeles. The 60th Anniversary Season included the UK fully staged premiere of Osvaldo Golijov’s *Ainadamar* and the Company premiere of Puccini’s *Il trittico*.

The Company tours extensively across Scotland to ensure performances are within reach of as many of the country’s dispersed population as possible. This is one of the most extensive touring programmes of any European opera company and a much-valued contribution to Scotland’s cultural and artistic life, particularly in remote and island communities.

The Company’s Education & Outreach programme, the oldest in Europe, includes an annual in-person and digital Primary Schools Tour, bringing children the opportunity to perform their own specially commissioned piece alongside professional singers. Around 120 schools and 9,000 pupils take part each year. Scottish Opera aims to be inclusive and affordable through availability of free and cheap tickets, as well as performances offering audio description and specially-devised shorter Access performances.

Scottish Opera is committed to making opera for all, presenting opera at the highest possible standards in theatres across the country, outdoors on tour, and digital audiences around the world. The Company’s 2021 production of *The Gondoliers*, filmed live at Festival Theatre Edinburgh, is available on BBC iPlayer and OperaVision. Scottish Opera’s on Screen productions are available to watch at [www.scottishopera.org.uk/what-s-on/opera-on-screen](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk/what-s-on/opera-on-screen). The collection includes Donizetti’s *L’elisir d’amore*, Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel*, Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, Menotti’s *The Telephone*, *The Diary of One Who Disappeared*, *Mister MacNeep Has Lost His Sheep*, and Samuel Bordoli and Jenni Fagan’s *The Narcissistic Fish*.

Renowned for their flexibility and craftsmanship, Scottish Opera productions are frequently presented by opera houses across the globe. Two of our 60th Anniversary productions have been presented by co-producer Welsh National Opera: Osvaldo Golijov’s *Ainadamar* was in Cardiff, Llandudno, Bristol, Plymouth, Birmingham, Milton Keynes and Southampton from September to November 2023. Puccini’s *Il trittico* was performed in Cardiff in October 2024.

Following on from a run at the Opera Comique in Paris, Detroit Opera performed our 2019 production of Missy Mazzoli’s *Breaking the Waves* in April 2024. It just performed *Ainadamar,* which was also presented by The Metropolitan Opera in New York last autumn. In spring 2025, *Breaking the Waves* opens at Houston Grand Opera in a co-production of Houston Grand Opera, Opera Ventures, Scottish Opera, Théâtre National de l’Opéra Comique, and Adelaide Festival that began life in Scotland.

In addition, our 2014 production of Donizetti’s *Don Pasquale* was performed twice in Canada: at Vancouver Opera in February 2024, and at Canadian Opera Company in Toronto in April and May 2024.

Scottish Opera is supported by the Scottish Government.



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