****

##### Press Release

31 January, 2025

#### SCOTTISH OPERA’S PRIMARY SCHOOLS TOUR SHOW *the tale o’tam* *O’SHANTER* EXPLORES

#### ROBERT BURNS’ CLASSIC

Scottish Opera’s much-loved Primary Schools Tour visits over 120 schools from 3 February until 27 June with *The Tale o' Tam o’ Shanter,* a show created to re-introduce young people to the works of celebrated poet, Robert Burns.

Based on Tam o’ Shanter, this fast-paced adventure was written especially for children in primaries 5, 6 and 7, and the fully-booked tour heads to schools in Glasgow, Ayrshire, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Stirling, the Highlands, Clackmannanshire, Aberdeen, Angus, Fife, Lanarkshire, Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, the Scottish Borders, West Lothian and Shetland, as well as Newcastle.

Last performed in 2017, *The Tale o’ Tam o’ Shanter* features original lyrics by **Ross Stenhouse** and music by **Karen MacIver**, who composed the score for *Special Delivery*, the Christmas 2024 co-production between Scottish Opera, Visible Fictions and Lanterhouse at Cumbernauld Theatre. She also wrote the music for *RED*, performed by Scottish Opera Young Company last summer.

The show follows the farmer Tam o’ Shanter, as he makes his way home from market day with his faithful horse Meg. As the night grows darker, the rain falls and the wind shrieks through the branches of the trees, he finds himself outside the church where he discovers a coven of witches dancing. Fascinated, Tam stops to watch, but suddenly one of them spots him, and he and Meg must run for their lives.

Schools are provided with high quality, online teaching resources in advance, including a teachers' support pack, to help introduce the songs from *The Tale o' Tam o’ Shanter* to pupils. A team of Scottish Opera performers and arts education specialists then spend a day rehearsing and preparing the pupils for a 30-minute, choreographed, fully-costumed performance for family and friends, helping teachers deliver aspects of A Curriculum for Excellence.

Forming part of a suite of Scottish Opera’s digital offerings for schools, which includes *The Curse of MacCabbra Opera House, How The Dragon Was Made,* and *Vikings! The Quest for the Dragon’s Treasure, The Tale o’ Tam o’ Shanter* has been re-imagined and expanded to make it even more accessible and adaptable for all schools in Scotland to take part.

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.

Scottish Opera’s Director of Outreach and Education, **Jane Davidson** said: ‘Our children’s operas make learning both enjoyable and challenging, giving pupils the opportunity to engage their creative and expressive capacities. Originally commissioned in 2002, this vibrant interpretation of Burns’ iconic poem enables a new generation to explore the culture, identity and language that remain key to the enduring appeal of Scotland’s most famous poet.  With the aim of making Tam accessible to many more schools, the project is now available in two formats, both involve downloading digital resources which prepare them for performance.’

*The Tale o’ Tam o’ Shanter* is kindly supported by **The Jean Armour Burns Trust, The David and June Gordon Memorial Trust, The Harbinson Charitable Trust, The W M Mann Foundation**and **Scottish Opera’s Education Angels**.

For more information visit [www.scottishopera.org.uk/join-in/opera-for-schools/the-tale-o-tam-o-shanter/](http://www.scottishopera.org.uk/join-in/opera-for-schools/the-tale-o-tam-o-shanter/)

-ENDS-

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

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

Primary Schools Tour Team

Music                                                  **Karen MacIver**

Lyrics                                                 **Ross Stenhouse**

Costume design**Patricia Kenny**
Art direction/illustrator**Iain Piercy**

Stop motion editor**Viola Madau**
Original Teaching resources         **Julie Brown**

Revised for 2025**Nicola Fisher**

Notes to Editors

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.



**For additional press details please contact the Scottish Opera press office:**

Emily Henderson, Press Manager, 0141 242 0511, emily.henderson@scottishopera.org.uk