





tête@tête **BLIND
DATE**

Anger

Words: Meredith Oakes

Music: Julian Grant

on such a day

Words: Philip Ridley

Music: Anna Meredith

The Feathered Friend

Words: Alasdair Middleton

Music: Helen Chadwick

Interval (20 Minutes)

The Big But

Words: Jonzi-D

Music: Jason Yarde

Houses

Words: Christopher Mayo & Christopher Crebolder

Music: Christopher Mayo

Nyanyushka

Words: Simon Nicholson

Music: Gary Carpenter

The Company

Performers

Soprano	Stephanie Corley
Mezzo Soprano	Susan Atherton
Baritone	Damian Thantry

Chroma

Clarinet	Stuart King
Violin	Helena Wood
French Horn	Evgeny Chebykin
Cello	Miriam Lowbury
Flute	Sarah O'Flynn
Tenor Trombone	Neill Hadden
Artistic Director	Stuart King
Manager	Claire Shovelton

Production

Music Director	Tim Murray
Director	Bill Banks-Jones
Designer	Tim Meacock
Lighting Designer	Mark Doubleday
Production Manager	Marius Rønning
Company Stage Manager	Ian Andlaw
Relights and Production Electrician	Mark Howland
Costume Supervisor	Caroline Hughes
Set	Factory Settings Ltd. www.factorysettings.co.uk
Administrator	Anna Gregg
Marketing Manager	Toby Leeming
PR	SoundUK (020 7375 0025)
Front of House	Claire Shovelton
Print & Publicity Design	Jeremy at JADED

Thank You

Susan Benn, Henrietta Bredin, Harriet Capaldi, Central School of Speech and Drama, Mel Cooper, Mark Elder, Sir Peter Jonas, Alison Holdom, Richard Lee and the staff of the Jerwood Space, Andrew Miller, David Pountney, Gavin MacFadyen, voiceover in "Houses", everyone at Riverside Studios, Ms Stella Steed, John Studzinski, Transport for London, Lost Property.

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Blind Date

It is a huge pleasure, as ever, to welcome you to the culmination of a momentous year's work with *Tête à Tête*.

Driven by a desire to broaden our partnerships with the whole range of creators of new opera, a year ago, we held a very playful speed-dating event: over a hundred such folk liaised in a variety of ways, including the spontaneous composition of several short operas conceived, orchestrated, staged and premièred all on the same night. The mix became all the more heady a few months later with a line-dancing evening, where the group created an extraordinary piece which morphed from traditional opera to performance art. These events are ample demonstration of the huge demand among artists for a safe environment to try things out, to experiment and play hand-in-hand with audiences, to allow new projects and relationships to take their first stumbling steps into a rosy creative future. Thus *Tête à Tête: the Opera Festival* was born presenting: twentyfive different shows including eight world premières under one roof in Riverside Studios, London. And so, as a result, during the last year alone, we have worked with over a hundred composers, and many hundreds of other artists and companies, to encourage new opera and to help them develop their work.

In a year that began with speed-dating, it's very fitting to end with a finished product, *Blind Date*. This work is the fruit of several liaisons, where both long-standing partnerships and couples created expressly for this performance have had the chance to develop their ideas fully through five weeks of workshops at our festival to reflect, and then regroup with the performing company to present the finished articles. At the outset, none of our authors had any idea of the content of their colleague's work, so in that sense, the evening is also very much a blind date, where part of the fascination is the major effect each piece feels from its neighbours. It's also a particular pleasure to be presenting the world premières of three works which develop pre-existing writing relationships with *Tête à Tête* alongside three works which are their authors' very first operas.

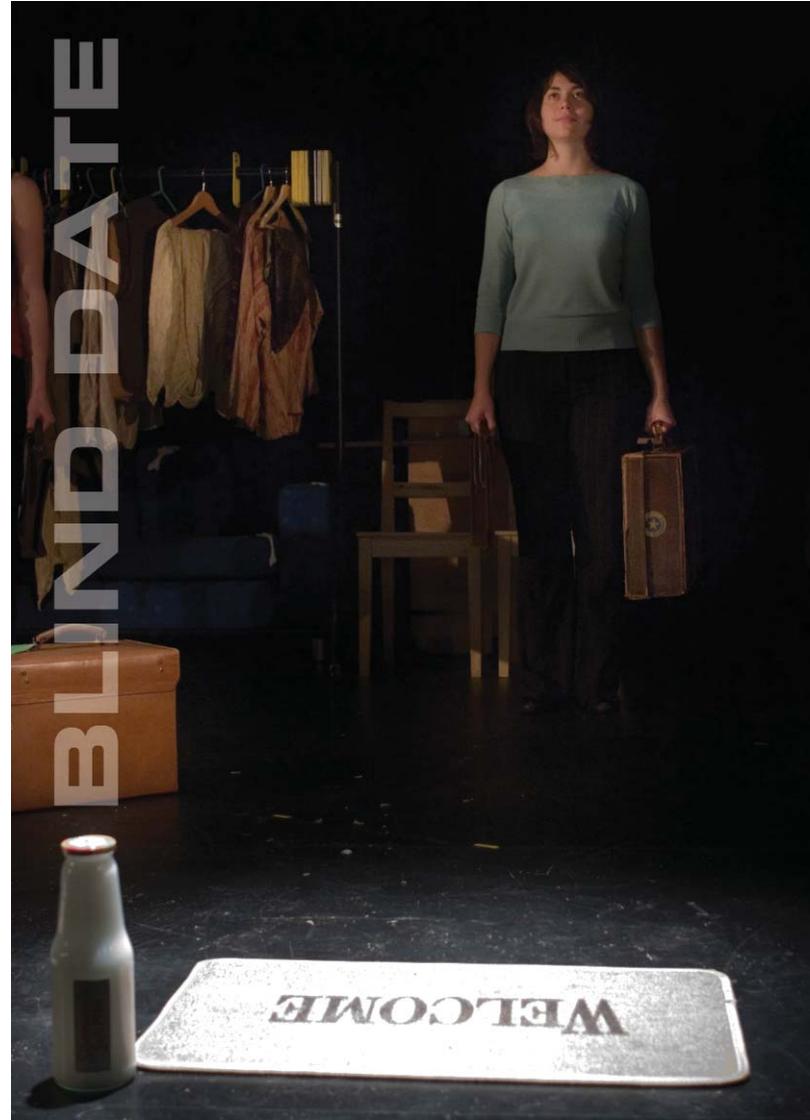
Blind Date

Finally, a very particular thank you is due to our funders for this performance. In a volatile funding climate, it has been a challenging year for Tête à Tête, and we owe a vast debt of gratitude to the many individuals, Trusts and Foundations who have made this programme possible, and in particular the remarkable Genesis Foundation, with whom we are very happy to be launching into a long-term partnership.

In this volatile climate, in such a time, We absolutely depend on support from trusts and individuals at all levels. Do please turn to the back of the programme to find out how you might become involved in this way.

But most importantly of all, on behalf of the whole company, I wish you a tremendous night out at Blind Date.

Bill Bankes-Jones
Artistic Director.



Anger



Words: Meredith Oakes
Music: Julian Grant

Soprano: Stephanie Corley
Critic 1: Susan Atherton
Critic 2: Damian Thantry

Anger

Two opera critics rave about the beautiful performance of a diva. However their agreement is short lived and their disagreement destroys the performance....

Anger was originally presented as part of *The Seven Deadly Sins*, a private performance of 7 short operas given in 1993 as a leaving present for the retiring English National Opera management (Peter Jonas, Mark Elder, David Pountney, Edmund Tracey.) Engineered by Henrietta Bredin, and directed by Bill Bankes-Jones this involved all kinds of skulduggery and secret rehearsals with the ENO stars of the time. *Anger* has never before had a public performance.

Composer

Julian Grant's previous operas include: *The Skin Drum* (winner, National Opera Association of America) *Out of Season* (ROH Garden Venture) *The Queen of Sheba's Legs* (ENO Baylis) *Heroes Don't Dance* (ROH) *A Family Affair* (Almeida) *Jump Into My Sack* (Mecklenburgh) and *A Very Private Beach* (ENO Knack). He composed the the opera *Odysseus Unwound*, for Tête A Tête, performed in 2006 and based on the story of Odysseus. The full production opened in London at the beautifully derelict Alexandra Palace and toured to Stavanger Norway then throughout England finishing on the Shetland Islands. He has lived in the USA, Canada, Hong Kong and Japan. From 2002-2007 he was head of music at St Paul's School for Girls. He now lives in Beijing.

Librettist

Meredith Oakes is an Australian playwright living in London (born 1946) whose work has included *The Neighbour* for the Royal National Theatre, *Faith* at the Royal Court Theatre and *The Mind of the Meeting* for BBC Radio Four. Meredith has also written adaptations of some classic works such as Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy* presented at the Southwark Playhouse, London in 2006. In 2002 she wrote the libretto for a short opera with music by Des Oliver, *Miss Treat* and, in 2004, completed the libretto of *The Tempest* based on Shakespeare's play with music written by the English composer Thomas Adès. The opera was given its premiere performance on 10 February 2004 at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Her most recent play, *Shadowmouth*, was presented in Sheffield in mid-2006.

on such a day



Words: Philip Ridley

Music: Anna Meredith

on such a day

It is a beautiful day... It is not... It is...

on such a day tells the story of a day as it unfolds through the eyes of our performers. Initially the beauty of the day is admired, however as events, as yet unknown, unfold we witness the reactions of those present and follow them through the storm to the calm that follows.

Composer

Anna Meredith is a composer, improviser, drum teacher and animateur. From 2004-2007 she was Composer in Residence with the BBCSSO and is currently working on a Trombone concerto for their Principle Trombone, Simon Johnson. During 2005/2006 Anna was premiered by Ensemble Modern, the LSO, the Presences Festival, the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, the Aldeburgh Festival, the SCO for the Cheltenham Festival, the folk group Horses Brawl, the Gaudeamus Festival the BBCSSO and the Smith Quartet at the Huddersfield Festival. She is also a founder member of the Camberwell Composers Collective. 2007 saw the culmination of Anna's part in the London Sinfonietta's *Blue Touch Paper Project* where she was mentored by electronica artists Matmos. After writing for *Tête à Tête* with the novelist and playwright, Philip Ridley, Anna and Philip will then start working on a large-scale youth music theatre work for Aldeburgh Music, due for performance in 2009.

Librettist

Philip Ridley was born in the East End of London where he still lives and works. He studied painting at St Martin's School of Art and his work has been exhibited throughout Europe and Japan. As well as three books for adults - and the highly acclaimed screenplay for the *The Krays* feature film - he has written six adult stage plays including the multi-award-winning *The Fastest Clock in the Universe* as well as a further five plays for young people. He has also directed two films from his own screenplays: *The Reflecting Skin* – winner of eleven international awards – and *The Passion of Darkly Noon* (winner of the Best Director Prize at the Porto Film Festival). Philip has also written many books for children and has won both the Evening Standard's Most Promising Newcomer to British Film and Most Promising Playwright Awards. The only person ever to receive both prizes.

The Feathered Friend



Words: Alasdair Middleton
Music: Helen Chadwick

Polly: Stephanie Corley
Suzy: Susan Atherton
Harry: Damian Thanrey

The Feathered Friend

Based on a true story that occurred in Leeds last year, *The Feathered Friend* tells the story of a Love Triangle between a man, a woman and a parrot. While Harry has been away, his girlfriend has been seeing someone else, although Harry is blissfully unaware until his parrot opens its mouth.

Composer

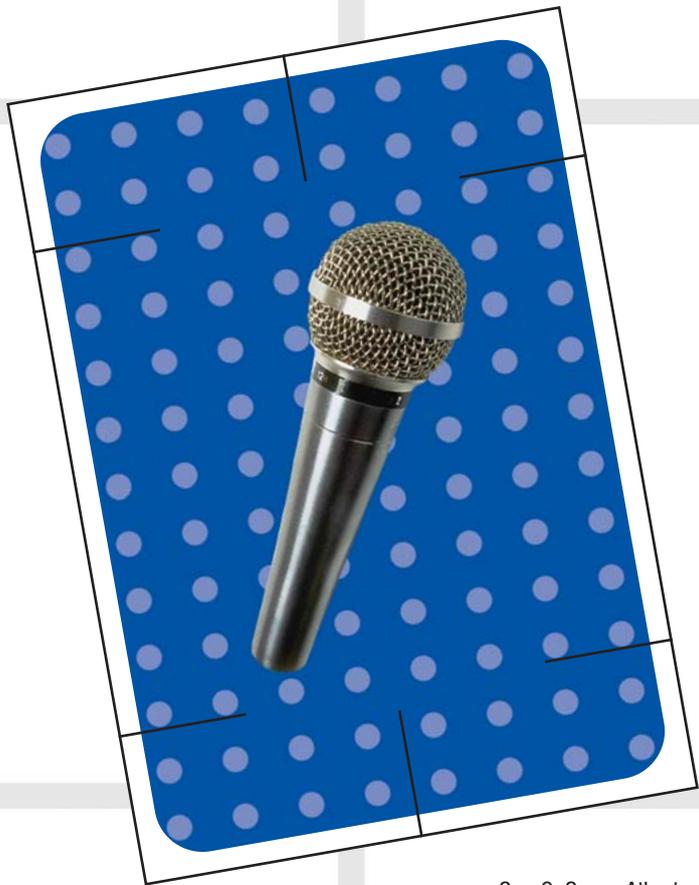
Helen Chadwick's song/theatre/story performances have toured in Europe and the Americas. She has recorded six solo albums and composed for the RSC, English Touring Opera, Welsh National Opera, The Royal Court, the National Theatre, and for Radio drama. She has worked on projects with DV8, Rambert and Complicite, and has sung in projects composed by Meredith Monk and Orlando Gough. She is in preparation for a group song theatre performance for the Linbury.

www.helenchadwick.com.

Librettist

Alasdair Middleton's work as a librettist includes: *Lessons in Harmony*, *The World Was All Before Them*, and *On London Fields* (Winner of an Royal Philharmonic Society Award 2005) all for Matthew King and *Red Riding Hood*, *The Hackney Chronicles*, *On Spital Fields* (Winner of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award 2006) *An Old Way To Pay New Debts* and *The Enchanted Pig* all with Jonathan Dove.

The Big But



Words: Jonzi-D
Music: Jason Yarde

Suz-O: Susan Atherton
Nigel Ian St Thomas: Damian Thanfrey
Linda Moran: Stephanie Corley

The Big But

The Big But is a humorous look at the devious world of celebrity PR. In a world where the term celebrity has become increasingly meaningless and the paparazzi and press chase the latest and greatest misdemeanours perpetrated by people in the public eye, *The Big But* follows the story of George Michael's secret love child. Potentially the scoop of the century we watch as the vultures descend on their prey...

Composer

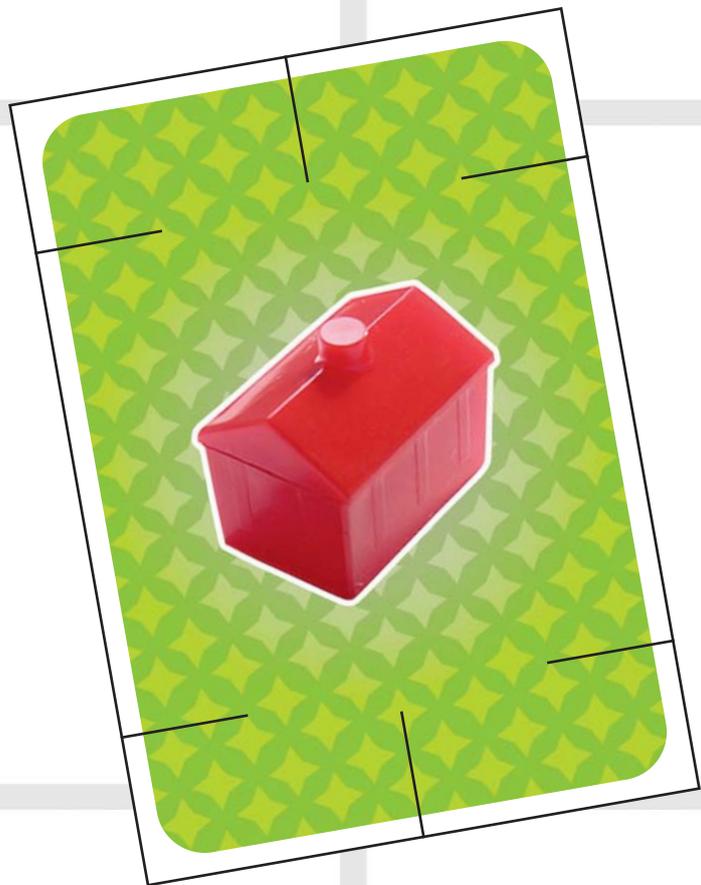
Jason Yarde, composer, arranger, producer, mc and saxophonist, writes across a variety of styles and media (jazz, classical, hip-hop, broken beats, soul, reggae). Jason participated in the 2006, LSO's Discovery Panufnik Young Composers Scheme and is now a LSO Sound Adventure Artist.

In All Seriousness Music Ltd/Big Life Music Ltd

Librettist

Jonzi D has been actively involved in British Hip Hop culture, rapping and b-boying in clubs and on the street since its genesis in the early eighties. Since graduating from the London Contemporary Dance School, Jonzi has been committed to the development of Hip Hop theatre, creating *Lyrical Fearta* in 1995, and *Aeroplane Man* in 1999. In the UK, Jonzi D's new company Jonzi D Productions is an Associate Company of Sadler's Wells and based at the theatre. He is also the curator and host of the acclaimed Breakin' Convention, International Hip Hop Dance Theatre festival, nominated for a South Bank Show Award. He has directed pieces for Robert Hylton, Benji Reid, Jane Sekonya, Loop Dance Co, and ACE Dance and Music. As an MC/poet, Jonzi has worked with The Roots, Steve Williamson, Mannafest, Lenny Henry, MC Mell 'O' and toured with Gangstarr. He is creator and host of the successful Apricot Jam and Vertikal Cypher infamous Hip Hop music and open mic sessions.

Houses



Words:
Christopher Mayo &
Christopher Crebolder

Music:
Christopher Mayo

Houses

Houses traces the story of three homes in Toronto from their construction, years ago, to the present day. Unearthing the lives lived, the stories trapped within the bricks and interweaving fragments of past, present and future, *Houses* is based on facts dug out of the Canadian archives by Christopher Mayo and subsequently pieced together.

Composer

Christopher Mayo, a Canadian born composer, was the recipient of the 2005 Royal Philharmonic Society Composition prize. As a result of this he was commissioned to write *Passed the Last River* for Michael Collins and the Dante String Quartet, which was premiered at the 2006 Cheltenham Festival and broadcast on BBC Radio 3. His work *Nineteen Frames* has received a Serge Garant Award in the 2005 SOCAN Awards for Young Composers, was selected in the Continuum Contemporary Music call for works, and has been performed in the UK (Composers Ensemble) and USA (Music06 Festival). Christopher has also been awarded the Richard Sadlier Prize, the William Erving Fairclough Scholarship, and the Glenn Gould Composition Award. Christopher is also a member of the Camberwell Composers' Collective.

Research

Christopher Crebolder is a freelance researcher and library technician who lives and works in Toronto, Canada. He has studied classical languages and literary theory at Victoria College at the University of Toronto while training as a Library Assistant at various academic libraries. His past research projects have included work for the Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, typographers, independent scholars, and a number of trade magazines. Currently the Senior Assistant at Emmanuel College Theological Library, one of Chris' primary interests continues to be the ever-changing cultural face of his native city, especially as represented in the local arts and music scene, and demonstrated in the continued gentrification of its older neighbourhoods.



Words: Simon Nicholson
Music: Gary Carpenter

Kirov: Damian Thanfrey
Olga Tomsk: Stephanie Corley
Maria Popinova: Susan Atherton

Nyanyushka tells the story of a man, left to fend for himself in post revolution Russia, who yearns for the care of his Nyanyushka once again.

Simon Nicholson writes:

I'd read about the peasant nannies of Tsarist Russia some time ago. Adored by the noble children they suckled and reared, they were nonetheless servants: penniless, illiterate women who usually lived out their entire lives on the estate on which they were born. When Gary approached me about the project, I remembered this material, and for some reason found myself wondering what might have happened to these women after the 1917 revolution. I thought up a story. It had the somewhat grotesque tone of some early Soviet writers (Mayakovsky, Bulgakov, Erdman) and that provided a good clue for how to write the libretto. Although it proved impossible to resist references to a certain 1960's musical film as well...

Gary Carpenter writes:

My references arrived with Simon's libretto. Set at a time when the influence of Diaghilev's coterie of disaffected Russian emigrés was still felt everywhere except Russia, I tinkered around the edges of Mussorgsky and early Stravinsky. In the spirit of the piece, I confess to one quotation.

Composer

Gary Carpenter is a Senior Lecturer at the Royal Academy of Music and teaches composition at the Royal Northern College of Music. He has been musical director and/or arranger - orchestrator on many films including *The Wicker Man* and *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy*. As well as many commissions and recordings Gary is also a broadcaster. Gary contributed *Doggone* to Tête à Tête's first programme of short commissioned operas, *Shorts*. www.garycarpenter.net.

Librettist

Simon Nicholson writes extensively for children's television: his credits include *Bob The Builder*, *Tracy Beaker*, *The Hoobs* and many other shows. His writing for music-theatre includes *China Song*, *Doggone* and *Flea Circus*, all with composer Gary Carpenter; also a children's version of *The Magic Flute* for the Unicorn Theatre, London. He has been nominated for Bafta and RTS awards and lives in Winchester.



Pass Me a Sparkler

Would I like to attend an operatic speed-dating evening, as a librettist who might be interested in meeting some composers? Certainly one of the odder invitations I've received but tantalising, provocative and of course irresistible -- all three descriptions you could equally well apply to Bill Bankes-Jones and the work he does with his opera company, Tête à Tête.

From its very first production, *The Flying Fox*, an immensely witty miniaturised version of *Die Fledermaus* arranged for an Anglo-Viennese quartet in which members of the audience doubled as revellers at Orlofsky's ball, this company has done things differently, and with freshness, daring and skill. So when I saw the Bankes-Jones signature on the invitation that dropped into my inbox I accepted with alacrity.

On the evening in question, a dirty London wind wrapped rubbish round the ankles of those hurrying through the vestry door of the Union Chapel in Islington, before blowing us up the stairs and into a shabby rehearsal room. As we arrived, we were each given an identifying name badge and a sealed envelope, which we were firmly instructed not to open. I picked out a few familiar faces – composers, conductors, singers, directors – but, as the crowd grew until we numbered around 80, there were a great many unfamiliar ones as well.

Palpably, and reassuringly, I was quite clearly not the only person to be feeling extremely nervous.

A bench ran around the sides of the room and there were tables scattered about the centre. Large signs bearing letters of the alphabet were fixed to the walls and to the backs of chairs. After a while, Bill shouted for quiet and issued his instructions. At his word we opened our envelopes, which by this time we were all clutching as feverishly as if they contained the meaning of life, to find something that looked like an order for a Chinese takeaway. Mine went:

1D 2D 3E 4E 5G 6S 7D 8U

The numbers simply indicated the order of your progress, the letters showed where you were to go for a four-minute slot, to meet a mystery date. If you found yourself at a table, you would encounter three people with whom you had a double session, i. e. , eight minutes, in which to write an instant operatic scene. And if the letter you were directed to marked a slot on the bench around the wall, you would meet one other person with whom you were simply expected to strike up a conversation, which might turn out to be of mutual interest or benefit.

The idea was that, after the first eight minutes, two complete mini operas would have been written and the finished manuscripts would be taken away to be collated, rehearsed and then performed by a small group of astonishingly open-minded, quick-studying and intrepid singers and instrumentalists.

I found myself teamed with the composer David Bruce, who wrote the music for Tête à Tête's most recent production, the immensely successful *Push!*, surely the first opera to deal exclusively (and graphically) with the subject of childbirth. He'd been given an empty sheet of music paper and we also had a list of short episodic descriptions, one of them highlighted as the one we were to address. It read 'baritone meets mezzo and sparks fly'. So we knew we had two characters to deal with and what their voice types were. What should we do with them? Was this episode in the middle of their story? Yes, it was. David took the plunge. 'I'll just write a chord to get things going,' he said, and started scribbling. I ripped a page out of my notebook. 'All right, let's be literal about this – if sparks are flying, they're at a firework display.' I wrote down B for baritone and then: 'I'm sure I've seen you somewhere before.' David was writing music as fast as I could write words. I gave him the line and wrote another one for the mezzo: 'I don't think so. Pass me a sparkler.' We were both wondering where this exchange could go next when we heard Bill counting down the seconds to the end of our session.

Chivvied by various people who seemed to know what they were doing, everyone rushed on to the next assignation.

Librettists turned out to be in short supply, so I was at a table again, with another composer, John Webb, and another mini scene to write. This time we had 'baritone calls soprano and asks her out'. We were all getting the hang of things by now.

Director Martin Constantine said, 'Let's have him ringing from the street outside her flat', I dashed down some words, John was already peppering the page with notes, which turned out when we heard them later on to be a witty take on the Nokia ring tone. In the nick of time we got the baritone spluttering out his proposal and the soprano agreeing to go out with him.

After that ferment of concentrated creativity it was quite a relief to sit and talk to three further composers and a choreographer about what they were doing and what they'd like to do. Impressive though it was to encounter people who thrust CDs or draft scenarios at me, I found it much more interesting to talk to those who had come along on spec, with no particular agenda or proposal to push.

Talking later to Bill and the conductor Tim Murray, the complexity of the event and the bravura with which it was executed became even more evident. They are in the middle of rehearsing a new opera production, *Odysseus Unwound*, by composer Julian Grant and librettist Hattie Naylor, involving a group of Shetland knitters and spinners. Don't ask – just check out their website and book yourself into a performance at Alexandra Palace in October or numerous other places through November including Stavanger, Manchester, Liverpool and Lerwick. I can guarantee that you will find it an exciting and revelatory experience.

As they'd already got the rehearsal space booked, they decided to use it, Odysseus singers and stage managers volunteered to join the experiment and Tête à Tête board members generously provided wine, bread and cheese – so the event cost absolutely nothing and may pay untold and ongoing artistic dividends. Bill spent hours making sure that everyone would meet as many

Pass Me a Sparkler

people as possible and then found that on the evening itself his role was limited to that of official timekeeper. Tim spent a large portion of the evening photocopying the mini opera scenes, deciphering them and piecing them together in some sort of order. His tip for anyone thinking of doing this sort of thing again – ‘For heaven’s sake, don’t use a 2B pencil.’ It can’t be denied that the results were rough and fairly chaotic but the whole exercise was enormously stimulating and, something one doesn’t get the chance to say often enough, huge fun.

Both Bill and Tim are passionately keen to provide an open forum for people to present new work to the public, whether by mounting a regular festival or by establishing a dedicated venue for small-scale opera. The Bankes-Jones approach is joyously lacking in caution, wholeheartedly embracing risk and the unexpected. This is cause for optimism, celebration and support.

Henrietta Bredin



Iain Andlaw*Company Stage Manager*

Ian graduated in 2007 from the Central School of Speech and Drama with a 1st class honours in Stage Management & Theatre Practice. Since leaving university Ian's work has included *A Disappearing Number* (Complicite – European Tour & Barbican), *Off The Wall* (Stan Wont Dance – South Bank Centre) and *Gratuitous Acts of Circus* (The Circus Space). This is Ian's first engagement with Tête à Tête.

Susan Atherton*Mezzo-Soprano*

The English mezzo Susan Atherton trained at the Royal Academy of Music. Her British engagements include Melanto and Amor (*Il Ritorno d'Ulisse*) and Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*) for Graham Vick's Birmingham Opera Company; Speranza (*Orfeo*) and Second Woman/Second Witch (*Dido and Aeneas*) for English Touring Opera and Dryad (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) for Garsington Opera. Future engagements include Mercedes for Raymond Gubbay at the Royal Albert Hall.

Bill Bankes-Jones*Director*

A graduate of the ITV Regional Theatre Young Directors' Scheme, Bill has worked for nearly 20 years in both theatre and opera throughout the UK and in Germany, Japan, Korea, Austria and Sweden, including all Tête à Tête's productions to date. Recent credits include *le Dialogues des Carmelites* for Trinity College of Music, a community production of *Carmen* for Blackheath Halls involving over 750 people, and Mozart's *First Commandment* for the Classical Opera Company. Plans include *The Barber of Seville* for OTC touring Ireland, and a marathon surfing expedition to Costa Rica.

Stephanie Corley*Soprano*

Stephanie studied at the RWCMD and the National Opera Studio and continues her studies with Rudolf Piernay and John Evans. Recent roles include, Nedda I *Pagliacci*, Leila *Les Pêcheurs des Perles*, Donna Elvira *Don Giovanni*, Cendrillon, *Cendrillon*, Tina, *Flight* (NOS scenes), Aminta (cover) *Il Re Pastore* (Garsington), *Fiordiligi* (cover) *Così fan tutte* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera), Pamina (cover) *Die Zauberflöte* and Musetta *La Bohème* (Scottish Opera on Tour). Future productions include *Così fan tutte* for Opera by Definition, *Don Giovanni* for Zagreb National Opera, *Trovatore* for Opera Holland Park and *The Merry Widow* for Scottish Opera on Tour.

Mark Doubleday*Lighting Design*

Mark has lit over 250 productions in most UK Theatres and also New York, Washington, Europe and Asia. Mark's recent work includes: *Behzti* at Birmingham Rep, *Lysistrata* at Houston Grand Opera/New York City Opera, *Hansel & Gretel* at Scottish Opera, *Love's Labour's Lost* in Washington and RSC. Mark has lit all of Tête à Tête's previous productions but one!

John-Paul Gandy*Répétiteur*

John-Paul has worked with such companies as Almeida Opera, English Touring Opera, Rambert Dance Company, The Clod Ensemble, cult figures: Mark E. Smith (The Fall) & Damo Suzuki (Can), accordion virtuoso Luke Daniels, improvisers: Alec Dankworth, Steve Noble, Ben Castle, Viv Corringham and Brian Abrahams, and 8 years collaboration with the extraordinary singer/performer Bettina Jonic. As that implies, John-Paul likes rummaging and getting his hands dirty within a wide range of sound possibilities.

Anna Gregg*Administrator*

Anna has managed Adonais Ballet Company, Pimlico Opera/Grange Park Opera, The Covent Garden Festival, The Big Picture Company and Early Opera Company.

Mark Howland*Relights and Production Electrician*

Mark studied Stage Lighting at RADA, from where he graduated with a Distinction. Lighting design work includes theatre, opera, musicals and choral concerts in venues ranging from churches and Abbeys to studio spaces and large theatres. Mark has also worked as Assistant to several Lighting Designers, including Ben Ormerod and Bruno Poet, and has re-lit several tours both around the UK and Internationally. Mark is also an experienced Strand 500 programmer and computer draughtsman.

Caroline Hughes*Wardrobe Supervisor*

Caroline Hughes has worked with Bill Bankes-Jones and Tim Meacock on *Die Fledermaus* for English Touring Opera, *Nitro the Revival* at the Royal Opera House, *PUSH!* and *Odysseus Unwound* for Tête à Tête, as well as various opera projects for the Opera Theatre Company in Dublin and English Touring Opera.

Tim Meacock*Designer*

For Tête à Tête: *Family Matters*, *Six-Pack*, *Orlando Plays Mad*, *Shorts*. With Bill Bankes-Jones: *Revival!*, (ROH2), *Die Entführung aus dem Serial* (Läckö Slotsopera), *Die Fledermaus* (ETO). Other designs: *A Touch of the Sun*, *Five Finger Exercise*, *Rutherford and Son*, *See How They Run* (Salisbury), *Betrayal* (Exeter), *Blood Wedding*, *The Tempest*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Crucible*, *The Provoked Wife*, *The Duchess of Malfi* (Colchester), *Birdsong* (RSC). Many shows at the Orange Tree Theatre Richmond.

Tim Murray*Music Director*

Studied at Cambridge University, Royal College of Music, and Britten-Pears School with Oliver Knussen. For Tête à Tête he has conducted *Push!* and *Odysseus Unwound*. Other recent work includes *The Silent Twins* for Almeida Opera, *Wind in the Willows*, *Pinocchio* and *The Gentle Giant* for the Royal Opera House, *The (Little) Magic Flute* for ETO, *Tobias and the Angel* for ETO/Young Vic and *Down by the Greenwood Side* for Clarion Music Theatre. Tim made his Proms debut in 1999, aged 21, with the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, returning in 2002 for the Julian Anderson Composer Portrait. He has also performed with BBC Singers, Psappha, National Symphony Orchestra of Ireland, RCM New Perspectives Ensemble and Salisbury Sinfonia.

Marius Rønning*Stage Manager*

Graduated from RADA in 2001 where he trained as a Stage Manager. Since then he has been working freelance. He has worked on Tête à Tête's *Shorts*, *Six-Pack*, *Family Matters* and *PUSH!* Other companies include Trestle (Mask), Royal College of Music, New Kent Opera, English Touring Opera, Wee (Dance), The Shout, Actors Touring Company, Soho Theatre Company, The Royal Court, Hampstead Theatre and Grange Park Opera. Marius has recently worked as Technical Director for Tête à Tête's Opera Festival. www.mariusronning.co.uk

Sound UK*PR*

Sound UK is committed to promoting the very best new music through PR, productions, consultancy and artist representation and offers a range of services to clients across new music. One of the leading contemporary music PR consultancies, sound uk also creates its own projects, including UK tours, the annual festival

Fertilizer and one-off events as well as offering its curatorial creativity and production knowledge to external organisations. sound uk is also the UK representative for some of Europe's most exciting and innovative musicians. For more information visit www.sounduk.net

Damien Thantrey

Baritone

Damien Thantrey has recently made his debut at the Royal Opera House as Marullo *Rigoletto*, WNO in *Don Carlos* and at Théâtre de Metz in *Death in Venice*. Other recent performances have included *Die Fledermaus* and *La Bohème* for Scottish Opera, *Death in Venice* at the Aldeburgh and Bregenz Festivals, *Orfeo* and *Oedipus Rex* for Opera North and *La Finta Giardiniera* and *Der Stein der Weisen* for Garsington Opera, *Le Nozze di Figaro* for Savoy Opera and *The Pearl Fishers* and *The Fair Maid of Perth* for Chelsea Opera Group. Damien has premiered more than 20 new works including the 5 baritone roles in the highly acclaimed *Shorts* for Tete-a-Tete.

CHROMA

Celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2007, CHROMA is a dynamic, critically acclaimed chamber ensemble featuring some of Britain's most outstanding musicians, known for the passion it brings to contemporary works, its vivid renderings of classic pieces and its diverse programme of education work.

Following its debut at the Purcell Room CHROMA has become most closely associated with the performance of contemporary music and has forged close links with many prominent British composers through an extensive series of premières and collaborations.

Recent projects have included the world premières of Jonathan Dove's award-winning *On Spital Fields - a Community Cantata* at Christ Church for the Spitalfields Festival, and Julian

Grant's "knitting opera" *Odysseus Unwound* with the innovative and acclaimed opera company Tête à Tête (libretto Hattie Naylor). CHROMA is Associate Ensemble for Tête à Tête.

CHROMA has an active programme of outreach and education work, and is currently Ensemble-in-Residence for Education at Spitalfields Festival, and the University of London's Royal Holloway and Bedford College.

Evgeny Chebykin

French horn

Evgeny Chebykin was educated at the Purcell School and the Royal Academy of Music, where he studied with Richard Watkins and Michael Thompson. Whilst at the Academy, Evgeny won numerous chamber music and solo prizes, including the coveted Dennis Brain Prize. As an orchestral musician he appeared with Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, London Sinfonietta, City of London Sinfonia and Britten Sinfonia. As a soloist Evgeny performed at BBC Proms, Aldeburgh, Cheltenham, Mostly Mozart and Presteigne festivals, and with artists such as Nash Ensemble, CHROMA, London Winds, Composers Ensemble and the Albion Ensemble.

Neill Hadden

Tenor Trombone

Originally from Scotland, Neill began playing the trombone at the age of 10. Lured by the prospect of spending his life blowing into a giant paperclip, he moved to London and graduated from Trinity College of Music in 1999 before beginning a freelance career including spells in Spain and Germany. He has considerable theatre and recording experience and a particular interest in contemporary and commercial music as well as a commitment to education work. In particular he is keen to promote the trombone as it is now an 'endangered species' in schools.

Stuart King

Artistic Director, Clarinet

Stuart began playing the clarinet aged nine. Since graduating from the GSMD in 1997 Stuart has been enjoying a rich and varied career performing, recording, teaching and leading/devising education-outreach projects. Much in demand as soloist, chamber and orchestral musician, Stuart has performed throughout the UK, Europe, the Middle East, Far East, South Africa and North America. Stuart is a founder member and Artistic Director of acclaimed chamber ensemble CHROMA. The relationship with Tête-à-Tête stretches over the next three years with CHROMA forming the performing ensemble and continuing to coordinate all the outreach work that accompanies each new touring production nationwide and abroad.

Miriam Lowbury

Cello

Miriam Lowbury studied at Bristol University, the Royal College of Music, and with the Amadeus Quartet on a Leverhulme Scholarship. As a chamber player she has toured widely, played on radio and TV, and appeared with artists including Raphael Wallfisch, and Jack Brymer. Her highly acclaimed recordings have been nominated for a Gramophone Award, and gained the top rating of five stars in the BBC Music magazine. Miriam is a member of Double Image, which has held residencies at Southampton University and the University of the Third Age. Her education work includes workshops in schools, universities and prisons, and teaching at the Junior Royal College of Music. Miriam plays on a cello by Thomas Dodd made in 1812.

Sarah O'Flynn

Flute

Sarah is co-Principal flute with Britten Sinfonia and her work with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Royal Scottish National Orchestra have both

included European tours as Guest Principal Flute. As a chamber musician Sarah is a member of CHROMA and The Marais Ensemble with whom she has performed at The Wigmore Hall, Purcell Room, Bridgewater Hall and live on Radio 3. Sarah runs a Summer Music Festival with The Marais Ensemble in her home town of Potton, Bedfordshire. Orchestras include: BBC Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, Britten Sinfonia, Chroma, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, English Festival Orchestra, English Sinfonia, Galliard Ensemble, Marais Ensemble, Opera a la Carte, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Education Work: Britten Sinfonia Education, English Sinfonia Education.

Helena Wood

Violin

Helena Wood was born in 1979 and began playing the violin at the age three. In 2001 she graduated from the Royal College of Music with a first class Honors degree. Helena freelances throughout the UK as a chamber musician and orchestral leader. She has also been received with great acclaim as a soloist at the Wigmore Hall, the South Bank Centre, the Barbican and many other major venues and continues to enjoy a busy recital and concerto schedule both in Europe and the UK.

Innovative challenging high-quality opera can make a great night out for everyone. 10 years ago Tete a Tete was born from this passion and the belief that opera can touch people's hearts and therefore change their lives like no other art form, and that this power should be felt as widely as possible. Time and time again our bold new approach to opera has generated projects which have absolutely touched people's lives and exerted a very strong influence across the sector, attracting new audiences and pointing the way towards a viable opera of the future, for both audiences and artists. Over the past decade we have employed over 200 artists to present the world premières of 34 stage works by 29 different composers, to thousands of people from South Devon to Shetland.

"I am not familiar with opera, but I loved the content. It surprised me by having poetry and grandeur and I did not expect that with modern music"

Audience feedback from *Blind Date* R&D.

Our first production *The Flying Fox*, ('*die Fledermaus*' by Johann Strauss), was performed at BAC Opera 98 and at the Purcell Room. This success was promptly followed by *Shorts* first performed at BAC Opera 99, revived at the Bridewell Theatre Spring 2001 & the first touring work of the company (Autumn 2001), supported by the Arts Council of England and in the main through donations and a tremendous vote of confidence by Trusts and Foundations. This pattern of support continued to enable us to produce *Orlando Plays Mad*, Vivaldi's '*Orlando Finto Pazzo*' in a new edition again premiering at BAC Opera in 2000.

In February 2002, in co-production with the ENO Studio, the company presented *Six-Pack*, a second wildly successful compilation of short operas by a rich mix of composers, revisiting the Bridewell Theatre then on the road for our second national tour.

In May 2002, the company explored a new avenue of community work and music and performed the world première staging of *Britten's Canticles* in Westminster Abbey, working in conjunction with clients in five centres for the homeless across London. This was a co-production with Streetwise Opera and the London Jubilee String of Pearls Festival.

"I could sing a hundred praises of this superb stage premiere, yet still undersell it. This was peripatetic drama at its best: powerful, involving, sympathetic, touching, inspiring... a community-generated staging of such delicacy, refinement, wisdom and originality that Deborah Warner might have plotted every move". Roderic Dunnett, The Times, 2002.

Following such a busy year the company returned to the cycle of a London premiere and national touring with *Family Matters* in 2003-4, which was a reworking of the third Beaumarchais *Figaro* play by Amanda Holden and six diverse composers. Workshops were held at the Battersea Arts Centre where over 400 members of the public contributed aural and written feedback on the first draft. Performances then took place at the Bridewell Theatre and across the UK.

In August 2005 we began the journey of exploring deeper possibilities of Research and Development across art forms with an odyssey of our own, *Odysseus Unwound*. After a period of R&D with 5 Shetland knitters and spinners a workshop version was the first opera to be performed in the UK's most remote community in Fair Isle, filmed by BBC 2's *Culture Show*. 8 months later in Autumn 2006 the final version of *Odysseus Unwound* composed by Julian Grant opened in London at the beautifully derelict Alexandra Palace in conjunction with the Knitting and Spinning Show and toured to Norway and throughout the UK, finishing in the Shetland. The production was accompanied by an extensive education programme led by Chroma.

During this time David Bruce and Anna Reynolds' new opera *Push!*, presenting the labour of six birthing mothers had been developed under the banner of Opera Genesis and Tete a Tete took on to produce it in Summer 2006. This was our first visit to Riverside Studios and the beginning of a partnership which has seen both organisations flourish.

It was after the huge successes of 2006 with *Odysseus Unwound* and *PUSH!* that it was apparent many, many individual artists and talented groups were exploring how to use words, music, staging and the human voice to energise, entrance, entertain and engage with the public. Following our own experiences over the past 7 years we also saw that support was scarce for these artists and their work,

especially at a very early stage both in terms of finances available and a platform to present the work to an audience. We had only been able to progress because of the support of established venues such as BAC, The Bridwell and ENO Opera Studio *the* vehicles for promoting new talent and that as these organizations have all now closed there was nowhere at all offering the chance for groups and artists to take their very first stumbling steps in a supportive low-risk environment.

We felt in the turbulent arena of arts it was now our responsibility to take up the challenge and use our experience, infrastructure, excellent public profile and access to resources to give a chance to a new whole generation of opera creators and audiences, to bring a whole new lease of life to the art-form itself. To help others in the same way we had been helped, from this passion came *Tête à Tête The Opera Festival*.

“It has really galvanized my work on the new opera, the project has made quantum leaps since the decision to use Mary and actually sing some arias – I wrote them very quickly but the amount of ideas that sprang forth as a result have been indispensable to the progress of the opera.” David Bruce on the first R&D stage of *The Taming of the Shrew* at the during The Opera Festival.

The inaugural Festival Summer 2007 was a huge success and comes out of our desire to be seen as not just a producing opera company, but also one that plays a key role in the development of artists and audiences for new opera outside our own portfolio of productions. The festival builds on and is an extension of developmental events like line dancing and speed dating, as well as giving artists the opportunity to test ideas and gain audience feedback, it also gave the audience the opportunity to share in and gain insight into the creative process.

In these times of financial strife where the demand on the public funding system is too high and companies must be as lithe and creative behind the scenes as on the stage we have to harness and keep hold of our mission and focus on *what makes a great night out* and our commitment to investing in the artists who make that work. We can so often get embroiled in the delivery - we are thrilled we are now at the stage where, for *Blind Date* at least, you are sharing with us all a night of the best, maddest, funniest, and most moving of music and song.

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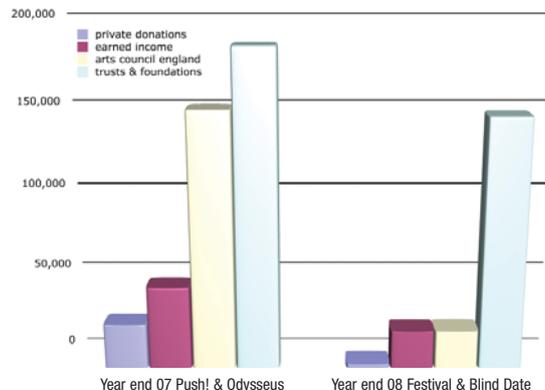
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Tête à Tête Needs You!

If you have enjoyed your evening and would like to get advanced performance news, free tickets, opportunities to come along to rehearsals or be more closely involved with our work please sign up to our mailing list NOW on www.tete-a-tete.org.uk

We depend on the generous help of you, our audience, for every show we put on. Every production is supported by a great many very generous people, giving anything from £5 to £5000 - we really couldn't do it without you. (In fact in some cases, we haven't: a number of really outstanding shows had to be withdrawn from this year's festival for lack of funds, so maybe you can help us to mount them in 2008.) This graph shows how much of a difference individual support can make. For Push! and Odysseus Unwound individual donations were nearly £30,000, made up of over 200 donations, so every single donation really does make a difference. Help us to reach our £40,000 target for next year.



If you would like to be involved in this way, please make a donation via www.tete-a-tete.org.uk or contact Matthew Hart, Secretary to the Friends, Tête à Tête, 204b Camberwell New Road, London SE5 ORR 020 7582 3328

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