

6 – 13 November 2023

7pm

Silk Street Theatre



Opera Double Bill: Respighi

Creative Team

Dominic Wheeler conductor

Victoria Newlyn director

Laura Jane Stanfield designer

Jake Wiltshire lighting designer

Jonathan Strutt video designer

Alistair Burton assistant conductor

Laurie Slavin assistant director

Programme

Maria egiziaca

Ottorino Respighi composer

Claudio Guastalla librettist

La bella dormiente nel bosco

Ottorino Respighi composer

Gian Bistolfi librettist

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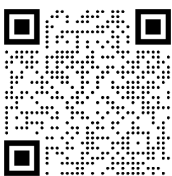
Sung in Italian with English surtitles.

Please note that this production contains adult content. Haze will be used.

The performance will be approximately 2 hours and 40 minutes, with one interval.

Digital Programme

Please access our digital programme for biographies and more: guildhall-programmes.co.uk/doublebill2023



Conductor's Note

A particular curiosity about these two wonderful operas is that neither piece was originally conceived for what we now regard as a conventional operatic staging, in a theatre with the orchestra in a pit.

Maria egiziaca was originally conceived as a concert piece to be performed in a liturgical setting. To this end, the score contains direct quotes from the *Life of St Mary of Egypt*, as recorded in the 7th century by St Sophronius, at the start of the two large orchestral interludes that link the three “episodes”. It seems logical to us that these may well have been shared with the audience/congregation, and we have therefore chosen to include them as projections during the interludes they preface. *La bella dormiente nel bosco* was originally conceived as a puppet opera, with singers voicing the characters from within the orchestra.

In both cases, it seems likely that Respighi was restricted in terms of orchestral space, location and number of players, and it's clear that, consummate craftsman that he was, he chose the distinctive orchestrations of both pieces to support these particular contexts. Woodwind and brass sections are light in both works and *Maria*, for all its passion and drama, has no percussion, but uses a slightly larger wind and brass section than the mere seven players in *La bella*. Neither opera uses harp, usually a favourite instrument for Respighi; instead, Respighi uses a harpsichord at key moments in *Maria*'s journey, and employs harpsichord, piano and celeste in *La bella*, whose very small wind and brass section also creates room for some carefully chosen percussion. Both scores are fascinating studies in a master orchestrator extracting maximum colour with extraordinary economy!

Dominic Wheeler
conductor

Maria egiziaca

Episode 1

At the harbour in Alexandria, Maria begs a Sailor to take her on his next voyage. She has grown bored of her life as a sex worker and seeks new adventure. The Sailor declines and Maria turns her attentions to a Pilgrim embarking for Jerusalem. She tells him that she has neither money nor provisions but will pay her way using her body. The Pilgrim warns the Sailor not to allow such a sinful woman to join the voyage. Maria taunts the Pilgrim with her free-spirit, beauty and sex positive attitude and continues to tempt the Sailor. Encouraged by two of Maria's companions the Sailor gives in and admits all three women aboard. As she boards the ship Maria hears a voice: "My life is on the other side of the sea. . ."

Episode 2

In Jerusalem, a Man with Leprosy and a Poor Woman wait on the steps of the Temple. The Man hopes that the religious relics inside might cure his disease. The Woman guides him to the Temple doors. As they enter together the voices of the faithful are heard.

Maria comes to the Temple guided by a Blind Woman. As the Blind Woman enters the voices sing of hope. Maria, inspired by this hope, starts to go inside but her way is blocked by the Pilgrim. The Pilgrim is convinced that she is not worthy to enter the Lord's house and drives her down the steps of the Temple.

Maria is defiant. The Pilgrim's zealous attitude spurs her to make a second attempt at entry, but she is rebuffed by an unseen power. An angel appears to her in the form of a fierce bird of prey. Humbled by the divine vision, Maria repents of her former life. She is willing to undergo the harshest of penitence to avoid eternal death and commits herself to the search for salvation. The Angel tells her "There, beyond, is the sacred river, where you may be cleansed. Here you will find a place of rest."

Episode 3

Forty-seven years later. The Pilgrim is a changed man, now a respected Abbot named Zosimus. At his hermit's cave a grave has appeared overnight. Believing this to be a sign from God, Zosimus prepares for death. In the distance a figure makes its way through the desert towards him. It is Maria. She is naked and asks Zosimus to give her his cloak to wear.

Maria reveals that the grave is for her; she comes to receive a blessing as she transitions to the next life. As their eyes meet Zosimus and Maria recognise each other from decades ago. Still unsure of her worthiness, Maria questions whether the years of gruelling isolation in the desert have been enough to secure her salvation. Ashamed of his youthful arrogance and cruelty, Zosimus reassures her that Paradise already shines in her face and keeps vigil with her until she passes. The angelic chorus sing of Maria's beautiful soul crowned with stars, as the Angel guides her to divine rest.

La bella dormiente nel bosco

Act 1 Scene 1

As the evening weaves her garlands across the night sky, the Nightingale sings and is joined in the duet by an eager Cuckoo. An audience of frogs comments that everyone considers themselves a poet in the moonlight. The animals are frightened away by the sound of approaching humans. It is the King's Ambassador and his Herald searching for fairies to act as godmothers to the new royal baby.

Having remained concealed for a week as they considered the King's invitation, the Blue Fairy and her sisters finally reveal themselves and agree to become the princess' spiritual protectors. The grateful humans leave the forest and the Fairies set about collecting gifts and blessings for the christening.

Act 1 Scene 2

The princess' tutor attempts to instruct his tiny pupil but realises she is occupied with matters of digestion. A grand procession enters as the courtiers, the King and Queen, and the Fairy Godmothers assemble to celebrate the royal birth with the giving of gifts and dancing. Suddenly the Green Fairy appears. She is furious and vows revenge.

She dispels the assembled well-wishers before placing a curse on the baby princess: at the age of twenty she will prick her finger on a spindle and fall into a deep sleep from which she will never be woken.

The King attempts to foil the curse by ordering the destruction of all the spindles in the land; the Queen, understanding that there are forces beyond human control, mourns her child's magical fate while the stars watch over her destiny.

Act 2 Scene 1

Twenty years later. Princess Bella is exploring the furthest reaches of the castle, excited by stories of Spring. She stumbles upon a forgotten room inhabited by an Old Woman, a Cat and a Spindle. Intrigued by this dashing pointy stranger she asks Sir Pussycat for an introduction. After some enthusiastic dancing, the Old Woman teaches Bella how to spin with the Spindle. As prophesied, the princess pricks her finger; she feels herself flooded by blue light and falls into a deep sleep. The Spindle gloats that even a King cannot pit himself against the will of the Green Fairy.

Act 2 Scene 2

Some days later, the foremost physicians of the realm admit that nothing can be done to wake Bella. The King is furious but his anger gives way to grief as royal protocol unfolds. The mourners arrive and weep for Bella as though she were already dead.

The Blue Fairy appears to the Queen and offers a glimmer of hope: she vows that the Green Fairy's spell will be overcome by love in the warmth of April. With this promise the Blue Fairy induces a great sleep across the whole Royal court, keeping Bella safe with an enchanted spider's web of protection.

Act 3 Scene 1

Hundreds of years later. An expedition led by Prince April stumbles upon an artists' commune led by the Woodcutter, who are discussing and collecting little remembered folk tales. They relate the legend of a sleeping beauty who can only be awakened in April. The Prince is intrigued; he dismisses his entourage (the Duchess; an American benefactor named Mister Dollar Cheque; and April's trusty motorbike valet) and vows to seek the "Sleeping Beauty" alone. Guided by a mysterious blue light, the Prince enters the enchanted castle.

Act 3 Scene 2

Inside the castle the Green Fairy makes a last-ditch attempt to prevent Prince April from breaking the curse on Bella. She is defeated, April finally sets eyes on the sleeping princess and Bella awakes. The two young people explore their nascent love. The King and Queen embrace their daughter and the court welcomes the rest of Prince April's expedition to the Kingdom. Old and New Worlds collide and together Bella and April start a new chapter. The Prince finds a haven in the quiet repose of the royal libraries and Bella is finally free to explore a world of adventure.

Maria egiziaca

Maria

Holly Brown (8 & 13 November)

Vladyslava Ionascu-Yakovenko (6 & 10 November)

Il pellegrino / Abbate Zosimo

Alaric Green (6 & 10 November)

Emyr Jones (8 & 13 November)

Il marinaio

Steven van der Linden

Il lebbroso

Jonah Halton

Uno compagno

Ana-Carmen Balestra (6 & 10 November)

Yolisa Ngwexana (8 & 13 November)

Voce d'un angelo

Ana-Carmen Balestra (8 & 13 November)

Yolisa Ngwexana (6 & 10 November)

Secondo compagno / La cieca

Shana Moron-Caravel (6 & 10 November)

Rachel Roper (8 & 13 November)

Il povero

Shana Moron-Caravel (8 & 13 November)

Rachel Roper (6 & 10 November)

Voce del mare

Joe Chalmers (6 & 10 November)

Jacob Harrison (8 & 13 November)

La bella dormente nel bosco

La Regina

Shana Moron-Caravel (6 & 10 November)

Rachel Roper (8 & 13 November)

La Principessa

Ana-Carmen Balestra

Il Principe Aprile

Jonah Halton

Il Re

Joe Chalmers (6 & 10 November)

Jacob Harrison (8 & 13 November)

La Fata azzurra

Yolisa Ngwexana

La Fata verde

Holly Brown

Il Gatto

Julia Merino

Il Fuso

Vladyslava Ionascu-Yakovenko

L'Ambasciatore / Un Boscaiuolo

Joe Chalmers (8 & 13 November)

Jacob Harrison (6 & 10 November)

Il buffone / Mister Dollar

Steven van der Linden

Il Cuculo / La Duchessa / La vecchietta

Shana Moron-Caravel (8 & 13 November)

Rachel Roper (6 & 10 November)

L'usignuolo

Biqing Zhang

Chorus

Camden Bonsu-Stewart

Charles Brocklebank

Michelle Cheung

Ambrose Chiu

Dani Croston

Cuan Durkin

Alice Hermand

Aldi Ho

Hannah Hughes

Elizabeth Mwale

Saul Rothwell

Harun Tekin

Georgia Tolson

Laura West

Opera Department Students & Fellows

Assistant Conductor

Alistair Burton

Assistant Director

Laurie Slavin

Repetiteurs

Ben Kubiak

Samuele Piccinini

Production Arts Students	Video Video Engineer & Operator Ethan Harris	Wigs, Hair & Makeup Wigs, Hair & Makeup Assistant Liam Allen	Additional Staff Production Manager/Lecturer in Production Management Julia Bermingham Stage Management Staff Supervisor Jo Holmes Stage Technology Staff Supervisor Alastair Pullan Lighting Supervisor Nick Peel Sound Staff Supervisors Andy Taylor Ben Collins Video Staff Supervisor Pete Wallace Construction Lecturer Jordan Rousseau Construction Lecturer Matt Farley Prop Making Lecturer Aurelie Clark Scenic Art Lecturer Vanessa Cass Design Realisation Assistants Marta Zen Izzy Froude Language Coach Emma Abbate
Production Management Production Manager Charlotte Munro Assistant Production Managers Eli Hunt Jakub Sypien	Construction Construction Manager Emily Cave Scenic Carpenter Katie Ranson Assistant Carpenters Owen Kelly Beau Morton-Turner Mabel Nash	Costume Costume Assistants Eddie Comerford Jasmin Davenport	
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Lighting Production Electrician David Csogor Assistant Production Electrician & Programmers Dan Basnett Linus Pomroy			
Sound Sound Operator Ethan Harris			

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working across our Opera and Drama productions this year:

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Iden Amys	Seth Cunningham	Finn Irving	Shannon Parker	Nicole Thomaz
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Jamie Baker	Tara Duffy	Meg Jordan	Kamila Przybylski	Grace Waring
Alfred Blake	Kirsty Edwards	Finn Karat	Kez Reynolds	Lili Warden
Didier Brown	Nia Edwards-Williams	Talia Servadio Kenan	Beca Roberts	Isabela Way
Katherine Byrne	Josh Essl	Hollie Lester	Agnes Rønningen	Joseph Wilkins
Archie Carr	Iris Farquharson	Koren Little	Joshua Sanderson	Sid Worth
Ru Chen	Alice Friend	Imogen Marinko	Dan Shelley	Christa Yap Shin Yee
Eddie Comerford	Hawks Gómez	Emma Mason	Abbie Simcock	
Alissa Crew	Jasmine Green	Daniel McDermott	Kennedy Stephens	

Orchestra

Violin I

Victor MacAbies*
Maria Reinon Roig
Benedict Wong
Isabelle Allan
Rowan Dymott
Yente Lottman
Colby Chu

Violin II

Seren Nickson*
Mario Gutiérrez Gorriá
Evan Lawrence
Anna Brown
Kayla Nicol
Helen Rutledge

Viola

Sirma Baramova*
Sean Lee
Josh Law
Connor Quigley
Andrei Gheorghe

Cello

Alex Acomb*
Niki Moosavi
Joe Barker
Kalina Videnova
Chiarra Dozza Lopez

Double Bass

Maria egiziaca:
Aaron Aguayo Juarez*
Cynthia Garduno
Meneses
Caetano Fernandes
Oliveira
La bella dormente nel bosco:
Cynthia Garduno
Meneses*
Aaron Aguayo Juarez

Flute

Isabelle Harris

Oboe

Elly Barlow

Clarinet

Kosuke Shirai
Teah Collins

Bassoon

Lily Wang

Horn

Dan Hibbert*
Kate King

Trumpet

Maria egiziaca:
Noah Bailis
La bella dormente nel bosco:
Parker Bruce

Trombone

Maria egiziaca:
Felix Rockhill
La bella dormente nel bosco:
Sam Cox

Bass Trombone

George Good

Percussion

Reuben Hesser*
Ava Kinninmonth

Piano, Harpsichord & Celeste

6 & 10 November:
Samuele Piccinini
(piano)
Ben Kubiak (harpsichord & celeste)
8 & 13 November:
Ben Kubiak (piano)
Samuele Piccinini
(harpsichord & celeste)

Ensembles, Programming & Instrument Manager

Phil Sizer

Orchestra Librarian

Anthony Wilson

Music Stage, Logistics & Instrument Manager

Kevin Elwick

Music Stage Supervisors

Shakeel Mohammed
Louis Baily

**Section Principal*

Names and seating correct at time of going to print.

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