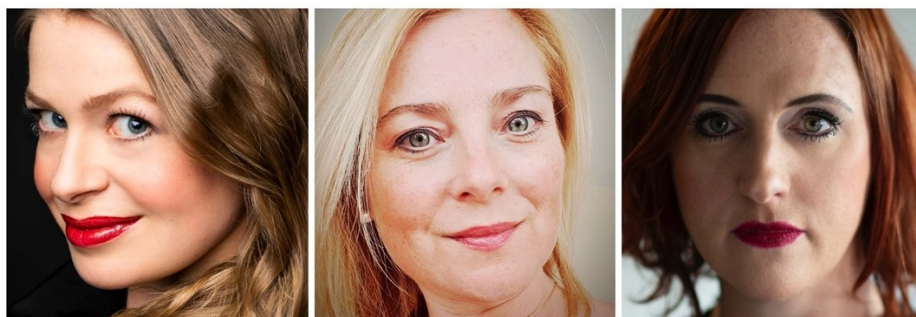


PRESS RELEASE – ANNOUNCEMENT – 28 APRIL 2022



**NORTHERN IRELAND OPERA ANNOUNCES TRIO OF TOP FEMALE ARTISTS
JOINING LA TRAVIATA AT THE GRAND OPERA HOUSE, BELFAST**



10- 17 September 2022

Press Night – 10 September

Northern Ireland Opera today announces a trio of top female cast and creatives in the critically-acclaimed national opera company's stunning new adaptation of Giuseppe Verdi's tragic love story, directed by Artistic Director Cameron Menzies, opening at Belfast's Grand Opera House this September.

In this first cast reveal, rising soprano star **Siobhan Stagg** (*ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, STAATSOPER BERLIN, BAVERISCHE STAATSOPER, HAMBURG STAATSOPER, OPERNHAUS ZURICH*) debuts in the leading role as courtesan Violetta Valéry. Renowned choreographer for both stage and screen **Isabel Baquero** (*ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, SCOTTISH OPERA, GARSINGTON OPERA, RICHARD EYRE'S 'LA TRAVIATA'*) joins the creative team alongside conductor **Rebecca Lang**, one of the most versatile and vivacious cross-over artists of her generation, with accolades in both opera and musical theatre (*HAMBURG STATE OPERA, THEATER AM POTSDAMER PLATZ, BERLIN; HER MAJESTY'S THEATRE, MELBOURNE; EVITA AND MY FAIR LADY, FLENSBURG*). She returns to the company after her huge success with *La Bohème* and will be working with the **Ulster Orchestra** in their first collaboration with NI Opera since before the pandemic, for this new production.

Announcing today alongside the trio of female talent and NI Opera's reunion with the Ulster Orchestra is the casting of a 24-strong chorus of Northern Irish and Irish artists. The singers, chosen as part of a local casting call out, will also join NI Opera's new chorus development programme and receive training and support including from the renowned Thomas Victor Johnson, Music Staff at Staatsoper Unter den Linden.

Further cast and creative announcements will follow shortly.

Announcement highlights include:

- **Rebecca Lang** returns to the company after her huge success with *La Bohème*. Conducting an orchestra at the Grand Opera House will be a significant moment both for Lang and for the history of NI Opera and the venue.
- Rising soprano star **Siobhan Stagg** debuts in the lead role as Violetta Valéry.
- **Isabel Baquero**, the renowned choreographer across stage and screen joins the creative team.
- NI Opera returns to The Grand Opera House and reunites with the **Ulster Orchestra** in their first collaboration since before the pandemic, for this new production.
- A **24 strong chorus of Northern Irish and Irish talent** have also been selected to perform and will also benefit from NI Opera's new chorus development programme.

La Traviata's gloriously romantic score brings to life the tragic love story of a beautiful courtesan Violetta Valéry and her lover Alfredo Germont. NI Opera's new conceptual production will explore the idea around image, visibility and the fragility of a woman's agency within her society.

Artistic Director Cameron Menzies comments: "I have had the great pleasure of working with each of these artists before and I can't wait for Rebecca Lang, Isabel Baquero and Siobhan Stagg to be in the same room to bring to life to this new and vibrant take on this operatic masterpiece. NI Opera is very fortunate to be able to work with artists of such an extraordinary calibre."

Ian Wilson, Grand Opera House Chief Executive said: "I am delighted to welcome back Northern Ireland Opera for the first time since the Grand Opera House was restored, with one of the most sumptuous and beautiful operas ever written. Opera has been a key part of the programme here for more than 125 years, and we are looking forward to seeing Siobhan and the other cast members follow in the footsteps of Luciano Pavarotti, Nellie Melba and many other great singers who have performed on the Grand Opera House stage."

Ciaran Scullion, Head of Music and Opera, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, said, "The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is hugely proud to be principal funder of Northern Ireland Opera and the Ulster Orchestra who make their return to the Grand Opera House this September for *La Traviata* featuring the internationally acclaimed line-up of Rebecca Lang, Isabel Baquero and Siobhan Stagg. We're delighted to once again see local artists being offered amazing professional development opportunities and working alongside world-class talent."

La Traviata marks Cameron's fourth production since he took the helm at NI Opera mid-pandemic in 2020. All three of his shows to date have received critical-acclaim with *La Bohème* ("*Opera at its Finest*", 5 Stars, Opera Now Magazine, Dec 2021) at Belfast's Carlisle Memorial Church in September 2021 and most recently *Into The Woods* at the Lyric ("*Storms along with such irresistible zest*", 4 Stars, The Times Feb, 2022). The cinematic experience *Old Friends And Other Days* has been the winning film at four independent film festivals including Paris Short Film Awards 2021.

Cameron joined the organisation in November 2020, and is leading this award-winning national opera company, widely acclaimed as one of the most exciting operatic start-ups in UK and Irish history into an exciting new era. Its philosophy of artistic excellence and risk-taking, is underpinned by a bold and imaginative approach to programming and productions.

[PRESS NIGHT: 10 September 2022, 7.30pm](#)

Listings information:

Venue: The Grand Opera House

Dates: 4 dates: 10, 13, 15, 17 September 2022

Times: 7.30pm

Prices: From £17.50

Booking Link: <https://www.goh.co.uk/whats-on/la-traviata/>

Address: Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7HR

Box office: 028 9024 1919

Creative Team

By: Giuseppe Verdi

Director: Cameron Menzies

Conductor: Rebecca Lang

Choreographer: Isabel Baquero

Cast: Siobhan Stagg plays Violetta

Full Cast and Creative Team to be announced shortly.

Twitter: @NIOpera

Insta: @northernirelandopera

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Siobhan Stagg - Violetta

A graduate of the University of Melbourne, Siobhan began her career as a Young Artist at the Salzburg Festival (2013) and at the Deutsche Oper Berlin (2013 – 2015). As word of her talent spread, Siobhan was quickly engaged for important debuts at the Hamburg State Opera, Berliner Philharmoniker, Bayerische Staatsoper, Grand Théâtre de Genève, Dutch National Opera (Amsterdam), BBC Proms and London's Royal Opera House Covent Garden, among others. After six years as a principal soloist at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Siobhan returned in 2019/20 as a guest, singing Tytania in the Berlin premiere of Ted Huffman's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Benjamin Britten. Siobhan is Artist in Association with Asher Fisch and the West Australian Symphony Orchestra in Perth. Other highlights include *Mélisande* at the Opera de Dijon, *Sophie* in *Der Rosenkavalier* at Opernhaus Zürich with Fabio Luisi, a return to the

Salzburg Festival for Mozart Matinees and a debut at Festival Aix-en-Provence in Romeo Castellucci's euphoric staging of Mozart's *Requiem* (streamed on Arte.).

About Rebecca Lang - Conductor

German-Australian conductor Rebecca Lang is one of the most versatile and vivacious artists of her generation. Ms Lang has held several positions as Conductor & Coach at theatres including Theater am Potsdamer Platz Berlin, Theater des Westens Berlin, Deutsches Theater Munich, Raimund Theater Vienna, Landestheater Flensburg, Theater Hof, Landestheater Linz, Festspielhaus Bregenz. Career highlights include Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (Staatsoper Hamburg), Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin & Massenet's *Cendrillon* (Her Majesty's Theatre, Melbourne) & Stravinsky's *L'Oiseau De Feu* (Hamburger Symphoniker). Musical Theatre highlights include *Evita*, *My Fair Lady*, *Hitem Horizont*, *Ich War Noch Niemals* and *The Rocky Horror Show*. Before accepting the Director of Music post at [Leuphana University](#), Rebecca Lang conducted Menotti's *The Old Man And The Thief* and Verdi's *La Traviata* in Berlin's independent theatre scene. In 2018 Ms Lang's collaborative instrumental ensemble, the Kruzeberger Kamerata performed the world premiere of Cyrus Meurant's *Herkleitos* (Laeiszhalle Hamburg).

About Isabel Baquero- Choreographer

Isabel worked extensively as an actress and dancer with the English National Opera and the Royal Opera in Covent Garden and as Assistant Choreographer in Sir Richard Eyre's production of *La Traviata*. Her choreography credits include flamenco dance in *Strictly Dance Fever* in both 2005 and 2006, *Barber of Seville* for Garsington Opera, *Carmen* at Longborough Opera, *La Rondine* at the Royal Opera House, Movement Director of *The House of Bernarda de Alba* at the Theatre Clwyd, Don Giovanni and Carmen for Diva Opera and Flamenco Dance Coach and Mike Leigh's film *Happy Go Lucky*. Recent credits include: *The Gondoliers* (co-production with D'Oyly Carte Opera & State Opera South Australia at Scottish Opera in Glasgow, currently touring).

About Cameron Menzies - Artistic Director

Award-winning director Cameron Menzies joined Northern Ireland Opera in November 2020. His career encompasses opera, theatre, music theatre, cabaret and film-making and his work has been seen throughout Australia, United Kingdom, Europe, South Africa, Japan and China. He has worked for Shakespeare's Globe, London Philharmonic Orchestra, Diva Opera UK, Opera Australia, Victorian Opera, Short Black Opera Company, Malthouse Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra & Sydney Symphony Orchestra. He is a Helpmann and Green Room Nominated director and awards include the Berlin New Music Opera award (2011), Bayreuth Opera Award for Opera Foundation Australia and a Sydney Award in 2016 for the best direction of *Pecan Summer* Australia's first Indigenous Opera. Recent credits include the short feature film: *Old Friends and Other Days*, 50th Anniversary National Australian tour of *HAIR The Original Tribal Rock Musical*, *Sister Act The Musical* at The Vaults UK, *Fluid* and *Under the Covers* starring Courtney Act, *Lucia di Lammermoor* UK and Australia, *Yma Sumac: The Peruvian Songbird* starring Ali McGregor, *Tosca*, *Don Giovanni*, *Madama Butterfly*, *La Bohème Die Sieben Todsünden* by Brecht/Weill starring Meow Meow and Strauss' *Salome* at the Palais Theatre. He has directed the world premieres of *Pecan Summer*, *Redfern*, *The Selfish Giant*, *CONTACT! A Netball Opera*, *The Grumpiest Boy in the World*.

About Northern Ireland Opera

Northern Ireland Opera is Northern Ireland's award-winning national opera company, and widely acclaimed as one of the most exciting operatic start-ups in UK and Irish history. With a philosophy of artistic excellence and risk-taking, underpinned by a bold and imaginative approach to programming and productions, Northern Ireland Opera is committed to the idea of opera as a uniquely enriching 'total' art form and one which should be open to everyone: through a modern but accessible production style, an emphasis on local participation and young people, and inexpensive ticket prices, the company has broadened the audience for opera in a region where there has been historic under-provision for the art form – and where the arts are uniquely placed to foster relations between communities. In only eleven years, the company's energy, ideas and high artistic standards have led to both national critical acclaim and an international profile.

About The Grand Opera House

The Grand Opera House is Northern Ireland's Premier Theatre, and the only surviving Victorian playhouse in the country. With a stunning and recently-restored Frank Matcham auditorium and a wide range of productions staged throughout the year, the Theatre is one of the best-loved and most important cultural assets in Northern Ireland.

**GRAND
OPERA
HOUSE**

