



*Image of Errollyn Wallen credit Paul Tucker. All images can be downloaded [here](#).*

**Mahogany Opera and Britten Pears Arts present the world premiere of  
Errollyn Wallen's new opera *A Christmas Miracle***

**The *Noye's Fludde* of our age, *A Christmas Miracle* is the re-telling of the  
Christmas story for the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

**This new work is inspired by Britten's collected texts for his intergenerational  
community opera of the Christmas Story that was never realised**

**20 & 21 November, Orford Church, Orford  
4 & 5 December, St Magnus Cathedral, Orkney**

*A Christmas Miracle* is a new opera for children, adults and professional artists by The Master of the King's Music, **Errollyn Wallen**. It has been developed by **Mahogany Opera**, co-produced by **Britten Pears Arts** and supported by **Jubilee Opera** and **Orkney Music and Culture**. The world premiere performances will take place in Orford Church on **20 and 21 November**, where, in 1958, Britten's visionary community opera *Noye's Fludde* was premiered. *A Christmas Miracle* will then travel to Errollyn Wallen's home of Orkney for performances in St. Magnus Cathedral on **4 and 5 December**.

Inspired by Britten's unrealised plans for his intergenerational community opera of the Christmas Story (titled *A Christmas Sequence*), and using text from the Chester Mystery Plays, the new opera by Errollyn Wallen includes special settings of much-loved Christmas carols for everyone to sing along with. *A Christmas Miracle* is designed to be bespoke for each performance; the production will tour with a small professional cast (4 singers and 10 instrumentalists) and production team, which will work with a large community cast of around 80-100 participants of varying ages, backgrounds and skills in each location.

This new community opera is a compelling re-telling of the Christmas story for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The work builds on the fundamental principles established by Britten in *Noye's Fludde*, and responds to today's approaches to co-creation, accessibility and sustainability. The story will run from the Annunciation and the Journey to Bethlehem, through to the Slaying of the Innocents and the Flight into Egypt. Wallen brings her rich and unique sound world to a dynamic retelling of the Christmas story which remains relevant with its universal themes of taking refuge, navigating the forces of jealousy and power, and the wonder of birth.

Director **Frederic Wake-Walker** collaborates with Errollyn Wallen for the third time (following *The Lighthouse Wave* and *Dido's Ghost*) and together they have created a piece that combines high levels of community participation with more complex material for professional artists. The result is a work in which community voices are celebrated and skillfully woven into the musical fabric. **Ruth Paton** is the lead designer who regularly collaborates with leading orchestras such as the City of London Sinfonia, Academy of Ancient Music and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Jerwood Foundation funding will support an emerging designer to work alongside her, with a forthcoming call-out for a Jerwood Opera Designer specialising in lighting.

The professional cast features, in the role of Angel Gabriel, sopranos **Hilary Cronin** who was selected by BBC Music Magazine as a Rising Star and **Emma Tring**, who sings with the BBC Singers and EXAUDI; countertenor **Andrew Watts** in the role of Herod, and known for his distinctive voice and compelling stage presence in both traditional and contemporary repertoire; mezzo-soprano **Idunnu Münch** as Melchior, performing widely across Europe regularly premiering new works, and actor/singer **Nick Mercer** as Preco/MC, who works across stage, screen and radio and has narrated audiobooks and TV animation characters. Conducted by **John Andrews**, *A Christmas Miracle* is scored for ten instrumentalists and will be performed by musicians from **Ensemble X** who regularly collaborate with Errollyn Wallen. As in Britten's *Noye's Fludde*, these can be supported in certain sections by amateur musicians at any level and will be recruited in each location.

**Composer Errollyn Wallen** said: 'It is hard to put into words how wonderful it is to be involved in this new opera. It is a joy to be bringing *A Christmas Miracle* to life with this great team. As Master of The King's Music, my stated focus has been on music-making for all, and I am proud to be part of this all-embracing musical adventure.'

**Director Frederic Wake-Walker** said: 'In this disconnected world, *A Christmas Miracle* will bring people together through the extraordinary collective power of the performing arts. Music knits our social fabric together. Projects like this give meaning and support to individuals and the group; sparking new connections while strengthening existing structures. This production is being built in the most communal and mutual way that I have ever experienced. Specialists in the field of participatory art, local community leaders, internationally renowned professionals, seasoned performers and first-timers of all ages and with a huge variety of skills are all meeting on the same level to share in a story of birth, resilience and hope. In today's world, it feels like we need this not just as a positive bonus but as something deeply essential. Like many people whose love of music and theatre was sparked by an informative early experience, I sang in a production of *Noye's Fludde* as a child. I know first-hand the deeply profound impact an experience of opera has on young people, how it gives an opportunity for expression, a feeling of belonging and a space to be yourself. By doing *A Christmas Miracle* in Orford and Orkney we are drawing on the two most vital sources of participatory opera in the UK while building on the legacies of Britten and Maxwell Davies.'

**Andrew Comben, Chief Executive, Britten Pears Arts** said: "It is a real thrill to be collaborating with Errollyn Wallen and Mahogany Opera on a modern day *Noye's Fludde*. I can't think of a better way to honour Britten's legacy in the 50th anniversary year of his death, than to create a new community opera inspired by his approach and his own unrealised plans. Errollyn, along with all the partners, firmly believes that music can and should engage a wide range of people and her commitment to using music as a platform for dialogue and change makes her the ideal collaborator. We hope the local community here in Suffolk will be as excited about it as we are and that *A Christmas Miracle* will be enjoyed by communities and audiences across the UK and beyond for many years to come.'

#### Call out for performers and volunteers

- Do you love singing, music making or arts & crafts? Britten Pears Arts and Mahogany Opera are looking for people of all ages to be involved in *A Christmas Miracle*.

- No experience is required – just enthusiasm! Come to the introductory workshops where A Christmas Miracle will be introduced with singing workshops and some informal auditions for some roles.

#### **Friday 8th May: 5pm - 8pm, Orford Town Hall**

- **5pm:** An invitation to 9 – 13-year-olds keen on singing and performing to come along for an informal workshop.
- **6.15pm:** Calling all members of the community - adults, children and young people to come and see a short sharing and find out more about the production, and how you can get involved onstage, backstage, making costumes and more.

#### **Saturday 9th May: 10am - 1pm, Kiln Studio Snape**

- An invitation to all singers 13+ and adults interested in performing.

#### **Time commitment**

- Weekly rehearsals from September 2026, either slotting into the current weekly rehearsals of local groups you can join or ad hoc to accommodate availability.
- 13 – 21 November: late afternoons and evenings for production and performances on 20 and 21 November.

To sign up visit [A Christmas Miracle - Call out for performers and volunteers – Fill in form](#)

#### **Listings for A Christmas Miracle**

**Errollyn Wallen** Composer

**Frederic Wake-Walker** Director

**Ruth Paton** Lead Designer

**TBA** Jerwood Opera Designer

**Hilary Cronin / Emma Tring** Angel Gabriel

**Andrew Watts** Herod

**Idunnu Münch** Melchior

**Nick Mercer** Preco/MC

**John Andrews** Conductor

**Musicians from Ensemble X:** two violins, viola, cello, double bass, two pianists [piano/doubling on organ], accordion, guitar and percussion.

**Tickets** will go on general sale on Saturday 8 August.

#### **For further press information, please contact:**

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#### **Notes to Editors**

##### **About Britten Pears Arts**

Britten Pears Arts is a pioneering music, arts and heritage charity based on the Suffolk coast at two popular, historic visitor destinations: The Red House and Snape Maltings. Britten Pears Arts emerged from the creative partnership of Benjamin Britten, one of the greatest composers of the 20th century, and his professional and personal partner, singer Peter Pears. Britten and Pears shared a progressive vision for music and the arts to be useful, helping people enhance and bring joy into their lives. Britten and Pears' vision inspires all our activity, from work with the local communities to our national leadership roles in the fields of talent development and music, health and wellbeing.

[www.brittenpearsarts.org](http://www.brittenpearsarts.org)

##### **About Mahogany Opera**

Mahogany Opera is a UK-based commissioner and producer of new opera and music theatre, working nationally and internationally. Our work focuses on developing high-quality new productions while broadening access to

opera for audiences, participants and artists. We have over 20 years' experience of commissioning, producing and touring new work, and have built a strong reputation for artistic quality, collaboration and community engagement.

[www.mahoganyopera.co.uk](http://www.mahoganyopera.co.uk)

### **About Jubilee Opera**

Jubilee Opera brings the world of opera to life for children of all ages. From the nurturing environment of the rehearsal room through to captivating performances, young people and audiences are introduced to the enchanting world of music, theatre and storytelling.

[www.jubileeopera.co.uk](http://www.jubileeopera.co.uk)

### **About Orkney Music and Culture**

Orkney Music and Culture (OMAC) is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation dedicated to enriching lives across the Orkney Islands through music, heritage and creative participation. Breaking barriers, building communities through music and song, OMAC works effectively both as a sole provider and in collaboration with other charities and organisations. It delivers inclusive opportunities to learn, play and experience a wide range of music, with a strong emphasis on traditional Orcadian culture. The organisation supports the preservation of local songs, folklore and musical traditions while nurturing future generations through workshops, concerts, festivals and outreach across mainland and island communities. OMAC promotes intergenerational participation, recently launching an Orkney-wide youth choir alongside regular sessions for all ages and abilities. Committed to reducing financial barriers, many activities are free, supported by an Instrument Bank offering loans of instruments and digital tools. Through accessible programming, including online participation, OMAC reduces isolation, strengthens community connections and ensures the arts remain vibrant, inclusive and accessible to all across Orkney.

[www.orkneymusicandculture.org](http://www.orkneymusicandculture.org)