

  
**EDINBURGH  
INTERNATIONAL  
FESTIVAL**

# **ARIADNE AUF NAXOS**

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**Royal Scottish National Orchestra**

25, 27, 29 Aug 7.30pm

EDINBURGH ACADEMY JUNIOR SCHOOL

The performance lasts approx. 2hrs 15mins  
with no interval.

*Sung in German with English supertitles*

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# ARIADNE AUF NAXOS

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**Royal Scottish National Orchestra**

**Lothar Koenigs** Conductor

**Louisa Muller** Staging

Cast includes

<b>Dorothea Röschmann</b>	Ariadne
<b>David Butt Philip</b>	Bacchus
<b>Brenda Rae</b>	Zerbinetta
<b>Catriona Morison</b>	Composer
<b>Martin Gantner</b>	Music Master
<b>Peter Bronder</b>	Dancing Master
<b>Joshua Hopkins</b>	Harlequin
<b>Alexander Sprague</b>	Scaramuccio
<b>Barnaby Rea</b>	Truffaldino
<b>Sunnyboy Dladla</b>	Brighella
<b>Liv Redpath</b>	Naiad
<b>Claire Barnett-Jones</b>	Dryad
<b>Soraya Mafi</b>	Echo
<b>Jonathan McGovern</b>	Wigmaker
<b>Ossian Huskinson</b>	Lackey
<b>Filipe Manu</b>	Officer
<b>Thomas Quasthoff</b>	Major-Domo

# SYNOPSIS

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## Prologue

In the house of the wealthiest man in Vienna, two theatrical groups are making last-minute preparations for the entertainments they have been asked to provide to follow a sumptuous banquet. The Major-Domo explains to the Music Master that the performance of *Ariadne auf Naxos*, his pupil's *opera seria*, is to be followed by a comic entertainment before a firework display at nine o'clock. The Music Master objects, but the Major-Domo replies that his master has paid for the entertainment so he can call the tune.

The Composer wants a final rehearsal of his opera, but is told that the musicians are playing during dinner. The Dancing Master comments cynically as the leading members of each company make absurdly fussy demands. Chaos ensues. The prima donna comments furiously on the presence of the comedy troupe and their leading lady, Zerbinetta. Learning that Zerbinetta's company is to give a comic performance straight after his opera, the Composer is enraged, but at that moment a beautiful new melody forms in his mind.

The Major-Domo brings worse news: his master wants the two entertainments performed simultaneously so that they end promptly before the pyrotechnics. Further uproar ensues: the Dancing Master suggests that the Composer should cut his opera so that the harlequinade's dances can be performed, and the lead singers urge him to cut each other's part. The comedians take a more practical approach. Zerbinetta charms the Composer into revealing the opera's plot: Ariadne, abandoned on the island of Naxos by her lover Theseus, longs for death. Zerbinetta is unimpressed and claims that Ariadne simply needs a new lover. When the Composer disagrees, Zerbinetta flirts with him and they develop a rapport. Filled with new hope, he improvises a song in praise of the holy art of music. But when he sees the tumbling comedians, ready to go on stage, he realizes with horror that he has fallen for a dreadful compromise.

## The opera

Ariadne, who helped Theseus kill the Minotaur in Crete, has been abandoned on Naxos. She is sleeping in front of her cave, watched by the nymphs Naiad, Dryad and Echo, who describe her fate and her inconsolable weeping. Ariadne wakes and tries

to recall a lost dream. She can think of nothing except her betrayal by Theseus, and she longs only for death.

Zerbinetta and the comedians fear that Ariadne has lost her mind, and Harlequin vainly tries to rally her with a song about life's joys. Ariadne ignores him and hopes Hermes, messenger of death, will arrive to lead her to his kingdom. Brighella, Scaramuccio, Harlequin and Truffaldino make another attempt to lift her spirits, but their singing and dancing have no effect. Zerbinetta asks the four comedians to leave.

Zerbinetta appeals to Ariadne directly: Ariadne is not the first woman to be abandoned, and the simplest way to cure a broken heart is to find another lover, to change the old for the new. Zerbinetta recounts her own erotic adventures to make her point. Meanwhile, Ariadne has withdrawn to her cave. Zerbinetta and the comedians then enact their entertainment: each tries to win Zerbinetta's favours, but only Harlequin succeeds.

The three nymphs excitedly announce the approach of a ship. On board is the young god Bacchus, who expresses his amazement at having escaped from the enchantress Circe. The nymphs summon Ariadne, who thinks that the voice she hears must be the long-awaited Hermes. The Nymphs encourage Bacchus

to continue singing and Ariadne is strangely moved. When they first catch sight of each other, Ariadne initially takes Bacchus to be Theseus, then Hermes heralding her death. Bacchus thinks Ariadne must be another Circe. Bacchus is entranced by Ariadne's beauty and proclaims his godly status. Her longing for death becomes a longing for love. Transformed by passion, they find solace in each other.

# PROGRAMME NOTES

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Composer Richard Strauss's second collaboration with librettist Hugo van Hofmannsthal is something rich, rather strange, and altogether unique. And as unconventional as their *Ariadne auf Naxos* is, it had an equally unconventional genesis.

It was originally conceived as a 30-minute operatic postlude to Hoffmannsthal's adaptation of Molière's play *Le bourgeois gentilhomme*, for which Strauss provided incidental music. This supposedly brief chamber opera, however, ended up running to more than 90 minutes, meaning an unpalatable six-hour evening for theatre lovers who were bored by the opera, and vice versa.

Both Strauss and Hoffmannsthal realised that what they'd created was simply impractical. As an alternative, the librettist suggested separating the two works and replacing the play with a short, backstage operatic prelude explaining the opera's unlikely context.

One of Vienna's richest men, it runs, has engaged both a serious-minded classical opera and a knockabout comedy troupe to entertain his guests at a high-class soirée, but with things running late, and fireworks scheduled for 9pm on the dot, he orders that both entertainments must happen simultaneously.

Strauss and Hoffmansthal had endless disagreements about the form their final work should take, but in the end, their spats only provided material for the backstage squabbles, fragile egos and high-minded ideals that both creators send up so mercilessly but also so compassionately in the opera. In its unlikely collision of high and low art, *Ariadne auf Naxos* asks serious questions about culture, wealth, fidelity and love, not least in its sparring central characters of Ariadne, who preserves her affections for Theseus, the man who has spurned her and Zerbinetta, leader of the comedy troupe, who happily admits that her desires flit jauntily from man to man.

**David Kettle**

# ROYAL SCOTTISH NATIONAL ORCHESTRA

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The Royal Scottish National Orchestra was formed in 1891 as the Scottish Orchestra and became the Scottish National Orchestra in 1950, before being awarded Royal Patronage in 1977. Throughout its history, the Orchestra has played an integral part in Scotland's musical life, including performing at the opening ceremony of the Scottish Parliament building in 2004. It performs across Scotland, including concerts in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen, Perth and Inverness, and appears regularly at the Edinburgh International Festival and BBC Proms.

Many renowned conductors have contributed to its success, such as George Szell, Sir John Barbirolli and Sir Alexander Gibson. The Orchestra's artistic team is currently led by Danish conductor Thomas Søndergård, who was appointed Music Director in 2018, having previously held the position of Principal Guest Conductor. Current Principal Guest Conductor is Hong Kong-born conductor Elim Chan.

The Orchestra has a worldwide reputation for the quality of its recordings and has received a 2020 *Gramophone* award for Chopin's piano concertos (soloist Benjamin Grosvenor and conductor Elim Chan), two Diapason d'Or awards for symphonic music (Denève/Roussel 2007 and Denève/Debussy 2012) and eight Grammy award nominations. Over 200 releases are available, including the complete symphonies of Sibelius (Gibson), Prokofiev (Järvi), Glazunov (Serebrier), Nielsen and Martinů (Thomson), Roussel (Denève) and the major orchestral works of Debussy (Denève). Søndergård's debut recording with the Orchestra of Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* was released in 2019.

The Orchestra's pioneering learning and engagement programme, Music for Life, aims to engage the people of Scotland with music across key stages of life. The team is committed to placing the Orchestra at the centre of Scottish communities via workshops and annual residencies across the length and breadth of the country.

# LOTHAR KOENIGS

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Born in Aachen, conductor Lothar Koenigs was Music Director of Welsh National Opera from 2009 to 2016. Guest engagements have included productions at New York's Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Milan's La Scala, Bayerische Staatsoper Munich, Semperoper Dresden, Teatro Real Madrid, Opéra National de Lyon and La Monnaie Brussels, in wide-ranging repertoire from Mozart to Berg, with a special emphasis on the operas of Wagner, Strauss and Janáček.

Highlights of his tenure at WNO include *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (also in a televised BBC Prom), *Tristan und Isolde* at the Edinburgh International Festival, and *Moses und Aron* in performances at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. He has also conducted symphonic engagements with leading orchestras throughout Europe, the USA, Japan and Australia.

Recent engagements include *Lulu* and *La Clemenza di Tito* at the Metropolitan Opera; *Wozzeck*, *Ariadne auf Naxos* and *Lohengrin* in Munich; *Elektra* for Zurich Opera; *Moses und Aron* in Madrid; *Daphne*, *Capriccio* and *Die tote Stadt*

in Brussels; *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* in Lyon; *Pique Dame* and *Eugene Onegin* for the Norwegian Opera; and *Tristan und Isolde* for the Royal Danish Opera. Forthcoming engagements include *Tristan und Isolde* and a new production of *Capriccio* in Munich.

# LOUISA MULLER

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*Opera News* lauds director Louisa Muller for her ‘absorbing, provocative staging’. She makes her Edinburgh International Festival debut directing these concert performances of *Ariadne auf Naxos*.

Following her critically acclaimed international debut at Garsington Opera with a new production of *The Turn of the Screw* (winner of a Royal Philharmonic Society award and named by the *Guardian* as one of the top ten classical music events of the year) in 2019, Muller has been immediately re-engaged by the company for 2022 and 2024.

Also upcoming, she returns to Los Angeles Opera for *Tannhäuser* and to the Lyric Opera of Chicago for *Tosca*, the latter title also affording her debut with Opera Colorado. She joins Boston Baroque for a new production of Handel’s *Amadigi di gala* that will also be live-streamed on the Idagio network and, in future seasons, returns to Handel with a new production of *Rinaldo* in her debut with Pinchgut Opera.

Recent engagements include debuts with Minnesota Opera and Los Angeles Opera, leading *La traviata* and *Don Carlo*, respectively. She directed a semi-staged production of *Das Rheingold* for the New York

Philharmonic that the *New York Times* heralded as 'riveting... a remarkable evening of music theater'. She has been a frequent presence at Wolf Trap Opera and has directed new productions of *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Roméo et Juliette*, Corigliano's *The Ghosts of Versailles* and *Tosca*.

  
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