


**EDINBURGH
INTERNATIONAL
FESTIVAL**

FALSTAFF

VERDI

—

Scottish Opera

8, 10, 12, 14 Aug 7.15pm

FESTIVAL THEATRE

The performance lasts approx. 2hrs 40mins
with one interval between Acts II and III

Sung in English with English supertitles
(translation by Amanda Holden)

A new co-production with Santa Fe Opera

Opera in three acts by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Arrigo Boito after *Henry IV Parts 1 and 2*
and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* by William Shakespeare

Supported by **Sir Ewan and Lady Brown**

Please ensure all mobile phones and electronic
devices are turned off or put on silent.

FALSTAFF



Scottish Opera

Creative team

Stuart Stratford

Conductor

Sir David McVicar

Director & Designer

Lizzie Powell

Lighting Designer

Andrew George

Choreographer

Hannah Postlethwaite

Assistant Set Designer

Lorna Price

Associate Costume Designer

Cast

Roland Wood	Sir John Falstaff
Elgan Llŷr Thomas	Fenton
Phillip Rhodes	Ford / Mr Brook
Aled Hall	Dr Caius
Jamie MacDougall	Bardolph
Alistair Miles	Pistol
Elizabeth Llewellyn	Alice Ford
Gemma Summerfield	Nannetta
Sioned Gwen Davies	Meg Page
Louise Winter	Mistress Quickly
Fergus Wood	Robin

Actors

Lauren Ellis-Steele
Eddie Chamberlin (8, 10, 12 Aug only)
Jamie Francis (14 Aug only)
Caleb Hughes
Josh Kiernan
Allan Othieno
Sally Swanson

Children

Oscar Clive
Ava-Simran Dhillon-Dileri
Euan Kirwan
Maya Lei

The Orchestra of Scottish Opera

The Chorus of Falstaff

Scottish Opera would like to thank the Dunard Fund for sponsoring this production of *Falstaff*. The production is also kindly supported by Falstaff Appeal donors, the Alexander Gibson Circle, Garfield Weston Foundation (Weston Culture Fund) and Scottish Opera Endowment Trust.

A huge thank you to the team at Scottish Opera for all their hard work in preparing this production. The full team is listed online at scottishopera.org.uk/falstaff

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Scottish Opera

General Director	Alex Reedijk FRC
Music Director	Stuart Stratford

SYNOPSIS

Sir John Falstaff has fallen on hard times. Holed up in the seedy Garter Inn, near Windsor, leeched on by Bardolph and Pistol, his old drinking companions, and with a mounting bill he cannot pay, he nevertheless remains irrepressibly optimistic and resourceful...

ACT I

Scene 1

The Garter Inn

Falstaff and his cohorts have spent a drunken night with the local, very wealthy Dr Caius. Caius bursts into the inn the following morning, accusing them all of robbing his pockets and wrecking his house. Falstaff smoothly evades the accusations and Caius storms off, swearing never to drink again in such disreputable company. The landlord of the Garter Inn presents Falstaff with his bill. A crisis ensues, but Falstaff reveals to Bardolph and Pistol his latest plan to make money: he intends to seduce the wives of two rich merchants and fleece their husbands.

He has set his sights on Alice Ford and Meg Page, both wealthy wives of Windsor, and has written passionate — albeit identical — love letters to each of them. Bardolph and Pistol refuse to deliver these letters, however, citing their honour as veterans of combat. Falstaff orders Robin, his page, to deliver them instead. Turning on his companions, he demolishes their idea of honour, and in a sudden fit of anger drives them out of the inn, making them destitute.

Scene 2

The garden of Ford's house

Bursting with indignation, Meg Page has rushed to her friend Alice Ford to show her the letter Falstaff has sent her. Alice has also received her letter from Falstaff, and together with Alice's daughter Nannetta, and their neighbour Mistress Quickly, they examine the missives, finding them identical. The women decide to exact revenge.

Meanwhile the furious Bardolph and Pistol, in search of some cash, have warned Ford of Falstaff's plan to seduce his wife. They are joined by Caius and the young, impoverished Fenton, who longs to marry Nannetta; Ford, however, favours the wealthy Caius

for his daughter's hand. Unknown to each other, the two groups of women and men plot different means of revenge. Alice and Meg will send Mistress Quickly as an emissary to Falstaff to suggest an assignation; Ford will go in disguise to lure him into a trap. Meanwhile, Nannetta and Fenton steal moments for romance.

ACT II

Scene 1

The Garter Inn

Bardolph and Pistol (now in Ford's pay) beg to rejoin Falstaff's service and he accepts them back. Unexpectedly, Mistress Quickly also arrives with messages from Alice and Meg. She tells Falstaff that both women are utterly smitten and that Alice in particular will make herself available this very day, once her husband is absent, between two and three in the afternoon. Falstaff congratulates himself on his conquest.

Bardolph now introduces another visitor. Ford enters, disguised as Mr Brook, a fabulously wealthy man but an inept lover. He tells Falstaff that he is passionately but hopelessly in love with Alice Ford.

Further, he is prepared to offer Falstaff money if he can accomplish her seduction; if such a great lover as Falstaff can do this, then surely there might be hope for him? Falstaff proudly informs Mr Brook that the seduction of Alice is already in hand and he withdraws to dress himself for the assignation. Astounded by this turn of events, Ford is consumed with jealousy. He swears to be avenged on his wife and her would-be lover. Falstaff returns in all his finery and sets out for Ford's house, arm in arm with 'Mr Brook'.

Scene 2

Ford's house

The wives of Windsor are eagerly awaiting their revenge. Nannetta is miserable, though, and tells her mother that Ford has decided to betroth her to Caius. Alice refuses to accept her husband's choice and reassures her daughter that the marriage will never happen. Mistress Quickly arrives, breathless, with news of her successful meeting with Falstaff; the women barely have time to arrange the room before he arrives. Quickly, Meg and Nannetta hide as Falstaff begins his seduction of Alice. He is soon interrupted by Quickly, who runs in to tell Alice that her jealous rival, Meg, is on her way. Alice hides

Falstaff behind a screen as Meg enters to play her part, pretending that Alice's husband is heading home to catch the lovers together.

The hidden Falstaff is duly terrified, but the joke suddenly turns sour when Quickly rushes back to tell Alice that Ford really is on his way to confront his wife and kill her lover. Raging, Ford bursts in, accompanied by Caius, Bardolph and Pistol. He curses Alice and proceeds to ransack the house, searching everywhere for Falstaff, emptying a laundry basket in his fury. Ford rushes away to search upstairs and the women bundle Falstaff into the empty basket, covering him with the dirty linen, while Alice runs off to summon some servants.

Meanwhile, Fenton and Nannetta slip behind the screen to share some stolen kisses. Ford bursts back in and the lovers are heard kissing behind the screen. Believing Alice and Falstaff are hiding together, he gathers the other men as Falstaff wails at Meg and Quickly from inside the laundry basket. The screen is torn down to reveal the young lovers, only increasing Ford's fury. He turns Fenton out of the house and continues the search. Alice emerges from hiding and orders her servants to tip the contents of the basket out of the window into the river below. An astonished Ford returns just in time to witness his wife's revenge.

ACT III

Scene 1

Outside the Garter Inn

Falstaff has hauled himself out of the river and staggered back to the Garter Inn. Miserable and soaked to the skin, he rails against the wickedness of the world but is soon revived by a tankard of hot mulled wine. Suddenly, Mistress Quickly appears with a letter from Alice. Falstaff furiously refuses to hear her but Quickly persuades him that Alice is blameless for the afternoon's misadventures and is keenly awaiting another assignation with him, at midnight in the secrecy of Windsor Park, under the fabled Herne's Oak tree. To spice things up, Alice asks that her lover should come disguised as Herne the Hunter, the legendary ghost of the park. Falstaff is intrigued and beckons Quickly to come inside the inn with him to talk further.

The whole meeting, however, has been planned and overheard by Alice and her husband, and also Meg, Caius, Nannetta and Fenton. Alice means to end her vengeance with an act of reconciliation, involving a masquerade of fairy folk. She casts her companions in their various roles and everyone

goes their separate ways to get ready. Quickly leaves the inn but hides as she overhears Ford plotting with Caius to trick his wife by blessing the union of Caius and Nannetta as part of the masquerade. She slips away to warn the other women of his plan.

Scene 2

Herne's Oak in Windsor Park

Near midnight, Fenton is the first to arrive at Herne's Oak, singing of his love for Nannetta. He is soon joined by his lover and the other women, who quickly dress him in an identical costume to the one Caius will wear in the masquerade. Everyone hides as Falstaff is heard approaching, disguised as requested in Alice's letter. As the nearby church clock strikes 12, Alice appears and tells Falstaff that Meg is unable to contain her longing for him and will soon join them. Falstaff is delighted at this turn of events, but when Meg arrives she feigns terror, telling them she has seen a band of fairies and witches on their way to the oak tree.

Alice and Meg vanish into the darkness and Falstaff is confronted by the troupe of masqueraders heading his way. Terrified, he falls to the ground. Disguised as the fairy Queen, Nannetta gathers her court round her. All now disguised, Alice, Meg, Quickly

and the men join them, and Bardolph, disguised as a devil, reveals the prostrate Falstaff. The maskers scold and torment Falstaff for his lecherous behaviour, pinching and rolling him round on the ground. But Falstaff recognises the foul stench of Bardolph's breath and unmask him. Everyone else reveals themselves and Falstaff realizes that he has been punished and made a fool of, but he pulls himself together and, with great humanity, manages to turn his humiliation into a comic triumph.

Ford announces that the revels will end with the betrothal of the Queen of the Fairies, and Caius leads a figure veiled in white from the trees. Alice asks her husband to bless the nuptials of another young couple and he agrees. But when the veils and masks are lifted, it turns out that Caius's bride is none other than Bardolph, quickly changed into a fresh disguise. Nannetta begs her father's forgiveness and Ford, now exposed as a fool as big as Falstaff, has to agree. The wives of Windsor are triumphant and Falstaff leads everyone in a song of laughter and reconciliation.

PROGRAMME NOTES

Giuseppe Verdi was almost 80 when he began work on *Falstaff*, the last of his 28 operas, and wasn't even convinced he'd live long enough to finish the job. He was spurred on, however, by his friend Arrigo Boito (librettist of their phenomenally successful *Otello* in 1887), who conceived a scenario based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* plus numerous passages from *Henry IV* parts 1 and 2 to add weight to its larger-than-life protagonist. In any case, Verdi yearned to write a successful comedy. His previous attempt — *Un giorno di regno*, back in 1840 — had sunk soon after its premiere. And after the torment and tragedy of *Otello*, he said: 'Having relentlessly massacred so many heroes and heroines, I have at last the right to laugh a little.'

It took Verdi and Boito almost three years to complete their work, the composer writing only in fits and starts, debilitated by worries about his ability to complete the opera. Nonetheless, it was a labour of love, written for pleasure rather than to the strict deadline of an opera house, and that love shines through in *Falstaff*'s warmth and originality. Even in his eighth decade, Verdi broke new ground in his sophisticated, through-composed structure

of flickering moods and constantly developing material. At its premiere at La Scala, Milan, in 1893, in front of royalty and leading arts figures from right across Europe (and at reportedly hugely inflated ticket prices), *Falstaff* was a breathtaking success, provoking an ovation that kept composer and cast on their feet for more than an hour.

David Kettle

David Kettle is a music and arts writer based in Edinburgh, who contributes regularly to the *Scotsman* and the *Daily Telegraph*. He has also written for publications including *BBC Music Magazine*, *The Times*, *The Strad* and *Classical Music*, and for organisations including the BBC Proms, Glyndebourne and Scottish Opera.

STUART STRATFORD

Stuart Stratford studied conducting with David Parry at Cambridge University and with Ilya Musin at the St Petersburg Conservatoire. He was appointed Music Director of Scottish Opera in mid-2015, which makes him the Company's sixth Music Director, joining a distinguished succession that originated with the Company's founder Sir Alexander Gibson.

For Scottish Opera he has conducted productions of *Tosca*, *Jenůfa*, *Rusalka*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *La bohème*, *Greek*, *Flight*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Kátya Kabanová*, *Anthropocene* (world premiere) and the groundbreaking *Pagliacci* in Paisley Opera House. He introduced the popular Sunday Series of lesser-known Operas in Concert, which has featured such titles as *L'amico Fritz*, *Le Villi*, *Iolanta*, *Francesca da Rimini*, *Aleko*, *Edgar*, *Silvano* and *Iris*. In the 2019/20 season he conducted *Tosca* and *Iris* as part of the Opera in Concert series.

In the UK he has worked with Opera North, Welsh National Opera, Opera Holland Park, English National Opera, the Buxton Festival and Birmingham Opera, with repertoire ranging

from *Giovanna d'Arco* to *Satyagraha*. Stratford is known for his expertise in Russian and Czech music and his passion for bringing opera outside of a traditional theatre setting to new audiences.

SIR DAVID MCVICAR

David McVicar was born in Glasgow and trained as an actor at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). He was knighted in 2012 for his services to opera and made Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government.

Scottish Opera credits: *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Così fan tutte*, *La traviata*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Idomeneo*.

His productions have been staged across the UK, including *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Salome*, *Adriana Lecouvreur*, *Aida*, *Les Troyens* and *Death in Venice* at the Royal Opera House; *Der Rosenkavalier*, *The Turn of the Screw* and *Médée* at English National Opera; and *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* and *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at Glyndebourne.

He has worked extensively in Europe, at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris, Opéra National du Rhin in Strasbourg, Gran Teatre del Liceu in Barcelona, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, La Scala in Milan, Royal Danish Opera in Copenhagen, and the Salzburg Festival, among others.

In the USA he has directed numerous productions at New York's Metropolitan Opera, including *Anna Bolena*, *Il Trovatore*, *Maria Stuarda*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, *Roberto Devereux*, *Tosca* and *Norma*.

He has also worked at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Canadian Opera Company and Opera Australia.

SCOTTISH OPERA

Scottish Opera was founded by Alexander Gibson in 1962 and inaugurated with a production of *Madama Butterfly* at the King's Theatre in Glasgow. In 1974, Scottish Opera purchased the Theatre Royal Glasgow, which reopened in 1975 as Scotland's first national opera house. The Orchestra of Scottish Opera was founded in 1980 and Stuart Stratford was appointed Music Director in 2015, following conducting engagements with The Orchestra of Scottish Opera and in the Company's production of Janáček's *Jenůfa*.

Scottish Opera is core funded by The Scottish Government.

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