



Mansfield Park
***Music* Jonathan Dove**
***Libretto* Alasdair Middleton**

Director Rebecca Meltzer
Revival Director Eleanor Burke
Music Director Bradley Wood
Repetiteur Ashley Beauchamp

Fanny Price Siân Griffiths
Sir Thomas Philip Wilcox
Lady Bertram Emily Gray
Maria Bertram Ellie Neate
Julia Bertram Sarah Anne Champion
Edmund Bertram Milo Harries
Aunt Norris Eleanor Garside
Mary Crawford Eleanor Sanderson-Nash
Henry Crawford Robin Bailey
Mr Rushworth Lawrence Thackeray

Saturday 9th July, 2022
The Great Hall, Boughton House

Supported by Penelope Escombe

Synopsis

ACT ONE

We are immediately thrown into the Bertram family's domestic life. Sir Thomas is preparing to leave for Antigua to attend to business on the sugar plantation, and preparations are in place for the socially advantageous marriage of his eldest daughter Maria to Mr Rushworth, owner of the nearby estate of Sotherton Park. Mr and Miss Crawford, the new tenants at the estate, are introduced to the Bertrams and first impressions are made. The fashionable and accomplished Mary Crawford has clearly set her sights on Edmund Bertram with whom she discusses the adopted member of the Bertram family, Fanny Price, and her peculiar social position.

The family bids farewell to Sir Thomas, and Mr Rushworth shares his ideas for redesigning the gardens at Sotherton, which prompts a family outing to the estate. While exploring its enormous grounds, Fanny observes the growing intimacy between Edmund and Mary, but more alarmingly, between Maria Bertram and Mary's brother, Henry Crawford.

With Sir Thomas away, Maria decides that all the young people must put on a play. There is great excitement on all accounts at the prospect of performing 'Lover's Vows'. Only Fanny and Edmund object to the scheme. After refusing the role of the Cottager's wife, Fanny is distraught when Edmund is finally persuaded to take up a role, playing opposite the alluring Mary Crawford. We watch as the chaotic rehearsals unfold: Fanny reluctantly helps Edmund learn his lines; Aunt Norris wreaks havoc with a piece of green baize and Maria and Henry relish the chance for maximising close physical contact.

The theatrical preparation is interrupted by the unexpected return of Sir Thomas who, upon seeing Mr Rushworth in costume, asks his daughter Maria if she is serious about marrying him. She hesitates, but beginning to doubt the sincerity of Henry's affection towards her, decides to uphold her engagement to Mr Rushworth, consoling herself with the prospect of the independence and splendour that her husband's income will allow her. They marry and leave for Brighton. With Maria out of the way, Henry declares his intentions to pursue Fanny Price.

ACT TWO

The family are preparing for a ball to mark Fanny's entering into society. Mary offers her a chain for the amber cross given to her by Edmund. Fanny gladly receives the gift, until Mary encourages her to think of Henry when she wears it. Shortly after this encounter, Edmund also offers Fanny a chain; one she far prefers to Mary's. Edmund tells her to keep Mary's chain as doing otherwise would seem ungrateful.

Sir Thomas insists that Fanny partner with Henry for the first dance. After the dance, Henry proposes to Fanny who refuses, causing a backlash from the other members of the family, including Edmund.

Maria Rushworth and Henry Crawford meet again at Twickenham with scandalous consequences. News of their affair reaches Mansfield Park and the family rallies together to protect their reputation. They soon discover that Julia Bertram has eloped with Mr Yates, an acquaintance from Brighton. Mary Crawford turns on Edmund and Fanny, revealing her true nature and priorities. She suggests that Maria divorces Mr Rushworth and wed Henry immediately, but Edmund disagrees and sheds his feelings for Mary, for she is not who he perceived her to be. The characters reflect on what has happened at Mansfield Park and are reconciled by Edmund and Fanny's engagement.

Margaret Ravalde (Assistant Director 2018)

***Mansfield Park* - a note by the director**

Despite its reputation for being Austen's least loved novel, *Mansfield Park* has attracted two composers of note since its publication; Benjamin Britten in 1946 (although the work was never completed), and Jonathan Dove, in partnership with librettist Alasdair Middleton.

Commissioned by Heritage Opera in 2011, Dove intended his chamber opera to be performed in country houses, a decision sympathetic to Austen's narrative. In fact, *Mansfield Park* is the only novel by Austen to be named after a house (Northanger Abbey was given its current name by Jane's brother before publication, following her death).

Since its premier, Dove's opera has been performed by numerous companies worldwide, and as its popularity has grown, so has the scale of the productions. In 2017, The Grange Festival commissioned an orchestral version of the score for a full-scale performance in their opera house. It seems pleasing, however, that Waterperry Opera Festival's production harkens back to the origins of the opera, highlighting the intimacy and domesticity of the original score, written for four hands on one piano.

Whilst Austen's novel charts 15 years in the life of the great house and its inhabitants, Dove and Middleton omit Fanny Price's adolescent years. Instead, the opera opens with Fanny as a fully-fledged member of the Bertram household. Yet, Dove and Middleton do not neglect to highlight one of the principal themes in the novel, that of her questionable identity and social status. Fanny is continually caught between two worlds, that of her humble beginnings, and the world of opulence in which she grows up, and which affords her the opportunity to transcend her family's unfortunate position. Whilst her cousin, and closest companion, Edmund, sees her as equal in all aspects, her vicious bully of an aunt and her oppressive, domineering uncle never fail to remind her of her low status.

Janeites (Austen fans) and scholars have, for decades, disputed over Fanny Price as the supposed heroine and protagonist of the novel. Is *Mansfield Park* the story of a long-suffering, timid girl who finds a home and true love against all the odds, providing a moral centre and an acute lens through which we observe the characters around her? Or is Fanny simply, as the novel's title suggests, a mere member of the intricate community known as Mansfield Park? Dove and Middleton's opera offers the latter interpretation, an ensemble piece, comprising a close examination of human behaviour within the domestic environment, yet contextualised through Fanny's principled perspective.

It is rare within the opera that we find fewer than a handful of characters on stage at any one time. Dove and Middleton are quite adept at presenting numerous dialogues simultaneously, the characters blending seamlessly between foreground and background. There is no starring role in this opera. Every character sustains equal musical and dramatic importance throughout.

It is heartening to observe Austen's work brought into a contemporary light for modern audiences, yet withholding all the irony, spark and astuteness of the original novel. *Mansfield Park* does not shy away from risqué themes of seduction, love, abuse and scandal, and in these multifaceted, complex characters we recognise the "full tide of human existence" (Johnson in *Boswell 2*: 337).

Dove and Middleton offer a stylish, satisfying and balanced reading of Austen's novel, and our production seeks to present the work with full flourish in an intimate, historic setting, bringing you right into the heart of this domestic drama.

Rebecca Meltzer

Biographies

Robin Bailey trained at the Royal Academy of Music and the Guildhall School Opera Course, London. His roles include Fox/*Vixen* (ENO/Silent opera), Mayor/1st cover Anatoly/*Chess* (ENO), Candide/*Candide* & Alfred/*Die Fledermaus* (West Green House Opera), Valjean/*Les Misérables* & Tony/*West Side Story* (Pimlico/Grange park opera), Fenton/*Falstaff* & Alfred/*Die Fledermaus* (Iford Opera), Gastone & cover Alfredo/*La traviata* (Neville Holt Opera), Bearded Wild Thing/*Where the Wild Things Are* (Shadwell Opera). Robin's solo oratorio work includes *B Minor Mass*/Bach, Mozart's *Requiem* & *La Grande Messe des Morts*/Berlioz (Canterbury Cathedral), *St. Matthew Passion*/Bach (Bristol

Beacon), *The Bells*/Rachmaninov (Winchester Cathedral), *Israel in Egypt*/Handel (Southwark Cathedral). Robin was a founding member of the *a cappella* group Voces8. He was also awarded 2nd prize in the International Lotte Lenya competition in New York, and the Young artists' prize at the Les Azuriales competition in Nice, France.

Ashley Beauchamp is a répétiteur, conductor, collaborative-pianist and coach based in London. He previously studied on the opera course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He has worked on over 30 productions, including operas at the Royal Opera House, Glyndebourne, Garsington, Nevill Holt, Waterperry Opera, Music Theatre Wales and Blackheath Halls. 2022 highlights include assistant conductor (and conducting one performance) for the world-premiere of *Pay the Piper* at Glyndebourne, and joining Nevill Holt as Head of Music for their 2022 season of *La bohème* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Ashley is Head of Music for Waterperry Opera Festival, and this summer will be music director for staged performances of Janacek's *The Diary of the One Who Disappeared*, répétiteur for *The Marriage of Figaro* and assist in the running of the WOF Young Artist Programme. Ashley is an associate artist of the ROH Youth Opera Company, works as a musical director for the Glyndebourne Youth Opera programme, and is Musical Director of the Thames Opera Company.

Eleanor Burke is a director and movement director. Founder and Artistic Director of Green Opera, an environmentally sustainable opera company, she is currently a Staff Director at Theatres Krefeld and Mönchengladbach in Germany where her revivals have included *Don Pasquale*, *Rusalka*, and *Die Zauberflöte*. Eleanor read English at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was a Fellow at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama (2020/21). A trained ballet and contemporary dancer, Eleanor is expanding her practice to include fight and intimacy choreography. Her recent productions include *The Rape of Lucretia* (in aid of Refuge), *Carmen* (West Road Concert Hall, Cambridge), *Isolated Incidents*, a series of short operas commissioned during the pandemic (Green Opera), and opera scenes for London City Orchestra and DEBUT. Future plans include Emily Hazrati and Nazli Tabatabai-Khatambakhsh's *TIDE* (Aldeburgh Festival), *Bluebeard's Castle* (Green Opera, Grimeborn Festival); Louise Bertin, *Le loup-garou* (Gothic Opera); *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Hampstead Garden Opera). She has also been invited to join English Touring Opera as a Staff Director for Spring 2023.

Sarah Anne Champion was winner of the Flora Nielsen Prize for French Song, and is an established performer of opera, oratorio, recital and consort singing. She began singing with the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain in 2003. She read music at Durham University before going on to the University of Cambridge to train as a Secondary School Music Teacher. She worked in Oxford for five years before beginning her singing career in London where she completed her Masters, with distinction, at the Royal Academy of Music. Some of Sarah's performance highlights for this year include Oxford Lieder's Spring Song 2022, and performing 400 year old, newly-discovered madrigals, duets and solo songs of Casulana live on Radio 3 with the Fieri Consort.

Eleanor Garside is a graduate of the University of Manchester, the Royal Northern College of Music and ENO's professional development course, Opera Works. Whilst studying she was awarded the Proctor Gregg Recital Prize, the Claire Croiza Prize for French Song and the Frederic Cox Prize for Singing. Since graduating, she came second in the AESS Patricia Routledge Prize for English Song and was a finalist in the 2017 Emmy Destinn Singing Competition. Eleanor has performed the roles of Yum Yum/*The Mikado*, Mabel/*The Pirates of Penzance*, Belinda/*Dido and Aeneas*, Miss Wordsworth/*Albert Herring*, Atalanta/*Xerxes*, Papagena/*The Magic Flute* and played the role of Aunt Norris in Waterperry Opera Festival's production of *Mansfield Park* in 2019. She has also been a long standing member of the

chorus for Grange Park Opera. Eleanor is also a member of a new professional chamber choir, the Jervaulx Singers, based in Ripon, North Yorkshire.

Emily Gray, described by *Opera* as a “charismatic singer-actress to watch”, has performed as a soloist at the Royal Albert Hall, St. Paul's, Kings Place, and the Purcell Room as well as giving frequent live performances on BBC Radio 3's *In Tune*. She has taken leading roles in Dove's *Mansfield Park*, Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, McNeff's *Banished*, Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and Haydn's *Lo Speziale*, also joining The Sixteen for their Grange Park Festival production of Handel's *Belshazzar* conducted by Harry Christophers. Emily has extensive experience as a recitalist, specialising in English Song. This year will see the release of her commissioned album of Michael Head and Eric Thiman songs, and she is already recording her second album of English Song set to release in 2023. Emily continues to perform as the mezzo soloist with the highly talented baroque chamber ensemble, Istante Collective.

Siân Griffiths is a Young Artist at the National Opera Studio in London. Prior to this, Siân gained a BA in Ancient History at the University of Reading before studying postgraduate voice at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. In 2019, Siân joined GSMD's prestigious opera course and completed her studies there in summer 2021. Recent performing highlights include Guest Singer in the Royal Ballet's production of *Like Water for Chocolate* by Joby Talbot, Charlotte in an Act 3, scene 1 extract (*Werther*) and Mercédès in the card trio (*Carmen*) for National Opera Studio's scenes performance with the English National Opera orchestra (Cadogan Hall), covering Olga/*Eugene Onegin* and Ragonde/*Le comte Ory* in Garsington Opera's 2021 productions, and performing the role of Olga for Garsington's *OperaFirst* schools performance with the Philharmonia Orchestra.

Milo Harries undertook his vocal training at the Royal College of Music and also holds undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from the University of Cambridge, where he is currently writing a doctoral thesis on theatrical encounter in the context of the climate crisis. His PhD is generously supported by the Judith E. Wilson Fund at the Faculty of English. Milo has performed and covered roles at Glyndebourne, Opera North, and as part of the 2019 European City of Culture Festival in Matera. He has worked on learning and participation projects for Opera North, and at the Royal Opera House, where he has also served as a coach for the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme.

Rebecca Meltzer is an Opera Director, Movement Director, Educator and Facilitator, and one of the founding members of Waterperry Opera Festival. Since completing her training at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and Durham University, she has worked with companies including the Royal Opera House, Opera Holland Park, Garsington Opera, English Touring Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, Shadwell Opera, National Opera Studio at Welsh National Opera, Iford Arts, Dorset Opera, Bury Court Opera, Blackheath Halls, Tête à Tête and Feral Productions. Rebecca is a visiting tutor and director at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, Trinity Laban, British Youth Opera and the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. For WOF, Rebecca has directed productions of *Mansfield Park*, *Ariel*, and *Hansel and Gretel*.

Ellie Neate is a soprano studying on the opera course at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, where she is generously supported by the Guildhall School Trust, the Fishmongers' Company, the Toni V. Fell Musical Charitable Trust, and was a 2021 Help Musicians Sybil Tutton Award holder. Opera roles include Gretel/*Hänsel und Gretel* (British Youth Opera/Silent Opera), Lucy England/*The Telephone*, Laurette/*Le docteur Miracle*, La Fée/*Cendrillon* (all at GSMD), and Denise in *TEXT*, a new commission for GSMD Opera Makers. In concert she has performed at Oxford Lieder Festival, Wigmore Hall in a BBC Radio 3 broadcast, and *Carmina Burana* with the LSC in the Barbican Hall. In 2022 she will sing

Cleopatra/*Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra* at the Buxton International Festival, and Milica in Waterperry Opera Festival's *Svadba*.

Eleanor Sanderson-Nash is a graduate of RCM and RNCM. Since completing her studies in 2017, Eleanor has had engagements with English National Opera, Grange Park Opera, British Youth Opera, Waterperry Opera, Tête-à-Tête, and was a Young Artist at Opera Holland Park in 2017. She was also a swing in *Phantom of the Opera* in London's West End from 2019-2020. During her time at RCM her studies were generously supported by a Martin Harris Award and a Charles Branchini Award, the Josephine Baker Trust, Friends of Music in Mayfield, The Lake House Charitable Foundation and the Tom Cocklin Memorial Trust. Eleanor is delighted to be returning to the role of Mary Crawford for the third time.

Lawrence Thackery has performed many operatic roles including Don José/*Carmen*, Rodolfo/*La bohème*, Alfredo/*La traviata*, Tamino/*The Magic Flute*, and Peter Quint/*The Turn of the Screw*. He is now setting his sights on the young heldentenor repertoire and was recently a finalist in The Mastersingers Wagner Vocal Competition 2022. His previous roles of Guido/*A Florentine Tragedy* and Drum Major/*Wozzeck* were the most recent steps along this path since the role of Lehrbube/*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* for Glyndebourne Festival Opera. Companies worked for include Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, Opera North, Grange Park Opera, Garsington Opera, Opera Ireland, Bergen National Opera, Silent Opera at the Beijing International Music Festival and Waterperry Opera Festival.

Philip Wilcox is a uniquely versatile musician who enjoys the many opportunities of a diverse musical life. He appears regularly as a concert soloist, opera singer, and professional chorister throughout the UK. Phil directs a number of choirs and is the Learning and Participation Manager for Leeds Lieder. Phil's recent roles include Father/*Hansel and Gretel* for Waterperry Opera Festival in a production which fully integrated British Sign Language and saw Phil accompany himself on the piano accordion; Alcindoro/*La bohème* for English Touring Opera; Prince Vyazemsky/*Ivan the Terrible* for Grange Park Opera; Basilio/*Il barbiere di Siviglia*; and Major General Stanley/*The Pirates of Penzance* for productions in both the UK and Saudi Arabia. He has sung for the Royal Shakespeare Company in London and New York, Opera North, Opera Holland Park Inspire, Tête à Tête, Buxton International Festival, and Northern Opera Group.

Bradley Wood, a New Zealand pianist and conductor, is a highly sought after soloist, chamber musician and collaborator specialising in vocal music. He graduated in 2019 with a Master of Performance with Distinction from the Royal College of Music and was then one of only four pianists selected to become a 2019/2020 Young Artist Repetiteur at the National Opera Studio. Bradley is extremely passionate about opera and was previously Head of Music for Bloomsbury Opera, and was a participant in the Solti Academy Repetiteur course in Venice. He is currently the Lord and Lady Lurgan Collaborative Piano Fellow at the Royal College of Music. He was recently awarded a place on the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme.

Waterperry Opera Festival was established in 2018 and is a unique and innovative opera festival hosted at the beautiful Waterperry House & Gardens in Oxfordshire. The festival offers high-quality, accessible and socially relevant work, created and performed by a diverse company, which bridges the gap between artists and audiences. This summer the festival celebrates its 5th Anniversary Season, showcasing emerging talent with no fewer than eight open-air and indoor productions performed in various performance spaces across the stunning Waterperry estate. To find out more about Waterperry Opera Festival, please visit waterperryoperafestival.co.uk