



Passion for Puccini

Conductor Alexander Joel returns to the UK next season to mark his English National Opera debut with *La bohème* (November 2018 - February 2019) and deepen his association with the Royal Opera House with *Tosca* (May & June 2019)

'[One] is very convinced of the elegant, silky and very neat rendition of the score coming from the orchestra pit, where the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande was at [its best] under the baton of Alexander Joel,'
Cavalleria Rusticana and *Pagliacci* review, *Tribune de Genève*, March 2018

Theatre runs deep in Alexander Joel's genes. The London-born, Vienna-based conductor, who can count the great actor-manager David Garrick among his maternal ancestors, is set to make his house debut at English National Opera next season with Puccini's *La bohème* from 26 November 2018. He comes to the Coliseum with the experience of conducting the work many times over the past two decades, emblem of a career forged in the opera houses of Germany and of an artist increasingly in demand on the world's leading stages. His schedule also includes a return to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, for a revival of *Tosca* at the end of the 2018-19 season.

"I'm looking forward to working for the first time at ENO, which is such a great institution, and with their fantastic orchestra and chorus," comments Alexander Joel. "I can't wait to bring *Bohème* back to the Coliseum. We have a cast of outstanding young singers and Jonathan Miller's compelling production to work with. It's a piece I love so much and one that really suits my way of making music. The out-and-out realism and pure emotion of Puccini's opera speak so clearly to me. It's always a joy to work with such powerful, expressive material."

Welsh soprano Natalya Romaniw, a graduate of the Guildhall School of Music and the prestigious Houston Grand Opera Studio, and American tenor Jonathan Tetelman make their respective ENO debuts as Mimì and Rodolfo. The cast also includes British lyric soprano Nadine Benjamin as Musetta, Australian baritone Nicholas Lester as Marcello and the British singer-actor Simon Butteriss as Benoît and Alcindoro.

Alexander Joel's deep knowledge of *La bohème* has grown over the course of more than one hundred performances. "*Bohème* is such a tricky work from the conductor's perspective," he notes. "You must shape the pacing for the singers, of course, as in any opera. But there are difficult corners on almost every page, and often several in succession on the same page. They need very careful handling."

Puccini is also on the cards for Alexander Joel's return to the Royal Opera House for eight performances of *Tosca*, opening on 27 May 2019. The revival of Jonathan Kent's production boasts a magnificent cast, with Latvian soprano Kristine Opolais sharing title-role duties with Angela Gheorghiu, Vittorio Grigòlo singing his first Cavaradossi for the company, and Bryn Terfel once again inhabiting the character of Baron Scarpia. The conductor received critical acclaim for *Rigoletto* at Covent Garden earlier this season and is eager to explore yet another landmark of Italian opera there in 2019.

"Like all great verismo operas, *Tosca* demands close attention to timing," observes Alexander Joel. "The Royal Opera Orchestra is quite sensational at responding to the subtlest change of tempo or dynamic nuance. The players are so alert, so ready to follow singers and give them the space they need to sound at their best. I've learnt so much from watching Antonio Pappano rehearsing with them. It was always a major dream for me to conduct at Covent Garden and I'm delighted to be invited back for what will be my fifth production for the company."

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26, 28 November, 1, 3, 6, 8 December 2018 & 29 January, 2, 7, 9, 12, 14, 16 February 2019
English National Opera, London Coliseum

Alexander Joel conductor | **Natalya Romaniw** Mimì | **Jonathan Tetelman** Rodolfo | **Nicholas Lester** Marcello
| **Nadine Benjamin** Musetta | **David Soar/David Ireland** Colline | **Božidar Smiljanić/Matthew Durkan**
Schaunard | **Simon Butteriss** Benoît/Alcindoro | **Jonathan Miller** director | **Natascha Metherell** revival director
| **ENO Orchestra & Chorus**

Puccini *La bohème*

27, 30 May, 4, 7, 10, 15, 17, 20 June 2019
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

Alexander Joel conductor | **Kristine Opolais/Angela Gheorghiu** Tosca | **Vittorio Grigòlo** Cavaradossi | **Bryn**
Terfel/Marco Vratogna Baron Scarpia | **Hubert Francis** Spoletta | **Michael Mofidian** Angelotti | **Jonathan**
Lemalu Sacristan | **Jihoon Kim** Sciarrone | **Jonathan Kent** director | **Royal Opera Chorus** | **Orchestra of the**
Royal Opera House

Puccini *Tosca*