

Star cast join Edward Gardner and Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra in *Peter Grimes* at Royal Festival Hall (30 November 2019)

'The musical responses were virtuosic in terms of balance, precision and ensemble, so that the big set-pieces came across in all their rhythmic and harmonic glory,' review of Bergen Philharmonic's *Peter Grimes* at Edinburgh International Festival, Opera, October 2017



Five-star reviews and a tumultuous standing ovation followed the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra's concert performance of *Peter Grimes* under Edward Gardner at the 2017 Edinburgh International Festival. London audiences have the chance to hear their acclaimed interpretation of Britten's opera at the Royal Festival Hall on Saturday 30 November. The Norwegian orchestra and its Chief Conductor began their journey with *Grimes* two years ago at the Bergen International Festival. They will be joined in London by a compelling cast, with Stuart Skelton in the title-role, Erin Wall as Ellen Orford, Roderick Williams as Captain Balstrode, Susan Bickley as Auntie and Catherine Wyn-Rogers as Mrs Sedley, and by the combined choral weight of the Bergen Philharmonic Chorus, the Edvard Grieg

Kor, the Royal Northern College of Music Choir and Bergen's Collegium Musicum Choir.

"Having done so much Britten in the UK, performing him abroad brings his music into closer, even more exciting relief for me," observes Edward Gardner. "The musicians in Bergen bring something extra to a tradition that we know so well in Britain. I find that incredibly exciting and deeply moving. Like the troubled Grimes they come from a coastal town and there's even a word in Norwegian for the 'monster in the community'. There's something about the piece that completely beguiles the orchestra and chorus."

The Royal Festival Hall performance is set to be prefaced by concert outings for *Peter Grimes* in Bergen and Oslo (21 & 23 November) and sessions to record the work for Chandos. "To be able to record the piece in Bergen with Stuart, who has defined the title-role for this era, is really exciting," says Gardner. "And then to bring our *Grimes* to London, where the work was first performed, is such a privilege."

While conductor, cast, chorus and orchestra share the concert platform, the Bergen *Grimes* creates powerful theatrical effects through director Vera Rostin Wexelsen's use of carefully chosen stage props and movement. Writing in *The Daily Telegraph*, Rupert Christiansen described the impact of its Edinburgh International Festival performance as 'nothing short of shattering', while *The Observer's* Fiona Maddocks concluded that there 'was nothing about this performance that failed to provoke pity or terror or both. The chorus's shout of damnation ("Peter Grimes!") chilled the blood: a crowd of fanatics whose contemporary echoes hardly need spelling out.'

"What's so brilliant about *Grimes* is that it's incredibly honest," notes Edward Gardner. "There's an emotional and dramatic outpouring that feels totally spontaneous and true. I rejoice in that the more I work on *Grimes*. With a great cast, well prepared, it takes on a life of its own. The opera contains many different styles but the dramatic temperature is uniquely well judged at every moment, the pacing is remarkable. We'll give an essence of a stage production at the Royal Festival Hall, as we did before. But *Grimes* is one of those operas that's as good, if not better, in concert than it is on the stage. So many of the ambiguities and so much of the violence is there in the music that you don't want for much that a full stage production can deliver. I love doing *Peter Grimes* in concert and can't wait to get back to it this autumn."

<http://harmonien.no/>

<https://www.southbankcentre.co.uk/whats-on/124764-bergen-philharmonic-orchestra-peter-grimes-2019>

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Saturday 30 November 2019

Southbank Centre, 7pm

Edward Gardner conductor | **Stuart Skelton** tenor, Peter Grimes | **Erin Wall** soprano, Ellen Orford | **Roderick Williams** baritone, Captain Balstrode | **Susan Bickley** alto, Auntie | **Catherine Wyn-Rogers** mezzo-soprano, Mrs Sedley | **Hanna Husáhr** soprano, 1st Niece | **Vibeke Kristensen** soprano, 2nd Niece | **Neal Davies** bass, Swallow | **Marcus Farnsworth** baritone, Ned Keene | **Robert Murray** tenor, Bob Boles | **James Gilchrist** tenor, Reverend Horace Adams | **Barnaby Rea** bass, Hobson | **Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra** | **Bergen Philharmonic Choir** | **Edvard Grieg Kor** | **Royal Northern College of Music Students** | **Choir of Collegiûm Mûsicûm** | **Håkon Matti Skrede** chorus master | **Vera Rostin Wexelsen** stage direction

Britten *Peter Grimes*

Presented in collaboration with Bergen National Opera. Originally presented in 2017, in collaboration with Bergen International Festival and Bergen National Opera.