



WEXFORD  
FESTIVAL OPERA



# THE VEILED PROPHET

# THE VEILED PROPHET

CHARLES VILLIERS STANFORD (1852–1924)

Grand opera in three acts

Libretto by W. Barclay Squire after Moore

Sung in English

*Presented by Heritage Music Productions  
in association with Wexford Festival Opera*

First performance 2 June 1881, Hoftheater, Hanover

New performing edition by Jeremy Dibble

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Caliph Mahadi .....	THOMAS D HOPKINSON
Mokanna .....	SIMON MECHLIŃSKI
Zelica .....	SINÉAD CAMPBELL WALLACE
Fatima .....	MAIRÉAD BUICKE
Azim .....	GAVAN RING <sup>†</sup>
Abdullah .....	JOHN MOLLOY
A Young Watchman .....	DOMINICK FELIX

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Conductor .....	DAVID BROPHY
Producer .....	UNA HUNT
Videographer .....	ROBERTO RECCHIA
Stage Manager .....	EMMA KEHOE
Répétiteur .....	TINA CHANG
Video Recording .....	TED MORAN
Surtitles .....	ELIZABETH DWRAL

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Chorus of Wexford Festival Opera  
ERROL GIRDLESTONE *Chorus Master*

TU Dublin Conservatoire Chorus  
STEPHEN WALLACE *Chorus Master*  
AOIFE O'SULLIVAN *Répétiteur*

Orchestra of Wexford Festival Opera  
FIONNUALA HUNT *Concertmaster*

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MONDAY 28 OCTOBER – 5 P.M.



RTÉ lyric fm



## Synopsis

The suppliants of Mokanna, the Veiled Prophet, are gathered in a hall in his palace. His slave Abdullah brings news of defeat at the hands of the Caliph Mahadi. Mokanna appoints the warrior Azim to lead an army against the enemy. The scene changes to the harem, where the priestess Zelica watches the troops making ready and recognises Azim as her former beloved. Mokanna appears and is revealed to Zelica as a demon, but he reminds her that they are joined by an eternal oath. The second act takes place in the harem, where the chief slave Fatima and the other women are preparing to receive Azim. Abdullah leads him in and Azim finds himself alone, but Zelica enters and the lovers are reunited. He persuades her to flee with him, but Mokanna intercepts them. Azim's sword breaks on the demon's body, and he runs off. The final act takes place at night in the besieged city, where the disaffected populace is preparing to revolt. Mokanna reveals himself among them, and demonstrates his power by apparently causing the moon to rise. They are convinced, and Mokanna invites them into the palace to drink with him – but the cups are poisoned. Zelica and Fatima enter, awaiting rescue by Azim. Fatima leaves, and Zelica sings of her hope, but is brought up short by the groans of Mokanna's victims dying in the palace. The Prophet now descends and offers Zelica a fatal cup, which she refuses. As dawn breaks Azim rushes in to protect Zelica. As he and Mokanna wrestle on the ground the gates are opened and the Caliph's army enters. Rather than be captured, Mokanna stabs himself.

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### PRE-PERFORMANCE TALKS

Una Hunt: *Adapting Thomas Moore's Lalla Rookh for the Operatic Stage*  
3–3.45 p.m. | Jerome Hynes Theatre

Jeremy Dibble: *Stanford's Veiled Prophet: A Pioneering Landmark  
in English-Language Opera*  
3.45–4.30 p.m. | Jerome Hynes Theatre

# Stanford's *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*: an opera with a contemporary resonance

JEREMY DIBBLE

## STANFORD AND OPERA

Stanford always retained a special place in his heart for the idiom of opera. As a teenager in Dublin during the 1860s the visits of the Royal Italian Opera Company, the Italian Opera Company and the Pyne Harrison Company (who sang in English) were high points in his musical calendar, whether it was sitting in the audience at the Theatre Royal, standing in the wings or obtaining the autographs of the great singers of the day. As a Cambridge student, he almost certainly followed the opera in London, and after Trinity College granted him leave to study in Leipzig and Berlin during the last six months of 1874, 1875 and 1876, he frequented the opera in both cities as well as in Dresden. This was an auspicious time for both French and German opera. In Paris Bizet's *Carmen* scandalised its first audiences in March 1875 with its breaking of convention, and the following year many of Europe's most prominent musicians turned up to hear the three cycles of *Der Ring des Nibelungen* at Bayreuth. Stanford, who was berated in a Bond Street music shop by George Macfarren, then Professor of Music at Cambridge, for attending, formed his own independent opinions on the four music dramas. He admired a good deal of the music, the fine orchestration, and the symphonic role of the orchestra, but he criticised the excessive length of the dramatic conception (Liszt, who sat in front of him, spent much of the time 'in the welcoming arms of Morpheus') and disliked the ubiquity of the leitmotifs.

After he became established as the organist of Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1877, Stanford was eager to begin his first operatic project. *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan* (1879) – 'an Irishman's work on an Irish poet's story', he told his former Dublin teacher, Robert Prescott Stewart. Written originally in English, it was first



Charles Villiers Stanford (1852-1924)

staged in German in Hanover in 1881. A second opera, *Savonarola* (1884), also written in English, received its first hearing in Hamburg in 1884 before it was disastrously staged in London. The 1880s witnessed a unique production of English operas under the aegis of Carl Rosa for whom Stanford produced *The Canterbury Pilgrims* (1885), a more Mozartian style of work, in 1885. After abandoning an opera on Hoffmann's *The Miner of Falun* in 1888, he did not complete another work in the idiom until 1893 when he produced *Lorenza* (1894), his only *dramma lirico*, which he hoped might be performed at La Scala and published by Ricordi. Neither hope materialised. His greatest success was with his 'romantic comic opera', *Shamus O'Brien* (1895), a brilliant two-act opera with spoken dialogue, based on a character from the Irish rebellion of 1798. It was hugely

successful under Henry Wood in London in 1896, toured the whole of the United Kingdom including Ireland in 1896, enjoyed a second season in London before moving to Broadway, New York, and Sydney, Australia. (It was later translated into German for performances in Breslau.) After an abortive attempt to write a second comic opera, *Christopher Patch, the Barber of Baghdad*, in 1897, he enjoyed modest success with a setting of Julian Sturgis's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* at Covent Garden in 1901 and Leipzig the following year.

In the years leading up to the production of *Much Ado*, Stanford had campaigned tirelessly for the establishment of a national opera house in London. Stanford's conviction was, in part, based on the notion that a national opera house was a symbol of prestige; however, he also believed that London, and Britain in general, required such a professional institution to strengthen the nation's musical infrastructure for the musicians it was producing in its conservatories. At the Royal College of Music, where he taught composition, he promoted the Opera Class to such a degree of professionalism where its annual productions became a fixture of the London season. What is more, classics of the repertoire, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *The Water-Carriers*, *Fidelio*, *Der Freischütz* and *Hänsel und Gretel*, were staged in English, a vital component in Stanford's campaign to bring opera before a new public. This combination of aims fuelled his ambition to attract municipal and state subvention, particularly after the London County Council was founded in 1898. Despite broad artistic support, the LCC demurred, and while the debate about funding reached the House of Commons in 1902, the question of state subvention was shelved.

Nevertheless, Stanford was undeterred and continued to crusade for a national opera house until his death in 1924. He also continued to compose opera. His adaptation of Sheridan's *The Critic* (1915), a wonderfully entertaining piece for singers and actors, was staged in London in 1916. That same year he completed his last opera, arguably his great operatic masterpiece, *The Travelling Companion*.

## STANFORD AND THE VEILED PROPHET

The singers one and all worked for the piece and not for themselves. There was no discontent, no requests for vocal emendations or additions to appease any individual singer. The orchestra, of which the violinists were mostly old pupils of Joachim, was one of the best in Germany. The players spared time even for individual study. On one morning I heard a curious sound in the dark theatre, and peering round from the stage I saw the drummer all alone practising the entire opera by himself ... After the first performance, Frank stood still in the street, took off his broad wide-awake, made a low bow and said, 'Denken Sie mal, meine Herrn und Damen, die Oper ist ja aufgeführt.'

Charles Villiers Stanford:  
*Pages from an Unwritten Diary*

Stanford completed the score of *The Veiled Prophet* on 8 February 1879 in Cambridge where, until then, he had held the full-time position of organist and choirmaster in Trinity College Chapel. After returning from his studies in Germany in January 1877, he had turned his thoughts to improving the chapel music, to expanding the profile of the Cambridge University Musical Society (for which he became principal conductor in 1871) and to advancing his reputation as a composer. His studies in Leipzig with Reinecke, and Berlin with Kiel, had broadened his technique and aspiration considerably and, by the time he began to compose *The Veiled Prophet* in 1877, he was the author of the choral work *The Resurrection*, a symphony (which took second place in the Alexandra Palace Prize in 1876), songs, piano music and a cello sonata. The famous 'Stanford in B flat' for the Anglican liturgy would not be written for another two years.

Composed with an English libretto by William Barday Squire, *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan* was offered to Carl Rosa in London, but Rosa was unable to take it on because of too many other commitments, and he could see from the score that the work would be a major challenge to perform. 'I strongly recommend you to have it produced in Germany,' Rosa recommended; 'its success will (unfortunately) have much greater chances here if accepted abroad.' Writing to Prescott Stewart, Stanford opined 'there is

unfortunately no opening for a Prophet (even a "veiled prophet") who writes operas in his own country; so perforce I must come to the land of north Teutons.' After visiting various opera houses in Germany, Stanford achieved an acceptance from Hanover. This was a major coup for the young Irishman, and he hoped that as many of his friends could come to northern Germany to hear it, above all his Cambridge mentor, Canon Percy Hudson: 'The opera is fixed for February 6 or 8. The rehearsals on the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th, so now you know the time and calculate how late you can make up your mind whether you can come. Do please try. It will rob us of a great big pleasure if you can't. Everybody concerned, Frank says, is immensely hot about the work and determined to make it go well, even the singers who are not in the cast.'

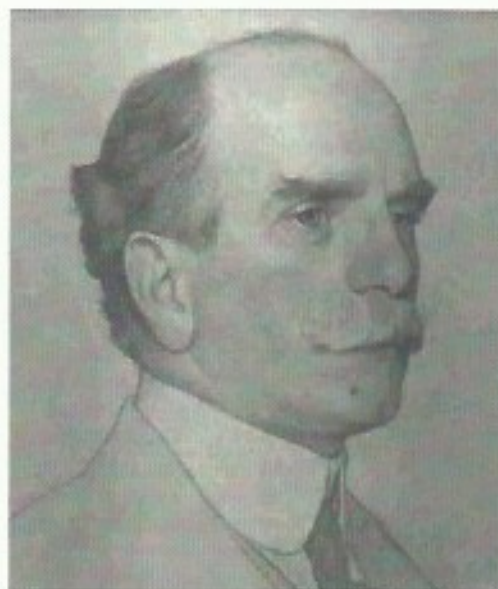
The opera was in fact given three performances there on 6 and 11 February and 3 May 1881 in a German translation,

*Der verschleierte Profet*, by its conductor, Ernst Frank. Some years later, after Stanford made some revisions to the score, it was performed on one occasion only, on 26 July 1893 at Covent Garden in an Italian translation by Giannandrea Mazzucato (when it was still common to perform all opera in London in the Italian language). Tonight's performance will be of the version performed in Hanover (where Stanford made quite a lot of small revisions to the manuscript), but it will be the first time the opera will be sung in English, the language the composer intended.

Perhaps typical of Stanford's youthful ambition, *The Veiled Prophet* was conceived on a grand scale with an overture, processional music and ballet not to mention substantial arias and

ensemble music. A good deal of Act I is taken up with spectacle as Mokanna, Abdullah (his closest disciple) and his followers (the male chorus) gird themselves to face the Caliph. The entry of the tenor, Azim, a new convert, ushers in the first ensemble piece, a trio for him, Abdullah and Mokanna and to this the chorus is conjoined as the entire body proclaim their hope for freedom.

An important sub-plot of the opera is initiated in Scene 4 when Zelica, Mokanna's virgin priestess, recognises her former lover, Azim, among Mokanna's army. Her aria, a touching lament, expresses her fears that he might be killed in battle. Her concerns, however, are discovered by Mokanna who has designs on Zelica himself. This we observe in the more extended symphonic dialogue between Zelica and Mokanna in Scene 5 which owes much to the more Wagnerian music of Acts III and IV of Schumann's *Genoveva*, a work Stanford greatly admired.



William Barclay Squire, *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan* librettist.

In Act II scene 1, in the harem of the palace, the female chorus is joined by Fatima, Mokanna's chief slave. She has heard Zelica's news of Azim and plans to aid her. Abdullah's fine Schumannesque 'hunting' aria in Scene 2 explains to Azim how Mokanna derives pleasure from pursuing his converts. This is complemented by a passionate aria, imbued with Zelica's theme (from her lament in Act I) as Azim attempts to seek out his beloved. Despairing, he is reassured by the chorus of spirits whose music acts as a prelude to the central ballet. Delicately scored, this portion of the opera suggests that Stanford was well acquainted with the operatic work of Delibes and Bizet. At its heart is Fatima's song 'There's a bower of roses', a haunting lyric coloured by exotic Neapolitan inflexions in the melody and

harmony. This became the best known extract of the opera and was widely performed during Stanford's lifetime. Scene 5, the longest of the six scenes in Act II, features Azim and Zelica as they are reunited in an extended multi-sectional symphonic structure worthy of Wagner. In an impassioned aria, Azim begs Zelica to forget the past and escape with him; as is evident from the orchestral interjections of Mokanna's theme, Zelica is conflicted and exhorts Azim to flee. But Azim is not to be deterred, and the two join to sing an impressive love duet which reveals that Stanford had learned much from Act II of *Tristan und Isolde* with its pedal points and incremental climaxes. As Azim and Zelica embrace, they are observed by Mokanna who has murderous intentions. In the rapid action of Scene 6, Azim confronts Mokanna, but his attempt to kill him is abortive.

The beginning of Act III is peaceful as the watchman paces up and down the wall, but we are nevertheless reminded by the sound of the Caliph's trumpets that an attack is imminent. Scenes 2 and 3 provide a series of imposing ensembles for chorus and soloists. In the former, Abdullah and his men sense Mokanna's betrayal; in the latter Mokanna performs a visual 'miracle' to convince his feeble followers to return to the fold. The 'miracle' itself is a *tour de force* of orchestral and choral writing. In sending his duped followers back into the palace to take refreshment, he cynically announces, in a gruesome act of revenge that all the draughts are poisoned. Meanwhile, in Scene 5, Zelica and Fatima sing a memorable duet ('O joy, O delight!') as they await the arrival of Azim and the Caliph's army. Fatima exits to leave Zelica alone in Scene 6 to plead deliverance from Mokanna's oath in a second solo aria. Her pleadings are accosted by the sounds of Mokanna's followers as they emerge in agony, dying from the poison. Zelica hides, as Mokanna comes forward in Scene 7 to sing his *cortège*-like monologue (music we hear at the beginning of the overture), full of malice and vengeance. As he pursues Zelica, music from their colloquy in Act I returns together with the recapitulation of many of the central character themes. This time, however, with the arrival of Azim in Scene 8, Zelica is defiant

and refuses to drink poison as an act of suicide with Mokanna who this time is overcome by Azim. Yet, in a final gesture of defiance in the final scene, Mokanna escapes his captors, removes his veil and commits suicide, leaving the city safe for the Caliph to make his entrance in an uplifting ensemble for chorus and soloists ('The dawn draweth nigh'). In a gesture of triumph, Azim lays his sword at the foot of the Caliph.

Stanford's first opera was a substantial and pioneering achievement. Not for some time had a British composer written a work on such a grand scale, with such musical ambition, and with such confidence in his own technical powers, and few native composers, save perhaps for Balfe, could boast of performances in a European theatre such as Hanover. What is more, no native composer had conceived such a grand operatic scheme in English for the contemporary stage. For Stanford, of course, it was equally important that his first opera was based on literature by an Irish writer, Thomas Moore. He may well have been aware that Moore had based his poem on a true story of the late eighth-century Persian prophet, but he could have had little idea that some of the central themes of his opera – fanaticism, the religious sect, mass death by poison – could have had such a chilling resonance today (Jim Jones's apocalyptic cult and the Jonestown massacre come to mind, as does the disaster of the Waco siege). Tonight's performance will be the first time Stanford's colourful and original opera has been heard in over 120 years. It promises to be a highly rewarding and enriching experience.

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After completing his PhD on Parry's music at Southampton University, **Jeremy Dibble** lectured in music at University College, Cork, for six years before moving to Durham University in 1993 where he is now a Professor of Music. A specialist on British and Irish music of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he is the author of several monographs. As President of the Stanford Society he has devoted much time as a writer and editor to Stanford's music.

## The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan – oriental horror with distinct Irish resonances

UNA HUNT

Opportunities to experience operas by historical Irish composers such as Michael William Balfe (1808–1870), William Vincent Wallace (1812–1865) and Charles Villiers Stanford (1852–1924) – the composer of tonight’s opera – are rare events. Nonetheless, interest in the works of these composers seems to be growing, although the path to resurrecting their operas remains fraught with difficulty. A scoping report on four key Irish operas prepared for the Arts Council in 2018 reveals that the orchestral materials are seldom complete or readily available which, perhaps, goes some of the way to explaining the apparent neglect. It also points towards another problem – without a consistent stream of performances, recordings and opportunities to produce such work, the achievements of these and other Irish composers cannot be properly assessed, and their contribution to the greater world of opera remains fugitive.

Not surprisingly, a certain gloom settled around Ireland’s historical opera composers although their stars are now beginning to rise. In 2008, Balfe’s Italian opera, *Falstaff*, was presented in a landmark performance at the National Concert Hall, Dublin and a CD released by RTE lyric fm. More recently, Robert O’Dwyer’s Irish language opera, *Eithne*, was recorded and performed by Opera Theatre Company and Balfe’s operetta, *The Sleeping Queen*, received an update at Wexford Festival Opera in 2013 and has since been presented in its original form at the National Concert Hall, the Blackwater Valley Opera Festival and the Mananan Festival in the Isle of Man. In Britain, some welcome CDs by Victorian Opera Northwest include Balfe’s *Satanella* and *The Maid of Artois*, and Wallace’s *Lurline* among others. Richard Bonyngé, the conductor on these recordings, has



Lalla Rookh, coloured by Hannah Kelly

proved a constant and unwavering advocate for returning the works of these composers to the public arena.

Stanford’s operatic profile has also been growing steadily. One of his operas was programmed in the early days of Wexford Festival opera – based on the Shakespeare comedy, *Much Ado about Nothing* (1964). This work was revived last August at the Leeds Opera Festival while Stanford’s last opera, *The Travelling Companion*, was given in several British venues last year by New Sussex



Opera; a recording of its last performance has just been released by Somm records. *The Veiled Prophet* itself was Stanford's first foray into the genre composed some four decades before *The Travelling Companion*. The overture and ballet music from tonight's opera were issued by RTÉ on a Naxos-Marco Polo recording in 1997 along with its most famous song 'There's a Bower of Roses by Bendemeer's Stream', while the beautiful love duet from Act II was presented at the Gems of Irish Opera concerts, National Library of Ireland, in 2008. All of this activity underlines a gathering interest in Stanford's operas culminating in this evening's performance as the first-ever complete presentation of *The Veiled Prophet* in the English language. Bizarrely, the premiere took place in Hanover as *Der Verschleierte Profet*, and the subsequent revival at Covent Garden was in Italian (*Il Profeta velato*). This is also the first full performance of the opera to take place in more than one hundred and twenty-five years. Video and audio recordings form a strong archival element to the production, and the audio will be offered for broadcast across the European Broadcasting Union by RTÉ lyric fm.

The storyline of the opera has distinct Irish connections as it was written by national songwriter and poet, Thomas Moore. *The Veiled Prophet* forms one of four narrative poems contained within the frame tale of Moore's oriental romance, *Lalla Rookh* (1817). The magnificent venue of the National Opera House is also worthy of note due to Moore's particular connections with Wexford. Just a short stroll from the opera house is the Thomas Moore Tavern believed to be the childhood home of Moore's mother, Anastasia Codd.

Moore's *Irish Melodies*, a collection of 124 drawing-room songs written to Irish airs, was so popular in the poet's lifetime that it made him one of the most famous Irishmen of his day. But, next to those songs, *Lalla Rookh* was his greatest triumph bringing with it significant international recognition. It also formed the storyline of several other operas prior to Stanford's, including works by Gaspare Spontini, Félicien David and Anton Rubinstein. Most famously, it was set, in part, by Robert Schumann in the cantata, *Das Paradies und*



Zelica discovering the Veiled Prophet, coloured by Hannah Kelly

*die Peri* (*Paradise and the Peri*). Schumann was a devotee of Moore and believed his poetry was made for music, even in its German translation.

*Lalla Rookh* took its inspiration from the fashion for orientalism in Europe prevalent since the 1700s. Moore was a voracious reader and was surely motivated by works such as the enormously-successful translations from the Arabic of the *One Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Nights* which betray certain similarities. Included within the Arabian stories are children's tales familiar to all – *Sindbad the Sailor*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* and *Aladdin* to name just three. The clever storyteller character of the surrounding tale, Scheherazade, who avoids death by spinning out the episodes related to the monarch Shahryar is mirrored in Feramorz, the minstrel protagonist of *Lalla Rookh*, and ultimately in Moore himself. As Moore had no personal experience of the east,



Zelica, coloured by Hannah Kelly

he relied on works such as *The Arabian Nights* to help him create his exotic world, and his nineteenth-century readers couldn't get enough of it.

The main narrative of the frame tale concerns Princess Lalla Rookh (the name means "tulip cheek") who is on a journey from Delhi to Cashmere where she is to be married. Along the way, the minstrel Feramorz regales the princess with his colourful stories, the first of these being the subject of Stanford's opera. Mokanna, the veiled prophet, has lost an eye in combat and hides his deformity under a veil while passing himself off as a god. He grows powerful and gains many followers – something which prompts the Caliph Mahadi to send an army to depose him. When his followers begin to falter, Mokanna administers poison to them before killing himself. Unmistakable is the uncanny resemblance to some modern cult tragedies, but this gruesome tale

also leads to a number of further twists in Moore's original story. Mokanna throws himself into the 'liquid flame' so that no trace of his body can ever be found – a prophetic reminder of Adolph Hitler's last wishes to have his body and that of Eva Braun doused in petrol and burned. Running alongside the cataclysmic events is the love story between Mokanna's priestess Zelica, and Azim, his warrior and proselyte. However, Moore's original poem is not mirrored in the conclusion of the opera. When Zelica deliberately dons the veil discarded by Mokanna in order to hasten her own death, she is mistakenly killed by Azim. Stanford's opera, on the other hand, concludes with a happier ending where, despite the preceding carnage, the lovers are reunited.

From the beginning, *Lalla Rookh* infuses the scene with luscious sights and sounds –

In that delightful Province of the Sun,  
The first of Persian lands he shines upon,  
Where all the loveliest children of his beam,  
Flow'rets and fruits, blush over every stream,  
And, fairest of all streams, the Murga roves  
Among Merou's bright palaces and groves

Almost immediately, the shadow of Mokanna casts itself across this utopian kingdom with warmongering and vile deeds, so much so that the critic at the opera's first performance noted 'it is remarkable that the story which, of all the episodic poems in [Moore's] work exhibits the greatest possibilities for dramatic treatment should have been hitherto almost entirely overlooked'. According to Moore's biographer, Ronan Kelly, contemporary readers recognised the tyrannical terror that followed the French Revolution in the narrative but closer to these shores the ghost of Daniel O'Connell has been perceived in the demagogue figure of Mokanna. Symbolism aside, the opera's libretto by William Barclay Squire retains the fragrance of the orient while making a gesture towards prevailing sensibilities by toning down the more racy elements of Moore's story. Perhaps, late Victorian audiences would not have tolerated the saucy antics of the inmates of the Harem who appear rather more chaste in the opera than Moore's erotically-charged

nymphs. Moore was actually considered a risqué poet in his day, a fact confirmed by an incident related by his literary friend, Lord Strangford. Strangford's mother, who was secretly reading *Lalla Rookh* declared herself "shocked at my own wickedness in admiring anything ... so much as I do [Moore's] Poem".

Mokanna's Harem is the setting for the second act of Stanford's opera, which acts as a foil to the dark melodrama of the other two acts. Here, the inhabitants disport themselves in an effort to tempt Azim, who nonetheless remains faithful to the memory of Zelica. The most famous song of the opera 'There's a Bower of Roses by Bendemeer's Stream' is sung by Fatima, the Harem's chief slave, bounded on either side by two ballets which form the surrounding scena. This song, along with the other musical interludes in *Lalla Rookh*, was published separately in parallel with its latter-day counterpart in *The Veiled Prophet* opera. Moore's song may have owed some of its enduring success to the accompanying air – the same one used by Percy French in 'The Mountains of Mourne' but, in any case, it has been sung down the years by many a famous tenor –

There's a bower of roses by Bendemeer's stream,  
And the nightingale sings round it all the day long;  
In the time of my childhood 'twas like a  
sweet dream,  
To sit in the roses and hear the bird's song.  
That bower and its music I never forget,  
But oft when alone in the bloom of the year,  
I think – is the nightingale singing there yet?  
Are the roses still bright by the calm Bendemeer?  
No, the roses soon wither'd that hung o'er  
the wave,  
But some blossoms were gather'd, while freshly  
they shone,  
And a dew was distill'd from their flowers,  
that gave  
All the fragrance of summer, when summer  
was gone.



Azim and Zelica (original engraving)

There are decided overtones of one of the most famous Irish Melodies – 'The Last Rose of Summer' in this song. The symbolism of the withered rose was a favoured motif of Moore's signifying martyrdom. In his setting of this text, Stanford employed a melody with a folksy modal twist – perhaps in homage to Moore as its creator. There's no way of knowing what Moore would have thought of his story and freshly reworked song appearing in such a grand opera as Stanford's *Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*. Secretly though, he might have taken great pleasure from the extended massed chorus scenes and Stanford's rich orchestration which complement so beautifully the endlessly-fascinating *Lalla Rookh*.

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All images come from *Lalla Rookh, an Oriental Romance*, by Thomas Moore, esq., Illustrated with Engravings. Published by Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, Paternoster Row, London.

# Artist Biographies



## David Brophy\*

Conductor, Ireland

### *The Veiled Prophet*

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: Conductor (BBC Proms in the Park 2019, BBC and The Ulster Orchestra); Neil Martin Recording, Neil Martin, RTE Concert Orchestra; The Music of Shaun Davey, Shaun Davey, RTE National Symphony Orchestra).

Shaun Davey, RTE National Symphony Orchestra).

FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS: Conductor (Culture Night, RTE Concert Orchestra; Cara O'Sullivan Fundraiser, RTE Concert Orchestra, Clilden Arts Festival, RTE Concert Orchestra).



## Mairéad Buicke\*

Soprano, Ireland

### *The Veiled Prophet*

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: Mimi (*La bohème*, Puccini, RTE National Symphony Orchestra), Musetta (*La bohème*, Puccini, English National Opera), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*, Mozart, English National Opera).



## Sinéad Campbell-Wallace

Soprano, Ireland

### *The Veiled Prophet*

PREVIOUSLY AT WFO: Inez (*Die drei Pintos*, 2003), Princess (*Transformations*, 2006), Monica (*The Medium ShortWork*, 2005), Antonia (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*

*ShortWork*, 2006).

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: Floria Tosca (*Tosca*, Puccini, Theater Regensburg), Agathe (*Der Freischütz*, Weber, Theater Regensburg), Helmwig (*Die Walküre*, Wagner, London Philharmonic Orchestra).

FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS: Floria Tosca (*Tosca*, Puccini, Scottish Opera).



## Tina Chang

Répétiteur, Canada

### *Dorilla in Tempe*

PREVIOUSLY AT WFO: Répétiteur (*L'Oracolo/Mala vita*, 2018; *Margherita*, 2017); Music Director (*Bernstein à la carte ShortWork*, 2018; *La scala di seta ShortWork*, 2017).

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: Pianist/Coach (*A Midsummer Night's Dream/La tragédie de Carmen/Company*, Britten/Brooks/Sondheim, Hawaii Performing Arts Festival), Pianist (*Sanctuary & Storm*, Tawnee Olson/Rebecca Barker, re:Naissance Opera), Répétiteur (*Faust*, Gounod, Vancouver Opera).

FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS: Répétiteur (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Rossini, Vancouver Opera; *Another Brick in the Wall*, Julien Bilodeau & Roger Waters, Vancouver Opera).



## Dominick Felix

Tenor, UK

### *Don Quichotte,* *The Veiled Prophet*

PREVIOUSLY AT WFO: Joe (*La fanciulla del West ShortWork*, 2018).

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: Tiridate (*Racdamisto*, Handel, Guildhall School of Music and Drama), Vaudeмонт (*Iolanta*, Tchaikovsky, Guildhall School of Music and Drama), Vassili (*Mavra*, Stravinsky, Guildhall School of Music and Drama).



## Thomas D Hopkinson

Bass, UK

### *L'inganno Felice,* *The Veiled Prophet*

PREVIOUSLY AT WFO: Monterone (*Rigoletto ShortWork*, 2017); Un capo delle guardie (*Medea*, Cherubini, 2017).

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: The Mourner (*Fantasio*, Offenbach, Garsington Opera); Marchese d'Obigny (*La traviata*, Verdi, Al Biston Festival – Lebanon); Bass Soloist (*Requiem*, Verdi, Oldham Choral Society).

FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS: Bass Soloist (*Elijah*, Mendelssohn, Salford Choral Society & Northern Baroque Sinfonia); Bass Soloist (*The Dream of Gerontius*, Elgar, Burnley Choir).

\*Wexford Festival Opera debut



### Simon Mechliński

Baritone, Poland

#### *The Veiled Prophet, Doctor Miracle*

PREVIOUSLY AT WFO: Luigi (*Il bravo*, 2018), Dr Malatesta (*Don Pasquale ShortWork*, 2018).

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: Eugene Onegin (*Eugene Onegin*,

Tchaikovsky, Toulon Opera), Foka (*The Enchantress*, Tchaikovsky, Lyon Opera), Janusz (*Halka*, Moniuszko, Wrocław Opera).

FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS: Ryx (*Casanova*, Ludomir Rozycki, Warsaw National Philharmonic), Strahlbusch (*Irrlehre*, Schreker, Lyon Opera).



### John Molloy

Bass, Ireland

#### *The Veiled Prophet*

PREVIOUSLY AT WFO: Le Commandeur de Beuprè (*Le Cour de Célimène*, 2011).

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*, Mozart, Northern Ireland Opera/Nevill Holt

Opera), Lindorf/Coppelius/Miracle/Dappertutto (*Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Offenbach, Irish National Opera), Swallow (*Peter Grimes*, Britten, Teatro Comunale di Bologna).

FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS: Don Basilio (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Rossini, Lyric Opera Productions), Quince (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Britten, Scottish Opera).



### Roberto Recchia

Videographer/Director, Italy

#### *The Veiled Prophet, Doctor Miracle*

PREVIOUSLY AT WFO: Director (*Bernstein à la carte ShortWork*, 2018).

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: Director (*Adelson e Salvini*, Bellini, Teatro Massimo Bellini

Catania; *Tutto quello che volevo*, Cinzia Spanò, Teatro dell'Elfo, Milano), Director/Actor (*Futuristi per caso*, Roberto Recchia, Spazio No'ima, Milano).

FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS: Director (*Mettici il cuore*, Corvino/De Vivo, Teatro Coccia, Novara).



### Gavan Ring

Tenor, Ireland

#### *Don Quichotte, The Veiled Prophet*

PREVIOUSLY AT WFO: Lieutenant Gordon (*Silent Night*, 2014), Father Philippe (*The Wandering Scholar ShortWork*, 2014), Marcello (*La bohème ShortWork*, 2010).

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS: Radoski (*Sigismondo*, Rossini, Münchner Rundfunkorchester), L'horloge/Le chat (*L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Ravel, BBC Proms), Frederic (*The Pirates of Penzance*, Gilbert & Sullivan, Cork Opera House).

FORTHCOMING ENGAGEMENTS: Guest Tenor (Viennese New Year Gala, Orchestra of Opera North), Prologue/ Quint cover (*The Turn of the Screw*, Britten, Opera North), Tenor Soloist (*Requiem*, Stanford, RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra).



### Una Hunt

Producer

Una Hunt has had a long and successful career as one of Ireland's most versatile concert pianists which has led to tours in Ireland, the UK, Europe, the USA, and Russia. She has made a particular commitment to rediscovering the music of Ireland's neglected composers and bringing it before new audiences. Her discography includes a substantial collection of world premiere CDs of Irish interest which she has performed widely.

Una is also active in Performance Research and is Professor at Technological University Dublin Conservatoire. She is a distinguished author and has published extensively on the music of Ireland, including a seminal publication on Thomas Moore's Irish Melodies. As an

award-winning broadcaster, she has produced and presented many documentaries on Irish musical figures for RTE lyric fm and among her previous credits are productions of operas by Irish composers which have attracted critical acclaim. Una is looking forward to the ground-breaking presentation of *The Veiled Prophet*, the first opera by Dublin-born composer, Charles Villiers Stanford.