

For more information about Toi Toi Opera or this production of *Suor Angelica & Elegies*, please visit www.toioiopera.com

letters held in their care, written by New Zealanders serving abroad during WWI to their loved ones at home.

Thank you to Archives New Zealand, Auckland War Memorial Museum, Invercargill City Council Archives, National Library of New Zealand, and the family of Len Shepard, for permission to quote in our production from Fry Ltd., exclusive agents for Boosey & Hawkes Music Publishers Ltd. of London.

These performances of *The Rape of Lucretia, Op. 37*, by Benjamin Britten are given by permission of Hal Leonard website: www.mentalhealth.org.nz/get-help

help regarding mental health, we recommend you visit The Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand's This production of *Suor Angelica & Elegies* features a character showing signs of distress. Should you wish to seek

Director
Sara Brodie

as the world emerged from yet another war.

pacifism, premiered in 1946. It was the sole opera at Glyndebourne that year.

at the Metropolitan Opera in 1918. *The Rape of Lucretia*, inspired by Britten's tale of *Suor Angelica* includes his greatest of arias, 'Senza Mamma'. It was first staged Puccini wanted to 'make people cry'; his sister was a nun and the heartbreaking who was killed at the Somme battlefield in 1916.

of the war and the deaths of his friends. Among them was George Butterworth Vaughan Williams composed *Dona nobis pacem* in a direct plea for peace, in the wake Great turmoil inspires great art, and from conflict comes a deeper understanding of New Zealanders at the front.

Suor Angelica, sung in the original Italian, whilst all other words are those New Zealand soldiers and nursing sisters. A narrator guides us through in response to, WWI. The whole is woven together with letters penned by thread of such a diverse program of music is it all was written during, and It is a pleasure to direct this inaugural Toi Toi Opera production. The common Nau mai, haere mai, welcome!

Suor Angelica & Elegies

III. 'Reconciliation'
Cantata: *Dona nobis pacem* – Ralph Vaughan Williams

Anthem for Doomed Youth – Wilfred Owen

6. 'Is My Team Ploughing?'
5. 'The Lads in Their Hundreds'
4. 'Think No More, Lad'
3. 'Look Not In My Eyes'
Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad – George Butterworth

Act I Scene 2: 'Their Spinning Wheel Unwinds'
The Rape of Lucretia, Op. 37 – Benjamin Britten

2. 'When I Was One-and-Twenty'
1. 'Loveliest of Trees'
Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad – George Butterworth

"My dearest Lucia, I don't know where to start this letter..."

ACT II

Interval – 15 Minutes

Suor Angelica (Sister Angelica) – Opera in one act by Giacomo Puccini

I. 'Agnus Dei'
Cantata: *Dona nobis pacem* – Ralph Vaughan Williams

"How I escaped seems a strange miracle yet I have a story stranger still, told to me by a nursing sister..."

ACT I

This production is dedicated to absent friends.



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We would like to thank all those individuals and organisations who have generously provided donations and grants, whether public or private. Without your support and vision this production would not have been possible.

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PUCCINI'S

Suor Angelica & Elegies

Feb 18, 19, 20, 21, 2021 - 7.30pm
Feb 21, 2021 - 2.00pm

The Great Hall
The Arts Centre of Christchurch
Te Matatiki Toi Ora

toioiopera.com

Featuring the music of
Britten, Butterworth &
Vaughan Williams,
with narration by
Sara Brodie



Demurest Angel Stephen Davis 2012

Suor Angelica Synopsis

Sister Angelica, the daughter of a noble Florentine family, has taken the veil in order to atone for her sin – an illicit passion when young which resulted in the birth of an illegitimate child. Years have passed, but she is unable to forget her son.

The strains of an Ave Maria can be heard from the convent chapel. A group of nuns emerges, the Monitress admonishes those who were late for vespers, and sends them into the convent for punishment.

Sister Genevieve observes that the fountain is on the verge of turning gold from the rays of the setting sun, as it always does for three evenings during May, a sign of divine grace from the Blessed Virgin Mary. A melancholy moment follows as the nuns recall a sister who recently passed away. Sister Genevieve suggests that, “Perhaps her soul might desire a libation from the fountain?” Sister Angelica declares that desires only come to fruition for the living – the dead have already fulfilled their earthly purpose and their destinies cannot be changed. Displeased with the theme of the conversation, the Monitress reminds them that, as nuns, all desires are forbidden to them. Sister Genevieve begs to differ – she, for example, yearns to hold a pet lamb. Sister Dolcina also has a wish, to which the nuns laughingly reply that it must be for something tasty to eat. To the amazement of all, Sister Angelica denies wishing for anything (yet all know she has been craving news from her family).

The Nursing Sister rushes in, much distressed – a nun has been stung by a wasp and is in great pain. Sister Angelica swiftly prepares a herbal remedy. The Nursing Sister leaves, praising Sister Angelica’s skill. Two Alms Sisters appear. They mention that a magnificent carriage with a coat-of-arms has arrived at the convent. The Abbess enters and summons Sister Angelica into the hall. Her aunt, the Princess, has come to demand her niece sign away her inheritance in favour of a younger sister, whose fiancé is willing to overlook the family dishonour Sister Angelica caused, so long as she pays for her actions. Unmoved by Sister Angelica’s protests, and her desperate enquiries about her son, the Princess brutally informs her that her son died of fever two years previously.

The document is signed, and the Princess departs. Grieving in the utmost despair, Sister Angelica begs for divine mercy. The nuns depart for the evening. Sister Angelica goes to follow, but then returns to prepare a lethal herbal draught. Bidding a tender farewell to the sisters, she swallows the poison but is suddenly overcome by guilt at having committed the mortal sin of taking her own life. She prays to the Virgin Mary for salvation, and her prayer is answered – as she dies, she sees a miracle – the Virgin Mary appears, along with Sister Angelica’s young son, who runs to embrace her.

Acknowledgements

General

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NZ Opera
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Showbiz Christchurch
Stephen Doig
The Opera Club, Christchurch
The Piano: Centre for Music and the Arts

Costuming

Greg Olsen – Sir Greg Theatrics
Iona Taylor
Michelle Balk – The Malthouse
Miranda Russell – First Scene
Nicky Newman
Rachel O’Brien Hamilton
Susan Saul
Tracey Hollander

Props

Di Brodie
Middleton Grange High School
Showbiz Christchurch
St Andrew’s College
The Court Theatre

Music

Alastair Sands
Christchurch Symphony Orchestra
Christ’s College
Hamish Oliver
Hoekstra Pianos
Ian Thorpe
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Comms & Front of House

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The Star, Christchurch
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Wei Li Jiang
Zara Frazer

Cast

Sister Angelica – Sarah-Jane Rennie
The Princess – Leisa Falconer
The Abbess – Raemon Greenwood
The Monitress – Tara Martin
The Mistress of the Novices – Louisa Pilkington
Sister Genevieve – Katherine Doig
Sister Osmina (*Suor Angelica*) & Bianca (*Elegies*) – Elizabeth Emeleus
Sister Dolcina (*Suor Angelica*) & The Maid (*Elegies*) – Emma Gilkison
The Nursing Sister (*Suor Angelica*) & Female Chorus (*Elegies*) – Margot Button
First Alms Sister – Jillian Hewson
Second Alms Sister – Iona Taylor
First Lay Sister (*Suor Angelica*) & Lucretia (*Elegies*) – Matilda Wickbom
A Novice & Second Lay Sister – Kristina Saul
Sister Lucilla – Rachel O’Brien Hamilton
Sister Chiara – Waitahi McGee
Narrator – Philip Nordt
Soldier-Soloist – Malcolm Leitch
Soldier-Soloist – Alex Robinson
Soldier-Soloist – Rory Sweeney
Angelica’s Son – Cole Moffatt
Chorus – Andy Fu
Chorus – Ian Thomas

Orchestra

Conductor – Mark Hodgkinson
Piano – Alison Holden
Organ & Piano – Jeremy Woodside
Violin (Concertmaster) – Matthew Oswin
Viola – Alastair Sands
Cello – Iain Brandram-Adams
Double Bass – Gerald Oliver
Flute – Susan Dollin
Percussion – Craig Given
Orchestra Manager – Ian Thorpe

Creative Team

Director – Sara Brodie
Production Designer – Mark McEntyre
Lighting Designer – Sheena Baines
Assistant Lighting Designer – Jacob Patchett
Costume Designer – Tina Thomas
Costume Consultant – Bronwyn Corbet
Properties Manager – Christy Lassen
Hair & Makeup Manager – Deirdre Fell

Crew

Production Management – Margot Button, Katherine Doig, Alex Robinson
Stage Manager – Danielle Rackham
Assistant Director – Waitahi McGee
Lighting Operator – Hana Pearce

