



INSTITUTE  
FOR YOUNG  
ARTISTS

news

ISSUE 56 / SUMMER 2020



Anna Stépany and Katherine Aitken, Samling Artist Programme Masterclass, Sage Gateshead. Full story inside.

Photo: Mark Pinder

## 'The first time I read Mansfield Park ... I heard music' Jonathan Dove

The elegant world of Regency England is the setting for this summer's Samling Academy Opera production of *Mansfield Park*.

In this re-imagining of the literary classic by Jane Austen, composer Jonathan Dove's score and the libretto by Alasdair Middleton combine lyricism with witty dialogue. The novel's most memorable dramatic scenes are ideal for the stage, including the lovers' confusions in a garden, scandalous amateur theatricals and a ball which sets all hearts a flutter!

The atmosphere of an 18th-century country house is captured beautifully by Jonathan Dove's piano duet accompaniment. As Dove says, 'Singing around the piano is an entertainment that Jane Austen would immediately have recognised ... The music does not pretend to be exactly of the period, but I hope it suggests to 21st-century ears something of the early 1800s, and the unique world of Jane Austen'.

*Mansfield Park* will be directed by a rising star of the opera world, Harry Fehr, who has led award-winning productions internationally, including at the Royal Opera House, San Francisco Opera,

Shanghai Opera House and at the Edinburgh International Festival. He will be supported by Samling Artists Miranda Wright as artistic associate and vocal coach, Ian Tindale as music director, pianist Lana Bode and Academy choreographer Mandy Demetriou.

Professional tenor and former Academy Singer Alex Banfield will also join the cast. Alex is originally from Morpeth in Northumberland and he sang the title role in our first ever Samling Academy Opera, *Albert Herring* in 2013. He is currently with Opera North where his most recent appearance as Sam Kaplan in *Street Scene* by Kurt Weill was praised by *The Guardian* for its 'wonderful depth of feeling'.

Alex will be singing the role of Henry Crawford in *Mansfield Park*, offering guidance and support to our less experienced singers in what for many will be their first taste of being in a fully staged opera.

Our grateful thanks to everyone who contributed to our fundraising appeal. Thanks to your generous help, we have reached our target to unlock £10,000 in matched funding.

### As we publish this newsletter, we don't yet know what the coming months will bring in the wake of coronavirus (COVID-19).

At Samling Institute we are doing all we can as a small team to ensure that the projects we have planned for later in the year come to fruition. Our Academy Singers have been diligently learning their roles for their summer opera production over the past few months and working with our creative team. So that this work continues, we are enabling distance learning, including vocal and music coaching via video link. If necessary, we plan to postpone rather than cancel, as they have all worked so hard.

We have been heartened to see how our Samling Artists and Academy Singers have found ways to collaborate from afar, sharing their digital performances on social media. They remind us every day just how vital and important music is in bringing us all together.

To all those who are continuing to support our work inspiring musical excellence in young people – Samling Friends, private individuals and trusts and foundations – our grateful thanks.

Karon Wright  
Artistic and  
Executive Director



**INSIDE THIS ISSUE** Samling Shorts with Harry Fehr, Introducing the Bertrams, Samling Futures, Alumni Success, Samling Artist Programme **Back page:** Dates for your diary!

## WHY SAMLING INSTITUTE?

'I don't think I would have had the courage to pursue a career in singing without Samling's support and encouragement. It has given me a career that has brought so much meaning to my life, and I am grateful to Samling for its role in that.'

*Alex Banfield, tenor, Samling Academy Singer 2012/2013*

## SAMLING SHORTS

# Harry Fehr

Harry Fehr studied philosophy at the University of Nottingham and for a postgraduate diploma in theatre directing at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts. He was a member of the Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and was revival, associate or assistant director on over twenty productions for the Royal Opera, also reviving its productions of *Così fan tutte* for Seattle Opera and *La traviata* in Guangzhou, China. He has directed operas across Europe and the UK and we're delighted that he joins us to direct our Samling Academy Opera production of Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park*.



Photo: Alex Brenner

### My first experience of opera was ...

I was in 'Amahl & the Night Visitors' and 'Dido & Aeneas' shortly before my voice broke, and also saw an amateur production of excerpts from 'The Marriage of Figaro' at around the same time. But the first professional production I saw was 'Macbeth' at ENO when I was about 14.

### I became an opera director because ...

Some directors work in both opera and straight theatre. But when I started out, I felt I had a huge amount to learn about the opera world, so I focused on that. And soon I was getting work in that world, so I just pursued it. Sometimes I wish I'd made an effort to work in straight theatre too - but then again, I really believe in the power of the operatic art form.

### The last piece of music I listened to was ...

I'm listening to some Vivaldi cello concertos as I write this. I listen to a lot of opera, but sometimes I just want to hear something which doesn't feel like work.

### The first thing I do when I look at a new opera is ...

If it's a piece which I really don't know at all already (as was the case with 'Mansfield Park') I read the libretto.

### If I weren't directing opera, I'd be ...

In my fantasy world, an architect - but I know I'd never be good enough, so maybe an architectural historian.

### The opera I dream of directing is ...

I love Janáček, so 'Kát'a Kabanová' or 'Jenifa' would be very high on my list. I also love Mozart and want to do 'Idomeneo' and 'La clemenza di Tito'. But there are so many others too! 'Alcina', 'La traviata', 'Don Carlos', 'Bluebeard's Castle', 'Elektra'...

### The *Mansfield Park* character I'd most like to take tea with is ...

Mary Crawford - no question. She may be somewhat amoral, but I secretly admire her pragmatism. And I think she'd be great company!

### I am enjoying working with Samling Academy because ...

It's so satisfying to see young singers grow gradually less inhibited, and really start to create characters.



## Introducing the Bertrams

The central character of *Mansfield Park* is Fanny Price, a poor relation, who is sent to live with her uncle Sir Thomas Bertram and his family.

Fanny's aunts and her cousins Maria and Julia take advantage of her simplicity and gentle goodness. Only Sir Thomas's son Edmund sees Fanny's true qualities, but their relationship is put to the test by the scheming Crawford siblings, Henry and Mary.

To find out more about this summer's Academy Opera production, cast list and venue updates please visit [samling.org.uk](http://samling.org.uk)

Left to right: George Evans-Thomas (Sir Thomas), Tia Radix-Callixte (Fanny Price) and Patrick Owston (Edmund Bertram)

Photo: Jen Hart



'Thank you so much for such an incredible, genuinely life-altering week. I learnt more than I could possibly have imagined and will take those skills with me for the rest of my career.'  
**Katherine Aitken, mezzo-soprano, Samling Artist Programme March 2020**

## Samling Futures

Hotfoot from the main stage of the Royal Opera House, Samling Artist tenor Nicky Spence visited three schools in the North East in February as part of our Samling Futures initiative.

Nicky led a set of lively masterclasses with current Samling Academy Singers and students from the participating schools, with support from Samling Artist pianist Somi Kim. There were also group activities and plenty of questions for Nicky, Somi and the Academy Singers.

The sessions at The King Edward VI School in Morpeth, Egglecliffe School in Stockton-on-Tees and Sacred Heart Catholic High School in Newcastle were designed to raise awareness of classical singing and to illustrate the opportunities



Nicky Spence working with Samling Academy Singer Ben Ryan and Sacred Heart Catholic High School student Clare Aspray. Photo: Mark Pinder

available through Samling Academy. In addition to the 185 participating students, Samling Futures reached a wider audience thanks to headline coverage on BBC Look North and in the regional press.

'Classical singing techniques, operatic acting skills and progression through the Samling programmes



were superbly presented with great humour, thoughtfulness and musical depth – a great achievement in just one afternoon,' said Robin Forbes, head of music at The King Edward VI School, Morpeth.

We look forward to welcoming singers from all three schools who have gained places on Samling Academy's next programme starting in October and we will be reaching out to more young people through Samling Futures next year.



Samling Artist Programme Masterclass and Concert at Sage Two, 7 March 2020  
 Photo: Mark Pinder



## Samling Artist Programme

Samling Institute welcomed back mezzo-soprano Anna Stéphany as the first Samling Artist singer to lead our week-long masterclass programme, reinforcing the virtuous circle of development that drives all our activities.

Anna and fellow leaders Caroline Dowdle and James Garnon led a lively and illuminating public masterclass at Sage Gateshead with eight new Samling Artists – soprano Catrin Woodruff, mezzo-sopranos Katherine Aitken and Ema Nikolovska, tenor Liam Bonthron, baritones Edward Jowle and Nicholas Mogg and pianists Gary Beecher and Camille Lemonnier.

## Alumni Success

### Alexandra Lowe (Samling Artist 2018) prize-winner in the Glyndebourne Opera Cup

Alexandra sang arias from *Otello*, *Faust* and *Don Giovanni* in the final, taking second prize. This high-profile competition was broadcast live on Sky Arts, presented by Chris Addison and Danielle de Niese.

Samling Artist baritones Jerome Knox and Morgan Pearce reached the final of the London Handel Singing Competition originally scheduled for the end of March.

Recent critically acclaimed recordings by Samling Artists include *Lines Written During a*

*Sleepless Night* by Louise Alder and Joseph Middleton, which received five-star reviews in The Telegraph and The Guardian and was named CD of the week by The Sunday Times; *Janáček The Diary of One Who Disappeared* with tenor Nicky Spence, which received Gramophone Magazine's Recording of the Month and is a finalist in the BBC Music Magazine Awards; and *Clytemnestra* by Ruby Hughes with BBC National Orchestra of Wales which received a five-star review in The Times.



Samling Artist soprano Alexandra Lowe in the final of Glyndebourne Opera Cup

Photo: Richard Hubert Smith © Glyndebourne Productions Ltd.



## SAMLING ACADEMY OPERA

### *Mansfield Park*, Jonathan Dove

#### Friday 17 July – Friday 24 July

Pay a call on the Bertram family in their grand home at Mansfield Park in Jonathan Dove's sparkling chamber opera adaptation of Jane Austen's novel.

#### Cast

Tia Radix-Callixte Fanny Price  
 Jenni-Mae Wardman Lady Bertram  
 George Evans-Thomas Sir Thomas Bertram  
 Emma Burke Maria Bertram  
 Rachel Bird Julia Bertram  
 Patrick Owston Edmund Bertram  
 Megan Hill Aunt Norris  
 Hannah McKay Mary Crawford  
 Alex Banfield Henry Crawford  
 Nathanael Thomas-Atkin Mr Rushworth

Harry Fehr director

#### Samling Artists

Miranda Wright artistic associate and vocal coach  
 Ian Tindale music director and pianist  
 Lana Bode pianist

Mandy Demetriou choreography  
 Alex Edwards lighting

#### The Witham, Barnard Castle

Friday 17 July, 7.30pm

Tickets £16, £10 students / under 25  
 thewitham.org.uk | 01833 631107

#### Birdsall House, Ryedale Festival

Monday 20 July, 4pm

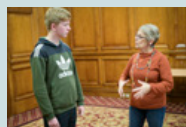
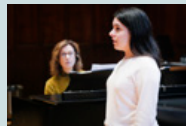
Tickets (on sale from 29 April) £20, £10 under 18  
 ryedalefestival.com | 01751 475777

#### Sage Two, Sage Gateshead

Thursday 23 July & Friday 24 July, 7.30pm

Tickets £18, £10 students / under 25  
 sagegateshead.com | 0191 443 4661

Tickets are not yet on sale. We will be in touch when box offices reopen

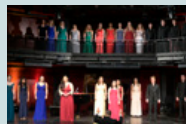


## SAMLING ACADEMY

### Friday 2 – Sunday 4 October and Friday 16 – Sunday 18 October

Thirty young singers, chosen by audition from across the North East, embark on a year of musical discovery and development supported by our Samling Artists and leadership team, including:

Caroline Dowdle music director  
 Patricia MacMahon vocal teacher  
 Miranda Wright Samling Artist vocal teacher  
 Joan Rodgers soprano  
 James Garnon actor  
 Mandy Demetriou choreographer



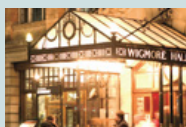
## Samling Academy Concert

### Sunday 18 October, 7.30pm

Sage Two, Sage Gateshead

Introducing our 2020/21 Samling Academy, this concert gives our young singers the opportunity to put into practice the performance skills they have been developing over their first two weekends of training, in a programme of song and opera.

Tickets available from Sage Gateshead later in the year  
 sagegateshead.com | 0191 443 4661



## SAMLING ARTIST SHOWCASE

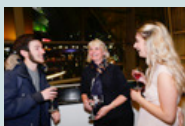
### Sea Pictures

Thursday 5 November, 7.30pm

Wigmore Hall, London

Madison Nonoa soprano  
 Angharad Lyddon mezzo-soprano  
 Patrick Terry countertenor  
 Benson Wilson baritone  
 Kunal Lahiry piano  
 Jonathan Ware piano

Based around song cycles with a maritime theme, the programme includes Sibelius' *Luonnotar* based on a Finnish creation myth, Rimsky-Korsakov's rarely performed cycle *U Morya*, Fauré's *L'horizon chimérique* and Elgar's *Sea Pictures* in the composer's version for piano.



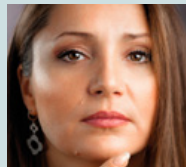
## We need your support

Samling Institute is a charity. We rely entirely on the generosity of private individuals, trusts and foundations and our own fundraising efforts. We do not receive any public funding.

Our supporters are at the heart of our creative community. Together they help make the Samling Institute experience unique.

By joining our Friends' scheme we can offer you excellent benefits from opportunities to meet emerging and international stars, to attending private Samling Institute recitals. Friends' membership costs just £40 per year for an individual, or £60 per couple.

To join our Friends' scheme, or to donate, please contact us at [enquiries@samling.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@samling.org.uk)  
 You can also join online at [samling.org.uk](http://samling.org.uk)



## SAMLING ARTIST PROGRAMME

### Sunday 29 November – Sunday 6 December

The core of Samling Institute's work is our Samling Artist Programme, an intense week of coaching and musical discovery that many previous participants have described as 'life-changing'.

## Samling Masterclass & Concert

### Saturday 5 December

#### 1.30 – 4.30pm and 5.15 – 6.15pm

Sage Two, Sage Gateshead

Introducing eight new Samling Artists in our public masterclass and concert, led by Italian opera star Barbara Fritolli, Samling Artist pianist Joseph Middleton and actor Alex Jennings.

## PLEASE NOTE

In the light of the current situation with coronavirus (COVID-19), it is possible that some of our events may have to be postponed. We will keep you informed of any changes via our website, our social media channels and our mailing list.



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 Artistic and Executive Director: Karon Wright  
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