



Samling
Academy Opera
**Dido &
Aeneas**
comes to
Sunderland

Rehearsals have begun for what is undoubtedly our biggest and most exciting event of the year – the long-awaited return of Samling Academy Opera.

One of Europe’s leading period instrument ensembles, Dunedin Consort and their director John Butt will accompany this fully staged and costumed production of Henry Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas* with a companion piece by Claudio Monteverdi.

We are heading to an exciting new venue – The Fire Station in Sunderland – for what will be their first live opera production.

Karon Wright, Samling Institute’s Artistic and Executive Director said ‘We’re thrilled to be working with the team at The Fire Station and bringing Samling Academy Opera to their stunning auditorium.



Photo: David Allen

It will be a really special experience for our young singers to perform there and for anyone who has not been to the venue before, I promise you that you’re in for a treat.’

Alongside a cast of current Academy Singers, we welcome back recent singers from conservatoire who missed out on performing in a Samling Academy Opera during the pandemic and its aftermath, including Tia Radix-Callixte and Max Robbins in the title roles. The production will be directed by Samling Artist Miranda Wright with choreography by Mandy Demetriou.

Tickets are on sale now and we can’t wait to see you in Sunderland for what promises to be a very special production.

This will be our second visit to Sunderland this year. Our Samling Futures workshops began in the city at state secondary schools in Monkwearmouth and Southmoor, followed by visits to schools in Northumberland and Newcastle. We have also been working with staff, soloists and the choir at King Edward VI

School in Morpeth who have joined our Singing Schools programme – read more about all of our work in schools on page 3.

Spring is audition season and we have enjoyed meeting candidates for both of our programmes. We held Samling Academy auditions in Gateshead, Durham and Newcastle with an increasing number of singers coming from schools that we’ve visited with our Futures and Singing School programmes.

Following initial recommendations and video applications, we held three days of live auditions in London and Glasgow for our upcoming Samling Artist Programme residencies.

In March, British baritone Christopher Purves joined us at Marchmont House to lead our Samling Artist Programme for the first time and later in the summer we look forward to welcoming the French soprano Véronique Gens and pianist Susan Manoff.

See inside for photos of our March masterclass and a Samling Shorts interview with Véronique.

WHY SAMLING INSTITUTE?

'I can't quite put into words how amazing the experience was. I have believed in myself and achieved things I didn't previously think I was capable of. I also learned so much from spending time listening to others – sharing in their work was such a privilege.' *Samling Artist Jessica Lawley*

SAMLING SHORTS

Véronique Gens



Véronique Gens is one of France's best loved sopranos, enjoying a distinguished career in opera, concert, recitals and recordings, and recognised for her interpretations of Mozart and of French repertory. Her appearance as Donna Elvira at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence with Claudio Abbado brought her worldwide recognition and since then she has appeared on the world's leading operatic stages and on more than 80 recordings. Her numerous awards include the rank of Chevalier in La Légion d'honneur. She will lead the Samling Artist Programme this summer for the first time and will sing Hector Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été* at The Glasshouse with Royal Northern Sinfonia in June.

My earliest musical memory is...

When I was around four, listening to a children's choir. I was too small, but my older sister used to sing in this choir and my parents did not know what to do with me in the meantime, so I was there listening to them with my ears wide open.

The last piece I listened to was...

'Der Rosenkavalier'. I will start the rehearsals for my first Marschallin at the Théâtre de Champs-Élysées within a week... and I don't feel ready for this HUGE challenge...

The opera character I most admire is...

Donna Elvira in Mozart's 'Don Giovanni'. She is honest, sincere, faithful, true and full of love for Don Giovanni and she tries to save him until the very end. All the other characters in this story are lying.

My favourite French song composer is...

Reynaldo Hahn ... no it is not true! I feel it is absolutely impossible to answer this question! I love them all!

My three travel essentials are...

My iPad, my ear-plugs and my scarves.

My favourite place in the world is...

As a singer, Vienna – I love the musical atmosphere and as a non-singing person, it's Paris – I love the energy of this beautiful city.

When I'm not singing...

I try to take care of my family and to spend time with them.



Samling Artist Programme

Baritone Christopher Purves joined us for the first time at Marchmont to lead this week-long residency, alongside pianist Simon Lepper, actor James Garnon and staff pianist Samling Artist Ella O'Neill. Pictured here in the public masterclass are new Samling Artists soprano Jessica Lawley, mezzo-sopranos Angelina Dorlin-Barlow and Lea Shaw, countertenor Matthias Daehling, baritone Charles Cunliffe, bass Joshua McCullough and pianists George Ireland and Harry Rylance.



Photos: Mark Pinder

The students loved the Samling Futures workshop - there was a real buzz amongst them after you left.'
 Amy Del Pino, Prudhoe Community High School

FOCUS ON SCHOOLS

Samling Futures

Students at eight state schools across the North East have been finding out about what it takes to be a classical singer.

With a team of our Academy Singers in support, Samling Artists mezzo-soprano Kamilla Dunstan, baritone Dominic Sedgwick and pianist Francesca Lauri led masterclasses and group activities in Sunderland, Newcastle, Hexham, Prudhoe and Ponteland. The workshops focused on developing a healthy vocal technique, how to bring a story to life in song and singing in foreign languages. Our Academy Singers shared with students how they have been able to develop their performance skills and grow in confidence and the three professionals also shared their individual journeys into music, answered questions and wowed their audiences with a short performance to round off the visits.



Francesca Lauri with Academy Singer Yohan James. Dominic Sedgwick and Kamilla Dunstan with students from Queen Elizabeth High School, Hexham



The King Edward VI choir and soloist Finlay working with Miranda Wright at the Samling Singing Schools public masterclass.

Samling Singing Schools

King Edward VI School in Morpeth in Northumberland has joined our growing network of Samling Singing Schools. Samling Artist Miranda Wright has been leading choir sessions and solo masterclasses and working one-on-one with the music staff to share her expertise in teaching classical singing. Pianist Alison Gill supported the sessions, giving the soloists the experience of working with a professional accompanist and enabling teachers to give their full attention to participating fully in the workshops. This first phase of the project ended with a lively open masterclass for friends and family.

'I'd like to express how wonderful our Samling Schools involvement has been so far. It has felt like an enormous privilege for both students and staff to receive such expert and sensitive classical singing tuition and professional development. The sensitive handling of the very different soloists made them feel safe and comfortable, while also being helpful to the students and the opportunity for everyone to perform with a professional piano accompanist was another privilege.

Above all, it was an incredible opportunity for a large group of teenagers to perform some classical repertoire and hear their peers doing the same. All the soloists have absolutely loved being part of the project.'



Heather Harrison, music teacher and choir leader, King Edward VI School



Samling
Academy Opera

Dido & Aeneas

With John Butt and Dunedin Consort
Thursday 17 and Saturday 19 July, 7.30pm
The Fire Station, Sunderland
Tickets £10-£20
thefirestation.org.uk | 0191 5700 007





Samling in Masterclass

Saturday 2 August, 2 – 5pm
Marchmont House, Duns, Berwickshire, TD10 6YL

Watch great artists at work as French soprano **Véronique Gens** and pianist **Susan Manoff** share their insights with eight rising stars of song and opera.

Tickets £25 available from marchmonthouse.com





SAMLING ACADEMY 10 – 12 October and 24 – 26 October

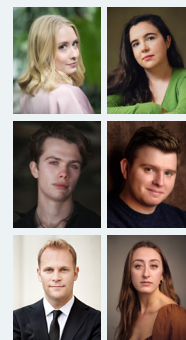
Thirty young singers selected by audition from schools and universities across the North East begin their year with six days of masterclasses and workshops under the direction of Caroline Dowdle and led by an impressive team of teachers, singers, pianists, an actor and a movement coach.



Samling Academy In Concert Sunday 26 October Sage Two, The Glasshouse International Centre for Music

Our 2025/26 Samling Academy Singers put into practice the performance skills they have been developing over six days of coaching. This popular afternoon of song and opera solos, duets and ensembles is accompanied by our Samling Artist pianists.

Tickets will be available later in the year.



SAMLING ARTIST SHOWCASE 'Between Heaven and Earth' Tuesday 4 November, 7.30pm Wigmore Hall, London

Six Samling Artists reflect on things earthly and heavenly, with music including *An die ferne Geliebte* by Ludwig van Beethoven, a selection from *La bonne chanson* by Gabriel Fauré and songs by Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, William Bolcom, Aaron Copland and Gustav Mahler.

Tickets £18 – £40 available now from wigmore-hall.org.uk



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