

# candide

Music by Leonard Bernstein, Book by Hugh Wheeler after Voltaire

## Blackheath Halls Opera 2022 Evaluation Report



@Blackheathhalls  
@OperaBH #CandideBH



## PRODUCTION TEAM

Director **Sebastian Harcombe**  
Musical Director **Christopher Stark**  
Designer **Elliott Squire**  
Lighting Designer **Tracey Gibbs**  
Movement Director **Jasmine Ricketts**  
BSL Interpreter **Wendy Ebsworth**

## CAST

Candide **Nick Pritchard**  
Cunegonde **Ellie Neate**  
Pangloss **Frederick Long**  
Old Lady **Sarah Pring**  
Maximillian **Matthew Kellett**  
Governor **James Liu**  
Paquette **Hannah Leggatt-McPhee\***  
Vandedendur/Prince Ragostki/  
Don Domino/Captain **Adam Brown\***

\*Vocal student / recent graduate of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Performing alongside our professional cast were:

- an adult chorus of 45 local people and Trinity Laban students aged 18 – 80+
- a youth company of 30 local young people aged 9 – 15

- 8 students from local special schools Charlton Park Academy and Greenvale School
- Blackheath Halls Orchestra – a group of 42 players aged 30 – 80+

Making a grand total of 125 community participants of all ages, abilities and backgrounds who performed Leonard Bernstein's opera *Candide* four times at Blackheath Halls between Tuesday 27 September and Sunday 2 October 2022.

With such a large and varied cast, Blackheath Halls Opera is always a substantial undertaking. Thanks to a large orchestra and numerous different characters, *Candide* was a particularly ambitious musical adventure for us. In order to be fully prepared for the work, rehearsals began in June with sessions for the adult chorus, orchestra and special schools. Our youth company launched in August with an intensive week of rehearsals. All groups began working together as we moved into September, and our professional cast joined us a month prior to the first performance.



# THE STORY

In our Blackheath Halls Opera production, Candide's journey of self-discovery begins in the late 1980s with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Under the impression given him by his teacher Pangloss that the world is the 'best of all possible worlds', he goes on an odyssey. This journey takes him through West Germany, Amsterdam, Spain, on a Mediterranean cruise, to a Greek island, to Marseilles, to a Monte Carlo Casino and finally to Nice airport where he is reunited with his true love Cunegonde.

In a rousing finale Candide and Cunegonde decide that they are 'Neither pure, nor wise nor good' but must 'do the best they know' by returning to their home and cultivating a simple life.

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## GRATEFUL THANKS

This year's production was supported by The Friends and Patrons of Blackheath Halls, The Smillie Family, The Hearn Foundation, The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, The Fischer Fund and The Thomson Reuters Social Impact Institute as well as numerous other generous individuals. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to them all.

We also thank our Opera Patron Nicky Spence and all the wonderful singers who raised funds by giving their time and expertise at our Opera Gala Night.



# STATISTICS



4

Performances

75

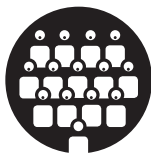
Rehearsal  
Sessions

200+

Hours of  
Rehearsal

3

Taster  
Sessions



125

People engaged

38

under 18s

36

Sessions 100%  
FREE for Youth  
Opera Company  
and special school  
participants

36%

BAME young  
people in our  
Youth Company

100%

of our Youth  
Company would  
take part again



1

BSL signed  
performance



1832

costume changes



1189

Tickets  
Sold



## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“Yes, Yes... I need  
this project for my  
wellbeing”

“The best of  
all possible  
community  
projects.”

“Exhilarating,  
an experience  
brimming with life!”



Love of music draws together people who may not come across each other in the outside world, Bonds are formed and continue. Projects like this forge essential links, and must be supported.



“What makes Blackheath Halls Opera unique is its openness and inclusivity.”



“This community opera is a rare and special thing - long may it continue.”



This opportunity for my child has enriched the whole family and introduced us to something new.







## AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

“Seeing the look of pure joy on the faces of some of the children at the end, as they drank in the atmosphere was really moving.”



This was a particularly ambitious project, which succeeded well beyond expectations. Congratulations to all those involved!



“Blackheath Halls Opera, an exemplary enterprise without age limit and open to all.....this gallop from disillusionment to hope was full of zest and joy.”

Fiona Maddocks,  
The Guardian &  
The Observer

[Read the Full Review](#)



“ One of the reasons the creative team chose *Candide* as this year’s production was because it offers such opportunities for the traditional community chorus – which includes kids from local schools Charlton Park Academy and Greenvale to shine. And shine they do as they throw themselves full-tilt into the fun and play a key part in making a great production truly magnificent.

Greenwich Visitor

[Read the Full Review](#)



“ This was a wonderfully vivid evening, the performers’ sheer exuberance never overwhelming the work. At the centre was Nick Pritchard’s touching *Candide* and Ellie Neate’s glittering *Cunegonde*, but these were surrounded with a strong group of soloists and performers who created a fine ensemble feel. You felt that everyone on stage, whether amateur or professional, was having a terrific time.

Planet Hugill

[Read the Full Review](#)



Patrons  
**Edward Gardner OBE**  
**Nicky Spence**





## BLACKHEATH HALLS OPERA

Look out for details of the  
2023 Opera Gala Night  
in the New Year