

BLACKHEATH HALLS OPERA 2023

# SEMELE

Music by George Frideric Handel, Libretto by William Congreve

Tuesday 26 September

Thursday 28 September

Saturday 30 September

Sunday 1 October



## Evaluation Report



#SemeleBH





## PRODUCTION TEAM

Director **Harry Fehr**  
 Musical Director **Christopher Stark**  
 Designer **Elliott Squire**  
 Costume Designer **Zahra Mansouri**  
 Lighting & Video Designer **Chuma Emembolu**  
 Repetiteur **Satoshi Kubo**  
 BSL Interpreter **Becky Barry**

## CAST

Semele **Francesca Chiejina**  
 Jupiter **Thando Mjandana**  
 Juno **Katie Bray**  
 Cadmus/Somnus **Matthew Rose**  
 Athamus **Owen Willetts**  
 Cupid **Garreth Romain**  
 Ino **Hannah Leggatt-McPhee\***  
 Iris **Molly Joynson\***

\*Vocal student of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Performing alongside our professional cast were:

- an adult chorus of 55 local people and Trinity Laban students aged 18 – 80+
- a youth company of 32 local young people aged 9 – 15
- 8 students from local special schools Charlton Park Academy and Greenvale School
- Blackheath Halls Orchestra – a group of 35 players aged 30 – 80+

Making a grand total of 130 community participants of all ages, abilities and backgrounds who performed Handel's Semele four times at Blackheath Halls between Tuesday 26 September and Sunday 1 October 2023. With such a large and varied cast, Blackheath Halls Opera is always a substantial undertaking. In order to be fully prepared for the work, rehearsals began in July with sessions for the adult chorus and orchestra. 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.

# GRATEFUL THANKS

Blackheath Halls is immensely grateful to the following people and organisations who, through their generous support, have made the 2023 Blackheath Halls Opera, Semele, possible at a time when we need community art more than ever:

## Organisations

The Hearn Foundation  
The Peter Harris Trust  
The Smillie Family  
Tesco Community Grant

## Sponsors

The Moser Family  
Ian and Emma Rosenblatt  
Kate Olver, in loving memory of Olga Olver  
Alasdair Neil and Penny Aldred  
Francesca Robinson  
David and Georgina Bowers  
Philip and Jean Smith  
Adam and Oona Scott  
Alex Coupe and William Phillips, in loving memory of Jenny Phillips  
Anne Burton  
Jonathan and Marjorie Ouvry  
John and Maggie Hine  
Richard and Margaret Dinkeldein

Mark and Cate Rowntree  
Andrew McDonnell, in loving memory of Janice McDonnell  
Jay and Emil Hassan  
The Fischer Fund  
Neil and Elizabeth Rhind, in loving memory of their children: Alexandra Louise (23 July '61 - 22 Dec '22) and Iain James Rhind (5 May '63 to 7 May '21).

## Supporters

Alison Palmer  
Alun Butler  
Anne Sykes  
Betsy Gregory and Craig Givens  
Daniel and Rebecca Holloway  
David Wilson  
Glenys Johnson and Tony Bevan  
Helma Zebregs  
Joanna Webb  
John Baldwin and Barbara Kolator  
Kevin Connell  
Mark and Cate Rowntree  
Melanie Geelan  
Pauline Savage  
Sarah-Jane Maidens  
Susan and Roger Taylor  
Tony Damer  
Yvonne Horsfall Turner



We would also like to give heartfelt thanks to the Friends and Patrons of Blackheath Halls who support all our community work throughout the year, including Blackheath Halls Opera. Special thanks to our Platinum Patrons and Patrons for their continued generous support.

#### **Platinum Patrons**

Adam and Oona Scott  
Alasdair Neil and Penny Aldred  
Alex Coupe and William Phillips, in loving memory of Jenny Phillips  
Anne Burton  
David and Georgina Bowers  
Fiona and Derek Gardiner  
Francesca Robinson  
Jonathan and Marjorie Ouvry  
Kate Olver, in loving memory of Olga Olver  
Paul Franklin and Jane Burton  
Phil Fortey  
Stephen and Dawn Oliver  
The Hearn Foundation  
Tim Newling

#### **Patrons**

Alastair and Rose Ballantyne  
Andrew and Janice McDonnell  
Anne McFarlane  
Anthony Bowne

Elizabeth Glasser  
George Myers Lusty  
Iain Langland  
Lee/Ramsey Family  
Lia Cristofoli  
Jay and Emil Hassan  
Joan Ruddock  
John and Maggie  
Michael and Pamela Cowan  
Mark and Cate Rowntree  
Michael Fletcher  
Paul Watts  
Peter and Sue Colvin  
Prabodh Mukul Agarwal  
Richard and Margaret Dinkeldein  
Robert Jones  
Roseland Kiwanuka  
Sarah-Jane Maidens  
Simon and Jennifer Standage  
Stephen and Tina Challacombe  
Stephanie Mizzi  
Suzanne Flowers  
Valerie Gordon-Walker

And to all those who prefer to remain anonymous, thank you.



# STATISTICS



4

Performances

225

Hours of  
Rehearsal

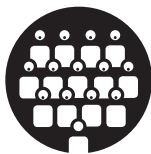
4

Taster  
Sessions



1

BSL signed  
performance



130

Participants  
engaged

40

under 18s

33

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

41%

BAME young  
people in our  
Youth Company



4

Surtitled  
performances



355

slices of  
homemade cake  
bought/eaten in  
support of the  
project



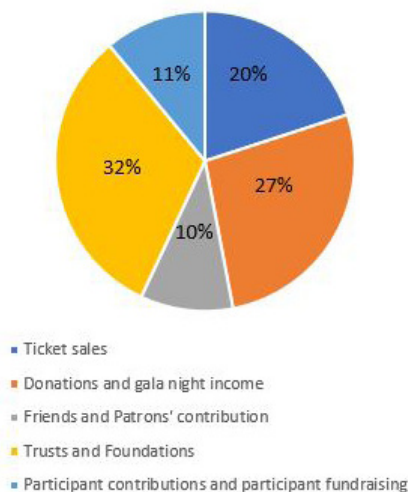
1160

Tickets  
Sold

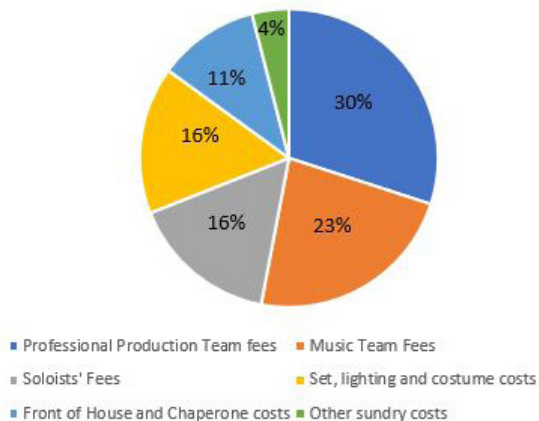


# PROJECT FUNDS RAISED & SPENT

Income



Expenditure





## PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“The impact  
on wellbeing is  
phenomenal.”

“This year felt  
more diverse and  
inclusive than ever -  
from kids through to  
principals”

“There is nothing remotely like this  
project. It is special in so many  
ways.

“A great joy and privilege, and one of  
the best experiences of my life.”





## AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

“It provides excellent opportunity for people of all ages, ethnicity and ability to take part in a project of high calibre in a safe, nurturing environment.”



My child has had huge issues with anxiety and self confidence, particularly since Covid lockdowns. Participating and performing in projects like this has been one of the most important things we have found to help bring her out of herself.



“...this was a very special way to be introduced to opera. Having never been to one before, I was very happy that the first time I saw it was to see my daughter perform.”



“It felt as though this event was centred at the heart of the community.”



“ The production compares very favourably with its equivalent in the main opera houses, and attracts internationally recognised soloists who want to take part in it.



# PRESS REVIEWS



The utterly convincing chorus, which features performers from Special Educational Needs schools and youth companies alongside members of the community... Their dedication and evident delight turn a strong production into a seriously moving one.

David Benedict, The Stage

[Read the Full Review](#)



There were many positives: the enthusiasm of the community performance, the excellent solo contributions of the professional cast, and a judiciously edited score that encapsulates the story of Semele within an audience-friendly time-span.



Hugh Canning, Operalogue

[Read the Full Review](#)



Patrons  
**Edward Gardner OBE**  
**Ailish Tynan**



**BLACKHEATH HALLS OPERA**  
Save the Date!  
**Opera Gala Night 2024**  
**Sunday 28 April**

Look out for further details  
in the New Year