

Conductor Thomas Blunt makes his Longborough Festival Opera debut in a new production of Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* by director Alan Privett



3 - 19 July 2015
Longborough Festival Opera

DONIZETTI: *Don Pasquale*

Conductor: Thomas Blunt
Director: Alan Privett
Designer: Lara Booth

Norina: Susanna Hurrell
Malatesta: Gary Griffiths
Ernesto: Jesus Alvarez
Don Pasquale: David Stout

"Thomas Blunt drew magical sounds from the instrumental ensemble"
- Opera

Young British conductor Thomas Blunt makes his conducting debut at **Longborough Festival Opera** in a new production of **Gaetano Donizetti's** comic opera *Don Pasquale*, directed by **Alan Privett**, from **3 - 19 July**. This marks the first Donizetti opera staged at **Longborough Festival Opera** and follows Privett's hugely successful **Wagner Ring Cycle** at Longborough which was nominated for an **RPS Award** in 2013.

Blunt will collaborate with British director **Alan Privett** on the new production of *Don Pasquale* for Longborough Festival Opera, the company's first ever staging of a Donizetti opera. Sets and costumes are by **Lara Booth**, with lighting design by **Anna Sbokou**, while the youthful cast includes British soprano **Susanna Hurrell** as Norina, Welsh baritone **Gary Griffiths** as Malatesta, Spanish tenor **Jesus Alvarez** as Ernesto and baritone **David Stout** as Don Pasquale.

Alan Privett on staging *Don Pasquale*:

"Don Pasquale is a wonderful piece of music. It's always a challenge to find a fresh approach to a familiar work, and I don't believe in innovation for its own sake. The production needs to respect the spirit of the composers' intentions. We have in fact settled on a setting of a 1930's movie soundstage - relating it loosely to Downton Abbey as an easy reference point - where the plot is played out as it were to a camera. We also see the characters and the studio crew who take on small roles, in their offstage private moments as well. I hope this will allow the singers to find a degree of stylisation in their interpretation of the music, and allow the audience to see the work for what it is, essentially a piece of fun, in which the characters are comic inventions."

Thomas Blunt began his career as **Chorus Master** at Glyndebourne, making his conducting debut with the company a year later, with performances of Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* on tour. Vladimir Jurowski subsequently invited him to be his **Assistant Conductor** with the **London Philharmonic Orchestra**, and he has since conducted several performances with the LPO. Other highlights include appearances with the **Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra**, **Welsh National Opera** (Jephtha), and **Opéra National du Rhin**.

In November 2014 Blunt took up his current position as Erste Kapellmeister at Konzert Theater Bern with a new production of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* directed and designed by British opera director Nigel Lowery. The cast included British soprano Camille Butcher, Julien Behr, British baritone Robin Adams, Yun-Jeong Lee and Kai Wegner. Following its first performance Der Neue Merker commented "*The musical direction was in the hands of Thomas Blunt, an expert in the best sense*" and Der Bund concluded "*Conductor Thomas Blunt leads the Berner Symphonieorchester with verve and authority ... the result after 3 hours: recommended.*" This production of *Die Zauberflöte* travelled to the Winterthur Theater until 12 May 2015, where Blunt debuted in conducting the Orchestra of the Musikkollegium Winterthur. In November Blunt will conduct Wagner's *Lohengrin* at the Konzert Theater Bern, which runs until 31 January next year.



Thomas Blunt on conducting *Don Pasquale*:

"I am thrilled to be conducting Donizetti's Don Pasquale for Longborough Festival Opera. There is a buoyancy in Donizetti's comedies that make them a joy to conduct - the humorous opera buffa elements in Pasquale are there for everyone to enjoy, but there is also an openness, humour, charm and humanity in this opera. This, combined with the score's invention, contrasts, and melodies, make it irresistible. I am particularly excited to be working with the young talented cast we have assembled, and also looking forward very much to working with the director Alan Privett - I think his ideas for the production will produce a very entertaining evening."

***Don Pasquale* performances at Longborough Festival Opera:**

July 2015: 03, 07, 11, 15, 19

<http://www.lfo.org.uk/don-pasquale>

Thomas Blunt



Thomas Blunt studied at Cambridge University and the Royal College of Music in London, and was the first ever British participant of the prestigious Allianz International Conductors' Academy where he worked with the London Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestras. He was recently appointed Erste Kapellmeister at Konzert Theater Bern.

He began his career as Chorus Master at Glyndebourne, making his conducting debut with the company a year later, with performances of *L'elisir d'amore* on the Tour, resulting in re-invitations to conduct *Falstaff* and *La Cenerentola*. During this time he also assisted conductors including Music Director Vladimir Jurowski.

Jurowski subsequently invited him to be his Assistant Conductor with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and has since conducted several performances with the LPO: venues include the Royal Festival Hall (including three UK premières), Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the Sala São Paulo for three highly successful performances where the LPO were joined by the Coro da Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo for Bruckner's Mass in E minor, resulting in an immediate re-invitation.

Other highlights include appearances with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Welsh National Opera (*Jephtha*), English Chamber Orchestra, Royal Northern Sinfonia, Buxton Festival/Bampton Classical Opera (*Italian Girl in London*), the World Première of Dave Maric's *Ghosts* for the Royal Opera House at the Linbury Theatre, and highly -acclaimed productions of *The Rape of Lucretia* and *The Turn of the Screw* which he co-produced for the Arcola Theatre, London.

He has also worked for Opera North, La Monnaie, and the Cantiere Internazionale d'Arte di Montepulciano, and in addition to his regular conducting work he has assisted distinguished conductors including Iván Fischer (in Budapest with the Budapest Festival Orchestra), and Bernard Haitink with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Recent engagements include debuts with Opéra National du Rhin and Konzert Theater Bern, conducting performances of *La Cenerentola* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* respectively, Opéra de Bauge conducting *I Pagliacci*, and his first appearance at the St Endellion Festival conducting performances of Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. He also returned to Brazil last year to conduct performances of Rossini's *Petite Messe Solennelle* with the Coro da Orquestra Sinfônica do Estado de São Paulo.

Recent Press Quotes:

"Thomas Blunt conducted an accomplished small orchestra with verve"

Daily Telegraph

"Blunt led a superb Northern Chamber Orchestra through galloping yet finely judged ensembles with assurance: punchy horns complemented a luscious string sound"

Opera Magazine

"Good things here started with the orchestra, playing to a really high standard under Thomas Blunt's cultured direction, beautifully paced and elegant"

Opera Now

"Thomas Blunt took us into the music to beguile and enlighten, sculpting a fiery, graceful and poised 'Haffner' Symphony"

Classical Source

"The Orchestra of the Musikkollegium Winterthur was consistently fully abreast of its task in relation to its polished sound, flawless and subtle tuning, precise drama and solo cues (flute!). Under Thomas Blunt's direction a firmly fluid playing was unfolded note by note - Mozart would have been satisfied."

Der Landbote, Winterthur

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