

Women Conductors champion Alice Farnham returns to the Royal Opera House for the family Christmas show based on Philip Pullman's *The Firework-Maker's Daughter* and her pioneering Women Conductors course


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10 December 2015 – 2 January 2016

Linbury Studio Theatre, Royal Opera House

Alice Farnham conductor

CHROMA Ensemble

The Firework-Maker's Daughter

David Bruce music

Glyn Maxwell libretto

John Fulljames direction

Dick Bird set design

Guy Hoare lighting design

Indefinite Articles puppetry

"At last: a first-rank children's opera"

The Telegraph, 2013

Women Conductors @ Morley

30-31 January 2016

Opera Course with Julia Jones
Royal Opera House

20-21 February 2016

Ballet Course with Andrea Quinn
Royal Opera House

Pioneering conductor Alice Farnham, Founder of the Women Conductors @ Morley course to encourage young, aspiring girls to try conducting, returns to the Royal Opera House to conduct the Christmas show based on Philip Pullman's *The Firework-Maker's Daughter*, a chamber opera for all the family, opening on **December 10**. Early in the New Year, Farnham is back again at Covent Garden for the next instalment of her conducting course to champion girls and female students to explore conducting opera with Julia Jones and ballet with Andrea Quinn, both conductors highly regarded in their respective fields.

Composer **David Bruce** teamed up with librettist **Glyn Maxwell** to create The *The Firework-Maker's Daughter* which was premiered at Hull Truck Theatre in 2013 and toured around the UK that year to popular and critical acclaim. Directed by John Fulljames, the production uses 'lo-

fi' special effects such as shadow puppetry produced by **Indefinite Articles** along with free-falling sand, and the manipulation of various household implements. Alice Farnham has had a close relationship with ROH for the past ten years, having worked more behind the scenes as an off-stage, assistant conductor and prompter, and as a Guest Conductor at the Royal Ballet.

Farnham explains: *"It's wonderful to be back on conducting at the Opera House in this special tale of a gutsy girl who wins through talent, determination and love, to follow in her father's footsteps. David Bruce has written such a colourful and witty score, which already proved a hit with young and old audiences. It's rare to do so many performances of new opera, and I am looking forward to that journey. I hope that they many kids who come along who will be inspired to follow in my footsteps and one day try conducting."*

Click below to watch the ROH 2013 trailer



As David Bruce explains:

"Since my own childhood I have thought of the theatre as a colourful place of magic and fantasy and as I've grown older I am still attracted to those same aspects - for me there is not really a difference between children's theatre and adult theatre - as I see it, it's all 'play' and we are all children."

Alice Farnham is a co-Founder with Andrea Brown of **Women Conductors @ Morley**, a series of comprehensive conducting workshops running at weekends throughout 2015-16 in London and all across the UK for aspiring female conductors. Encouraged by conductors such as Valery Gergiev throughout her career, **Alice Farnham** conceived **Women Conductors @ Morley** together with Morley College's former Director of Music **Andrea Brown** after a spate of negative responses from prominent male conductors to Marin Alsop's appearance at the 2013 Last Night of the Proms.

The project is divided into two phases: **Phase 1** targets young musicians between the ages of 16 and 25, and focuses on developing technique and facilitating expression with the body, following the Musin (St. Petersburg)

school of conducting. **Phase 2** targets professionals and teachers aged 19 and over. Aimed both at encouraging older applicants, perhaps professional musicians who want to go into conducting but lack confidence. It consists of a series of workshops focused on different styles (baroque, classical opera, ballet, amateur etc), given by such respected conductors as **Rebecca Miller, Sian Edwards, Jane Glover, and Julia Jones**. Farnham believes that "***the time is ripe for a revolution of sorts; orchestras need women conductors.***"

As Farnham explains:

"It is a shame that young women are still discouraged by this negative perception of leaders in classical music and that they continue to be unable to envisage themselves in these key roles even in the 21st Century. There are some determined individuals out there but still too many girls and young female students are put off by the stereotypes of the patriarchal, dictatorial image of the maestro and often negative initial experiences, which can be off-putting. But the role of the conductor in the 21st Century has changed dramatically – conductors need to be far more collaborative with good social and communicative skills ... and we see so many young women exhibiting these on a daily basis. The time is ripe for a revolution of sorts; orchestras need women conductors."

Obstacles to leadership can be seen in so many professions, not just in conducting as Sheryl Sandberg's recent book *Lean Intensifies* to the many reasons why women do not put themselves forward for promotion.

As Sandberg explained to a graduating class:

"Like everyone here, I have great hopes for the members of this graduating class. I hope you find true meaning, contentment and passion in your life. And I hope that you have the ambition to lean in to your career and run the world, because the world needs you to change it. Women around the world are counting on you. So please ask yourself: What would I do if I weren't afraid? And then go do it."

Alice Farnham



Alice Farnham trained under the legendary pedagogue **Ilya Musin** and **Leonid Korchmar** at the St. Petersburg State Conservatoire, she enjoys a growing reputation both in the UK and abroad.

Alice was Music Director of **Welsh National Youth Opera** for their award-winning 2013 production of Paul Bunyan to critical acclaim, and will return as Music Director for their 2016 production. She was recently invited by Valery Gergiev to conduct Britten's The Rape of Lucretia at the Mariinsky St Petersburg in November 2013 and 4th April 2015.

Passionate about training the next generation of conductors, Alice Co-Founded **Women Conductors @ Morley**, the ground-breaking series of workshops to encourage women to enter the conducting profession.

She is an experienced conductor of contemporary music including the world premiere of **Charlotte Bray's** Making Arrangements for Tête à Tête Opera to critical acclaim. In 2008 she conducted the Royal Ballet New Works at the Linbury including **Graham Fitkin's** Reel, which won Best Stage Work, for the British Composers' Awards. She has also conducted large-scale communities concerts and operas including **David Bedford's** Titanic at Carlisle Sands and **Martin Read's** Round-about Basingstoke at the Anvil.

Alice is known for her work with young singers and musicians and is on the staff at the **Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama** and recently conducted an Opera Gala Concert with the vocal students and RWCMD Chamber Orchestra, a Side-by-Side concert with Welsh National Opera and the RWCMD. She is Music Director of Cumbria Youth Orchestra and is a regular Guest Conductor of the South Bank Sinfonia. She is Course Director of Morley Opera School since 2013.

She began her career as an organist, holding Organ Scholarships at St. Hugh's College Oxford where she read Music and later was Organ Fellow at St. Thomas' Fifth Avenue, New York. For three years she studied Symphonic and Operatic Conducting at the St. Petersburg State Conservatoire under the legendary pedagogue, Ilya Musin.

Women conductors @ Morley

In early 2014 discussions in the media regarding the lack of women conductors prompted academics in the music department at Morley to respond, by introducing a pilot course for women conductors. The Women Conductors Pilot Programme was designed for women aged 16-19 as an introduction to conducting, to give them the confidence and leadership skills needed to follow this career path.

Due to generous funding a range of trusts and foundations including Arts Council England, Morley is able to continue after the initial pilot with a series of weekend workshops, to be held at conservatoires, universities and at Morley College, London throughout 2015/16. The project is open to female music students aged 16-25 who are in full-time music education either at conservatoires or universities, or in the sixth form and planning to study music full-time.

The workshops cover topics including; conducting technique, leadership, body language and communication. Led by acclaimed conductor, Alice Farnham, participants will have the opportunity to work with professional pianists, orchestral string players and a movement and body language coach.

The second phase of this programme will include a series of workshop weekends for professional female musicians (all ages 19+) focusing on different areas of conducting. They will be led by leading women conductors including Jane Glover, Sian Edwards, Julia Jones, Andrea Quinn, Jessica Cottis, Sarah Tenant-Flowers, Rebecca Miller and Andrea Brown.

<http://www.morleycollege.ac.uk/womenconductors>

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