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For Immediate Release

Powerful storytelling and community engagement in Welsh National Opera's brimful Autumn 2022 Season

Welsh National Opera's Autumn Season will open with a new production of *The Makropulos Affair*; directed by Olivia Fuchs and conducted by WNO's Music Director Tomáš Hanus. Part of WNO's Janáček Series and based on a play by the Czech writer Karel Čapek, the opera tells the tale of a woman who can never die after taking an elixir of life nearly 300 years ago. Its enigmatic central character, Emilia Marty will be performed by Angeles Blancas Gulin who makes her Company debut. As well as touring to UK cities, the production will be performed also in the Czech Republic, as part of Festival Janáček Brno 2022 celebrating Janáček and his work in November. **This production is coming to Theatre Royal Plymouth on 28 October 2022.**

Annabel Arden's production of Puccini's *La bohème* returns with Caroline Chaney directing with a fresh approach. Conducted by Pietro Rizzo in his WNO debut, the double cast will feature Rodion Pogossov and Germán Enrique Alcántara also making their debuts with the Company as Marcello, alongside Luis Gomes and Jung Soo Yun as Rodolfo, Elin Pritchard and Anush Hovhannisyan as Mimì, Benson Wilson and Mark Nathan as Schaunard, and Aoife Miskelly and Haegge Lee as Musetta. **This production is coming to Theatre Royal Plymouth on 27 October 2022.**

The Autumn Season will also see the return of the ground-breaking new opera, *Migrations* following its critically acclaimed world premiere in Cardiff in June 2022. Writers and new librettists to opera, Shreya Sen-Handley, Edson Burton and Miles Chambers, Eric Ngalle Charles, and Sarah Woods, have joined Sir David Pountney, (who also directs the production) to create the libretto of six powerful stories of migration with some of the narratives drawn from people's real-life experiences and landmark moments in history. Composer Will Todd's extraordinary music intertwines t



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he stories into an opera featuring music, dance and storytelling on an epic scale. **This production is coming to Theatre Royal Plymouth on 29 October 2022.**

The cast of 100 performers includes Tom Randle, Meeta Raval, David Shipley amongst other artists, along with the Bristol-based Renewal Gospel Choir Community Chorus, a Bollywood ensemble and a children's chorus including members of Welsh National Opera's Youth Opera Company. Matthew Kofi Waldren conducts.

Tenor Thomas Kinch and baritone Dafydd Allen have been announced as WNO's **new Associate Artists for the 2022/2023 Season** and will make their Company debuts this Autumn.

Dafydd Allen, recently a postgraduate student at the Royal College of Music, was a finalist in the Kathleen Ferrier Bursary for young singers representing the Royal College of Music and is a frequent prize winner in the Urdd Eisteddfod and National Eisteddfod of Wales. He will make his WNO debut singing the role of Stage Technician in *The Makropulos Affair*.

Thomas Kinch is a recent graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Having sung roles with Dorset Opera, Sri Lanka Opera and North Wales Opera, he was an Emerging Artist in 2021 at Dolera Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices where he worked with renowned coaches, directors, and teachers from the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, and Deutsche Oper Berlin. Thomas will cover the role of the solicitor Vitek in *The Makropulos Affair*.

WNO Associate Artist Dafydd Allen said:

'I'm extremely excited to be joining Welsh National Opera as an Associate Artist and feel very fortunate to be joining my national company. I am especially excited to be able to continue my development working alongside some of the best performers in the world, I can't wait.'

WNO Orchestra will be taking part in the Cardiff Classical Concert series at St David's Hall with concerts in November and January alongside performances at the prestigious Festival Janáček Brno 2022. Both concerts feature Czech music and are conducted by WNO Music Director Tomas Hanus, mezzo-soprano Jana Kurucova will also perform in the November concert. The Janáček festival celebrates composer Leoš Janáček and

the places where he worked and lived for more than 50 years. As well as performing *The Makropulos Affair*, WNO Orchestra will also present an orchestral programme of works by Wagner, Britten, Dvořák and Janáček under the baton of Tomáš Hanus, featuring baritone Adam Plachetka. WNO Chorus and Orchestra will also be performing *Messiah* in St David's Hall in December.

Play Opera LIVE, WNO's show for families, returns to Cardiff and on tour at Theatre Royal Plymouth with a 'roarsome' theme. Musician and presenter Tom Redmond returns to introduce a programme of well-known classics as well as John Williams' theme from *Jurassic Park*. Tom also narrates and brings to life the music from Steve Pickett's *Dinosaur Rumpus*, based on Tony Mitton's children's book, *Bumpus Jumpus Dinosaurumpus*. There will be a host of pre-show workshops and foyer activities which showcase all aspects of an opera company from wigs and make-up to props and costume. **This production is coming to Theatre Royal Plymouth on 30 October 2022.**

WNO's **General Director Aidan Lang** said:

'Opera as an art form cannot stand still, and part of WNO's mission is to broaden the range of experiences that it offers its audiences. This is what underpins the programming of WNO's Autumn Season. After its successful opening in the Summer, I am looking forward to seeing *Migrations* on tour, and am sure our audiences will be as moved as they were at its world premiere in June. If that opera is epic in its scale, its sister piece, *The Shoemaker*, deals with similar themes, but in a more intimate manner and setting. The joyful energy that is always unleashed by the members of the WNO Youth Opera will be abundant in the performances of *Cherry Town*, *Moscow*. A new production of *The Makropulos Affair* was long overdue, and WNO is fortunate to have in Tomáš Hanus, our Music Director, a conductor who lives and breathes Janáček's music. WNO believe that opera is an art form for everyone, and with Puccini's enduring masterpiece *La bohème* completing the line-up, it is our hope that the Autumn Season delivers to that notion.'

WNO's **Music Director Tomáš Hanus** said:

'*The Makropulos Affair* by Leos Janáček is a piece that has marked by life and has been huge part of my international career. I have conducted this piece at Opera Bastille



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in Paris, the Bavarian State Opera Munich and at my debut with National Theatre in Prague. I cannot wait to do it with the WNO Orchestra and Chorus, who are renowned for their brilliant Janáček performances. I am especially excited to be welcoming the Company to my hometown of Brno to perform this opera at the Janáček Festival in November. This new production of Olivia Fuchs is a highly exciting project that I hope will be an important one in the WNO history.'

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For further information please contact the Media and Communications team on public.relations@theatreroyal.com / 01752 230439

Notes to Editors

Welsh National Opera is the national opera company for Wales, funded by the Arts Councils of Wales and England to provide large scale opera, concerts and outreach work across Wales and to major cities in the English regions. We endeavour to provide transformative experiences through our education and outreach programme and our award-winning digital projects. We work with our partners to discover and nurture young operatic talent, and we aim to show future generations that opera is a rewarding, relevant and universal art form with the power to affect and inspire.

The role of WNO Music Director for *The Makropulos Affair* is supported by Marian and Gordon Pell.

The role of Emilia Marty is supported by Peter Espenhahn.

The role of Krista is supported by Colin and Sylvia Fletcher.

The Makropulos Affair is supported by John Ellerman Foundation, Colwinston Charitable Trust, Harry Hyman and Melanie Meads, WNO Janáček Circle and WNO Partners.

Migrations is supported by John Ellerman Foundation, ABP, WNO New Commissions Syndicate. The production is dedicated to the memory of Anthony Bunker.

WNO Youth Opera is supported by Gibbs Charitable Trust, the Boris Karloff Charitable Foundation and The Thistle Trust.



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Theatre Royal Plymouth works with partners to understand the challenges people face accessing the arts, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged people. It creates pathways that are genuinely accessible to those who might otherwise never get to engage with the arts. They collaborate to co-create and co-author work that represents the community, creating the space needed for people to tell their story in their own way.

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