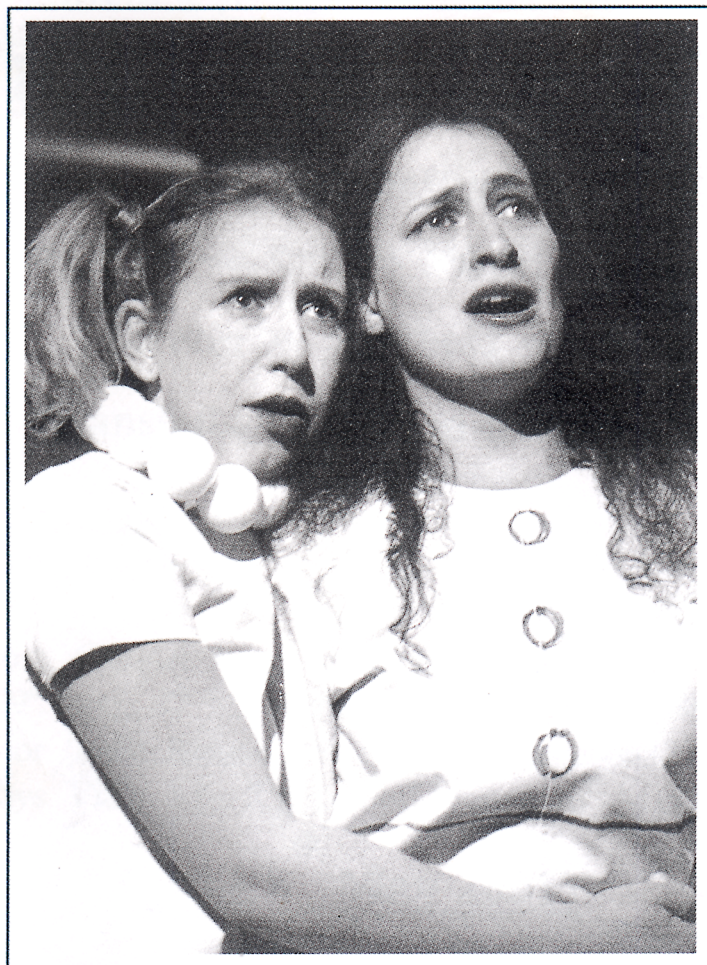


# OPERA MINT

## Hansel & Gretel

by Humperdinck - sung in English



Conductor: Michael Rafferty • Director: Elsa Rooke

Lighting: Kris Nuttall • Costumes: Bruno Fatalot

Trans. David Pountney, arr. David Seaman

at Purcell Room.

7.30p.m. Tuesday 8th May

**Programme: £1.50**

Royal Festival Hall  
Queen Elizabeth Hall  
Purcell Room

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# OPERA MINT



Patron: Paul Hamburger  
Artistic Director: Sara Clethero MA GBSM  
Administrative Address: 278 Gillott Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B16 0RU  
Tel/Fax: 0121 454 3087 Mobile: 0976 388523

Website [WWW.Operamint.co.uk](http://WWW.Operamint.co.uk).

## **HANSEL AND GRETEL**

**by E.Humperdinck**

**Chamber version by David Seaman**

**Libretto by Adelheid Wette**

**Translation by David Pountney**

**Conducted by: Michael Rafferty**

**Directed by: Elsa Rooke**

**Musicians:**

Piano: Ben Frost Clarinet: James Mainwaring/ Bernard Lafontaine  
(17<sup>th</sup> March, 29<sup>th</sup> April, 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> April ). Rehearsal pianists Ben Frost and  
Robert Challinor 'cello: Russell Davies/Juliet Tomlinson (24<sup>th</sup> Feb)  
Horn: Alun Rhys Viola: John Rayson/Jeff Moore (10<sup>th</sup> March)

**Cast (8<sup>th</sup> May 2001)**

**Hansel : Claire Stoneman**

**Gretel : Zoë Challenor**

**Witch/Mother : Jo Risebero**

**Father : Giles Pettit**

**Sandman : Kristina Rowley**

**Dew Fairy : Anna Flannagan**

**Gingerbread Children: Christiane Moron, Mary Moloney**



**Stage Manager:** Suman Pal  
**Costume Designer:** Bruno Fatalot  
**Assisted by:** Peggy Sturm  
**Set Designed by:** Elsa Rooke  
**Built by:** Ray and Ann Yorke  
**Painted by:** Elsa Rooke and Bruno Fatalot  
**Light Designer:** Kris Nuttall  
**Assisted by:** Ray Yorke  
**Transport Managers;** Ray and Anne Yorke  
**Publicity Assistant:** Sarah Flitter  
**Drawing for leaflet:** Ellie Williams

### **OTHER CREDITS**

**Opera Mint would like to thank INTELFAX LTD and CHAD LIGHTING for their generous donations.**

The vicar and PCC of St. Georges Church, Edgbaston, Birmingham for the use of rehearsal facilities.

Maria Viegas, Ruth Ahmed and Joan and Cyril Cooper.

John Challenor for general support and financial administration.

Simon Kirby for financial consultancy.

Ros McCarthy for administrative support.

Doll was made by Philippe Serpinet. Elsa Rooke wishes to thank Geraldine Allier and Martin Theveuon for their collaboration on the set design.

**Opera Mint is a not-for-profit organization supported by Youthful Promise Trust, a registered charity no 1014426.**

**You can find out more about Opera Mint by visiting our website at [www.operamint.co.uk](http://www.operamint.co.uk).**

**Opera Mint** runs workshops, residential courses, and other ongoing training in London, Wales and the Midlands. A rigorous programme of training in a friendly atmosphere is available at all levels from beginners to young professionals. We operate a strong equal opportunities policy, and there are no auditions.

For further information contact :-

Opera Mint, 278 Gillott Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham. B16 0RU.  
Tel/Fax 0121 454 3087. Anyone wishing to make a donation to Youthful Promise Trust, the charity supporting Opera Mint, should contact :-  
Simon Bryden Brooke, Carysfort House, 14 West Halkin Street,  
LONDON SW1X 8JS.

This production has been a particularly joyous one for Opera Mint. With several new singers in the company, a renewed collaboration with Elsa Rooke, Michael Rafferty, and Kris Nuttall, with the delightful and unexpected addition of Bruno Fatalot as costume designer, we find ourselves with a production of a directness and simplicity which normally only exists in dreams.

Add to this the skill and dedication of a team of solo instrumentalists playing David Seaman's masterly chamber version of the opera, and the situation is magical.

Singing is a robust art form, in that it keeps returning to the surface in all ages and circumstances, but also fragile, easily manipulated by the unscrupulous or the egotistical. When it is nurtured and free it is glorious. But for these singers that end result is bought by dedication and hard work, turning up on time to rehearsals and lessons at the end of a long working day, long journeys at night and weekends, spending money on tuition, and exercising strong self-discipline in personal lifestyles.

Discipline is also necessary in making the leap of imagination to work with people from all walks of life and many different backgrounds. We at Opera Mint have a strong commitment to giving singers of all backgrounds, including those with special abilities, opportunities to participate in performances and these performances reflect and celebrate that diversity.

You, our audience are as much part of the magic as the production and musical team. Your understanding and support are a crucial part of the performance. We hope you will keep in touch with us, comment if you wish (forms are provided if that is more convenient) and continue to support and follow the progress of the company and individual singers. Financial support is (of course!) always needed but even more important is the support of a lively and sympathetic audience.

Should you wish to become a Friend of Opera Mint formally, please write to Mrs Rosalind McCarthy, 6 Cedar Bridge Croft, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands B74 2SF.

And above all, thank you for coming to this performance and supporting us.

**SARA CLETHERO**



## Directors Introduction

### A Children's Tale Told By Children

This is a children's tale told by children, poetic, funny and cruel, the way only children can be all at once, poetic, funny and cruel. Two small children from a poor broom-maker's household are left at home with the fear of getting thrashed if they fail to do their chores and an ongoing hunger to bear. But they are small children and anything can become a game to fight both hunger and fear including the whole story itself, which could very well be a tale they make up for their benefit, out of their everyday world: brooms, a scolding mother, a comforting father, little friends from the neighbourhood.... With their imagination fed by fear and hunger, they tell a story where they can win over both. Hence a set and costumes drawn out of children's imagination. Just by turning furniture around and adding colour to a glum environment, a house can become a wood, a cellar an oven, an angry mother a scary witch.... In other words, everything at hand in their everyday life can be used and transformed by the power of their imagination to serve the purpose of a tale where they play at scaring and tempting each other.

As if everything were seen through Hansel and Gretel's eyes: the mother, who comes back at the most inappropriate time (as mothers always do, catching you red-handed) and whose anger is so unfair (but how are the children to understand that a mother who cannot provide for her offspring is gnawed by guilt and by the anger of powerlessness, exhausted by life and by a husband who beats her, probably for exactly the same reasons?). The Father, who comes back with his wise song (Gretel reminds her brother of their father's faith in life) and who seems to enjoy teasing his foul-mooded wife to the point of scaring her with gruesome tales as if to punish her for her fierceness. The fairies conjured up precisely when the story becomes too scary, to give the children a break (the Sandman putting them to sleep) and to start the story again (the Dew Fairy waking them up to a bright brand new day): and last but not least, this apparently all-powerful witch (as grown-ups always seem to be to children) inciting and revolting at the same time, as if the children needed to exorcise both what they long for and what they fear, (besides both the mother and the witch fail to feed the children properly). This is why it feels necessary to restore things by the end of the story the way they were when it started, as the family is finally gathered together and as the house is no longer a place ruled by fear and hunger but a home for hope and joy.

ELSA ROOKE

## Background to the opera

There was a revival of interest in national folk literature in early nineteenth century Germany. For examples of this are the *Kinder und Hausmärchen* by Brothers Grimm in 1810 and *Das Knaben Wunderhorn* a pair of anthologies of folk poetry whose poems were set by Schumann and Mahler published in 1805 and 1808. Such publications were not only intended for children but also the educated middle classes. They did much to bring the Fairy Tale and Folk Poem from an oral tradition to a literary high art.

Early on in his career, the composer Engelbert Humperdinck 1854-1921 fell under the influence of German fairy tales and folk literature which was to be a major inspiration for several of his compositions. One can see what a powerful effect they had on him in a diary entry dated 19<sup>th</sup> September 1879 "Last night in bed I read some of the Grimm's fairy tales, which so excited me that for a long time my racing imagination would not let me rest".

Humperdinck's opera *Hansel and Gretel* is not based on the version collected by the brothers Grimm but by another one by Ludwig Bechstein published in 1845. Beckstein's volume of fairy tales had a much wider distribution in nineteenth century Germany than that of the brothers Grimm. He is also much more graphic and dramatic in his retelling of the *Hansel and Gretel* story (making it more suitable for an operatic setting) and more realistic in its portrayal of living conditions. It contains several elements of social criticism while at the same time keeping all the important fairy tale/magical elements.

The origins of Humperdinck's opera date back to May 1890. He was asked by his sister Adelheid Wette to write some songs for a fairy tale play on the *Hansel and Gretel* story written for her children to perform on her husband's birthday. Humperdinck composed four songs for the play, a precursor of the dance duet (act 1 scene 1), the echo song (act 2 scene 1), the evening prayer (act 2 scene 2) and Kikeriki song (act 3 scene 1). He inscribed the manuscript of these songs as *Im Kinderstübchen-Weihfestspiel* (a nursery sacred festival play). Back in 1879 Humperdinck had assisted Wagner with the writing out and stage performance of *Parsifal*. He also composed a small passage of traditional music for the third act of the opera which Wagner rejected.



The final version of Hansel and Gretel was premiered in Weimar on December 23<sup>rd</sup> 1893. Although success was overshadowed by the popularity in Germany of the then new form of Italian Verismo opera (eg. Mascagni's *Cavalleria*), by the following year it had been produced in no fewer than fifty German theatres. That same year it was first shown in England and would be seen in America a year later. Since then it has become a popular work suitable for children but in reality it is an opera that transcends these associations. It is a piece whose folk-like charm and message of faith and hope transcending evil and fear is suitable for old and young alike.

ADAM NAGEL

### Claire Stoneman - Hansel

Claire Stoneman is a young mezzo-soprano who was born and brought up in Birmingham. Claire has sung with Opera Mint since 1995. Her operatic debut was as the *Third Lady* in Opera Mint's production of *The Magic Flute* in 1996 after a year studying voice. Claire's other operatic roles include the *Sorceress (Dido and Aeneas)*, *Cherubino (The Marriage of Figaro)* and *Mrs Grose* in Opera Mint's highly acclaimed production of *The Turn of the Screw* in 1999. Claire sings regularly in concerts and recitals around the country, including performances in the Midlands, Wales, Yorkshire, Buckinghamshire and London. She has performed as a soloist on three occasions at Symphony Hall, Birmingham.

Claire's extensive oratorio repertoire ranges from Pergolesi to Britten. She gained much performing experience as principle contralto with the University of Leeds Chorus and Symphony Choir. After graduating with a BA in English Language and Literature, Claire won the University of Leeds School of English Scholarship which enabled her to study for an MA in English Literature. After graduating with her MA (thesis on Britten's *Turn of the Screw*), Claire studied for a Post-graduate Certificate in Education specialising in English and Drama. She now teaches in a large South Birmingham secondary school. In November 2000 Claire sang *Mozart arias* with the University of Warwick Symphony Orchestra in Butterworth Hall, Coventry. Future plans include *Carmen* and *Romeo (I Capuleti e i Montecchi)* with Opera Mint. Claire continues to study with Sara Clethero.

### Zoë Challenor - Gretel

Zoë grew up in Birmingham and then in Cardiff, where she made her operatic debut as an unborn child in Richard Strauss's *Die Frau Ohne Schatten* for Welsh National Opera, aged 12! Since then she has sung numerous roles with Opera Mint, including Handel's *Semele*, *Pamina* in *The Magic Flute*, *Susanna* in *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Musetta* in *La Bohème*. Her performance of *Flora* in *The Turn of the Screw* was acclaimed in *The Birmingham Post* and *Opera Magazine* and she went on to sing the role again last year at the Britten-Pears Festival in Aldeburgh. Zoe is a regular soloist at St Augustine's in Highgate, London. Her frequent performances in oratorios and recitals have included Faure's *Requiem* with Christopher Maltman in Birmingham's Symphony Hall and Handel's *Messiah* in Hanover, Germany as part of Expo 2000, where she was again acclaimed by critics. She studies with Pamela Cook MBE. Future plans include *Giulietta* in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* and *Frasquita* in *Carmen*, both for Opera Mint.

### Anna Flannagan - Dew Fairy

Anna Flannagan read Music at Cardiff University where she was awarded the Sir Geraint Evans Prize for Outstanding Singers for the years 1998 and 1999 and gained a First in her Final Recital. She now studies with Esther Salaman, is a member of Abbey Opera and is winner of the Sir Arthur Collins Esq. Cup for the Vocal Recital Class in the Bromley Music Festival 2000. She is a member of the Early Music Group, Fiori Musicali, with whom she has sung in *Haydn's Creation*, *Schubert's Mass in B Flat*, *Monteverdi's Vespers* and broadcasts including *Byrd, Tallis, and Monteverdi* and recordings including *Haydn's Nelson Mass* for Metronome Records. Stage appearances include excerpts from *Euridice (Orfeo - Gluck)* with Abbey Opera, *Blousey* in an Act I production of *Bugsy Malone*, *Belinda (Dido and Aeneas)*, *Ingrate (Il Ballo della Ingrate - Monteverdi)* with Fiori Musicali.

Contemporary performances include *Kodaly's Te Deum* at Cardiff City Hall, *Berio's Folk Songs*, *Stravinsky's Two Poems of Balmont* and *Three Japanese Lyrics* with Cardiff University Contemporary Group and a role in the opera *King of Hearts* by Michael Torke made for Channel 4. In September 2000 she sang *Songs of a Wayfarer* by Mahler with the Rhondda Symphony Orchestra and looks forward to returning there this September. Other forthcoming performances include *Arminda (La Finta Giardiniera - Mozart)*, May 2001 at the Cochrane Theatre and *Handel's Messiah* in November 2001.



### **Joanna Risebero - Mother/Witch**

Joanna Risebero is a young mezzo-soprano who completed her degree in Music and Arts at Dartington College of Arts in 1999. She is currently studying privately with Ava June Cooper whom she first met at the Royal Northern College of Music. She is also a student on The Knack run by the Lilian Bayliss programme at English National Opera. This is her first production with Opera Mint which she first became associated with at their summer school in August 2000. She is due to commence further study as a post-graduate singer at the Royal College of Music this September.

Joanna began to take her singing seriously whilst at Camden School for Girls where she was regularly asked to sing solos in their termly Oratorio concerts. She then went on to join the New London Children's Choir, conducted by Ronald Corp. With the NLCC she took part in various concerts, recordings and radio broadcasts in London and abroad with conductors such as Ashkenazy, Sinopoli, Rostropovich, Sir John Gardiner, Luciano Berio, James Levine and Alexander Gohr. Her solo work includes : *A child of Our Time*, Tippett, conducted by John Catlow with Camden School for Girls. She also appeared as *Rosa Bud* in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* with Imperial Opera, *Mary* in *Follow the Star* with the Hampstead Players, *Eileen* in *Wonderful Town* with Camden School for Girls, and *Belinda* in *Dido and Aeneas* with NLCC.

### **Giles Pettit - Father**

A pupil of Pamela Cook, Nottingham based Giles has been regularly taking baritone roles in both stage and concert performances throughout the East Midlands and South Yorkshire. Opera roles include: *Papageno*, *The Magic Flute*, Crucible, Sheffield, *Sacristan*, *Tosca*, Opera House, Buxton, *Mandarin*, *Turandot*, Theatre Royal, Nottingham, *Morales*, *Carmen*, Crucible, Sheffield, *High Priest of Baal*, *Nabucco*, Arts Theatre, Nottingham, *Shipman*, *A Canterbury Tale*, and *Captain Schwarz*, *A Flight of Pilgrims*, both at Cottesmore Parish Church.

Music Theatre roles include: *Curly*, *Oklahoma*, Lyceum, Sheffield, *Billy Briglow*, *Carousel*, Playhouse, Nottingham, *Lancelot*, *Camelot*, Opera House, Buxton, *Freddie*, *My Fair Lady*, Lyceum Sheffield, *Bernardo*, *West Side Story*, Assembly Rooms, Derby, *Audrey*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, Lace Theatre, Derby, *Rapunzel's Prince*, *Wolf in the Woods*, Arts Theatre, Theatre Royal, Waterford Festival, *Various*, *Joanny Joanson*, Guildhall, Derby.

He has also played *Guiseppe* in *The Gondoliers* at the Arts Theatre, Nottingham. Oratorio work includes: *Beethoven, Mass in C*, *Mozart Requiem*, *Handel's Messiah*, *Haydn, Creation* and *Nelson Mass*, *Gounod Messe Solennelle de St Cecilia*, *Orff, Carmina Burana*, *Schubert, Mass in G*, *Puccini, Messa di Gloria*, *Stainer, Crucifixion*, *Rossini, Petite Messe Solennelle*, and *Monteverdi, Vespers*. His future plans include the part of *Belcore* in *Elixir of Love* by *Donizetti* at the Crucible Theatre, Sheffield and *Escamillo* in *Bizet's Carmen* at the Theatre Royal, Nottingham.

### **Kristina Rowley - Sandman**

Kristina comes from Scotland originally, but has now settled in Bicester. A graduate in modern languages from Oxford, Kristina is now in her second year of a PhD in Comparative Literature at Warwick. This is Kristina's debut with Opera Mint. Previous roles include *Pitti-sing* in *'The Mikado'* at the Oxford Playhouse, *Donna Elvira* and *Marcellina* with Oxford Touring Opera, *second woman (Dido and Aeneas)*, and *Mrs Partlett (The Sorcerer)* at the Northcott in Exeter. Kristina has also appeared in *'Cavalleria Rusticana'* with the English Touring Opera and *'Carmen'* with Opera Jigsaw.

### **Elsa Rooke – Director**

Elsa Rooke was born in Paris where she studied English Literature at the Sorbonne (doctoral dissertation majoring in Britten's operas), as well as drama, dancing, singing, and violin. She continued her musical education in London (Goldsmith's College, Aural and Harmony) where she has been living since 1992. Commuting between both countries, Elsa has been working for various opera companies in France (Opéra Comique in Paris, Opéra National de Lyon, Opera Nancy, Theatre de Caen, Opera d'Avignon, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence...) as stage-manager, assistant-director, researcher or revival director. Productions include *'The Turn of The Screw'*, *'The Rape of Lucretia'*, *'A Beggar's Opera'*, *'Albert Herring'*, *'Hansel and Gretel'*, *'The Merry Widow'*, *'Electra'*, *'Eugene Onegin'*, *'The Love for the Three Oranges'*, *'Betrothal in a Monastery'*, *'Carmen'*, *'Il Ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria'*, *'Tosca'*, *'Falstaff'*.....

In 1999 she directed *'The Turn of The Screw'* for Opera Mint in Birmingham (St George's Church, Edgbaston) and in Wales (St Donat's Arts Centre), conducted by Michael Rafferty. Elsa has also published a number of papers on opera and literature as well as French translations of some of Britten's Libretti. She gives talks on opera on a regular basis. In April 2001 she will be directing Martinu's *'Comedy on the Bridge'* for the Opéra National de Lyon (Opera Studio).



### **Michael Rafferty – Conductor**

Michael Rafferty co-founded the Cardiff New Opera Group and subsequently became Musical Director of Music Theatre Wales in 1988. Since then he has conducted all their productions including world premieres of *Ubu* by Andrew Toovey, *Flowers* and *The Roswell Incident* by John Hardy, *In The House of Crossed Desires* by John Woolrich and *Jane Eyre* by Michael Berkeley.

Many of the Music Theatre Wales productions have been recorded for BBC radio, TV or CD. He has also conducted for the Composers Ensemble, Banff Music Theatre, PM Music Ensemble and Opera Nationale du Rhin, Strasbourg. Future engagements include Maxwell Davies *The Lighthouse* at the Cheltenham Festival of Music and on tour in the U.K. also to be broadcast on Radio 3, performances with the PM Music Ensemble in Brussels and *Jane Eyre* in Shanghai.

### **Bruno Fatalot - Costume Designer**

Bruno Fatalot was born in Nancy, France. For the last fifteen years he has been working as a costume designer for opera, theatre and film. His most recent productions include *Marouf* (by Rabaud) for Opera La Marseille, *La Belle Hélène* for Klagenfurt and Portland Opera Houses, *Traviata* and *Lucia Di Lammermoor* for Choregies D'orange, *Andromaque* for Theatre Montorgueil in Paris, *La Poudre Aux Yeux* for the Festival d'Angers. His projects include Martinu's *Comedy on the Bridge* for Opera National De Lyon, *Butterfly* for Opera de Rennes and de Tours, and a French long feature.

### **Peggy Sturm - Costume Assistant**

Peggy Sturm was born in Tourcoing, France in 1978. She is still studying in Paris in a costume designer school and has already worked for '*La Belle Hélène*' and for '*Le Docteur Miracle*' and has also experience in street theatre. She will finish her schooling in June 2001.

### **Kris Nuttall - Light Designer**

Kris began his lighting career on his first day at the University of Bath. Whilst a student he lit over two hundred plays, operas, concerts and bands. As a professional he has lit a wide range of shows from operas to raves (often on the same day). Past credits include *Dido and Aeneas*, *King Arthur*, *Into the Woods*, (BUSO) Bath University Students Opera, *Cabaret*, *Gasping*, *Animal Farm*, (BUST) Bath University Students Theatre, *Our Country's Good* and *Death and The Maiden* (Next Stage). Nominated for the Rose Bowl Award for The Crucible (Swarts Prize), past work for Opera Mint includes *La Bohème* and *Turn of The Screw* for which he was critically acclaimed.

He continues to work at Bath University as a Lighting Director and teacher. March sees his debut as a set designer for a dance production. When not lighting he can be found in his garden or in the sky learning to fly.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

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