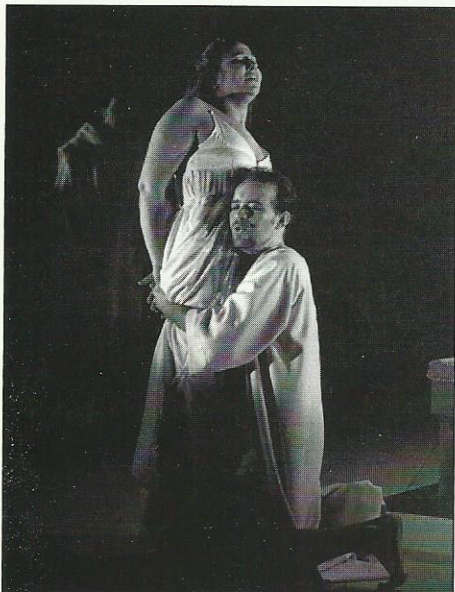


# TERN COLLEGE OF MUSIC

The RNCM Opera training programme follows a policy of opera production in the original language. Students were required to learn their roles for Janacek's masterpiece *From the House of the Dead* in the original Czech, a valuable educational experience which resulted in the production being nominated for a Manchester Evening News Award for Opera. It was during this production that the use of English surtitle translations for public performances was introduced, initially with slide projections.

RNCM Operas have received critical acclaim and awards, notably *Don Carlo* (Manchester Evening News Award). Tchaikovsky's *Orleanskaya Dyeva* (Michelob Award for Opera), and in 1996, *The Rape of Lucretia* which competed successfully against tough opposition from Opera North, Glyndebourne Touring Opera, and English Touring Opera to take the 1996 Manchester Evening News Award for Opera.



**Christine Rice as Lucretia and Adrian Powter as Tarquinius in the award-winning 1996 production of Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*. Photo: Gerald Murrey**

Casting is by audition. All vocal studies students are eligible following consultation with their individual tutors. Occasionally, productions are double-cast but always there is a cover cast that receives coaching and production rehearsals as part of their educational and professional training which includes a fully staged cover performance with the RNCM Symphony or Chamber Orchestra. Training in this field is essential as many students undertake their first professional contract as a cover with a major opera company. It also has practical benefits. During a performance of *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the "Cherubino" fell ill and the cover replaced the principal for Act IV, having been wigged, made-up, and costumed during the interval,

unbeknown to the audience until the final curtain.

Traditionally, the college has produced a Spring Opera Season which consists of two contrasting full-length operas, one which usually involves a full opera chorus. Many students experience their first total involvement by being a member of this chorus. The production of *Orleanskaya Dyeva* demanded a mixed chorus of over 80 dancers, actors, jugglers, acrobats and children for the court entertainment, coronation and battle scenes. Being a combination of many skills, on that occasion, students from other schools volunteered their services to participate, an indication of current thinking that the training of young musicians for the new millennium must focus on versatility and not solely on one's specialist field of study.

Students at the RNCM regularly audition for major professional opera companies including the Royal Opera, English National Opera, Opera North, Welsh National Opera, Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Opera, Frankfurt Opera, Bayreuth Festival, Broomhill Opera, British Youth Opera, and Clonter Opera. They are frequently successful in gaining their first professional contracts either as a principal, a cover, or a chorus member. This established process of professional links is essential for the students' future employment and usually takes place during the summer vacation/touring season or following their graduation, links directly to Opera Studios for further study both in the UK and abroad: the National Opera Studio Centre de Formation Lyrique (Paris), Zurich Opera Studio and Cologne Opera Studio. This has often led to students obtaining their first contract in an international opera house. Opera training for modern vocal students, who need to be versatile and able to apply themselves to the demands of both traditional and contemporary opera as well as to concert platform engagements, which could include music/musical theatre items, is enormously expensive. A production can cost anything from £70,000 to something over £100,000 to stage. Yet annual productions are entirely self-financing, without the help of any public funds. They earn income from Box Office sales and depend heavily on sponsorship and charitable support. The budgets are overseen personally by the college secretary, who has frequent meetings with the Director of Opera Studies and the Theatre Production Manager to monitor progress and to contain or curtail expenditure.

## THE COMPANY'S EVENSONG AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

Last November, there was a notable change from tradition to our annual St.

Cecilia service. It was decided to invite Masters and Clerks from our brother City Livery Companies to participate in this rather special and beautiful occasion. This proved very popular and representatives from no fewer than thirty Companies attended. The service was followed by refreshments in the Crypt which gave Liverymen an opportunity to meet up again and also entertain our distinguished guests.

The opening music featured Giovanni Gabrieli's *Canzon* in double echo and the first movement of Richard Strauss' *Symphony for Wind Instruments* played by the GSMD Wind and Brass Ensemble directed by Helena Gaunt.

Before the service began, the Masters and Clerks made a splendid sight as they processed fully robed to their pews followed by the Musicians' Livery, Court and finally the Wardens and Master.

Liveryman John Scott directed the Cathedral Choir. As usual, towards the conclusion of the service, the *Elegy*, composed for the Company by Sir Edward Elgar, was played by the GSMD Chamber Ensemble in memory of those Liverymen who had passed away during the year.

Thereafter, the Choir, Ministers, Musicians and Masters, Prime Wardens and Clerks dispersed to their respective chapels as the organist, Richard Moorhouse, played Bach's *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor*.

## PRINCIPAL AND PRESIDENT

Our congratulations go to Liveryman Ian Horsbrugh, Principal of the GSMD. At its General Assembly in Copenhagen, he was elected President of the Association of European Conservatoires which represents 125 major music colleges across Europe.