

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra Windrush, The Journey programme notes

Pegasus Opera, in partnership with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, present *Windrush, The Journey*.

For more than 30 years, Pegasus Opera Company has fearlessly paved the way for diverse talent in opera. Today, we're paying tribute to Windrush, showcasing a rich tapestry of music and storytelling, and celebrating Black classical composers: past, present and future.

Through the outstanding music of Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Richard Thompson and Des Oliver – three composers who represent different eras of Black history – we'll honour the legacy of the Windrush generation with an exciting fusion of classical music, steel pan, jazz and blues.

In the foyer of The Tung Auditorium, a fascinating immersive exhibition showcasing the work of Black British composers through music, photographs and anecdotes will accompany this concert.

Jeri Lynne Johnson

Award-winning American conductor [Jeri Lynne Johnson](#) is a versatile artist who is comfortable with a variety of repertoire and has developed a reputation for offering masterful and compelling performances of contemporary work.

Lauded as “a stunning, rhythmically vital conductor”, Johnson studied piano from the age of four and went on to gain a bachelor's degree in music and religion at Wellesley College and a master's in music history and theory from the University of Chicago. In 1998 she won the Jorge Mester Conducting Scholarship to attend the Aspen Music Festival, and her conducting mentors have included Liverpool's Sir Simon Rattle, Marin Alsop and Daniel Barenboim. Meanwhile in 2005 she made history by becoming the first Black woman to win an international conducting prize when she was awarded the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship.

Three years later, she founded the Philadelphia-based [Black Pearl Chamber Orchestra](#) of which she is artistic director. The orchestra aims to combine artistic excellence, cultural diversity and meaningful community engagement and has been recognised nationally and internationally as a leading innovator in social justice and racial equity.

[Johnson](#) has conducted many leading orchestras in the United States and internationally, and has also collaborated with contemporary artists such as [Jay Z](#), Alicia Keys and hip-hop band The Roots.

She is also a composer.

Watch Jeri Lynne Johnson talk about [how to bring classical music to the next generation](#).

Singers From Pegasus Opera Company

[Pegasus Opera Company](#) exists to create opportunities for composers, singers and musicians of African and Asian heritage.

The professional opera company was established in Brixton in 1992 by its artistic director Lloyd Newton, whose credo is 'harmony in diversity'. It produces high-quality performances, balancing this with a focus on artist development and with an eye to promoting the talents of emerging artists on eminent platforms. Pegasus celebrates the music of the African, Asian and Caribbean diasporas, using creativity to challenge and advocate for positive change. It also seeks to break down stereotypical racial casting to allow singers of all backgrounds an opportunity to play the roles for which they would not normally be cast.

Hear Pegasus Opera Company singers perform Des Oliver's '[Rush, A Windrush Anthem](#)' in 2021.

Joseph Bologne, le Chevalier de Saint-Georges – *L'Amant Anonyme*

Overture to *L'Amant Anonyme*

Depuis longtemps mon coeur soupire (Act 1, Scene 1)

Tant de Constance (Act 1, Scene 2)

Son amour, Sa constance extrême (Act 1, Scene 3)

Enfin une foule... L'Amour, deviant propice (Act 2, Scene 1)

Aimer sans pouvoir le dire (Act 2, Scene 2)

Non, non je ne puis rien entendre

Ah! Quel trouble

The 2022 film *Chevalier* may have amped up the facts for the big screen, but there's no doubt [Joseph Bologne's](#) real life story is an amazing one.

Born in France's West Indian colony of Guadeloupe in 1745, the illegitimate son of a wealthy French plantation owner and an enslaved Creole woman, [Saint-Georges](#) was taken to France at the age of seven to be educated. Saint-Georges went on to become a superstar of the pre-Revolutionary French court and society, and was widely regarded as the most accomplished man of his age.

In addition to being a hugely talented violinist, conductor and composer, he was also a consummate athlete, arguably the finest swordsman in Europe (on a visit to London he sparred with the future George IV), and military commander.

A contemporary of Mozart, he was the first [composer of African descent](#) to attain widespread acclaim in Europe.

L'Amant Anonyme, or *The Anonymous Lover*, dates from 1780 and the two-act chamber opera comique is the sole surviving complete example of Saint-Georges' six operas.

The story, with a libretto by French writer and playwright Desfontaines, is based on a play by the Comtesse de Genlis. It centres around Léontine, a wealthy widow who is receiving gifts and love letters from an anonymous admirer who – spoiler alert – turns out to be her friend Valour who has been struggling to tell her how he really feels about her.

Saint-Georges' Italianate score is both light and witty but also deeply expressive, and the role of Leontine requires a wide range and vocal agility.

Did you know? As the conductor of the French capital's Concert de la Loge Olympique orchestra, Saint-Georges premiered Haydn's six Paris symphonies.

Listen to [the overture](#) from the Chevalier de Saint-Georges' opera *L'Amant Anonyme*.

Richard Thompson - *Aspects of Othello & Desdemona*

[Richard Thompson](#) is a composer and performer whose work encompasses jazz and Third Stream composition.

In 1999 he was awarded the first Individual Artist Award for classical music composition from Brooklyn Arts Council, and his piece *Legend of the Moors* – a musical depiction of the presence and influence of the Moors in Spain in the Middle Ages – was premiered at the Brooklyn Conservatory.

His other compositions include the song cycles *The Shadow of Dawn*, *Dream Variations* and *Song of Solitude*, *Mask Suite* (premiered by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra), and a chamber opera [The Mask in the Mirror](#), a dramatization of the courtship and marriage of prominent African-American poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and Alice Ruth Moore.

In 2012, he was commissioned by the city of San Diego and Caltrans to compose a musical tribute to Martin Luther King Jr to accompany the installation of a mural by artist Philip Matzigkeit. *I Have a Dream*, scored for jazz quintet, male jazz singer and choir, was performed in October that year.

Originally from Aberdeen, he studied at the University of Edinburgh and Rutgers University in New Jersey and gained a jazz diploma from Berklee College of Music in Boston.

He made his debut as a pianist at the Purcell Room, Queen Elizabeth Hall, in 1984. Thompson performs as a soloist in both jazz and classical concerts and in many chamber groups, including his own jazz quintet, and is currently Professor Emeritus of Music at San Diego State University where he teaches theory, jazz performance and jazz history.

Five Aspects of Othello, five settings of pivotal soliloquies from Shakespeare's tragedy, was composed for operatic bass Kevin Maynor and chamber orchestra, and was premiered by Newark's Trilogy Opera in July 2020.

Soliloquy One comes from Act 1, Scene 3 of the play and starts 'most potent, grave and reverend signiors'.

The second soliloquy – **her father loved me, oft invited me** – also comes from Act 1, Scene 3, while Soliloquy 3 (from Act 4, Scene 1) which opens with 'lie with her?' shows Othello's jealousy, fuelled by Iago, becoming increasingly desperate.

Soliloquy 4 and 5 both use monologues from Act 5, Scene 2 in which Othello convinces himself what he is about to do is an act of love ('it is the cause',) and, facing justice after murdering Desdemona, prepares to kill himself ('soft you, a word or two').

Watch the premiere of *Five Aspects of Othello*, performed in the open air in July 2020.

Des Oliver and Edson Burton - "Windrush Opera" (Scenes 3 and 4)

Post-minimalist, and at times impressionistic, infused with African-diasporic influences, **Des Oliver's** music draws from a variety of genres and styles and combines driving rhythms with vivid colours, often culminating in mesmerising and immersive musical landscapes.

Commissions include works for the Bach Choir and Faust Chamber Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Oxford Philharmonic Orchestra. His *Dionysian Rivers Flow Through Me* was selected for the International Computer Music Conference in South Korea, and he has composed works for the soloist Clio Gould, All India Radio artist Shruti Jauhari, and most recently for accordionist Mingyuan Ruan.

His work has been performed at the Southbank Centre, Battersea Arts Centre, LSO St Lukes, Oxford Playhouse, the Sheldonian Theatre and Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival.

He is also a filmmaker and his curated documentary series *Identity and the Anxiety of Influence*, commissioned by Sound and Music for the British Music Collection, explores issues surrounding black identity with the breadth of new music produced by BAME composers across the UK.

Oliver studied composition with Robert Saxton and Simon Bainbridge at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He won a scholarship at the Royal Academy of Music and has had masterclasses with Thomas Ades, Nicholas Maw and the BBC Singers among others.

He holds a doctorate in composition at Worcester College, Oxford, and is a composition tutor at Christ Church, University College and Magdalen College. He is also a Jerwood composer with the London Symphony Orchestra.

Writer, poet, academic and curator **Edson Burton's** work is informed by the diversity of voices which form part of his navigation of class, ethnic and geographic communities.

He is a writer of drama for radio, stage and screen and his work has been produced by Show of Strength, Trinity Community Arts, and the Bristol Old Vic where he is associate artist. He is also co-founder of Black theatre company Dip & Fall Back.

Burton's academic specialisms include Afrofuturism, the Transatlantic Slave Trade, Race and Representation, and he has worked as a consultant and coordinator for a range of national and regional-based history projects.

In 2022, he was one of five writers who created the libretto for *Migrations*, a new work for Welsh National Opera.

He was made an MBE in the King's New Years Honours in 2023 for services to the arts and community in Easton, Bristol.

Oliver was originally commissioned by Pegasus Opera Company to compose *Rush – a Windrush Anthem* during the Covid lockdown to be performed by its online community choir, with the musical and lyrical content coming from his conversations with choir members over Zoom.

Windrush Opera, with a libretto by Edson Burton, is Oliver's first full-length opera and centres on four distinct characters – Avril, a timid young woman aspiring to be a nurse on arriving in England; Smiley, a resolute individual with a strong moral compass and hidden feelings for Avril; Vanley, Avril's charming yet somewhat promiscuous husband, hailing from Trinidad; and Don, a conscientious former soldier of World War II deeply invested in the concept of the 'Empire'.

As they forge an unlikely friendship aboard the Empire Windrush, each harbours individual aspirations and ambitions.

Set a year or so after their initial encounter, Scene 3 unfolds in shared lodgings in the dilapidated quarters of Notting Hill. The atmosphere is fraught with neglect, mirroring the tumultuous journey of these characters as they navigate life in England through various epochs.

Infused with the rich tapestry of Caribbean music, the opera resonates with diverse styles and genres that enhance its narrative.

In Scene 3, the lively 'cockroach' trio, led by Vanley, exudes the vibrant rhythms of 1950s calypso, adding a playful charm to the ambience. Meanwhile, Scene 4 introduces "Snow Child," a children's song infused with Cuban influences, enriching the emotional depth of the storyline with its melodic strains.

Through these musical interludes, the opera not only captivates the audience but also transports them across time and space, immersing them in the vivid landscapes of the characters' lives.

Daisy Ou, Pianist

Praised as a "deft" (The Telegraph) pianist with "exceptional talent" (The Daily Telegraph), "commanding the stage with panache" (The Evening Standard), Australian-born Chinese pianist Daisy Ou has performed throughout Australia, the USA, UK and Europe.

Daisy received her Masters of Music with Distinction, studying with Senior Professor Joan Havill at The Guildhall School of Music & Drama as a The Herbert & Theresie Lowit Memorial Scholar. Daisy is a grant recipient of The Sidney Perry Foundation, The Youth Music Foundation of Australia Inc. and The Zetland Foundation for her overseas studies.

In 2022, Daisy performed and acted in The Bridge Theatre's production of Henry Ibsen's *John Gabriel Borkman* as the character of Frida Foldal – a girl who comes to realise her potential as a pianist and leaves home to pursue her dreams under the direction of Sir Nicholas Hytner performing alongside Sir Simon Russell Beale, Lia Williams and Clare Higgins.

Daisy is a co-member of The London Piano Duo, recently winning The 4th International Recondite Piano Competition. She is currently represented by the Arts & Entertainment Talent agency iD Talent.

Christian Joel, Tenor

Hailing from Trinidad and Tobago, tenor Christian Joel is an up-and-coming artist of great promise. Christian's upcoming performances include the title role of *Orlando* in Handel's opera with Liberata Collective, Steuermann in Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* with Persona Arts and Count Almaviva in Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*.

Last season performed Amnon in Hagemann's *Ruth* with Pegasus Opera Company, and Handel's *Orlando* with Liberata Collective at Buxton International Festival. Christian has appeared as Chief Pee-Ay-Sis in Will Todd's *Migrations*, and Anthony (cover) in David Hackbridge Johnson's *Blaze of Glory* with Welsh National Opera. Other operatic roles include David in John Adams' *I was looking at the ceiling and then I saw the Sky* (Opéra de Lyon), Dr Sachs in Michael Nyman's *The Man who mistook his wife for a Hat* (Theatre Oriental de Vevey), Prince Paul (*La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein*, Offenbach) with the Lucerne Theatre.

Christian's recent concert repertory includes Carmina Burana at in France, Handel's Israel in Egypt under the baton of Leonardo García Alarcón, and Mozart's Requiem at the Herkulesaal, Munich. Christian is also the featured tenor in Google's 'Blob Opera' interactive site.

Following studies at HEMU de Lausanne and the Zurich University of the Arts, he was an artist of the International Opera Studio at Opéra de Lyon during the 2019-2020 season.

Donna Bateman, Soprano

Donna Bateman is an award-winning Soprano who has been honored as an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music. ^[1]_{SEP}

Donna's first leading role was Marzelline in Birmingham Opera Company's award-winning production of *Fidelio*. Donna has debuted several major world premieres, including *The Royal Opera House, ROH2*, in *The Gentle Giant*, Estella in *Life is a Dream*, by Jonathan Dove, Emilie in Ernest Toch's 'Egon Und Emilie' at King's Place London and Lulu in *American Lulu - Neuwirth/Berg* for The Opera Group, Young Vic, Scottish Opera and Bregenz Festspiele co-production.

Upcoming engagements include Katie in 'Who Cares' by Douglas Finch, *The Mother in Pleasurable Death* by Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayian for HERA (premiere), Imoinda in *Imoinda* by Odaline de la Martinez (British premiere), *Fortuna and Melanto* in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* for The Grange Festival and *Porgy and Bess* for English National Opera, Dutch National Opera and Theater an der Wien Vienna.

Donna also provides masterclasses and mentoring in support of singers of all ages. Donna developed the educational programme 'Musical Buddies' for schools and children's centres and was awarded the 'Brent Citizen' award for her work, and is a mentor for Pegasus Opera's 'Lift Up Lambeth Voices'.

Donna's parents, Winston and Victoria Bateman, came to England as part of the Windrush generation. In 2023 her family was awarded the Christina Newbury Memorial award and the 'Who Cares Wins Award' for 80 years of combined service in the NHS.

Felicity Buckland, Mezzo-soprano

Felicity trained at the RNCM and on ENO's Opera Works programme.

Her 2023/4 season appearances included Flora *La Traviata* at ENO (cover); Rosina *The Barber of Seville* (Bradford Opera Festival); Amneris *Aida* (Kentish Opera); Meg Page *Falstaff* (West Green House Opera), and performances of Mendelssohn *Elijah* and Beethoven *Symphony No.9*. She has sung principal roles in both celebrated productions of Philip Glass at ENO: Kasturbai in *Satyagraha*, and Ankhesenpaaten in *Akhnaten*.

Past operatic highlights include: Wellgunde *The Rhinegold* (Birmingham Opera); *Carmen* (Baseless Fabric Theatre/Grimeborn/Kentish Opera); Lily *Porgy and Bess* (Theater an der Wien); Nicklausse *The Tales of Hoffmann* (Kentish Opera), *La Cenerentola* (High Time); Olga *Eugene Onegin* (Opera Up Close, Opera South East.); Rossweisse *Die Walküre* (Grange Park Opera); Maddalena *Rigoletto* (Park Opera); and Beggar Woman *Sweeney Todd* and Paquette *Candide* (West Green House Opera).

Felicity' concert specialities include Elgar *The Dream of Gerontius*, Verdi *Requiem*, Handel *Messiah*, and Rutter *Feel the Spirit*. She has made solo appearances for the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall, at Royal Festival Hall, and with the BBC Concert Orchestra.

Benson Wilson, Baritone

Winner of the Kathleen Ferrier Awards and the Lexus Song Quest, Benson Wilson was a Harewood Artist at English National Opera. Other companies with whom he has worked include Glyndebourne, Longborough Festival Opera, Opera Holland Park and Welsh National Opera.

A committed recitalist, he has toured in New Zealand, including programmes at Auckland Chamber Concert Hall and Hawkes Bay Opera House, as well as appearing with pianists including Lucy Colquhoun, Ella O'Neill, James Baillieu, Iain Burnside and Joseph Middleton at venues including London's Wigmore Hall and at the Brighton, Kings Lynn, Leeds Lieder, Ludlow and Oxford Lieder Festivals. He has appeared in concert with City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Auckland Philharmonia Orchestra and Orchestra Wellington, also singing Finzi's *Et in terra pax* for his debut with BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sakari Omari.

A 2019 Salzburg Festival Young Artist, where he sang **Mirza** *Der Gesang der Zauberinsel*, and a Samling Artist, Benson Wilson graduated from the University of Auckland and completed his studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the National Opera Studio.

Marie Cayeux, Soprano

Recipient of a bursary from the International Opera Awards Foundation for the season 2023-2024, Marie Cayeux recently debuted at Opéra de Monte-Carlo as the Fire, the Princess and the Nightingale in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and as a guest artist at the international Festival Lyrique-en-Mer.

Winner of many prizes at international competitions, her past roles include: La Princesse Laoula (*L'étoile* – Chabrier), the Dew fairy (*Hänsel und Gretel* – Humperdinck), Louisa (*A Feast in the Time of Plague* – Cui), Mrs P. (*The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat* – Nyman), The Maid (*Four Sisters* – Langer) and Barbara (*Roman Fever* – Hagemann). This summer, she will be covering Waldvogel (*Siegfried* – Wagner) for Longborough Festival Opera.

UK-based since 2018, Marie studied in Opera School at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and obtained her Masters in Vocal Performance with Distinction at the Guildhall School.

Victoria Evaristo, Narrator & Director

Victoria Evaristo trained at the Guildhall School of Music and drama and is an actor, director and freelance drama tutor. Her most recent acting work includes : Someone, Somewhere isn't us (Pavilion works) Woven (Forrest theatre Edinburgh festival) MA Joyce's Tales from the Parlour (Liverpool theatre Festival) The Pay Day (Praxima Films) Mummylogues (Old red Lion theatre) WOW Festival (Royal Festival Hall) Baring the Weight (New Diorama) The Rally (Stockwell playhouse)Big Bad world(Comedy Central) Ma Joyce's Tales from the Parlour(Oval House) Do you know where your daughter is? (Hackney Empire) Angel Point (New Peckham Varieties Theatre), Tell Me You Love Me, (Landor), Sankofa, (Royal Festival Hall) Belle (Southwark Playhouse), Big Splash (Oily Cart) Treemonisha (BAC) Soul Sisters Melody (Everyman Liverpool). And numerous advert campaigns.

Recent directing work includes: The Forest and the Calling from Beyond (East15 Acting school) The Sweet science of Bruising (Young actors theatre) Just Aretha (Redbridge Drama Centre) Mummylogues (Old red lion theatre) In search of a white Identity (actors centre on demand season) Victoria has taught and directed at East 15 Acting school, Young Actors theatre, Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts, Redbridge Drama Centre, Sylvia Young Theatre School, Identity School of Acting, City University, Black Fest creatives, Big Foot theatre company, London Bubble and Eastside Educational Trust.