



ROYAL
OPERA
HOUSE

Press Release

Thursday 16 June 2022

This is the hour

She gathers herself

And speaks

**The Blue Woman - a radical new opera exploring the rage, resilience
and healing following sexual violence**

The Royal Opera are proud to present ***The Blue Woman*** – a deeply political, new opera exploring the psychological aftermath of sexual violence experienced by women. Composed by **Laura Bowler**, directed by **Katie Mitchell**, with a libretto by **Laura Lomas**, this hugely important piece explores the interior landscape of one woman, who has experienced a post-traumatic shattering of self, as a consequence of being raped.

Opening on **Wednesday 6 July** in the intimate **Linbury Theatre**, *The Blue Woman* provokes a conversation about how opera deals with violence against women, and our responsibility to audiences today and in the future.

Sarah Crabtree and Kate Wyatt, Creative Producers, The Royal Opera add: “In repertory opera, sexual and physical violence against women is often an accepted norm. From Tosca to

Butterfly, female protagonists meet violent ends in stories predominantly created by male composers and librettists. Since these more traditional works were written, the world has changed and bold, contemporary, new work can redress this balance. We are thrilled to be able to commission Laura and Laura to complete this important work and in doing so, amplify the many voices whose stories still need to be heard.'

In 2016, before the pandemic and before #MeToo movement, composer Laura Bowler undertook a residency at **Britten Pears Arts**, exploring how, in a society where 1 in 5 women has been raped or sexually assaulted as an adult*, a contemporary opera might approach the subject of violence against women. At the 2019 **Aix-en-Provence Festival**, Laura Bowler met Katie Mitchell and invited her to direct the piece, who in turn suggested working with Laura Lomas to develop the commission and write the libretto.

Laura Lomas explains: 'Throughout the process, Laura and I maintained an open dialogue, sharing research and ideas as well as early sections of text and composition. This felt necessary to ensure that the conceptual ideas of the work were held by both the libretto and the music'.

Laura Bowler adds: 'The four vocalists are supported and distorted by the ever-present musical textures and physicality of the four on stage cellists, whilst the percussion and electronics destabilise, interrupt and overwhelm with a constantly pivoting energy between propulsion and stasis.'

The creative team – including conductor **Jamie Man**, costume and set designer, **Lizzie Clachan**, sound designer, **Matthew Fairclough**, lighting designer **James Farncombe** and video director **Grant Gee** have worked closely with Laura, Laura and Katie, to ensure the creation of a set that not only functions aesthetically but compliments the live and electronic musical aspects of the composition.

The Blue Woman – in rep from 6-11 July 2022. Tickets now on sale. For more information, visit roh.org.uk

Support available

Rape Crisis is an umbrella charity that supports local crisis centres across the country, and helps survivors of rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment or any form of sexual violence.

You can contact Rape Crisis via their free helpline on [0808 802 9999](tel:08088029999) for support or to find out what services are available in your area.

The Royal Opera House is grateful to Rape Crisis for the support they have made available to our audiences.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

- Guidance: Suitable for ages 16+ This production contains themes of sexual violence and assault. Audience discretion is advised.

PRESS CONTACT

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CREATIVE TEAM

- Composer Laura Bowler
- Librettist Laura Lomas
- Director Katie Mitchell
- Music Director Jessica Cottis
- Conductor Jamie Man
- Set and Costume Designer Lizzie Clachan
- Lighting Designer James Farncombe
- Video Director Grant Gee
- Sound Designer Matthew Fairclough
- Assistant Director Emma Doherty
- Assistant Conductor Berrak Dyer

CAST

- Soprano Gweneth-Ann Rand
- Mezzo-sopranos Rosie Middleton, Lucy Schauerfer
- Contralto Elaine Mitchener
- Cello I Louise McMonagle
- Cello II Su-a Lee
- Cello III Tamaki Sugimoto
- Cello IV Clare O'Connell
- Percussionist Angela Wai-Nok Hui

The Blue Woman

The Royal Opera a co-production with Britten Pears Arts

Linbury Theatre

On Stage from Wednesday 6 – Saturday 11 July

Tickets £5-£25

For more information, and to book, visit: [The Blue Woman \(roh.org.uk\)](https://roh.org.uk)

Insights

The Blue Woman

Part of the Engender Festival 2022 – Monday 4 July, The Clore, ROH

About Engender

Established by The Royal Opera in 2019, Engender aims to highlight and grow the wealth of female talent both onstage and behind the scenes. It provides space and opportunity for personal development, peer support and creation of new work as well as conversations about gender in opera and exploring the barriers to equality. The network is open to all women and non-binary people in opera. Across the year Engender hosts conversations focused on gender in opera and exploring the challenges to achieving equality.

About The Royal Opera

The Royal Opera, under the artistic direction of Antonio Pappano, Music Director, and Oliver Mears, Director of Opera, is one of the world's leading opera companies. Based in the iconic Covent Garden theatre, it is renowned both for its outstanding performances of traditional opera and for commissioning new works by today's leading opera composers, such as George Benjamin, Harrison Birtwistle, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Thomas Adès.

About the Royal Opera House

Home to The Royal Ballet, The Royal Opera and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, the Royal Opera House brings together world-class performers and trailblazing creative teams to share unforgettable performances with audiences near and far. Our theatres are in London's Covent Garden, but our work is accessed and experienced across the UK and globally through our streams, tours, cinema programme, radio broadcasts and TV output.

Over the course of the pandemic, we curated the #OurHouseToYourHouse programme – nine live-streamed concerts and 38 full-length streamed productions from our archives. Content was viewed over 15 million times in 183 countries, and broadcast in partnership with the BBC, Sky Arts, Marquee TV and Netflix. During the pandemic we lost £3 in every £5 of our income and we continue to feel the financial impact as we slowly recover.

In September, we returned for our first full Season since 2019, sharing a packed programme of world premieres, landmark new productions and returning favourites. Since then, we have expanded our audience through a flagship Young ROH scheme, returned to live cinema relays, and extended our national impact through an ambitious curriculum-linked programme for schools, specially designed to ignite creativity, broaden participation and diversify the future of opera and ballet. We are committed to reducing our impact on the environment and aim to achieve net zero emissions by 2035.

Royal Opera House Recovery Campaign

Live performance is a shared experience, and our audiences are at the heart of what we do on our stages, backstage, online, in cinemas and in our communities. The global pandemic has affected all arts organisations across the world. We have lost £3 in every £5 of our income, and our loan from the Government takes us only part of the way. We need your help with our Recovery Campaign to bring our artists back to our stages. [Roh.org.uk/donate](https://roh.org.uk/donate).