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# Nicky Shaw

## Selected Reviews

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### *La bohème*. Irish National Opera (November 2023)

"Nicky Shaw's sets and costume designs are spot-on, readily capturing the gritty, bohemian atmosphere. An impressive two-storey outer wall, lined with arches and windows, functions as both the ramshackle, impoverished artists' studio and as the cheerful commercial backdrop to the Café Momus. In Act 3 the small wall pivots to create the perspective of a long street and, coupled with snow falling, conveys the cold destitution in store for the lovers. ... Costumes are lively and relatable, with caps and waistcoats being the order of the day and some wonderful, if brief, pageantry from the police and marching band. The transformation of Musetta in Act 2 from top-hat-and-tails to sequins is hilarious. – **Andrew Larkin, bachtrack.com** \*\*\*\*\*

"Here the interwar period ... becomes colourfully real in the costumes and café exterior designed by Nicky Shaw. ... Shaw and the lighting designer Matt Haskins have people not appearing from the wings but emerging unsettlingly out of nowhere, complete darkness, notably a troop of black-clad monks who pass through without a word to the sound of predawn church bells.

... [Nicky] Shaw ... has people not appearing from the wings but emerging unsettlingly out of nowhere, complete darkness, notably a troop of black-clad monks who pass through without a word to the sound of predawn church bells." – **Michael Dungan, The Irish Times** \*\*\*\*

"Designer Nicky Shaw ... nods to the art of that time, literally raising Mimi's gelida manina to a cinematic plane, as images of it and her profile float above the bohemians' makeshift studio. It all makes perfect sense, and does not stop the production conveying the essence of what Puccini was trying to do here: integrate feeling and realistic drama with the most sumptuous music." – **Alan O'Riordan, Irish Examiner** \*\*\*\*

"Nicky Shaw's beautiful sets contain mesmerising street exteriors." – **Chris O'Rourke, theartsreview.com** \*\*\*\*\*

"I want to be immediately up front about this. Irish National Opera's latest production of Puccini's *La Bohème* at the Bord Gáis Energy Theatre should be seen by everybody who has an interest in opera in Ireland. Or maybe, more correctly, those who have not seen any opera at all in Ireland. It is by far the best production of Puccini's masterpiece I have ever witnessed at home, or even on video, film or television. ... As well as being incredibly beautiful visually, it had that real hallmark of a special production – it radiated confidence from start to finish. On an opening night, that is really something special to behold. And, despite such a sad tale, even joyous. ... The production values were immensely impressive and so directly Orpha Phelan and her team deserve credit, particularly Nicky Shaw (set and costume design) ... The children's chorus scene with the perfectly picturesque (and almost statuesque) soldiers was particularly delightful." – **Dick O'Riordan, Business Post**

"The director Orpha Phelan and designer Nicky Shaw moved the period forward to Paris in the 1920s, another bohemian decade, with considerable success. Shaw designed a setting with great arches which could be supplemented in various ways to suit the story, creating a particularly effective transition from the first to the second act, as the crowd at the Café Momus burst through the arches with dramatic impact." – **Ian Fox, Opera Magazine**

### *Rebecca*, Charing Cross Theatre (September 2023)

"Shadow play and watery surges around De Winter's Cornish estate, Manderley, are captured beautifully through Matt Powell's projections. Together with Nicky Shaw's quickly re-formatting set design, bedrooms morph into moonlit trees or cauldron-like ocean waves."

– **Arifa Akbar, The Guardian**

### *La Sonnambula*, Buxton International Festival (July 2023)

"Nicky Shaw's sets and Zahra Mansouri's costumes place the piece in a worker's canteen and in Lisa's spare bedroom in the 1950s. Both of them look a treat." – **George Hall, The Stage** \*\*\*\*\*

"Aided by appealing sets by Nicky Shaw, Fehr puts us instead in the chauvinist British 1960s, in a workplace canteen advertising "beef stew and dumplings". – **Mavis Kirkham, The Times** \*\*\*\*\*

"For this production Harry Fehr's enlivening tactic was to change the setting from the bucolic Swiss Alps to what looked like a British work canteen in the 1960s, wittily realized by the designer Nicky Shaw." – **Rupert Christiansen, Opera Magazine**

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### ***The Land of Might-Have-Been, Buxton International Festival (July 2023)***

Kimberley Sykes' production, with designs by Nicky Shaw, works wonders with a fairly sparse collection of furniture and scenic flats, following the show from the ballroom to the trenches via Charing Cross Station and a Goyte Valley picnic. – **Sarah Noble, Bachtrack**

### ***Don Pasquale, Irish National Opera (November 2022)***

"The staging, designed by Nicky Shaw, was simple, imaginative and effective."

"The designs allowed for the small chorus to enter and leave naturally without disrupting the dramatic flow, and there were plenty of places for the characters to hide themselves away, which added to the potential for slapstick." – **Alan Neilson, Operawire**

### ***Flight, RCM Opera School (June 2022)***

"Overall, the performance was nothing short of spectacular, and an encouraging sign of the future of the operatic genre. I especially commend the internationally acclaimed costume designer Nicky Shaw for her decision to place Clara (a.k.a the Controller or perhaps "God") in an austerly white, tea-length suit/dress combo with pointed shoulders. What a striking image against the gray hues of the background and the colors of the other cast!" – **John Vandevent, Opera Wire**

### ***La Cenerentola, Irish National Opera (November 2019)***

"The overture comes with reminders of half a dozen fairy tales, and Nicky Shaw's inventive set is full of such books, both large and small. The storybook backdrop works well, but the revelation of a complete library is a coup de theatre." – **David Byers, The Irish Times\*\*\*\***

"Phelan's La Cenerentola, with clever, witty and sometimes spectacular designs by Nicky Shaw, is steeped in the world of fairy tales." – **Michael Bervan, The Irish Times\*\*\*\***

"Excellent as the cast were, the wow factor was the staging that drew the audience into a fantasy world of books... In the princes' palace, Nicky Shaw's set creates the illusion of giant floor to ceiling books in vintage book bindings, the titles of classic children's literature legible from a seat in the stalls." – **Cathy Desmond, The Irish Examiner\*\*\*\*\***

"... a fine production by Orpha Phelan, in delightful children's-book settings from Nicky Shaw..." – **Ian Fox, Opera Magazine**

### ***Madama Butterfly, Glyndebourne Festival and Tour (May 2018)***

"Butterfly isn't the first abandoned child bride in Japan. When the curtain goes up on Annilese Miskimmon's new Puccini production for Glyndebourne's touring wing, we're not in Pinkerton's flat-pack house, but Goro's marriage bureau, where drunk American sailors pay up, grab a geisha and head off to the hotel next door... It's a jolting beginning and — if it takes some liberties with the libretto — the scene, brilliantly designed by Nicky Shaw and atmospherically lit by Mark Jonathan, establishes the tenor of Miskimmon's production immediately: no queasy sentimentality, no room for cherry-blossom Japan." – **Neil Fisher, The Times\*\*\*\***

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"She [Annilese Miskimmon] updates the action to the 1950s, also taking the controversial decision to set the first act in Goro's Marriage Bureau in downtown Nagasaki, a location which in Nicky Shaw's designs suggests absolute efficiency and an air of sleaziness simultaneously ... Elsewhere, one can have few reservations about a production that explores text and music both seriously and sensitively. Puccini and his skilful librettists may do much of the work for you, but Miskimmon and an excellent cast ensure that the emotional impact of the piece is devastating." - **George Hall, The Stage** \*\*\*\*

"On August 9, 1945, an atomic bomb dropped by America on Nagasaki killed 35,000 people and left the Japanese city devastated. The flavour of the era is conveyed by designer Nicky Shaw's setting the first scene, not in a traditional paper-screened house with cherry blossom, but in marriage-broker Goro's sleazy downtown office where a conveyor belt of instant hook-ups between Japanese girls and American servicemen provides a profitable income... The humming song as Butterfly and her maid Suzuki await news of Pinkerton's return is exquisitely realised in shadow silhouettes against an ethereal blue background." - **Claire Colvin, Sunday Express**\*\*\*\*\*

### **Semele, Garsington Opera (June 2017)**

"Comical and clever ... With visuals entrusted to director Annilese Miskimmon and designer Nicky Shaw, Garsington's jokey, modern-dress approach feels apposite: the piece contains ironic and even blatantly comic episodes in its retelling of a cautionary tale on the eternally fresh theme of Be Careful What You Wish For." - **George Hall, Financial Times**\*\*\*\*\*

"Annilese Miskimmon's wittily imaginative production ... Nicky Shaw's enchanting designs – Jupiter's realm is evoked with celestial blues, reflective surfaces, even glowing orbs – provide some ravishing stage pictures ... There are magical moments in this staging of one of Handel's most richly inventive scores." - **Barry Millington, Evening Standard**\*\*\*\*\*

"A magical new production. ... Miskimmon's take on the piece, stunningly designed by Nicky Shaw in rich tones of blue and white, fleshes out all the characters, even the gods, and for the most part she maintains a light comic touch." - **Mark Valencia, WhatsOnStage**\*\*\*\*

"Garsington's new production of Handel's Semele, directed by Annilese Miskimmon, is something of a triumph ... Nicky Shaw's designs include fitted bright-blue flight crew uniforms for the heavenly attendants and an evocative moonlit backdrop. As the sun sets outside Garsington's airy pavilion theatre, the stage responds with illuminated moons and a candlelit memorial to Semele." - **Edward Bhesania, The Stage**\*\*\*\*

"The most imaginative production of utter delight..." - **London Theatreviews**\*\*\*\*\*

"Annilese Miskimmon's larky take on the piece, which possesses a rich seam of levity, not least in the pouty posturings of self-loving Semele in her rock-star assortment of glittering outfits ... That it looks wonderful, too, is all thanks to designer Nicky Shaw ... Garsington's fabulous production of Semele." - **Christopher Gray, Oxford Times**\*\*\*\*\*

"A witty, winning production..." - **Claire Seymour, Opera Today**

"First-rate musical performance and production that's hard to fault." - **Michael Tanner, The Spectator**

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### ***Dead Man Walking, Royal Danish Opera (January 2017)***

"No imperfections in this production ... Orpha Phelan's staging and Nicky Shaw's scenography are at once moderate, expansive and flexible."  
- **Peter Dürrfeld, *Kristeligt Dagblad* \*\*\*\*\***

"Staged with great understanding by Irish director, Orpha Phelan. ... Nicky Shaw has created a great frame and got church and prison to work in one modern elementary building, just like the costumes is remarkable." - **Knud Cornelius, *Frederiksborg Amts Avis*\*\*\*\*\***

"The audience is saved no details. Experiencing this production of Dead Man Walking is like watching a film immersed in a large musical aquarium of emotions. Depicted vividly with cinematic accuracy... this is a sharply staged production." - **Politiken\*\*\*\*\***