



GOTHIC OPERA PRESENTS

Der Vampyr

BY HEINRICH AUGUST MARSCHNER



FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Welcome to the Arcola for Gothic Opera's *Der Vampyr!* This is the first of two productions Gothic Opera are staging in 2024, our sixth exciting year.

First up we are thrilled to give a new shine to *Der Vampyr*, the opera that launched our company in October 2019. This romantic opera, which premiered in Leipzig in 1828, is often considered the missing link between Weber's *Freischütz* (1821) and Wagner's *Fliegende Holländer* (1843).

Based on John Polidori's short story *The Vampyre* - one of the first evocations of a vampire in European literature - the narrative of the opera resonates with the contemporary British audience, especially those familiar with Gothic realms and pop culture works such as Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*.

In a renewed adaptation by Julia Mintzer and Kelly Lovelady, the creative tandem that we are thrilled to welcome back along with half of the original cast, *Der Vampyr* promises to offer a highly entertaining, thought-provoking and sassy evening to the Grimeborn audience.

We hope you enjoy the show! And we do hope you'll also come along to our Halloween production - the UK staged premiere of Donizetti's *Maria de Rudenz*, coming to Battersea Arts Centre this autumn.

Béatrice de Larragoiti

Gothic Opera presents
DER VAMPYR

Composed by
Heinrich August Marschner

Libretto by
Wilhelm August Wohlbrück

Director
Julia Mintzer

Conductor and Arranger
Kelly Lovelady

New dialogue by
Charles Ogilvie

Set and Costume Designer
Charles Ogilvie

Lighting Designer
Will Alder

**Associate Director/
Fight Choreographer**
Jonny Danciger

Producer
Helene Mathiesen

CAST

Ruthven

Giuseppe Pellingra

Malwina

Milena Knauß

Aubrey

Jack Roberts

Davenaut

Conall O'Neill

Emmy

Amber Reeves

Janthe

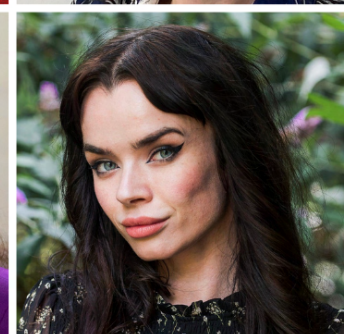
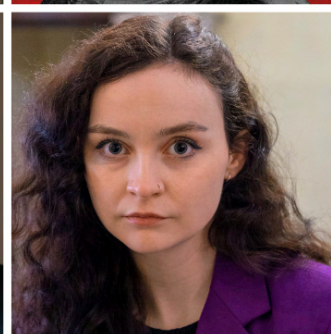
Madeleine Todd

Georg

Matthew Scott Clark

Vampire Master

Gráinne Gillis



ORCHESTRA

Piano/Harmonium

Jasmin Allpress (14th, 15th, 16th)

Francesca Lauri (17th)

Sousaphone

Iain McDonald

Double Bass

Adam Storey

Cello

Niki Moosavi

PRODUCTION TEAM

Producer/ Production Manager

Helene Mathiesen

Stage Manager

Vendy Pospisilova

Assistant Stage Manager

Becca Elsey

Assistant Conductor/ Surtitles Operator

Bogdan Skrypka

GOTHIC OPERA

Artistic Director

Béatrice de Larragoiti

Executive Producer

Charlotte Osborn

Communications & Marketing Director/ Producer

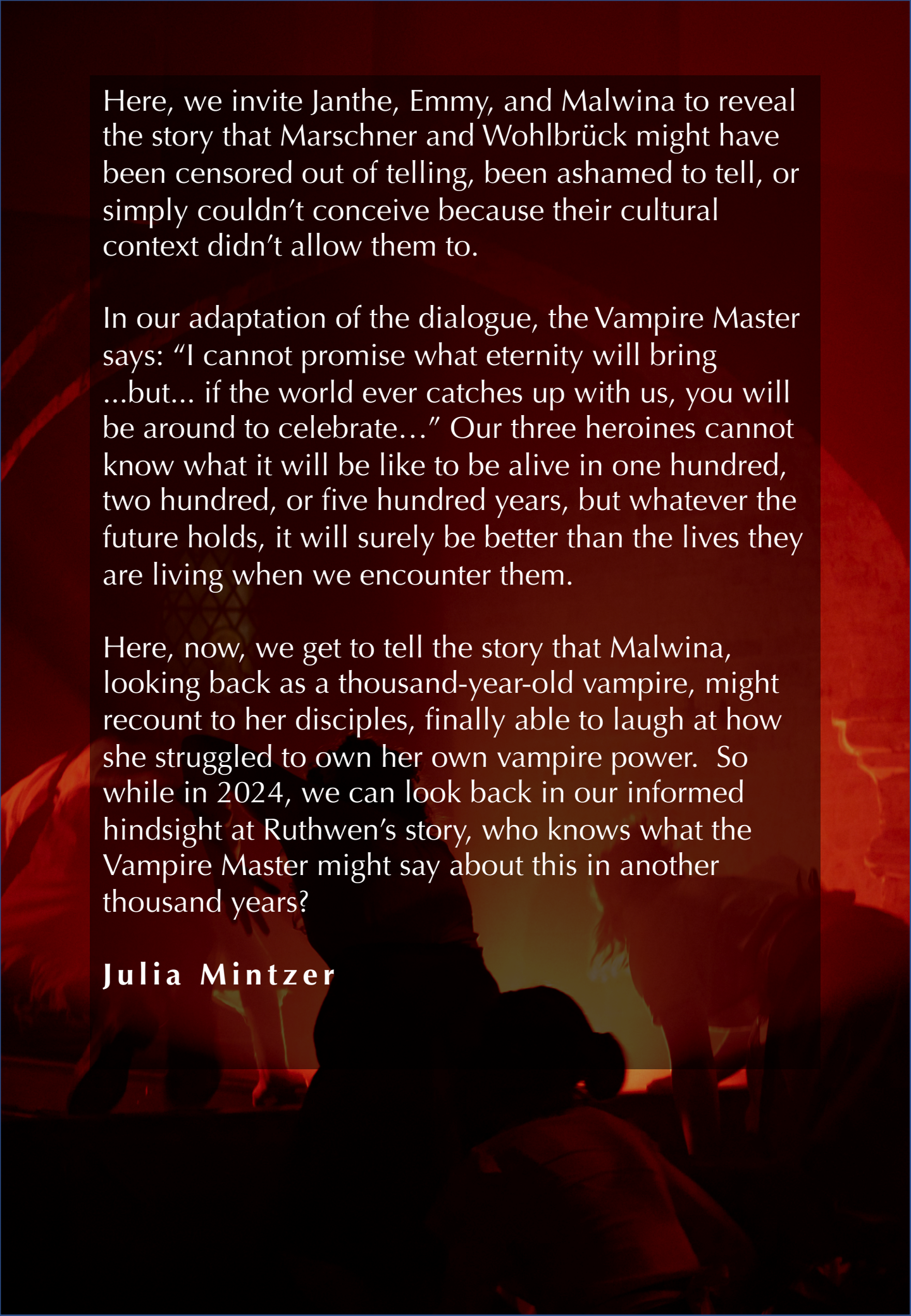
Alice Usher

FROM THE STAGE DIRECTOR

My first thought on reading through the score and libretto of *Der Vampyr* was "well, goodness, this is a bit much." The ingenue sings about bejewelled fields playing dress-up....I thought, "this can't be serious..." followed by...."but what if it needn't be?" While the original material of this opera is way over the top, I hope our performance tonight can take it even a step further, as we invite you all in on the joke in this raucous vampire romp.

At the core of all this joking, though, is a not-at-all comic topic. Vampire horror is among the popular genres that widely still don't question sexualizing violence against women. The original text of *Der Vampyr* asks the audience to root for the antihero as he deceives and then assaults the three female protagonists. In imagining what could have been the real story of Ruthwen's last day on earth, I wanted to follow a narrative that fit the original material while also considering that the agency might not lie where the character's contemporaries assumed.

In the libretto and the novella it draws from, Janthe, Emmy, and Malwina are people with so little agency that there is no way for them out of their oppressive circumstances but by... outliving them.



Here, we invite Janthe, Emmy, and Malwina to reveal the story that Marschner and Wohlbrück might have been censored out of telling, been ashamed to tell, or simply couldn't conceive because their cultural context didn't allow them to.

In our adaptation of the dialogue, the Vampire Master says: "I cannot promise what eternity will bring ...but... if the world ever catches up with us, you will be around to celebrate..." Our three heroines cannot know what it will be like to be alive in one hundred, two hundred, or five hundred years, but whatever the future holds, it will surely be better than the lives they are living when we encounter them.

Here, now, we get to tell the story that Malwina, looking back as a thousand-year-old vampire, might recount to her disciples, finally able to laugh at how she struggled to own her own vampire power. So while in 2024, we can look back in our informed hindsight at Ruthwen's story, who knows what the Vampire Master might say about this in another thousand years?

Julia Mintzer

FROM THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR

What a privilege to return to this joyous show and creative team for another bite! Premiered in 1828, *Der Vampyr* takes its inspiration from the German Singspiel tradition combining opera with spoken dialogue. In devising a new chamber adaption for our Arcola run, my focus has been on bridging the gap between these two distinct theatrical worlds. I've sought an organic flow between sung and spoken text; and between English and German language scenes. I've invited moments of comedy into Marschner's orchestration and vocal lines; and added a rich palette of instrumental colour and texture to underscore and support the dramatic speech.

The Davenauts and their associates, an undeniably motley crew, are now mirrored in an eclectic band which looks back at Marschner's score through a contemporary lens. Our soundworld puts German Romanticism alongside silent film accompaniment and a pastiche of other contemporary allusions to underpin the opera's huge breadth of expression from light to darkness. Drawing down on the quirks of the original score, a compacted cast of 8 is met by the unique combination of cello, bass, piano, Indian hand harmonium, sousaphone, a battalion of whistles; and an onstage human skull lyre (see photo) inspired by a Central African artefact held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.



(above: skull lyre under construction)

My approach is a liberal one: how does Marschner's intent, as we understand it, best serve and be served by those of us in the room today. My *Der Vampyr* arrangement goes beyond the instrumental lineup listed in the margin of the full score. It's an adaption tailored to the specific personalities, bodies and minds who have come together for this exuberant project; and the very particular way those energies reverberate and intersect in our performance space in the year of our Blood Mother 2024.

Kelly Lovelady



ABOUT US

Founded by Alice Usher, Béatrice de Larragoiti and Charlotte Osborn in 2019, Gothic Opera creates atmospheric productions that explore the more spooky and unusual corners of the operatic repertoire. We are a registered charity. We aim to cast fresh light on the operatic art form, opening it up to those who are not familiar with it, and providing important opportunities to early-career artists, creatives and performing arts professionals.

The company's inaugural production was *Der Vampyr*, an irreverent and timely feminist retelling of a nineteenth century opera through the lens of consent and agency, which won attention from the press (including BBC Radio 3, *Opera Now* magazine and *Elle UK*). Our subsequent production, *Bluebeard's Castle* in July 2021, was described as "grippingly and... poetically achieved" in *Opera* magazine; and our Halloween 2021 opera *La Nonne sanglante* (The Bloody Nun) was the winner of the Opera Production category in the Off-West End Awards.

Gothic Opera's most recent productions were their 2022 double bill *Le Loup-garou* by Louise Bertin + *Le dernier sorcier* by Pauline Viardot, which was highlighted in a Guardian editorial about the importance of performing neglected work by female composers; and *Rip Van Winkle* by Robert Planquette at Hoxton Hall in 2023.

JOIN THE FRIENDS OF GOTHIC OPERA

Times are very hard for the arts in the UK at present. Gothic Opera is dependent on the support of generous **donors, trusts and foundations** to enable our important work. We are grateful for the support of our Friends, who make regular contributions by standing order.

Please consider joining the Friends of Gothic Opera so that we can continue to plan for forthcoming seasons:

- providing paid work for artists, creatives and performing arts professionals (often in the early part of their careers)
- bringing forgotten and neglected work to a wider audience.

Please see www.gothicopera.co.uk/friends for more information, or take a flyer outside and fill in our Friends booking form.

GOTHIC OPERA

Friends

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Gothic Opera is also grateful for the generous support of its **Donors** and **Friends**, who contribute regularly to the company to help it pursue its aims and ensure its longevity. To find out more about joining the Friends, please see the previous page of this programme, or visit www.gothicopera.co.uk/friends.

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The Arcola Theatre

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Arina Mkrtchian

Will O'Brien

Adam Jarman

Alison Dunne

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Dave Usher

Louis de Charbonnières

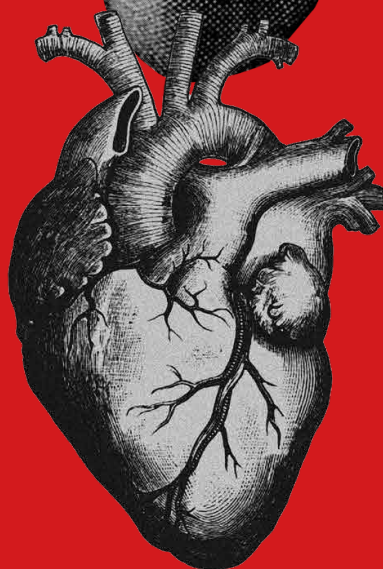


THIS HALLOWEEN
GOTHIC OPERA PRESENTS



MARIA DE RUDENZ

BY GAETANO DONIZETTI



BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE
31 OCTOBER - 2 NOVEMBER
GOTHICOPERA.CO.UK

