

'Acis and Galatea' – Handel

Hestercombe Gardens, Taunton, TA2 8LG

Saturday July 25th and Sunday July 26th at 7:00 p.m.

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The performances will take place on the lawn in front of the Orangery; if the weather is bad, in the Reception Hall of Hestercombe House.

Handel's short masque 'Acis and Galatea', no more than an hour in duration, was composed for outdoor performance and what more effective setting could we use than the world-famous gardens at Hestercombe?

Handel's first dramatic work in English is based on a classical myth found in Ovid's Metamorphoses. The nymph Galatea and the shepherd Acis revel in their pastoral life and mutual love, supported and encouraged by their friend Damon and by the chorus. Alas, Galatea has also caught the eye of the giant Polyphemus, a serio-comic figure, who arrives to court her. A love duet between Acis and Galatea turns into a trio when Polyphemus (no longer comic) blusters in frustrated rage. He hurls a boulder down the mountain, Acis is killed, and Galatea and the chorus are left to mourn.



Portrait of Handel by Balthasar Denner

Artists



Josephine Cresswell (Soprano, Galatea)

Josephine is in her 2nd year at Birmingham Conservatoire. Josephine started singing in St. Mary Magdalene Church, Taunton, singing solos in Allegri's *Miserere* and Mascagni's *Easter Hymn*. She played Ida in *Die Fledermaus* for Somerset Opera, and in Birmingham recently played Jackie in the new opera *Ava's wedding* by Michael Wolters.

Christopher Griksaitis (Tenor, Acis)

Christopher is from the North East. He graduated in 2014 from Birmingham Conservatoire with a First Class Honours degree whilst studying under Gwion Thomas. He hopes to relocate to Germany to undertake a masters degree next year.



Donald Maxwell (Bass, Polyphemus) has sung leading roles with the major British opera companies including the Royal Opera, and with companies in New York, Milan, Vienna and Paris. His many roles range from Gunther (*Götterdämmerung*) and the title role in *Rigoletto*, to Pooh-Bah (*The Mikado*) and Doolittle (*My Fair Lady*). He is the Patron of Somerset Opera.

Nicholas Fisher (Director)

Nic grew up in Somerset. While studying in Surrey he directed *The Sorcerer*, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Bernstein's *Candide* amongst others. Professional directing work has included Handel's *Samson* and *Eugene Onegin* for Brent Opera, and Stephan Macdonald's play *Not about Heroes*. In October 2013 he co-founded The Black Cat Opera Company with whom he directed *Don Giovanni*.



Jack Lovell (Conductor)

Jack is a graduate of the University of Birmingham and Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama is currently MD of Opera'r Ddraig, Royal Forest of Dean Orchestra and Birmingham Gay Symphony Orchestra. Past achievements include critically acclaimed productions of *Carmen*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *The Beggar's Opera* and *Paul Bunyan*.

The orchestra playing tonight is the Festival's orchestra in residence, OrchestraWest, leader **Barry Haskey**.

