

= English National Opera =

English National Opera (ENO) is an opera company based in London , resident at the London Coliseum in St. Martin 's Lane . It is one of the two principal opera companies in London , along with The Royal Opera , Covent Garden . ENO 's productions are sung in English .

The company 's origins were in the late 19th century , when the philanthropist Emma Cons , later assisted by her niece Lilian Baylis , presented theatrical and operatic performances at the Old Vic in a rough area of London for the benefit of local people . From those beginnings , Baylis built up both the opera and the theatre companies , and later added a ballet company ; these evolved into the ENO , the Royal National Theatre and The Royal Ballet .

Baylis acquired and rebuilt Sadler 's Wells theatre in north London , a larger house , better suited to opera than the Old Vic . The opera company grew there into a permanent ensemble in the 1930s . During the Second World War , the theatre was closed and the company toured British towns and cities . After the war , the company returned to its home , but it continued to expand and improve , and by the 1960s a larger theatre was needed . In 1968 , the company moved to the London Coliseum in the heart of London and adopted its present name in 1974 . The company has survived several proposals to merge it with The Royal Opera .

Among the conductors associated with the company have been Colin Davis , Reginald Goodall , Charles Mackerras , Mark Elder and Edward Gardner . In 2015 Mark Wigglesworth was appointed music director . ENO is known for its emphasis on the dramatic aspect of opera , with productions , sometimes controversial , by directors including David Pountney , Jonathan Miller , Nicholas Hytner , Phyllida Lloyd and Calixto Bieito . In addition to the core operatic repertoire , the company has presented a wide range of works , from early operas by Monteverdi to new commissions , operetta and Broadway shows .

= = History = =

= = = Foundations = = =

In 1889 Emma Cons , a Victorian philanthropist who ran the Old Vic theatre in a working @-@ class area of London , began presenting regular fortnightly performances of opera excerpts . Although the theatre licensing laws of the day prevented full costumed performances , Cons presented her public with condensed versions of well @-@ known operas , always sung in English . Among the performers were well @-@ known singers such as Charles Santley . These operatic evenings quickly became more popular than the drama that Cons had been staging . In 1898 , she recruited her niece Lilian Baylis to help run the theatre . At the same time she appointed Charles Corri as the Old Vic 's musical director . Baylis and Corri , despite many disagreements , shared a passionate belief in popularising opera , hitherto generally the preserve of the rich and fashionable . They worked on a tiny budget , with an amateur chorus and a professional orchestra of only 18 players , for whom Corri rescored the instrumental parts of the operas . By the early years of the 20th century , the Old Vic was able to present semi @-@ staged versions of Wagner operas .

Emma Cons died in 1912 , leaving her estate , including the Old Vic , to Baylis , who dreamed of transforming the theatre into a " people 's opera house " . In the same year , Baylis obtained a licence allowing the Old Vic to stage full performances of operas . In the 1914 ? 15 season , Baylis staged 16 operas and 16 plays (13 of which were by Shakespeare) . In the years after the First World War Baylis 's Shakespearean productions , which starred some of the leading actors from London 's West End , attracted national attention , as her shoe @-@ string opera productions did not . The opera , however , remained her first priority . The actor @-@ manager Robert Atkins , who worked closely with Baylis on her Shakespearean productions , recalled , " Opera , on Thursday and Saturday nights , played to bulging houses . "

= = = Vic @-@ Wells = = =

By the 1920s it was clear to Baylis that the Old Vic no longer sufficed to house both her theatre and her opera companies . She noticed the empty and derelict Sadler 's Wells theatre in Rosebery Avenue , Islington , on the other side of London from the Old Vic , and decided to seek to run it in tandem with her existing theatre .

Baylis made a public appeal for funds in 1925 , and with the help of the Carnegie Trust and many others acquired the freehold of Sadler 's Wells . Work started on the site in 1926 and by Christmas 1930 a completely new theatre seating 1 @, @ 640 was ready for occupation . The first production there , a fortnight 's run from 6 January 1931 , was Shakespeare 's Twelfth Night . The first opera , given on 20 January , was Carmen . Eighteen operas were staged during the first season .

The new theatre was more expensive to run than the Old Vic ; a larger orchestra and more singers were needed , and box office receipts were at first inadequate . In 1932 the Birmingham Post commented that the Vic @-@ Wells opera performances did not reach the standards of the Vic @-@ Wells Shakespeare productions . Baylis strove to improve operatic standards , while at the same time fending off attempts by Sir Thomas Beecham to absorb the opera company into a joint enterprise with Covent Garden , where he was in command . She was at first tempted by the financial security the proposal seemed to offer , but was convinced by her friends and advisers such as Edward J. Dent and Clive Carey that it was not in the interests of her regular audience . This view received strong support from the press ; The Times wrote , " The Old Vic began by offering opera of some sort to people who hardly knew what the word meant ... under a wise , fostering guidance it has gradually worked upwards ... Any kind of amalgamation which made it the poor relation of the ' Grand ' season would be disastrous . "

At first Baylis presented both drama and opera at each of her theatres ; the companies were known as the " Vic @-@ Wells " . However , for both aesthetic and financial reasons , by 1934 the Old Vic had become the home of the spoken drama , while Sadler 's Wells housed the opera and ballet company , the latter of which had been founded by Baylis and Ninette de Valois in 1930 . Lawrance Collingwood joined Corri as resident conductor , and with the increased number of productions , guest conductors were recruited , including Geoffrey Toye and Anthony Collins . The increasing success of the new ballet company helped to subsidise the high cost of opera productions , enabling a further increase in the size of the orchestra , to 48 players . Among the singers in the opera company were Joan Cross and Edith Coates . In the 1930s , the company presented standard repertoire works including operas by Mozart , Verdi , Wagner and Puccini , lighter works by Balfe , Donizetti , Offenbach and Johann Strauss , some novelties , among which were operas by Holst , Ethel Smyth and Charles Villiers Stanford , and an unusual attempt at staging an oratorio , Mendelssohn 's Elijah .

In November 1937 Baylis died of a heart attack . Her three companies continued under the direction of her appointees , Tyrone Guthrie at the Old Vic , in overall charge of both theatres , with de Valois running the ballet , and Carey and two colleagues running the opera . In the Second World War the government requisitioned Sadler 's Wells as a refuge for those made homeless by air @-@ raids . Guthrie decided to keep the opera going as a small touring ensemble of 20 performers . Between 1942 and the end of the war the company toured continuously , visiting 87 venues . It was led by Joan Cross , who managed the company and when necessary sang leading soprano roles in its productions . The size of the company was increased to 50 and then to 80 . By 1945 its members included singers from a new generation such as Peter Pears and Owen Brannigan , and the conductor Reginald Goodall .

= = = Sadler 's Wells Opera = = =

As the war drew to an end , the government considered the future of opera in Britain . Like Sadler 's Wells , the Royal Opera House had presented no opera or ballet since 1939 . The Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) , the official body charged with dispensing the modest public subsidy recently introduced , considered its options and concluded that a new Covent Garden company should be established . It was to be a year @-@ round , permanent ensemble ,

singing in English , instead of the short , starry international seasons of pre @-@ war years . Many saw this as an opportunity to merge the two companies , as the modus operandi of the new Covent Garden company was now similar to that of Sadler 's Wells . However , David Webster , who was appointed to run Covent Garden , though keen to secure de Valois ' ballet company for Covent Garden , did not want the Sadler 's Wells opera company . To him the old company was worthy but " dowdy " and " stodgy " . Even with a policy of singing in English , he believed he could assemble a better company . The management of Sadler 's Wells was unwilling to lose its company 's name and tradition . It was agreed that the two companies should remain separate .

The continued existence of Sadler 's Wells Opera was threatened by divisions within the company . Cross announced her intention to re @-@ open Sadler 's Wells theatre with Peter Grimes , by the young Benjamin Britten , with herself and Pears in the leading roles ; there were many complaints from company members about supposed favouritism and the " cacophony " of Britten 's score . Peter Grimes opened in June 1945 and was hailed by public and critics ; its box @-@ office takings matched or exceeded those for *La bohème* and *Madame Butterfly* , which were being staged concurrently by the company . However the rift within the company was irreparable ; Cross , Britten and Pears severed their ties with Sadler 's Wells in December 1945 and founded the English Opera Group . The departure of the ballet company to Covent Garden two months later deprived Sadler 's Wells of an important source of income ; the ballet had been profitable and had since its inception subsidised the opera company .

Clive Carey , who had been in Australia during the war , was brought back to replace Joan Cross and rebuild the company after its wartime privations and recent departures . The critic Philip Hope @-@ Wallace wrote in 1946 that Carey had begun to make a difference , but that Sadler 's Wells needed " a big heave to get out of mediocrity " . In the same year *The Times Literary Supplement* asked whether the Old Vic and Sadler 's Wells companies would stick modestly to their old bases " or shall they boldly embrace the ideal of a National Theatre and a National Opera in English ? " Carey left in 1947 and his place at the head of the company was taken in January 1948 by a triumvirate comprising James Robertson as musical director , Michael Mudie as his assistant conductor and Norman Tucker in charge of administration . From October 1948 , Tucker was given sole control . Mudie became ill , and the young Charles Mackerras was appointed to deputise for him .

By 1950 Sadler 's Wells was receiving a public subsidy of £ 40 @,@ 000 a year ; Covent Garden received £ 145 @,@ 000 . Tucker had to give up the option of staging the premiere of Britten 's *Billy Budd* , lacking the resources to do it justice . He was keen to improve the dramatic aspects of opera production , and eminent theatrical directors including Michel Saint @-@ Denis , George Devine and Glen Byam Shaw worked on Sadler 's Wells productions in the 1950s . New repertoire was explored ; at Mackerras 's urging Janáček 's *Káťa Kabanová* was presented for the first time in Britain . Standards and company morale were improving ; *The Manchester Guardian* summed up the 1950 ? 51 London opera season as " Excitement at Sadler 's Wells : Lack of Distinction at Covent Garden " and judged Sadler 's Wells to have moved " into the front rank of opera houses " .

The company continued to leave Rosebery Avenue for summer tours to British cities and towns . The Arts Council (successor to CEMA) was sensitive to the charge that since 1945 far fewer opera performances had been given in the provinces . The small Carl Rosa Opera Company toured constantly , but the Covent Garden company visited only those few cities with theatres big enough to accommodate it . In the mid @-@ 1950s renewed calls were made for a reorganisation of Britain 's opera companies . There were proposals for a new home for Sadler 's Wells on the South Bank of the Thames near the Royal Festival Hall , but these fell through because the government was unwilling to fund the building . Once again there was serious talk of merging Covent Garden and Sadler 's Wells . The Sadler 's Wells board countered by proposing a closer working arrangement with Carl Rosa . When it became clear that this would require the Sadler 's Wells company to tour for 30 weeks every year , and practically destroy its presence on the London opera scene , Tucker , his deputy Stephen Arlen , and his musical director Alexander Gibson resigned . The proposals were modified , and the three withdrew their resignations . In 1960 the Carl Rosa Company was wound up ; Sadler 's Wells took over some of its members and many of its touring dates , setting up

" two interchangeable companies of equal standing " , one of which played at Sadler 's Wells theatre while the other was on the road .

By the late 1950s Covent Garden was gradually abandoning its policy of productions in the vernacular ; such stars as Maria Callas would not relearn their roles in English . This made it easier for Tucker to point up the difference between the two London opera companies . While Covent Garden engaged international stars , Sadler 's Wells focused on young British and Commonwealth performers . Colin Davis was appointed musical director in succession to Gibson in 1961 . The repertoire continued to mix the staples and the unfamiliar . Novelties in Davis 's time included Pizzetti 's *Murder in the Cathedral* , Stravinsky 's *Oedipus rex* , Richard Rodney Bennett 's *The Mines of Sulphur* and more Janáček . Sadler 's Wells 's traditional policy of giving all operas in English continued , with only two exceptions : *Oedipus rex* , which was sung in Latin , and Monteverdi 's *L 'Orfeo* , sung in Italian , for reasons not clear to the press . In January 1962 the company gave its first Gilbert and Sullivan opera , *Iolanthe* ; it opened on the day on which the Savoy operas came out of copyright and the D 'Oyly Carte monopoly ended . It was well received (it was successfully revived for many seasons until 1978) and was followed by a production of *The Mikado* in May of the same year .

The Islington theatre was by now clearly too small to allow the company to achieve any further growth . A study conducted for the Arts Council reported that in the late 1960s the two Sadler 's Wells companies comprised 278 salaried performers and 62 guest singers . The company had experience of playing in a large West End theatre ; in 1958 its sell out production of *The Merry Widow* had transferred to the 2 ,351 seat London Coliseum for a summer season . Ten years later the lease of the Coliseum became available ; Stephen Arlen , who had succeeded Tucker as managing director , was the driving force behind moving the company . After intense negotiations and fund raising , a ten year lease was signed in 1968 .

One of the company 's last productions at the Islington theatre was Wagner 's *The Mastersingers* , conducted by Goodall in 1968 , which 40 years later was described by Gramophone magazine as " legendary " . The company left Sadler 's Wells with a revival of the work with which it had reopened the theatre in 1945 , *Peter Grimes* . Its last performance at the Rosebery Avenue theatre was on 15 June 1968 .

= = = Coliseum = = =

The company , retaining the title " Sadler 's Wells Opera " , opened at the Coliseum on 21 August 1968 , with a new production of Mozart 's *Don Giovanni* , directed by Sir John Gielgud . This was not well received , but the company rapidly established itself with a succession of highly praised productions . Stephen Arlen died in January 1972 , and was succeeded as managing director by Lord Harewood .

The success of the 1968 *Mastersingers* was followed in the 1970s by the company 's first Ring cycle , conducted by Goodall , with a cast including Norman Bailey , Rita Hunter and Alberto Remedios . The cycle had a new translation by Andrew Porter and designs by Ralph Koltai . In Harewood 's view , among the highlights of the first ten years at the Coliseum were the Ring , Prokofiev 's *War and Peace* , and Richard Strauss 's *Salome* and *Der Rosenkavalier* .

The company 's musical director from 1970 to 1977 was Charles Mackerras . Harewood praised his exceptional versatility , with a range " from *The House of the Dead* to *Patience* . " The critic Alan Blyth described him as an expert on authenticity in performing Handel , a pioneer of Janáček , " a scholarly Mozartian ... a sure advocate of French opera , a strong , no nonsense interpreter of the Viennese classics , an expert in early 19th century operas by Donizetti and others , and an abiding admirer of Gilbert and Sullivan " . Among the operas he conducted for the company were Handel 's *Julius Caesar* starring Janet Baker and Valerie Masterson ; five Janáček operas ; *The Marriage of Figaro* with pioneering use of 18th century performing style ; Massenet 's *Werther* ; Donizetti 's *Mary Stuart* with Baker ; and Sullivan 's *Patience* . The company took the production of the last to the Vienna Festival in 1975 , along with Britten 's *Gloriana* . Mackerras was succeeded as musical director by Sir Charles Groves , who was unwell and unhappy during his brief tenure in

1978 ? 79 . Groves was relieved to hand over to Mark Elder , who found him " immensely encouraging and supportive " .

From the outset Arlen and then Harewood had wanted to change the company 's name to reflect the fact that it was no longer based at Sadler 's Wells theatre . Byam Shaw commented , " The one major setback the Sadler 's Wells Opera Company suffered from its transplant was that unheeding taxi drivers kept on taking their patrons up to Rosebery Avenue " Harewood considered it an elementary rule that " you must not carry the name of one theatre if you are playing in another one . " Covent Garden , protective of its status , objected to the suggestion that the Sadler 's Wells company should be called " The British National Opera " or " The National Opera " , although neither Scottish Opera nor the Welsh National Opera opposed such a change . Eventually the matter was decided by the British government , and the title " English National Opera " was approved . It was adopted by the company 's board in November 1974 . In 1977 , in response to demand for more opera productions in English provincial cities , a second company was established . It was based at Leeds in northern England , and was known as ENO North . Under Harewood 's guidance it flourished , and in 1981 it became an independent company , Opera North .

= = = ENO = = =

= = = = 1980 ? 99 = = = =

In 1982 , at Elder 's instigation , Harewood appointed David Pountney director of productions . In 1985 Harewood retired (becoming chairman of ENO 's board the following year) and Peter Jonas succeeded him as managing director . The 1980s triumvirate of Elder , Pountney and Jonas , often called the " Powerhouse " , initiated a new era of " director 's opera " . The triumvirate favoured productions described by Elder as " groundbreaking , risky , probing and theatrically effective " and by the director Nicholas Hytner as " Euro @-@ bollocks that never has to be comprehensible to anybody but the people sitting out there conceiving . " Directors who did not , in Harewood 's phrase , " want to splash paint in the face of the public " were sidelined . A survey in the 1980s showed that the two things that ENO audiences most disliked were poor diction and the extremes of " director 's opera " .

In the Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians Barry Millington has described the Powerhouse style as : " arresting images of dislocated reality , an inexhaustible repertory of stage contrivances , a determination to explore the social and psychological issues latent in the works , and above all an abundant sense of theatricality . " As examples Millington mentions " Rusalka (1983) , with its Edwardian nursery setting and Freudian undertones , and Hansel and Gretel (1987) , its dream pantomime peopled by fantasy figures from the children 's imagination ... Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District (1987) and Wozzeck (1990) exemplified an approach to production in which grotesque caricature jostles with forceful emotional engagement " .

Poor average box @-@ office sales led to a financial crisis , which was exacerbated by backstage industrial relations problems . After 1983 the company ceased touring to other British venues . Assessing the achievements of the Powerhouse years , Tom Sutcliffe wrote in The Musical Times :

ENO is not second best to Covent Garden . It is different , more theatrical , less vocal The ENO now follows a policy like Covent Garden 's in the early years after the war , when Peter Brook was scandalising the bourgeoisie with his opera stagings . The last two seasons at the ENO have been difficult , or at any rate sentiment has turned against the outgoing regime over the last nine months . Audience figures are well down The presiding genius of the Elder years has , of course , been David Pountney . Not because his productions were all marvellous . Perhaps only a few were . But because , like Elder , he enabled so many other talents to thrive .

Productions during the 1980s included the company 's first presentations of Pelléas and Mélisande (1981) , Parsifal (1986) and Billy Budd (1988) . 1980s productions that remained in the repertory for many years included Xerxes directed by Hytner , and Rigoletto and The Mikado directed by Jonathan Miller . In 1984 ENO toured the United States ; the travelling company , led by Elder ,

consisted of 360 people ; they performed *Gloriana* , *War and Peace* , *The Turn of the Screw* , *Rigoletto* and *Patience* . This was the first British company to be invited to appear at the Metropolitan Opera in New York , where *Patience* received a standing ovation and Miller 's production of *Rigoletto* , depicting the characters as mafiosi , was greeted with a mixture of enthusiasm and booing . In 1990 ENO was the first major foreign opera company to tour the Soviet Union , performing the Miller production of *The Turn of the Screw* , Pountney 's production of *Macbeth* , and Hytner 's much @-@ revived *Xerxes* .

The Powerhouse era ended in 1992 , when all three of the triumvirate left at the same time . The new general director was Dennis Marks , formerly head of music programmes at the BBC ; the new music director was Sian Edwards ; Pountney 's post of director of productions was not filled . Marks , inheriting a large financial deficit from his predecessors , worked to restore the company 's finances , concentrating on restoring ticket sales to sustainable levels . A new production by Miller of *Der Rosenkavalier* was a critical and financial success , as was a staging of Massenet 's *Don Quixote* , described by the critic Hugh Canning as " the kind of old @-@ fashioned theatre magic which the hair @-@ shirted Powerhouse regime despised " .

Marks was obliged to spend much time and effort in securing the funding for an essential restoration of the Coliseum , a condition on which ENO had acquired the freehold of the theatre in 1992 . At the same time the Arts Council was contemplating a cut in the number of opera performances in London , at the expense of ENO , rather than Covent Garden . By increasing ticket sales in successive years , Marks demonstrated that the Arts Council 's proposition was unrealistic . After what *The Independent* described as " a sustained period of criticism and sniping at the ENO by music critics " , Sian Edwards resigned as music director at the end of 1995 ; she was succeeded by Paul Daniel . In 1997 , Marks resigned . No reason was announced , but it was thought that he and the ENO board had disagreed about his plans to move the company from the Coliseum to a purpose @-@ built new home . Daniel took over the management of the company until a new general director was appointed .

Daniel inherited from Marks a company thriving artistically and financially . The 1997 ? 98 season played to 75 per cent capacity and made a surplus of £ 150 @,@ 000 . Daniel led the campaign against yet another proposal to merge Covent Garden and ENO , which was rapidly abandoned . In 1998 Nicholas Payne , director of opera at Covent Garden , was appointed to the post of ENO general director . Productions in the 1990s included the company 's first stagings of *Beatrice and Benedict* (1990) , *Wozzeck* (1990) , *Jen?fa* (1994) , *A Midsummer Night 's Dream* (1995) , *Die Soldaten* (1996) , and *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (1999) . Co @-@ productions , enabling opera houses to share the costs of joint enterprises , became important in this decade ; in 1993 ENO and Welsh National Opera collaborated on productions of *Don Pasquale* , *Ariodante* and *The Two Widows* .

== == 2000 ? 2009 == ==

Martin Smith , a millionaire with a finance background , was appointed chairman of the ENO board in 2001 . He proved to be an expert fund @-@ raiser , and personally donated a million pounds to the cost of refurbishing the Coliseum . He and Payne came into conflict over the effect on revenue of the " director 's opera " productions that Payne insisted on commissioning . The most extreme case was a production of *Don Giovanni* directed by Calixto Bieito in 2001 , despised by critics and public alike ; Michael Kennedy described it as " a new nadir in vulgar abuse of a masterpiece , " and other reviewers agreed with him . Payne insisted , " I think it 's one of the best things we 've done It 's exceeded my expectations . " In the arts pages of the *Financial Times* , Martin Hoyle wrote of Payne 's " exquisite tunnel vision " and expressed " the concern of those of us who value the true people 's opera " . Payne remained adamant that opera lovers who came to the ENO for a " nice , pleasant evening ... had come to the wrong place . " The differences between Smith and Payne were irreconcilable , and Payne was forced to resign in July 2002 .

The successor to Payne was Séan Doran , whose appointment was controversial because he had no experience of running an opera company . He attracted newspaper headlines with unusual

operatic events , described by admirers as " unexpected coups " and by detractors as " stunts " ; a performance of the third act of The Valkyrie played to 20 @, @ 000 rock music fans at the Glastonbury Festival . In December 2003 Daniel announced that he would leave at the end of his contract in 2005 . Oleg Caetani was announced as the next music director , from January 2006 .

In 2004 the company embarked on its second production of Wagner 's Ring . After concert performances over the previous three seasons , the four operas of the cycle were staged at the Coliseum in 2004 and 2005 in productions by Phyllida Lloyd , with designs by Richard Hudson , in a new translation by Jeremy Sams . The first instalments of the cycle were criticised as poorly sung and conducted , but by the time Twilight of the Gods was staged in 2005 , matters were thought to have improved : " Paul Daniel 's command of the score is more authoritative than could have been predicted from his uneven accounts of the previous operas . " The production attracted generally bad notices . The four operas were given individual runs , but were never played as a complete cycle .

During the first decade of the century the company repeated the experiment , previously tried in 1932 , of staging oratorios and other choral works as operatic performances . Bach 's St. John Passion was given in 2000 , followed by Verdi 's Requiem (2000) , Tippett 's A Child of Our Time (2005) and Handel 's Jephtha (2005) and Messiah (2009) . ENO responded to the increased interest in Handel 's operas , staging Alcina (2002) , Agrippina (2006) and Partenope (2008) . In 2003 the company staged its first production of Berlioz 's massive opera The Trojans , with Sarah Connolly as " a supremely eloquent , genuinely tragic Dido " .

In 2005 , after an internal debate that had been going on since 1991 , it was announced that surtitles would be introduced at the Coliseum . Surveys had shown that only a quarter of audience members could hear the words clearly . With a few exceptions , including Lesley Garrett and Andrew Shore , ENO singers of the 21st century were considered to have poorer diction than their predecessors such as Masterson and Derek Hammond @-@ Stroud . Harewood and Pountney had been immovably opposed to surtitles ; both believed that opera in English was pointless if it could not be understood ; Harewood thought , moreover , that surtitles could undermine the case for a publicly funded opera @-@ in @-@ English company . The editor of Opera magazine , Rodney Milnes , campaigned against surtitles on the grounds that " singers would give up trying to articulate clearly and audiences would cease focusing on the stage " . Despite these objections surtitles were introduced from October 2005 .

On 29 November 2005 Doran resigned as artistic director . To replace him , Smith divided the duties between Loretta Tomasi as chief executive and John Berry as artistic director . These elevations from within the organisation were controversial , because they were neither advertised nor cleared at the top level of the Arts Council . Smith received severe press criticism for his action , and in December 2005 he announced his resignation . In the same week , Caetani 's appointment as the next ENO music director was cancelled . Berry was at first criticised in the press for his choice of singers for ENO productions , but the appointment of Edward Gardner as music director from 2007 received considerable praise . The Observer commented that Gardner was " widely credited with breathing fresh life into English National Opera , whose growing reputation under his youthfully innovative hand has seen the house ally itself with outside talent , from Anthony Minghella 's hugely popular Madam Butterfly to Forced Entertainment 's production of Philip Glass 's Satyagraha . "

Attendance figures recovered , with younger audiences attracted by ENO 's marketing schemes . The company 's finances improved , with £ 5 million in reserve funds in April 2009 .

= = = = 2010 ? present = = = =

Productions in the 2011 season continued the company 's traditions of engaging directors with no operatic experience (a well reviewed The Damnation of Faust staged by Terry Gilliam and set in Nazi Germany) and of drastic reinterpretations (a version of Britten 's A Midsummer Night 's Dream presented by Christopher Alden as a paedophile parable set in a 1950s boys ' school , which divided critical opinion) . In the 2012 ? 13 season ENO introduced " Opera Undressed " evenings , aimed at

attracting new audiences who had thought opera " Too pricey , too pompous , too posh " . Operas advertised under this banner were Don Giovanni , La traviata , Michel van der Aa 's Sunken Garden (performed at the Barbican) and Philip Glass 's The Perfect American .

In January 2014 the ENO announced that Gardner would leave at the end of the 2014 ? 15 season , to be succeeded by Mark Wigglesworth . The Times commented that the incoming music director had a reputation for " steely , even abrasive determination " and that he would need it , with recent productions lambasted by critics and shunned by the public , leading to an £ 800 @, @ 000 deficit made worse by cuts in public subsidy . From late 2014 the company went through a further organisational crisis . The chairman , Martyn Rose , resigned after two years in the post , following irreconcilable differences with Berry . He was followed by Henriette Götz , the company 's executive director , who had a series of public disagreements with Berry . In February 2015 the Arts Council of England announced the unprecedented step of removing ENO from the national portfolio of 670 arts organisations that receive regular funding , and instead offered " special funding arrangements " because of continuing concerns over ENO 's business plan and management . The council recognised that the company was " capable of extraordinary artistic work " , but " we have serious concerns about their governance and business model and we expect them to improve or they could face removal of funding . " In July 2015 Berry resigned .

Critical and box @-@ office successes in the company 's 2014 ? 15 season included The Mastersingers , which won an Olivier Award for best new opera production , and Sweeney Todd , with Bryn Terfel in the title role . New productions announced for 2015 ? 16 were Tristan and Isolde , with sets by Anish Kapoor ; Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk ; the company 's first staging of Norma ; The Force of Destiny directed by Bieito , and the first London performance for 30 years of Akhnaten .

The Huffington Post wrote in March 2016 that the ENO was finding itself " in a predicament that has much in common with the challenges that forced the New York City Opera to file for bankruptcy in 2013 ... There are those who fear that without major changes the company may fold , as was the case with NYCO " , which came out of bankruptcy and began again staging performances in January 2016 .

= = Repertoire = =

The company has aimed to present the standard operatic repertoire , sung in English , and has staged all the major operas of Mozart , Wagner and Puccini , and a wide range of Verdi 's operas . Under Mackerras and his successors the Czech repertoire has featured strongly , and a broad range of French and Russian operas has been presented . The company has for decades laid stress on opera as drama , and has avoided operas where vocal display takes precedence over musical and dramatic content . In addition to the operatic staples , ENO has a history of presenting new works , and latterly of commissioning them .

= = = Commissions and premieres = = =

ENO has commissioned more than a dozen operas by composers including Gordon Crosse , Iain Hamilton , Jonathan Harvey , Alfred Schnittke , Gavin Bryars , David Sawer , Asian Dub Foundation and Nico Muhly . The company 's best known world premiere probably remains Peter Grimes in 1945 . Subsequent world premieres have included The Mines of Sulphur (1965) , The Mask of Orpheus (1986) , The Silver Tassie (1999) , and works by Malcolm Williamson , Iain Hamilton , David Blake , Robin Holloway and Stephen Oliver . British stage premieres include operas by Verdi (Simon Boccanegra , 1948) , Janáček (Káťa Kabanová , 1951) , Stravinsky (Oedipus rex , 1960) , Prokofiev (War and Peace , 1972) and Philip Glass (Akhnaten , 1985 , among others) .

= = = Operetta and musicals = = =

From the beginning , the company interspersed serious opera with lighter works . In the early years the " Irish Ring " (The Bohemian Girl , The Lily of Killarney and Maritana) featured in Old Vic and

Sadler 's Wells seasons . After the Second World War , the company began to programme operetta , including *The Merry Widow* (1958) , *Die Fledermaus* (1958) , *Orpheus in the Underworld* (1960) , *Merrie England* (1960) , *La vie parisienne* (1961) , *La belle Hélène* (1963) , and *The Gipsy Baron* (1964) .

The company has produced six of Gilbert and Sullivan 's Savoy operas . After the successful *Iolanthe* and *The Mikado* in 1962 and *Patience* in 1969 , the last much revived in the UK , the U.S. and on the continent , a second production of *The Mikado* in 1986 starred the comedian Eric Idle in a black @-@ and @-@ white setting moved to a 1920s English seaside hotel . It has been regularly revived over 25 years . A 1992 production of *Princess Ida* directed by Ken Russell was a critical and box office disaster , ran briefly , and was not revived . *The Pirates of Penzance* was produced in 2005 . A highly coloured production of *The Gondoliers* opened in 2006 ; the press pointed out that the company 's diction had declined to the point that the recently introduced surtitles were essential . In 2015 the film director Mike Leigh directed a new production of *The Pirates of Penzance* ; the critical consensus was disappointment that Leigh had chosen one of the weaker operas in the Savoy canon , but the show provided a box @-@ office hit . The cinema live broadcast of the production broke all previous box @-@ office records for UK opera cinema @-@ event releases .

From the 1980s the company has experimented with Broadway shows , including *Pacific Overtures* (1987) , *Street Scene* (1898) , *On the Town* (2005) , *Kismet* (2007) , and *Candide* (2008) . In many of ENO 's lighter shows , the size of the Coliseum has been a problem , both in putting across pieces written for much more intimate theatres and in selling enough tickets . In 2015 a new business plan for ENO included making money from a West End musical partnership with the impresarios Michael Grade and Michael Linnit .

= = Recordings = =

Recordings of individual scenes and numbers were made by Sadler 's Wells singers from the company 's earliest days . In 1972 an LP set was issued bringing together many of these recordings , prefaced with a tribute to Lilian Baylis recorded in 1936 . Among the singers in the set are Joan Cross , Heddle Nash , Edith Coates , Joan Hammond , Owen Brannigan , Peter Pears , Peter Glossop and Charles Craig . The conductors include Lawrance Collingwood , Reginald Goodall and Michael Mudie .

After the Second World War , the Sadler 's Wells company made a 78 r.p.m. set of excerpts from *Simon Boccanegra* (1949) , but made no more recordings until the stereo LP era . In the 1950s and 1960s , the company recorded a series of abridged sets of operas and operettas for EMI , each occupying two LP sides . All were sung in English . The opera sets were *Madame Butterfly* (1960) , *Il trovatore* (1962) , and *Hansel and Gretel* (1966) . The abridged operetta recordings were *Die Fledermaus* (1959) , *The Merry Widow* (1959) , *The Land of Smiles* (1960) , *La vie parisienne* (1961) , *Orpheus in the Underworld* (1960) , *Iolanthe* (1962) , *La belle Hélène* (1963) and *The Gipsy Baron* (1965) . A complete recording of *The Mikado* was released in 1962 .

Excerpts from the company 's *Twilight of the Gods* were recorded in German under Mackerras (1972) and in English under Goodall (1973) . The complete Ring cycle was recorded by EMI during public performances at the Coliseum between 1973 and 1977 . The cycle has been reissued on CD by Chandos Records . A live recording of the company 's *The Mastersingers* was made in 1968 but not released until 2008 .

In the CD era , a series of operatic recordings sung in English has been released by Chandos Records . Some are reissues of Sadler 's Wells Opera or ENO recordings originally issued by EMI : *Mary Stuart* (recorded in 1982) and *Julius Caesar* (1985) , both starring Janet Baker , and *La traviata* (1981) , starring Valerie Masterson . The newer recordings , made specifically for the Chandos series , have no official connection with ENO , but feature many past and present members of the company . Conductors include Sir Charles Mackerras , Sir Mark Elder and Paul Daniel . Those in which the chorus and orchestra of ENO appear are *Lulu* , *The Makropoulos Affair* , *Werther* , *Dialogues of the Carmelites* , *The Barber of Seville* , *Rigoletto* , *Ernani* , *Otello* and *Falstaff* , as well as the live recordings of *The Ring* and *The Mastersingers* .

= = Education = =

In 1966 , under the company 's head of design , Margaret Harris , Sadler 's Wells Theatre Design Course was founded ; it later became Motley Theatre Design Course . ENO Baylis , founded in 1985 , is the education department of ENO ; it aims to introduce new audiences to opera and " to deepen and enrich the experience of current audiences in an adventurous , creative and engaging manner . " The programme offers training for students and young professionals , and also workshops , commissions , talks and debates .

= = Musical directors = =

= = Artistic directors = =