

CHARLES  
DICKENS' *A*  
CHRISTMAS  
CAROL  
THE MUSICAL

Programme

November 2021





## Musical Theatre At Its Best

Delivering the moments that matter to our members and our audience since 1960

If you want to find out more about BOC, or any of our upcoming productions advertised throughout this programme, please visit our new website at [www.belfastoperatic.org](http://www.belfastoperatic.org)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

**A Night of Christmas Music and Song**  
4th December 2021  
Ulster Hall

**A Night at Gatsby's**  
7 & 8th May 2022  
Hilton Hotel Belfast

**Disney's 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame'**  
7th - 11th March 2023  
Grand Opera House, Belfast



## CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

It is with more than the usual pleasure that I welcome you to BOC's 2021 production of the Dickens classic, *"A Christmas Carol"*, here in the Grand Opera House.

Firstly, it is always a privilege to take to the stage of this magnificent theatre, but to be the first local Company to do so following its multi million pound refurbishment, is extra special. You will have seen, from the moment you walked through the door, the superb craftsmanship on show throughout this historic building. We very much hope the production on stage will live up to its surroundings.

Secondly, throughout BOC's 60 year history, we have never faced a challenge like the one we had to face in staging this show. The global pandemic, which made its unwelcome presence felt in early 2020, has changed the way we all live. Although we were disappointed at having to cancel all our exciting plans for 2020, our 60th Anniversary year, this disappointment paled into insignificance when compared to the dreadful grief suffered by so many in our community, as a result of the virus.

However, whilst placing the safety of our members above all other considerations, we pledged to get back to what we do best, as soon as it was safe to do so. Thanks to a very hard working committee, a dedicated and talented membership, a progressive production team, and countless willing people working hard behind the scenes, we set about the task of bringing *A Christmas Carol* to the Opera House stage. Following auditions in April, our early rehearsals took place outdoors. Social distancing, mask wearing, testing, sanitising both ourselves and the rehearsal venues, became standard practice. Indeed, it was only a few weeks ago that we got confirmation from the Northern Ireland Executive that the Opera House could actually open for business.

Our determination to stage this show only makes sense if it is matched by our audience's desire to return to the theatre to see it. Packed houses for each of our performances this week prove that all the effort has been worthwhile and, on behalf of the Company, I'd like to thank you sincerely for your support.

If you are interested in learning more about the Company, why not visit our brand new website [www.belfastoperatic.org](http://www.belfastoperatic.org), or follow us on social media at Facebook, Twitter or Instagram - details can be found at [linktr.ee/belfastoperatic](https://linktr.ee/belfastoperatic) - or you can e-mail us at [secretary@belfastoperatic.co.uk](mailto:secretary@belfastoperatic.co.uk)

In the meantime, sit back, open your heart to the spirit of the season, and enjoy *A Christmas Carol*!

Colin Boyd - Chairman - Belfast Operatic Company

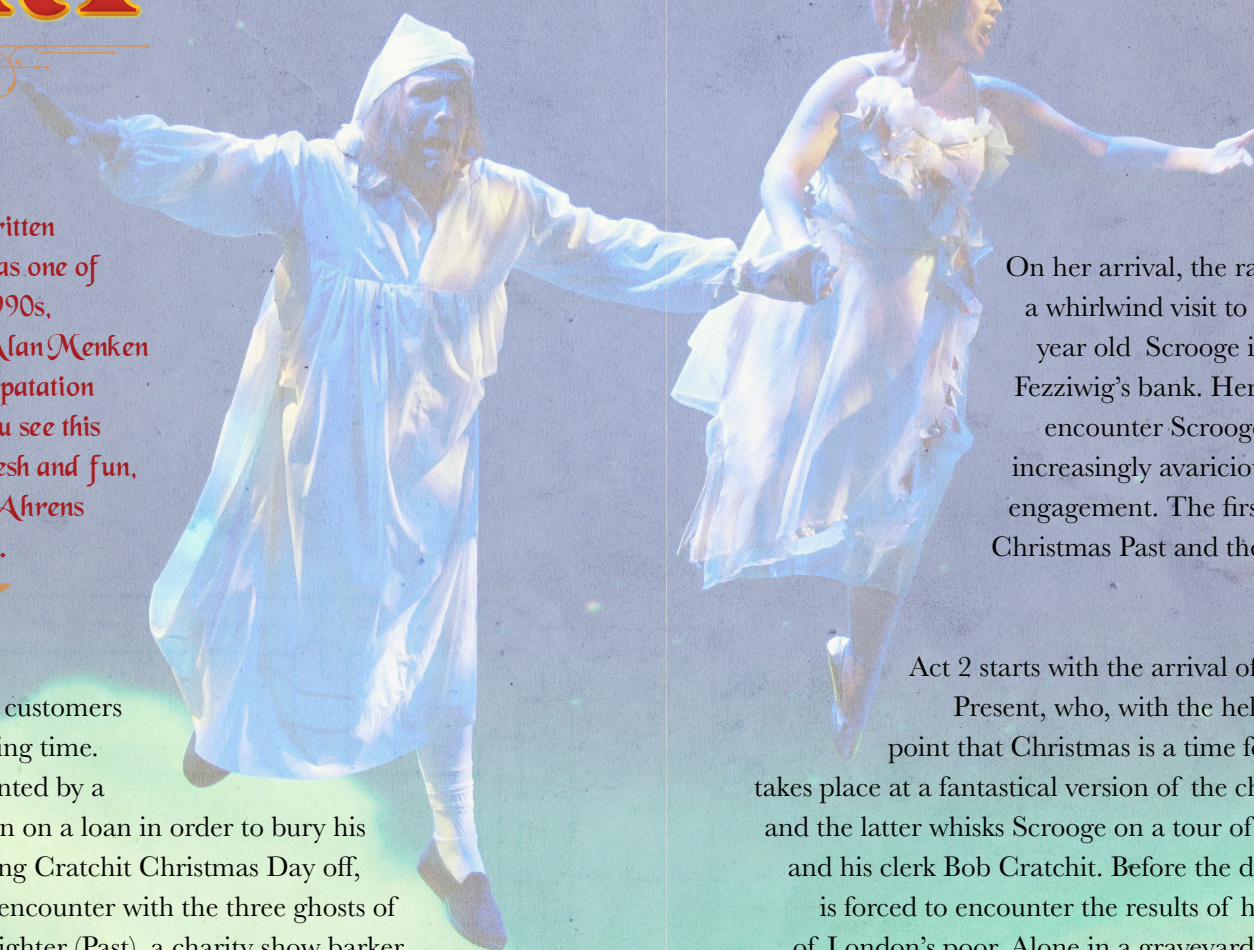


# THE STORY

The story of *A Christmas Carol* is iconic, written by Charles Dickens, who is widely regarded as one of the greatest writers of all time. In the early 1990s, Madison Square Gardens tasked composer Alan Menken to assemble a team to create a new musical adaptation to play a 5500 seat venue. The result is, as you see this evening, a faithful adaptation that feels both fresh and fun, with music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and book by Mike Ockrent and Lynn Ahrens.

Christmas Eve at the Royal Exchange sees the customers enjoying some last minute business before closing time. Scrooge enters with Bob Cratchit to be confronted by a debtor and his daughter asking for an extension on a loan in order to bury his wife, which Scrooge refuses. Begrudgingly giving Cratchit Christmas Day off, Scrooge makes his way home and has his first encounter with the three ghosts of Christmas in their real-world guises as a lamplighter (Past), a charity show barker (Present), and a blind beggar woman (Future). Scrooge's long-suffering employee Bob Cratchit buys a Christmas chicken with his son Tiny Tim and joins the thronging streets of London.

On arriving at his house, Scrooge is confronted by the ghost of his old colleague, Jacob Marley, which Scrooge quickly dismisses as a figment of his imagination. He makes his way into his house where a meagre supper is prepared by Mrs Mops, his housekeeper. After falling asleep in his chair he is confronted once again by the ghost of Marley who, along with a host of other spectres bound by their greed, informs Scrooge of the impending visit of the three Ghosts.



On her arrival, the rather genial ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge on a whirlwind visit to his past, revealing the debtor's trial of his father, a 12 year old Scrooge in a shoe factory and happier times as an employee at Fezziwig's bank. Here he is also reminded of his only love Emily. We then encounter Scrooge in shared employment with Jacob Marley where his increasingly avaricious and mean character forces Emily to break off their engagement. The first Act climaxes when a progressively sinister Ghost of Christmas Past and the shadows of the characters he has already met, force Scrooge to encounter the 'Lights of Long Ago'.

Act 2 starts with the arrival of the hugely benevolent and jolly Ghost of Christmas Present, who, with the help of some very attractive Christmas Elves, makes the point that Christmas is a time for celebration, generosity and fellowship. The former takes place at a fantastical version of the charity show he was seen promoting on Christmas Eve and the latter whisks Scrooge on a tour of London that includes the homes of his nephew Fred and his clerk Bob Cratchit. Before the departure of the Ghost of Christmas Present, Scrooge is forced to encounter the results of his own mean spirit at the top of the show in the guise of London's poor. Alone in a graveyard, Scrooge is visited by the Ghost of Christmas Future and glimpses his afterlife and the derision with which he is viewed. The alarming events in the graveyard and the evening encounters force him into a state of repentance for his past.

It's Christmas morning and Scrooge is awakened to find the nightmare of the previous evening over and a reformed Scrooge sets out to make amends to those he has hurt. To the amazement of passersby he releases Mr Smythe from his debt and takes the largest turkey in London to the home of his employee Bob Cratchit. Astonished crowds witness Scrooge reconciled with his nephew Fred and family. As snowflakes fall, the musical climaxes with Tiny Tim being hoisted on to the shoulders of Scrooge to proclaim to one and all a final 'God Bless Us Everyone'.



Belfast Operatic Company presents...

# A NIGHT OF CHRISTMAS MUSIC AND SONG

featuring

1<sup>st</sup>  
OLD  
BOYS



DECEMBER 4TH 2021  
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BELFAST OPERATIC  
COMPANY

## DICKENS IN BELFAST



Charles Dickens was one of the most popular novelists in the Victorian era and his works are still familiar to readers and film directors today. During his writing career, Dickens did much to raise awareness of the appalling living and working conditions experienced by children of the poor in the slums of London, as well as cities throughout the length and breadth of the land.

In 1921, Hugh A MacCartan published a slim volume entitled *The Glamour of Belfast*. One of its chapters was headed 'Ulster Hall, Charles Dickens'. The famous author visited Belfast on three occasions. On his first visit on the 27th August 1858, he performed to a thronged Victoria Hall in May Street, where his reading of *A Christmas Carol* received more than an enthusiastic response from the delighted audience.

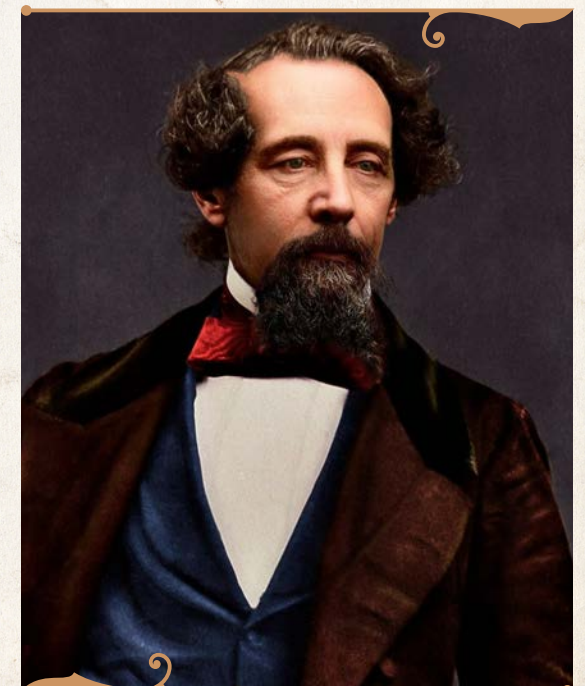
The following day, after walking to Carrickfergus and back, (a distance of sixteen miles) he spoke in the afternoon to another large gathering. On this occasion he read to them from *Dombey and Son* and followed this up by an evening of readings from *The Poor Traveller*, *The Boots at the Hollytree Inn* and the Mrs Gamp episode from *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

Dickens returned to Belfast in 1867 and on this occasion the venue was the new Ulster Hall which in those days had a capacity for 2000 people. The huge audience heard him read from *Dr Marigold* as well as an excerpt from *Pickwick Papers*.

His third tour in 1869 was billed as "the last that will ever be given by Mr Dickens in this country". The Ulster Hall audience on this occasion heard Dickens give a really effective performed public reading. The works from which he chose to entertain his patrons were *David Copperfield*, *Pickwick Papers* and *A Christmas Carol*.

In the opinion of Charles Dickens, "Belfast was a fine place with a rough people". Clearly he was delighted with his receptions in Belfast and doubtless he would have been extremely impressed by the fact that there had been in existence in the city since 1744, a Charitable Institution in Clifton Street, commonly referred to as The Poor House.

This was in addition to a new Workhouse (1841) on the Lisburn Road to which the new Union Hospital was added in 1845.





# ADAPTATIONS OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Dickens' story has stood the test of time. Through the years *A Christmas Carol* has been adapted over 140 times, making it one of the most widely adapted pieces in history. The visual adaptations started just after the 1900s on the stage, with Dickens himself holding readings of the story. The classic work has been dramatised and adapted for virtually every medium, with new versions appearing regularly.



The first known visual adaptation is a silent British short, Directed by Walter R. Booth and produced by R.W. Paul in 190. It lasted just six minutes and twenty seconds, four minutes of which is preserved in the British Film Institute.

The larger than life transformation of the title character has been tackled in cartoon format through the years in a variety of styles. Most known may be musical cartoon adaptation 'The Stingiest Man In Town', adapted by Rankin/Bass, the team behind a number of famous holiday specials for American TV.

The Japanese studio which brought this title to life housed many of the animators who would go on to form the famous Studio Ghibli.

Further cartoon adaptations included Mister Magoo, Bugs Bunny, the Flintstones and of course, Mickey Mouse himself.

In a 1997 cartoon, Tim Curry voiced Scrooge in a version which extended the supporting cast of the novel, Curry would later reprise the role in Madison Square.

More than 170 years after the infamous miser-turned-do-gooder Ebenezer Scrooge entered culture for the first time, the story was once again tackled by Disney with their computer generated offering presenting a new take on the story. This 2009 adaptation starred Jim Carrey as Scrooge, & each of the Christmas ghosts. The budget for the production was huge, with CGI animation very much in its infancy.

From cartoon to crossover, Michael Caine took to the role of Scrooge surrounded by Jim Henson's creations, The Muppets. For many, this is their first introduction to the famous tale and with good reason - this vibrant take on Dickens' work is up there with the best. With catchy musical interludes, and a degree of artistic license taken to adjust to Hensons aesthetic, the film stays close enough to the source material to create a balanced and entertaining take on the story.

While others have stuck to the story, there have been a number of adaptations which draw heavily on the comedy of the piece. 1988 saw Bill Murray appear in 'Scrooged', in which events from the book are neatly adapted to fit the comedy, whilst maintaining familiarity of plot.

1988 saw another parody, this time by Blackadder, taking the clever stance of reversing the redemption arc of the story so that by the end, Blackadder becomes a swine.

In 1999, a direct to TV version starred Patrick Stewart as an arrogant and aloof Scrooge, feared by those around him. Darker in tone, the story encompassed more of the original than most adaptations, but is oft criticised for lacking the Christmas spirit the story should have.

Tonight's version of *A Christmas Carol* was born when producer David Michael of Madison Square Garden approached composer Alan Menken, fresh from Academy Award Wins for *The Little Mermaid* and *Beauty And The Beast*, to adapt for the stage. Menken assembled a team

of director Mike Ockrent, choreographer Susan Stroman and lyricist Lynn Ahrens. The biggest task fell to the Scenic Designer Tony Ivey and Costume Designer William Ivey Long, who had to design a show for the Madison Square Garden arena.

The goal with this particular adaptation was to create a show which would appeal to audiences of all ages. The story has a dramatic arc to it, so the team were faced with the challenge of how to make the show feel fresh and defy audience expectation. To achieve this they drew on the class structure within the novel, showcasing the classes within London and how everyone celebrates 'Christmas Together' - the production went on to run every season from 1994-2003. The show to this day holds

the record as the longest-running holiday show in Broadway history.

This version of *A Christmas Carol* was then adapted for television in 2004, starring Kelsey Grammar as Scrooge, and a cast including Ruthie Henshall, Jane Krakowski and Jennifer Love Hewitt. An original 1994 cast album featuring the MSG cast is available, though the team got together on an annual basis and continued to tweak the show, creating their own festive tradition.

In 2013, Belfast Operatic Company brought the production to Belfast audiences for a sold-out run in the Grand Opera House, featuring new scenic technology that allowed transition from one scene to another in the blink of an eye.



# ALAN MENKEN

*Alan Menken has composed some of the most beloved songs and musical scores of our time. His work has introduced an entire generation to the world of musicals; both stage and screen.*

Born on July 22nd, 1949, Alan grew up as a child of the 60's, dreaming of a career as a singer-songwriter, while assuming he'd become a dentist like most of the other men in his family. While enjoying a spectacularly unsuccessful stint as a pre-med student at NYU, he was introduced to the BMI Musical Theater Workshop, run by the great conductor, Lehman Engel.

There, Alan found his calling as a musical theater composer-lyricist. Along with performing on the New York cabaret circuit and writing and producing jingles and *Sesame Street* songs, some of the musicals and revues that Menken wrote songs for in this period are *Atina: Evil Queen of the Galaxy*, *Real Life Funnies*, *Patch Patch Patch*, *Personals*, *Diamonds*, *Kicks* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*.

His first collaboration with frequent collaborator, Howard Ashman, *God Bless You Mr. Rosewater*, opened in 1979 to excellent reviews and modest box office.

In 1982, their next musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*, became the highest grossing Off-Broadway show ever, toured the world, won countless theater awards and resulted in a movie musical that earned Menken his first Oscar nomination for "Mean Green Mother from Outer Space."



On the strength of the success of *Little Shop*, Alan and Howard were hired to write the songs for the Disney animated feature, *The Little Mermaid*, for which Alan also wrote the score. The result was an Academy Award for the song "Under the Sea," a nomination for "Kiss the Girl," and the Academy Award for Best Score. *Beauty and the Beast* followed, earning Menken two more Oscars for Best Song ("Beauty and the Beast") and Best Score, with two other songs ("Be Our Guest" and "Belle") nominated.

After Ashman passed away, in 1991, with *Aladdin* not yet completed, Alan began his collaboration with Tim Rice, to write the remaining songs. They won the Best Song Oscar and the Song of the Year Grammy for "A Whole New World," which also reached #1 on the Billboard Charts. Menken won Best Score again and "Friend Like Me," written with Ashman, received a nomination as well. In that same year, Alan's live action film musical, *Newsies*, with lyrics by Jack Feldman, was released - a film which has since been adapted in to a successful stage musical, originally starring Jeremy Jordan.

Three more animated musicals followed, between 1994 and 1997; *Pocahontas* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, with lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, and *Hercules*, with lyrics by David Zippel, with two more Academy Awards, for Best Song ("Colors of the Wind") and Best Score (*Pocahontas*), and two more nominations, for Best Score (*Hunchback*) and Best Song ("Go the Distance." - *Hercules*)

The success of the animated musicals lead Alan back to Broadway with the stage musical of *Beauty and the Beast* (lyrics by Ashman and Rice), which ran for 13 years, and Madison Square Garden's *A Christmas Carol* (lyrics by Lynn Ahrens), which ran for 10 years. Menken and Rice's oratorio, *King David* was the premiere production at the newly renovated New Amsterdam Theater in 1997.

That same year Alan returned to his Off-Broadway roots with a science fiction musical at the WPA Theater, *Weird Romance* (lyrics by David Spencer). A stage adaptation of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* opened in 1999 in Berlin, as *Der Glockner Von Notre Dame*, and stands as that city's longest running musical.

In 2002, Alan Menken's 7th Disney animated musical, *Home on the Range*, opened. And in 2007, Menken wrote the score and reunited with Stephen Schwartz to write the songs for *Enchanted*, earning three more Oscar nominations for "Happy Working Song," "That's How You Know" and "So Close." Filming has since completed in Ireland on the sequel, *Disenchanted*.

Alans works returned to Broadway with stage versions of *The Little Mermaid*, *HUNCHBACK*, and most recently, *Aladdin* in 2014 - but also with *Sister Act* in 2009. In 2020, Menken became an EGOT recipient, having won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar and a Tony - one of only 16 people in history to achieve this status. He is one of the most awarded composers in history.

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

**Time: London, 1880**

Overture

**Scene 1/2: The Royal Exchange**

A Jolly Good Time

Nothing To Do With Me

**Scene 3: Scrooge's House**

Link By Link

**Scene 4: Scrooge's Bed Chamber**

The Lights of Long Ago

**Scene 5: The Law Courts**

God Bless Us, Everyone

**Scene 6: The Factory**

A Place Called Home

**Scene 7: Fezziwig's Banking House**

Fezziwig's Annual Christmas Ball

A Place Called Home (Reprise)

**Scene 8: Scrooge and Marley's**

The Lights of Long Ago (Part II)

INTERVAL

**Scene 9: A Starry Night**

Abundance and Charity

**Scene 10: All Over London**

Christmas Together

**Scene 11: The Graveyard**

Dancing On Your Grave

Yesterday, Tomorrow and Today

**Scene 12: Scrooge's Bed Chamber**

London Town Carol

**Scene 13: The Street, Christmas Day**

Nothing To Do With Me (Reprise)

Christmas Together (Reprise)

God Bless Us, Everyone (Finale)





**COLIN  
BOYD**  
Ebenezer Scrooge

Colin first performed with BOC in 2003, when he was cast as Harrison Howell in *Kiss me Kate*, a show in which he fell for both Musical Theatre and the leading lady! Since then his theatre credits with BOC have included Henry Etches and The Major in *Titanic the Musical*, Cogsworth in *Beauty and the Beast*, Buffalo Bill Cody in *Annie get your gun*, Horace Vandergelder in *Hello, Dolly!*, Ebenezer Scrooge in the 2013 production of *A Christmas Carol* and Walter Hobbs in *Elf the musical*.

Over the years Colin has made guest appearances with Bangor Operatic, Lisnagarvey Operatic, New Lyric, St. Agnes Choral Society, and Ulster Operatic, the latter of which enabled him to fulfil his ambition to play the role of King Arthur in their hilarious 2017 production of *Monty Python's Spamalot!* Married to celebrated

soprano, Elizabeth Ross, Colin produced Elizabeth's one woman shows, *The Other Side of Me* and *Reflections* staged in venues throughout Northern Ireland, including The MAC and The Baby Grand.

Away from the musical stage, Colin has many years of experience performing in comedy plays throughout Northern Ireland. He was invited to play the role of Jack Worthing in Belmont Drama's production of *The Importance of being Ernest* by Oscar Wilde, a role he regards as one of his favourites. Colin is a life-long member of Lambeg Players, and, as well as directing many of their productions, he has played most of the comedy characters created by local playwright, Sam Cree. Panto roles with Lambeg and Lisnagarvey include, a rather fetching mermaid, "Fairy Liquid", The "Larne/Stranraer Fairy" and of course "Widow Twankey".

Colin relishes the opportunity of bringing Scrooge back to the stage once again. The physical and mental effort required to deliver this role, seems to be lost on Colin's children, who maintain he has been playing the role, without breaking sweat, for most of their lives!



**DUARTE  
SILVA MOREIRA**  
Tiny Tim

Duarte is 8 years of age who loves to play, read and listen to music. He is always keen to learn about the world around him and History and Geography are his two favourite subjects. However, music has always played a large part in his life since he was a little boy - he has always loved singing and dancing, and joined Belfast School of Performing Arts when he was 6.

He was delighted to audition for and be cast in the role of Tiny Tim, and has had a sparkle in his eye ever since the first rehearsal, which left him in awe of what he heard and saw, solidifying his desire to perform when he grows up. He has loved the rehearsal time, and getting to know his new family (The Cratchits), and would like to thank everyone involved for giving him this amazing opportunity.



**CIARÁN  
CONLON**  
Bob Cratchit

Since joining Belfast Operatic in 2008, Ciarán has become avidly involved in the life of the company. He has appeared on the Grand Opera House Stage in several dance and ensemble roles in productions including *Hello, Dolly!*, *Cinderella*, *Sister Act*, *The Addams Family* and *Jekyll and Hyde*.

Ciarán received a First Class Honours from the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts in 'Music, Theatre and Entertainment Management' before returning home to work in his family business NIAVAC Ltd. Re-joining Belfast Operatic Company has allowed him to continue his passion for theatre and make lifelong friendships.

This is a special year for Ciarán marking his first Principal role with Belfast Operatic Company playing father figure Bob Cratchit in *A Christmas Carol*. He is delighted to share the exceptional GOH stage with our magnificent Tiny Tim, Martha, Mrs Cratchit, and the rest of the BOC family.

Ciarán would like to thank both the Production Team and Committee for their hard work and determination to ensure this production reached the stage!



**JANE  
MCKIBBIN**  
Mrs. Cratchit

Jane is an English teacher in a secondary school in Belfast. She is currently teaching Charles Dickens to her Year 9 class while performing in *A Christmas Carol* - a lovely coincidence! Jane is a keen reader and has a love for all genres of music. She is vocally trained and has achieved diplomas in Musical Theatre.

This is Jane's first show with Belfast Operatic Company. She is also a member of Lisnagarvey Operatic Society and has taken on roles such as 'Liesl' in *The Sound of Music* and 'Carmen' in *Sweet Charity*. Jane has also been an active member of Bart Players. Her most recent role with the company was Pauline Clench in *One Man Two Guvnors*. Jane cannot wait for her first show with BOC.

She has been made to feel so welcome and she looks forward to treading the boards of the Grand Opera House Stage with the wonderful Cratchit family!





**ALICE  
JOHNSTON**  
Christmas Past

On a daily basis, Alice works as an infant teacher in a primary school in Belfast. Over the years, she has been responsible for choir training, ensemble and orchestral leadership; teaching dance, drama and directing musical productions. Alice is a member of the stylish, vintage, three-part harmony group, The Victory Rollers who perform all over the country. Alice is vocally trained, and has achieved diplomas in Classical singing and Music Theatre. With an embedded passion for performing, Alice continues to study voice and is in turn teaching voice privately and at the JH Academy of Theatre Arts, Belfast.

Since joining Belfast Operatic Company in 2006 she has appeared on the GOH stage in many principal roles including: Cupid (*Orpheus in the Underworld*), Minnie Fay (*Hello, Dolly!*), Belle (*Disney's Beauty and the Beast*), Calamity (*Calamity Jane*), The Ghost of Christmas Past (*A Christmas Carol*), Cinderella (*Rodger's and Hammerstein's Cinderella*) and Emma Carew (*Jekyll & Hyde*). Alice is looking forward to taking to the sky once again in this magical role.

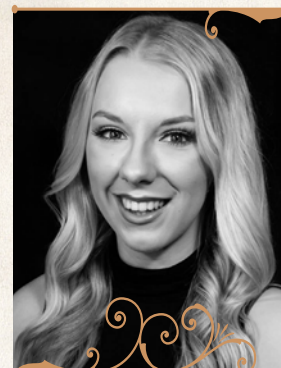


**SIMON  
PYPER**  
Christmas Present

Simon studied Performing Arts (Dance) at Middlesex university in London. He has worked with many well known choreographers such as Anne Went (National Ballet) Mark Bruce (Ballet Rambert) and Tammy McLogue (Lithuanian Dance). He also spent three years as a resident dancer in Disneyland Paris.

Simon has followed in his dad's footsteps (Wilf Pyper) and has directed multiple shows across Northern Ireland. These include *Sweeney Todd*, *Sister Act*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *All shook up* (Fortwilliam Musical society), *Whistle down the wind*, *Little Shop of Horrors* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor dream coat* (St. Patrick's Choral society) as well as multiple youth productions and Pantomimes for Lisnagarvey Operatic Society.

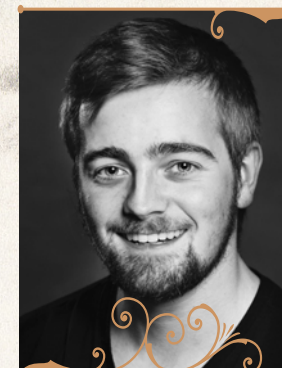
Simon first appeared on stage with Belfast Operatic Company at the age of 6 in *La Vie Parisienne* in the Arts Theatre. Since then he has played multiple leading roles across the province. He was delighted to return to Belfast Operatic Company for their Centenary Production of *Titanic the Musical* and *The Addams Family* which both took place in the Grand Opera House. After 18 months of no theatre, Simon is excited to get back on stage as the Ghost of Christmas present in this production.



**JORDAN  
ROSBOROUGH**  
Christmas Future

Jordan is delighted to be back performing, in her first role with Belfast Operatic Company since joining in 2017. She is a Classroom Assistant by day and works as a singing teacher at Sarah Maxwell Vocal Tuition, where she gained her Musical Theatre Diploma with Distinction in 2018. Jordan works with RPNI Events LTD performing as princesses & other characters at special events.

Jordan has Choreographed for several musical companies, including Banbridge Musical & Ulster Operatic. Currently, she is the Choreographer for Dundalk's Panto in January 2022. She acted as Dance Captain for several productions including *Bosco's Legally Blonde* (where she also played Margot) and *West Side Story* at the Grand Opera House (Feb 2018, also playing Velma). At the 2019 AIMS Awards Ceremony, Jordan performed with the Northern Region in the opening, featuring her and her dance partner, Sean O'Neill, in a contemporary duet to 'Shallow' collaborating with Naoimh & Ann-Marie Morgan. As a performer, previous roles include Patty Simcox in *Grease the Musical* at the Grand Opera House Belfast 2018, Madame Thernadier in *Les Misérables* at The Waterfront Belfast 2017, and Angie in the NI premier of *Our House*, also at The Grand Opera House 2016. Jordan wishes the audience an enjoyable time and is thrilled that the Theatre industry is back in action!



**MATTHEW  
CAMPBELL**  
Jacob Marley

Matthew studied Music at Queens University Belfast, before returning in 2018 to complete his Masters thesis focusing on the history of Musical Theatre in Northern Ireland.

He now works as a freelance performer, multi-instrumentalist, musical director and orchestrator. Matthew is a member of Irish Vocal Group 'Shamrock Tenors' and travels the world with them performing both land and cruise ship productions. The tenors recently received two consecutive number 1 singles with their release of 'Belfast' and 'Grace'. Matthew has also enjoyed working alongside and touring with performers such as Peter Corry, Liam Lawton, Phil Coulter, Malachi Cush and Karl McGuckin. Currently, Matthew is orchestrating a new musical for YouTube channel 'Crank Game Plays' due to premier in Chicago this weekend before embarking on a National US Tour in 2022. Notable theatre credits include Link Larkin (*Hairspray*), Warner Huntington (*Legally Blonde - Irish Premier*), Benny (*In The Heights - Irish Premier*), Che (*Evita*). Matthew also received various AIMS & NODA award wins/nominations in the 'Best Male Singer' and 'Best Youth Performer' categories for his roles as Marius (*Les Misérables*), Jesus (*Godspell*) and Mitch/Olives Dad (*The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*). Matthew is excited to be making his BOC debut this evening!





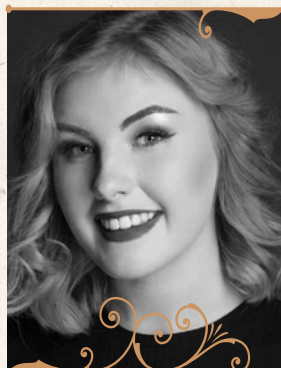
**PATRICK  
DARCY**  
Young Ebenezer

Patrick is a recent graduate from Queen's University, completing a degree in History and Politics. Beyond his studies, Patrick immersed himself in the world of Musical Theatre. In Queen's he was the President of the Queen's Musical Theatre Society. He has been lucky enough to perform on many of the major stages in Northern Ireland, starting on the Grand Opera House stage when he was 10 years old, in a production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. Patrick has taken on a range of challenging roles in various productions such as Jesus in *Jesus Christ Superstar*, Tom Collins in *RENT* and Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors*, to name a few.

Patrick has been an member of BOC now for 3 years, taking part in various productions, including *The Greatest Show* in which he played Sebastian, and *Titanic - the Musical* in which he took on the role of Frederick Barrett.

Beyond the stage, Patrick is a member of the Vocal group 'Adoro', performing in venues such as the Stormont Buildings and St Anne's Cathedral, and he attained his LLCM in Musical Theatre Performance in the summer of 2021. For Patrick, this show represents a step towards normality and a return to what he loves, live performance.

He hope's you enjoy this performance to the Dickens classic tale!



**NAOMI  
SMYTH**  
Emily

Naomi is 24-year-old support worker, part time performer for REAL Princesses NI, and Singers Secreto, while being a full-time mummy. Naomi is originally from Portaferry, where her passion for theatre began, as she got cast as a troublesome angel in her nativity play, when she was 6 years of age. Since then, she has performed in countless venues all across Ireland. Roles included *Les Miserables* as 'Fantine' (Grand Opera House 2015), *Our House* as 'Kath' (Summer Youth Project 2015), *West Side Story* as 'Anita' in both The Mac (B.S.P.A) and The Grand Opera House (B.M.D.S). *Grease* as 'Sandy'. *Annie* as 'Miss Hannigan', *Whistle Down the Wind* as 'Candy', (St Patrick's Choral Society, Downpatrick) and as 'Eva Peron' in *Evita* in both T13 (MT4Y) and The Great Hall Downpatrick (S.P.C.S), a role for which she was nominated for Best Female Singer at the Annual A.I.M.S Awards and won her Best Performance in a musical at the Annual NODA Awards.

As a new member of B.O.C, Naomi was slightly nervous coming in to such a well-established company, however the cast, crew & production team truly are the most kind and welcoming people in the business. Rehearsals have brought some much needed joy into so many of our lives, having really missed the buzz of performing while having such great fun on and off stage.



**FERGAL  
WHITE**  
Mr. Fezziwig

With a repertoire that includes opera and operetta, musical theatre and sacred music, South Down Tenor Fergal has been in demand as a performer and concert soloist for many years, performing in theatres both nationally and internationally. Fergal joined BOC in Summer 2019 and was cast as Murdoch in *Titanic* and has fully embraced the BOC experience, enjoyed taking part in many of our concerts and online social and musical events over lockdown. Musical Theatre experience includes Max in *Sunset Boulevard* [Winner of AIMS Best Supporting Actor 2016] Grand Opera House, Belfast; roles with Newry Musical Society include Julian Marsh in *42nd St* [Runner Up , AIMS Best Actor], Motel in *Fiddler on the Roof*, Mr Snow in *Carousel* and Warbucks in *Annie*. Most recently Fergal played Professor Higgins in NMS's *My Fair Lady*, Colonel Peron in Banbridge Musical Society's *Evita* and Rev Shaw Moore in *Footloose* here at the Grand Opera House. Fergal has also enjoyed performing with a number of Dublin based societies where favourite roles include Horton in *Seussical* (HXT), Rico in *Copacabana* (Coolmine MS) and Minstrel in *Once Upon a Mattress* (DMDS). After Christmas he will take on the title role of *Shrek* in the Grand Opera House.



**TIM  
REYNOLDS**  
Fred Anderson

Tim Reynolds has been treading the boards, mostly in South Wales and Northern Ireland, for over 15 years. He has enjoyed the challenge of taking on a diverse range of roles in musicals including *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Jesus), *Hairspray* (Corny Collins), *Evita* (Che), *Sweet Charity* (Oscar Lindquist), *Grease* (Vince Fontaine/ Teen Angel), *Dr Dolittle* (Matthew Mugg), *Wild Bill* (Calamity Jane) and *Annie* (Rooster). He is also a singer for weddings and other special occasions through the company Singers Secreto. Tim is a primary school teacher at Rowandale Primary School in Moira and is passionate about instilling a love for the arts through his role. He is delighted to be involved in his first musical theatre production with Belfast Operatic Company as Scrooge's nephew Fred.



**LAURA  
KERR**  
Mrs. Fezziwig

Laura is thrilled to be playing the role of Mrs Fezziwig in Belfast Operatic Company's production of *A Christmas Carol*.

A member of BOC for several years, Laura's other roles include Dolly Levi in *Hello, Dolly!*, Alice Beane in *Titanic: The Musical*, Annie Oakley in *Annie Get Your Gun*, Adelaide Adams in *Calamity Jane*, Mrs Fezziwig in *A Christmas Carol*, the Wicked Stepmother in *Cinderella* and Mother Superior in *Sister Act*. Laura recently reprised the role of Miss Hannigan in *Annie* at The National Concert Hall, Dublin with Festival Productions - and also played the role of The Wicked Witch of The West in their production of *The Wizard of Oz*.

Laura is a primary school teacher where she conducts the choir and directs school productions - most recently her choir got through to the final stages of the School Choir of the Year. Laura performs regularly with the Lambeg Players.



PRESENTS

# THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME

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LYRICS BY  
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BELFAST OPERATIC COMPANY  
PRESENTS

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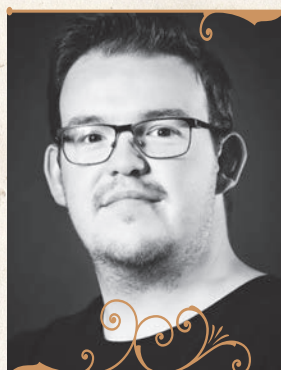
**WILFIE  
PYPER**  
Director

Wilfie is delighted to be teaming up once again with Tim Bell and Adam Darcy for this BOC production of *A Christmas Carol*

He has spent a lifetime in theatre and is regarded as one of Northern Ireland's leading musical theatre directors. He has been resident director with the BOC for some 28 years. His catalogue of productions for us is immense and include *HMS Pinafore*, *La Vie Parisian*, *Yeoman of the Guard*, *Iolanthe* and *Trial By Jury*. Those at the Grand Opera House include *Oklahoma*, *The Pirates Of Penzance* (Broadway and traditional), *Show Boat*, *Brigadoon*, *The Mikado*, *Kiss Me Kate*, *Hello, Dolly!* (twice), *Annie Get Your Gun*, *Calamity Jane*, *Fiddler on The Roof*, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Beauty and the Beast*, Rogers and Hammerstein's musical version of *Cinderella*, *Sister Act* and their hugely successful *The Addams Family* in 2016, followed swiftly by *Jekyll and Hyde* in 2017 and *ELF* in 2018

BOC's Centenary performance of *Titanic the Musical* in the GOH in April 2012 gained Wilfie yet another Best Director award from the Association of Irish Music Societies in the Gilbert section and along with it a Best Director award in the Sullivan section for his production of *The Sound of Music* making him the first director in the North to receive this accolade and the first in Ireland for seventeen years.

In 2019 he was honoured to receive an MBE from Her Majesty the Queen for services to musical theatre and drama in the Province.



**TIMOTHY  
BELL**  
Choreographer

Timmy's stage experience began at the age of 4 with McMaster Stage School, Bangor, with whom he now teaches and choreographs. Over the years he has performed and choreographed with numerous societies and youth theatres in the North including the NI premiere productions of *The Addams Family* and *9to5* the musical and *Curtains*, all with Newcastle Glees.

Timothy has worked on workshops in Dublin with Festival Productions and choreographed outreach projects with Youth Music Theatre UK. He has also worked with the National Youth Theatre, Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury, Churchhill Theatre, Bromley and Qdos Productions. Timmy has been the assistant choreographer for the Grand Opera House Youth Productions for the past 7 years. Timmy has enjoyed playing many numerous roles, winning the Association of Irish Musical Society award for Best Supporting Male in 2006 for his role of Will Parker in *Oklahoma!*. Timothy has thoroughly enjoyed working with BOC and choreographing *A Christmas Carol*, having previously choreographed *The Addams Family*, *Sister Act*, and *Jekyll and Hyde* in the Grand Opera House and the company's *'Westend to Broadway'* and *'Broadway to the Silver Screen'* Concerts in the Ulster Hall, as well as *ELF* in the Waterfront Hall.

Most recently choreography credits include *'GREASE'* for Ulster Operatic at the Grand Opera House, and Newcastle Glees *'Curtains'*, as well as BOC's *ELF* in the Waterfront Hall.



**ADAM  
DARCY**  
Musical Director

Adam is delighted to be joining Wilfie, Timmy and the company of BOC as Musical Director for *A Christmas Carol* for the very first time! Adam is a Belfast-based Musical Director, Vocal Coach and Pianist with a passion for music and theatre.

Adam has conducted and played for countless musical theatre productions and concerts over the last 12 years. He has worked as MD on a number of Irish and Northern Irish premiere productions, including, *In the Heights*, *Godspell* (Broadway Revival), *Pippin*, *Into the Woods* and *Spring Awakening*. His original composition, 'Belfast Child' was chosen as part of the *Exclaim!* Showcase in Liverpool's Everyman Theatre.

Adam is constantly in demand working with private students, theatre groups, ensembles and schools across Northern Ireland. He is the co-founder of youth theatre company, Ravara Productions and is a long-standing music teacher for two schools at the Belfast School of Performing Arts. He continues to study Estill Voice Training under renowned vocal coach, Anne-Marie Speed at 'The Voice Explained'.

Most recently Adam was Musical Director for MMK's outdoor site-specific production of Sondheim's *Into the Woods*.

Adam can't wait to return to the Grand Opera House and bring to live the score of one of his favourite musical theatre composers!



**CAROLE  
MCCLURE**  
Production Manager

Carole is delighted to be back with BOC for this spectacular Christmas show. She has been involved with the Company since 1996 as a performer and Production Manager. Most recently she worked on *Addams Family* and *Jekyll and Hyde* in the Grand Opera House, *Westend to Broadway* and *Broadway to Silver Screen* concerts in the Ulster Hall and *Elf* in the Waterfront Hall.

Carole's involvement in theatre began when she joined her Church Drama Group as a teenager and over the years has performed, accompanied, choreographed and directed a range of productions. Carole brings a wealth of experience to her position of production manager and is delighted to be working alongside the BOC production team and the Grand Opera House Technical Team after such a long break. She is excited to be back in this opulently refurbished theatre but it has been very challenging for everyone involved in this production. Current COVID protocols have had to be adhered to both in rehearsals and in the theatre. Carole along with the cast and backstage teams are hoping that the hard work will be apparent with the audience being treated to a fabulous and magical piece of Christmas spirit.

She would like to thank the Technical Team at the Grand Opera House, all the outside Technical Teams involved, The Production Team and the cast for their valued support, cooperation and patience throughout this journey in difficult times. Carole would also like to express her thanks to the Committee for continuing to put their faith in her work with BOC.



# CAST

**Ebenezer Scrooge** Colin Boyd  
**Christmas Past** Alice Johnston  
**Christmas Present** Simon Pyper  
**Christmas Future** Jordan Rosborough  
**Jacob Marley** Matthew Campbell  
**Mrs Mops** Wendy Pyper  
**Mr Fezziwig** Fergal White  
**Mrs Fezziwig** Laura Kerr  
**Bob Cratchit** Ciaran Conlon  
**Mrs Cratchit** Jane McKibbin  
**Emily** Naomi Smyth  
**Young Scrooge** Patrick D'Arcy  
**Fred Anderson** Tim Reynolds

## Rich Carol Singers

Elizabeth Ross, Sean O'Neill, Karen Glass,  
 Harrison Gordon, Laura Kerr,  
 Angus McIntyre, Aileen Fox, Josh Kelso

## Bankers

Hall Graham, David Magowan

## Charity Men

Adam Callendar, Lowry Hodgett, Mark Tilley

## Friendly Tarts

Shirley Adair, Hannah Beasant

## Rich Chorus Ladies

Audrey Stewart, Diane Richardson,  
 Lauren Toner, Valerie Maxwell,  
 Cathy McLoughlin, Emma McMullan,  
 Heather Millar

## Middle Class Ladies

Sharon Murray, Susan Forster,  
 Ellie Bamford, Sarah Morrow,  
 Sarah McLaughlin

**Sally Anderson** Lauren McRoberts  
**Mr Smythe** Darryl Bowden  
**Grace Smythe** Isla Torney  
**Scrooge's Mother** Claire Howell  
**Judge** Lowry Hodgett  
**Mr Hawkins** Ian McMaster  
**Scrooge's Father** Ken Hamilton  
**Beadle** Kevin McIlhennon  
**Poulter** James Marsden  
**Old Joe** Gary Redpath  
**Granny Chuzzlewit** Kirsten Magee  
**Fishmonger** David Bailie  
**Charwoman** Shirley Adair

## Poor Women

Jessica Houghton, Susan Taylor,  
 Cheryl Weston

## Dancing Girls

Alice Tate, Taylor Wills, Emily McGleenon,  
 Olivia Davidson, Naomi Smyth,  
 Jordan Rosborough, Kirsten Magee,  
 Aileen Fox, Jill Morrow, Lauren Toner

## Factory Worker

Joshua Quigley

## Children

Owen Wilson, Fergus McIlwaine,  
 Aibhlin Hughes, Amiee McAuley,  
 Amelie Thorpe, Aoife Tomozei,  
 Rosa Hamilton, Harry Lennon

**Tiny Tim** Duarte Silva Moreira

**Fan** Olivia Pyper

**Jonathan** Jude Forsythe

**Young Scrooge** Leo McDermott,

**Martha Cratchit** Cora Magee

# PRODUCTION TEAM

**Director** Wilfie Pyper MBE  
**Musical Director** Adam Darcy  
**Choreographer** Timothy Bell  
**Production Manager** Carole McClure  
**Stage Manager** Marie Cusack  
**Lighting Design** ACK Productions  
**Sound Design** McCusker Pro Audio  
**Projection Design** Chris Thompson  
**Costumier** Triple C  
**Projector supply** ThirdSource  
**Wigs supplied by** Ali Murphy  
**Set Build** Colin McRoberts  
 Johnny McRoberts  
**Set Painter** Alan Marshall  
**Crew** Eric McClure  
 Colin McRoberts  
 Johnny McRoberts  
 Iain Mercer  
 Chris Thompson  
 Mal Hanna  
 Andy McKnight  
 Aine McConvey  
 Victoria Magowan  
 Johnny Sykes  
 Chantelle McKeown  
**Wardrobe Co-ord** Carole McClure  
**Wardrobe Team** Hannah Beattie  
 Anne Blackshaw  
 Mary Hewitt  
 Rosemary Kelly  
 Claire McRoberts  
 Bobi Monson  
 Megan Pentland

## Props Team

Jane McKee  
 Carol Sykes  
 Brian Moore  
 David Young  
 Debbie West  
 Lucy Briggs

**Make-up Team** Rachael McKnight  
 Ally McKeever  
 Joanne Boyd  
**Wig Dresser** Sandra Byrne  
**Programme Design** Gary Redpath

# ORCHESTRA

**Reed** David Mayes  
 Kevin Lawless  
 Gillian McCutcheon  
**Trumpet** Hannah Murray  
 Philip Ferguson  
**Horn** Charlie Doherty  
**Trombone** Jimmy Kitchen  
 Nathan Moore  
**Percussion** Jeremy Hoy  
**Drums** Drew Vincent  
**Keyboard** Gary Myles  
 Andrew Neill  
 Darren Day  
**Violin** Una Donnelly  
 Dervilagh Cooper  
**Viola** Colleen McMullan  
**Cello** Kerry Brady  
**Flute** Colin Irvine

# FOR BOC

**President** Thompie Steele  
**Chairman** Colin Boyd  
**Vice Chairman** Hall Graham  
**Secretary** Gary Redpath  
**Treasurer** Liz Boyd  
**Committee** David Robinson,  
 Jordan McFarlane,  
 Katy Tweed, Josh Kelso,  
 Shane Berger, Carol Sykes  
**Friends Secretary** Joy Kerr  
**Librarian** Diane Richardson  
**Company Auditor** Johnaton Kennedy DFK





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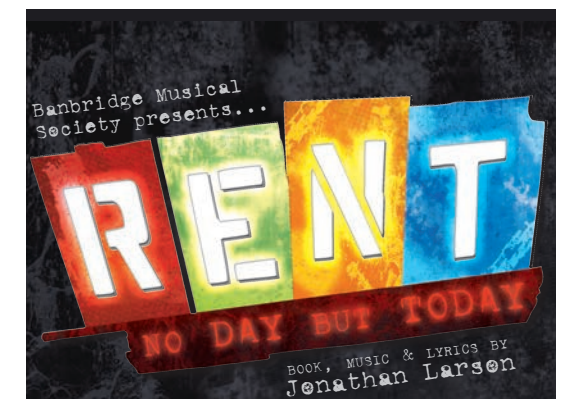
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**The Association of Irish Musical Societies** was established in 1965. Its mission is to entertain, educate, support and engage through exceptional musical productions. To foster the development and promotion of musical theatre in Ireland and make it accessible to all.

It is an umbrella organisation now representing well over 10,000 people directly involved in bringing musical entertainment to their local communities. With around 130 member societies it offers a range of services including:

- Adjudication and Awards Scheme
- Annual Choral Festival
- Workshops on a regional and national basis
- Residential Youth Summer School for 15-18 year olds
- Comprehensive Insurance Scheme
- Bursaries for talented and dedicated people seeking to train professionally in performance
- Informative website and regional and national Facebook pages promoting shows and activities
- Annual Awards Weekend - attended by around 1,000 people each June



Banbridge Musical Society presents...

# RENT

**NO DAY BUT TODAY**

BOOK, MUSIC & LYRICS BY **Jonathan Larson**

**27th February 2022**  
**Market Place Theatre & Arts Centre, Armagh**

MUSICAL ARRANGEMENTS: **Steve Skinner**      DRAMATURGY: **Lynn Thomson**

MUSIC SUPERVISION & ADDITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS: **Tim Weil**      RENT was originally produced in New York by New York Theatre Workshop and on Broadway by Jeffrey Seller, Kevin McCollum, Allan S. Gordon & New York Theatre Workshop      ORIGINAL CONCEPT & ADDITIONAL LYRICS: **Billy Aronson**

This amateur production is presented in arrangement with Music Theatre International (Europe). All authorised performance materials are also supplied by MTI Europe - [www.mtishows.co.uk](http://www.mtishows.co.uk)



# 60 YEARS - A JOLLY GOOD TIME!

In 2020, BOC was set to celebrate its 60th Anniversary with a number of high profile events, including an ambitious production of *Titanic The Musical* in a purpose built venue in the docks of Belfast to mark 60 years of the company in a grand fashion.

It was fitting then that in the midst of rehearsing *Titanic*, we would have a gala ball in the Titanic Suite of the building itself in March 2020. Over 200 were in attendance across 19 tables, with BOC decorations and homemade table centres made by a member of the company. Large BOC letters provided a photo opportunity for all, whilst a professional photographer papped company

members throughout the night. A slideshow of photographs through the years stirred some fond memories from throughout the years.

Whilst the company had a wonderful evening celebrating together - the dance floor was electric - in the background a global pandemic was beginning to take hold, and the following Monday, National lockdown was announced, putting a premature end to the company plans for further celebrations, the ball then marking the last large scale event for 19 months.

Through lockdown the company kept together virtually, up until tonight's performance - plans rage on for the next 60 years of success!



## OUR FOUNDER

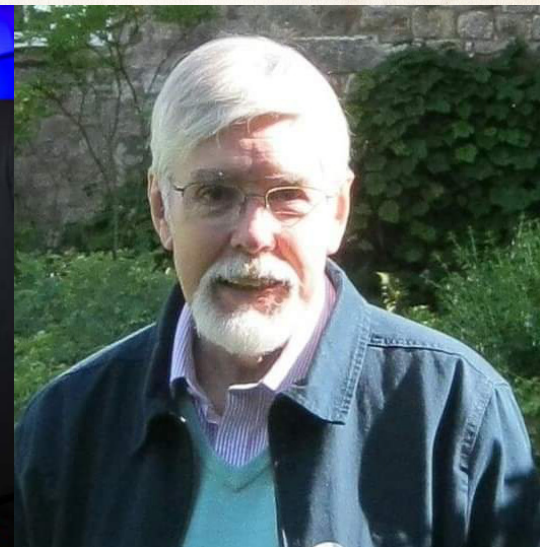
The curtain came down on an era for Belfast Operatic Company on August 8, 2020, with the death of its founder, John Stewart Mercer, after a short illness. John was a young music teacher at the ground-breaking Orangefield Boys' School when he formed the Ballymacarrett Musical Society in 1960 using the church choir at First Ballymacarrett Presbyterian Church where he was organist and choirmaster as its backbone.

In his initial ten years as director and musical director before resigning in 1970, the group often staged two shows each year, majoring on the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, and occasionally straying into other operettas and even opera, with John putting his at times quirky touch on the shows. In later years he would often remark on the sustained growth and development of the group he founded.

For a man who, in the early years, also dabbled in settings, compiled programmes and guided the group through two names changes until it became Belfast Operatic Company in 1965, John did not make his stage debut with the group until 2006, playing the role of JJ Astor in the Irish premiere of *Titanic The Musical* at the Grand Opera House, not long after again becoming an active member.

It was a role he reprised in November, 2007, before stepping in as musical director for a revival of the Hanmer and Park version of *Orpheus in the Underworld* at the Opera House the following year, a show with which he was familiar with having staged its Irish premiere in 1967. John was elected Belfast Operatic President in 2009, a role he held for a couple of seasons. With his wife, Audrey, John was the special guest at the Company's 60th anniversary ball at Belfast's Titanic Centre in early March, 2020, just before the Covid-19 lockdown.

Around 200 members of the Belfast Operatic family were there that night, a far cry from the much smaller numbers at the birth of the Company. John is survived by Audrey and the couple's daughters, Rosalind and Joanne, and their families.





# THE BOC FAMILY



*Little did we know that when we took to the stage in the Marine Hotel, Ballycastle in February 2020, that we'd not be performing together again for over a year and a half.*

What the past two years has proven, if it were ever in doubt, is that BOC is much more than a choral society. We are indeed a BOC family, and when we look back at the past two years, instead of focusing on what we didn't get to do and the challenges of these incredibly tough times, let's have a look at all the fun we had...

The Gala Ball on 14th March was a glitzy affair on the top floor of the Titanic exhibition centre. And while we danced the night away, there was a looming sense that the Titanic was indeed going down. We would not see each other in person again for months. Mere days later we went into the first lockdown.

Rehearsals never stopped, and for this we must thank Keith Pyper (Musical Director) and Anne Gillespie (Repetiteur). Every Monday night without

fail they were there on Zoom. We learned lots of new material for future concerts and even started the material for "A Christmas Carol" (and our next show...). Although we couldn't hear each other and were singing alone in our kitchens and bedrooms, we were in some sense together, and that meant a lot. Both Keith and Anne have moved on from the company now and we are grateful for their hard work and dedication to keeping us together for all those months.

As lockdown lifted in summer 2020, we had a few months of outdoor, socially distanced rehearsals before colder weather and changing restrictions moved us online again. Even in the summer, some ("sensible" - Wendy) members showed up with blankets, hot drinks and even hot water bottles to keep them warm as the sun went down. An online option was offered throughout for members who were shielding or otherwise unable to attend in person. We recorded a number of musical numbers during Lockdown, with each member

singing their part into the camera and edited together later. "Why We Sing" was our first foray into Virtual choir in May 2020. This song was released as a fundraiser for Friends of the Cancer Centre. It was an emotional sing for me, as we missed singing together so much at that time. My then nearly 2 year old daughter commented on watching, "All the friends singing together. Mummy happy." Indeed. I'm hoping we'll bring this song back for a live concert one day. Some recordings were made for an aborted "Bohemian Rhapsody" and at Christmas, "Silent Night" was accompanied by a donation to the Black Santa appeal.

A highlight of 2020 was the Scavenger Hunt on the 20th July. This madcap list of goals had us driving around Belfast in "bubbles", jumping out to propose to strangers, slide down slides and dress up statues. It was a hilarious race against time round the eerily quiet summer streets, won by the Robinson family.

In September 2020, a small group of members performed at the Lough Down Festival. This 90 minute programme featured a mix of solos and small ensembles, performed on a windy stage to a drive in audience who showed their

appreciation by honking horns and flashing lights. The same month, members auditioned for an ensemble production of "I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change" which was to be videoed and assembled as an online show. A few rehearsals were held but as we moved into the Winter it became apparent that it wouldn't be practical to go ahead at that time. But who knows... we might resurrect this at some point in the future.

In November our then Musical Director, Keith, held a series of online workshops for our member who do not read sheet music, to teach sight reading skills to help members with learning the music.

On 5th December, with our "Night of Christmas Music and Song" in St Anne's Cathedral having been cancelled at the last minute due to changing regulations, we screened our 2019 concert online as a Facebook Live. For many of our members (and audience) this concert kicks off the festive season.

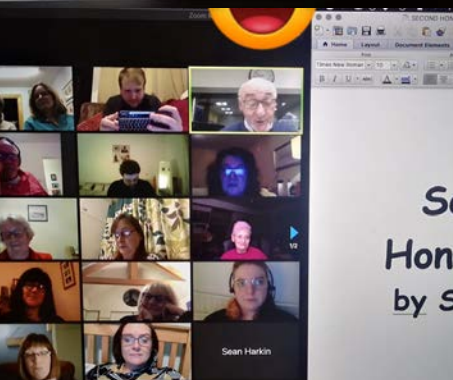
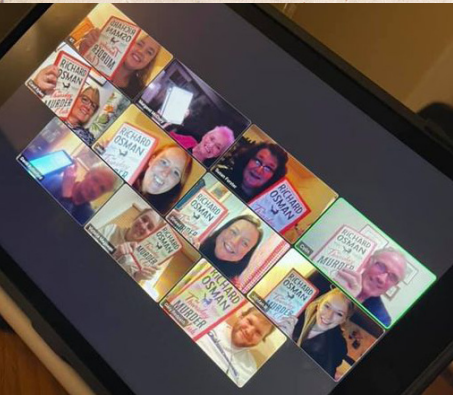
As we moved into the second lockdown in January 2021, the company held an online event for everyone to discuss and share their ideas for what

the company could do to lift spirits and keep us engaged through the dark winter months at home. We were even there for each other on New Year's Eve, laughing, playing games and singing together on Zoom.

In January 2021 Katy inaugurated the BOC Book Club, which is still going strong. We meet once a month (ish) to discuss our chosen read (pulled from the magical hat). We certainly don't all like the same things and conversations are lively at times as we've sampled everything from Irish drama to adult thriller.

At the end of January 2021 we had a Zoom open mic night, with a mix of live performances from members' living rooms and a trip down memory lane with videos of concerts past. It was great to see some of our new members (who had not yet met in the flesh) performing, and Daryll stole the show with his comic reinterpretation of Bohemian Rhapsody.

On 8th February Victoria Magowan guided us through a "Bake Off" online, instructing us all in how to make a Lemon Loaf. It was great fun (and delicious), although months later I was





still discovering specks of hardened cake mix on my laptop following a whisking accident!

The 12th of February we had great fun with an online “*Through the Keyhole*” as brave BOC members showed us round their homes and we broke into sub groups on Zoom to guess “*who lives in a house like this.*”

Our director Wilfie Pyper guided us through an online acting and auditions masterclass on 1st February and on 15th March we had great fun putting our skills to the test doing an online read through of “*Second Honeymoon*” by Sam Cree. Wilfie provided some direction and members swapped in and out of roles, having a go at the accents and laughing a lot. Perhaps the company may extend this foray into non-musical theatre...

In January, members Alice Tate and Jordan Rossborough took the company through dance workshops in two contrasting dance styles, which had us leaping about in our kitchens and on 19th March, we were dancing again as choreographer Wendy Mairs put the company through their paces with an 80s Dancercise

session on Zoom. Not only was this great fun, but it was good to be up and moving instead of sitting in front of a computer screen!

At the start of April 2021, we had an online Gin Education night with The Distiller Guy... otherwise known as an excuse to drink gin. The enthusiastic participants learned how to combine flavourings to make a gin extra special. And that Lemongrass from Asda just isn't the same. We didn't quite get the hang of how large a “measure” should be however...

The company also held Zoom screenings of some of our previous shows. We watched *The Greatest Show* and *A Christmas Carol* together apart, with the chat providing a lively counterpoint to the show onscreen.

Auditions were held for *A Christmas Carol* back in April 2021 with our first rehearsals being held outdoors.

On the 18th July BOC took to the stage together for the first time in a year and a half for an outdoor concert in Magheramorne Estate. The audience dined on gourmet picnics in the hot sun while the company,

shaded by the stately home, brought songs from some old favourites and new. It was our first time performing with our new Musical Director Adam Darcy who did a great job coaxing our relatively unused vocal cords back into action. It was also the first time we heard some of our new members in solo performance. I know I'm not the only person who was quite emotional to be back in the glad rags and back on stage together after so long.

Our AGM was held for the first time in two years the following day in an outdoor, socially distanced setting. It was exciting to focus on the future and be hopeful about what's coming next for the company. It was also an opportunity to say thank you to our committee, who have kept the company going financially and practically through such challenging time.

BOC's partnership with “Friends of the Cancer Centre” was cemented with an impressive climb up Slieve Donard by Adam, Lauren, Colin, David and Liz on 4th September. Well done to them. Other fundraising took place for the company funds, including the sale of centrepieces from our 60th

Anniversary Gala Ball and the making and selling of reusable cloth face coverings thanks to Margaret, Carole, Heather and Marion. Jordan also organised a number of fundraising events including a mail in Quiz.

We've all missed watching musicals as well as being in them and in lieu of theatres being open, a few groups went to see new film versions of musicals at the cinema as they reopened. “In the Heights” was a fun summer musical and “Everybody's Talking About Jamie” raised laughs and tears. There are plans afoot to see more of the musical films due out this season and tickets are booked for “Waitress” on this very stage in 2022!

A group also went to see an outdoor production of “Into the Woods” in August 2021. Thanks to Gary, who always has his finger on the pulse of what's new on the musicals scene, for all the organising.

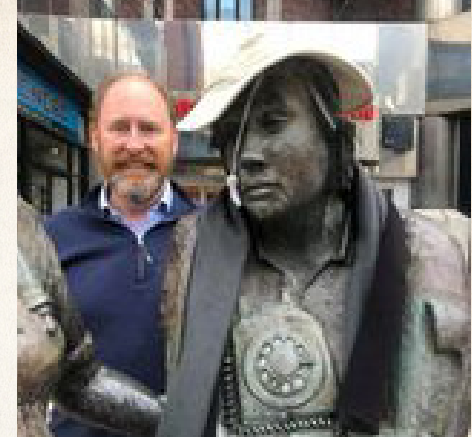
Finally, honourable mention to Valerie for all the funny musical memes she posted in the Facebook group when we needed a smile.

So, the Titanic didn't sail, the 60th Anniversary Concert was not to be, and

our Christmas Concert was also cancelled. But despite all the challenges of the past two years the BOC family is stronger and closer than ever. Sincere thanks to all of those who organised events and put smiles on our faces. And an especially big thank you to the committee who helped us do so safely and within guidelines.

We're so excited to bring you “*A Christmas Carol*” and hope you enjoy the show even half as much as we'll enjoy performing for you at long last.

Sinead Coll





# A GRAND RESTORATION

As you entered the theatre this evening, it would almost have been impossible to miss the impact of the newly completed £12.2 million restoration and development project of the theatre. The restoration project has seen the auditorium's paintings and decorative and ornate plasterwork painstakingly restored and conserved, as well as new seating, carpets, curtains and drapes installed.

The design of the foyer and public spaces has been totally reimagined, with a new bar installed in the restored 1980 glass extension overhanging Great Victoria Street, as well as beautifully refurbished stalls and circle bars. As part of the project, the Theatre's technical infrastructure has been upgraded and a permanent heritage exhibition installed telling the fascinating story of the Theatre's 125-year history.

Speaking about the completion of the project Colin Loughran, Chairman of the Grand Opera House Trust, said: "Today is a momentous day in the long and proud history of the Grand Opera House and represents a significant ray of light in the darkness of the last year. The ambitious restoration project has delivered fantastic results and we are hugely confident that it will ensure the

Theatre remains on the world stage as a centre for theatregoing and as a Belfast visitor and tourist attraction. We would like to thank our funding partners for their unwavering support which has helped to secure the Theatre for generations to come."

The project was delivered by specialist construction firm, Tracey Brothers Ltd, and more than 60 sub-contractors. John Tracey, Director of Tracey Brothers, said: "The project was unusual as it was made up of two separate sites. The focus of the work was the extensive restoration of the 1895 listed building and the installation of state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems to meet modern-day theatregoer expectations.

Alongside this was the reimagination of the 2006 extension to make it more sympathetic to the Matcham building, complete with a stunning helical staircase, enhanced bar and hospitality facilities, and the installation of new interpretative spaces telling the story of the Grand Opera House.

"Tracey Brothers are delighted to have been involved in the project and the quality of the final result is testament to all involved. We hope that the Grand Opera House continues,

not only as a source of great entertainment for young and old alike, but also as a landmark Belfast venue to visit for many years to come."

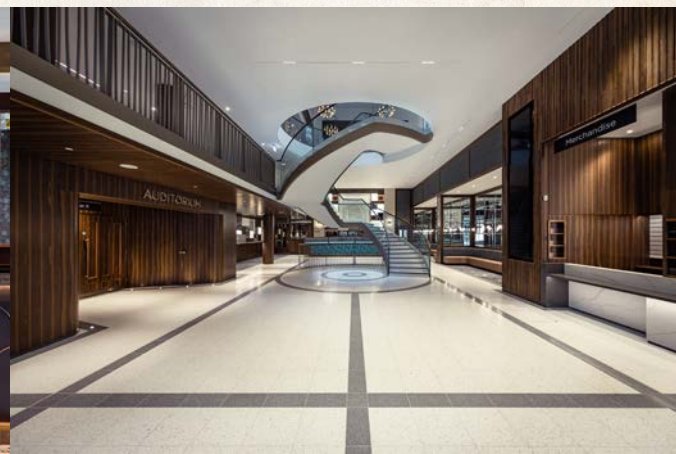
Ian Wilson, Chief Executive of the Grand Opera House added: "The Grand Opera House was last restored 40 years ago, and we are delighted that this vital project for the Belfast arts scene has been completed. The restoration of the iconic and unique 1895 auditorium is stunning and maximises the beauty of the original architecture. Alongside the transformation of the public areas and facilities within the building, theatregoers will have a much-improved experience from the minute they walk through our doors. The installation of the first ever permanent heritage exhibition to tell the Theatre's story over its 125-year history is also a welcome addition and is expected to attract thousands of visitors each year".

As well as Tracey Brothers as main contractor, the project team included architects Consarc Design Group, interior design by Sundara Design, project management WH Stephens, special theatre consultants Charcoalblue, M&E by Semple & McKillop, and structural engineering by Albert Fry Associates. The restoration project was supported by The

National Lottery Heritage Fund, Department for Communities, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, Foyle Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation and The Wolfson Foundation

The Grand Opera House was designed by the leading Victorian theatre architect Frank Matcham and opened on 23 December 1895. Many of the world's leading actors, singers, dancers and entertainers have appeared on its stage, including Charlie Chaplin, Sarah Bernhardt, Laurence Olivier, Vera Lynn, Luciano Pavarotti, Darcey Bussell and Laurel and Hardy.

Belfast Operatic Company have performed 26 shows in the Grand Opera House, including a number of Irish premieres. The move to the venue in 1988 helped to usher a new era for the company, with Leonard Andersons production of *The Pirates of Penzance* laying the foundation for a lengthy relationship. The theatre's size and facilities have allowed the company to broaden its repertoire, staging some of Broadway's biggest hits, starting with *Fiddler on The Roof* in 1991. As the 21st Century dawned, productions became bigger, glossier and more ambitious, and the company continue to choose titles which both challenge its membership, and entertain audiences.





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