

The Paradis Files Programme

The Paradis Files

Image description

On the front cover is an image of a white woman with blonde hair, looking off to the left, on a blue background. Her hair and make-up is reminiscent of 18th century European styling. Her hair is in an up-do with ringlets falling down either side of her face, with a bejeweled flower on the left side. She is wearing pale make-up with a bold red lip. On her right cheek is a beauty mark. She is wearing an elaborate gold dress with large bejeweled earrings and necklace.

Support Graeae

Graeae is a registered charity and our extensive programme of work is only made possible by the kind support of grant-giving organisations, sponsors and donations from the public.

Please help support the work we do – cultivating and championing the careers of Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists, both across the UK and internationally. Not only do we employ artists in productions, but we also work to train the next generation through extensive training and learning programmes. To donate, please visit justgiving.com/Graeae

Image descriptions

Four images from previous Graeae productions are presented in a square.

Top left, from *Reasons to be Cheerful*. A group of people on stage, some with one arm punched up into the air. Centre stage a wheelchair user is singing into a microphone. *Reasons to be Cheerful* is projected onto a screen at the back. Image credit, Patrick Baldwin.

Top right, from *Ten Nights*. A young Asian male is sat on the edge of a stage. He is wearing relaxed clothing and white skull cap. Behind him on the stage is a carpet with Islamic prayer mats printed on it, a white drape and a book stand. Image credit, Ali Wright.

Bottom left, from *Kerbs*. Two wheelchair users are sat facing one-another, either side of a table. Behind them, on the back wall of the set are squares with different coloured lines and dots, and the edge of the projected captioning. Image credit, Patrick Baldwin.

Bottom right, from *One Under*. Two black men wearing dark clothing are in front of a wooden frame with shelves stacked with random objects. The man on the right is stood, looking down at the man on the left who is sat on the floor. Image credit, Patrick Baldwin.

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Arts Council England

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Programme design by Malcolm Reid

The Paradis Files

Commissioned by The Stables for IF: Milton Keynes International Festival A Graeae Theatre Company production in partnership with BBC Concert Orchestra and Curve Theatre

Cast and Creatives

Singers

Maureen Brathwaite as Hilde, The Baroness von Paradis
Omar Ebrahim as Joseph, The Baron von Paradis, A Doctor and Baritone Gossip
Andee-Louise Hypolite as A Doctor, Alto Gossip
Bethan Langford as Maria Theresia von Paradis
Ella Taylor as Gerda, The Maid and Soprano Gossip
Ben Thapa as Salieri, A Doctor and Tenor Gossip

Performance Interpreters

Chandrika Gopalakrishnan
Max Marchewicz

Musicians

Jelena Makarova on Piano
Michael Gray and Charles Mutter on Violin, Leaders
James Goode and Dominic Worsley on Double Bass
Miloš Milivojevic and Živorad Nikolić on Accordion
James Gambold on Percussion

Creative Team

Errollyn Wallen CBE, Composer
Andrea Brown, Musical Director and Conductor
Jenny Sealey, Director
Nicola Werenowska, Librettist
Selina Mills, Co-librettist and Original Idea
Bernadette Roberts, Designer
Emma Chapman, Lighting Designer
Ben Glover, Video Designer
Sonny Nwachukwu, Assistant Director
Sarah Playfair, Casting Director
Bill Bankes-Jones, Dramaturg
Daryl Jackson, British Sign Language Consultant
Raji Gopalakrishnan and Zara Jayne, Deafblind Audience Development Project Consultants
Bethan Langford and Selina Mills, Audio Description Advisors

Production Team

Simon Sturgess, Production Manager
Paul Sawtell, Company Stage Manager
Gemma Scott, Deputy Stage Manager
Stuart Glover, Technical Stage Manager
Hetty Shand, Senior Producer
Lizzy Luxford, General Manager
Robyn Bowyer, Trainee Producer
Bill Chandler Director, BBC Concert Orchestra
Carolyn Hendry, Concerts and Planning Manager, BBC Concert Orchestra
Claire Tapping, Orchestra Personnel Manager, BBC Concert Orchestra

Alice Gatherer, Team Assistant, BBC Concert Orchestra
David Burns, PR Consultant
Chloé Nelkin and Emma Ferrier, Marketing Consultants
Henri T, Rehearsal Photography
Patrick Baldwin, Production Photography
Suki Mok and Øyvind Aamli, Film Makers
Stephanie Greenslade, Costume Supervisor
Aoife Barron Flynn, Access Support Worker and Deafblind Textile Artist

With thanks to:

Andy Massey, Alex Hume, Lawrence Wallington and Caroline Richardson. Kate Baiden, Brian Benson, Rebecca Buckle, Mark Davies, Colin Falconer, Mary Rose Fox Ness, Marissa Frampton, Natalie Raybould, Kassia Scott, Claire Shovelton, Cathy Tate, Dominic Veall and Anna Gregg and all the team at Tête à Tête. And everyone who has helped make this happen over the last four years.

Synopsis

Prologue

The ensemble of actors introduce themselves and the characters they are playing.

Scene 1

The Gossips set the scene, as is their role for most scenes. Theresia and Gerda, her maid, are in an empty classroom at the end of term. Theresia's students have just left. Her mother, the Baroness von Paradis, arrives. She is not welcomed by her daughter.

Scene 2 – a memory

Theresia refuses to play the piano in her music lesson with Salieri whose behaviour is inappropriate. Theresia rejects Salieri's advances and so he tells the Baroness that Theresia is in love with Herr Mozart. The Baroness is furious.

Scene 3

Gerda encourages Theresia to talk to her mother.

Scene 4 – a memory

As Theresia plays for the Empress, her mother and father discuss their concern that she may never marry if they are not able to cure her blindness.

Scene 5

The Baron and Baroness hire various doctors who try to cure Theresia's blindness.

Scene 6

Gerda comforts Theresia. The Baroness tells Gerda she needs Theresia's forgiveness. Gerda warns that some wounds cannot be healed.

Scene 7

The Baroness asks Theresia for forgiveness. Theresia cannot forgive the Baroness and suggests her father loved her more.

Scene 8 – a memory

Theresia feels alive and free as she tours Europe. The Baroness, against her will, tours with her daughter. The Baron stays behind at court.

Scene 8a

Theresia and her father miss each other. Gerda suggests the Baron would be shocked by the fun Theresia is having.

Scene 9

The Gossips encourage Theresia to speak about the baby she lost. Gerda and Theresia confront the Baroness who prayed for the baby's death.

Scene 10

The Baroness pleads for forgiveness again, admitting she now sees how wrong she was. Theresia and her mother connect in their shared experience of baby loss.

Scene 11 – a memory

The Baron is furious with his wife for not giving him a son.

Scene 12

Theresia realises her father did not love her as she thought, and begins to understand her mother.

Scene 13

The Baroness asks if Theresia will play the piano for her. The Baroness wants Theresia to go on tour again so the world can appreciate her brilliance but Theresia loves her school and her students.

Image description

A digital design image by Bernadette Roberts. On a black background, a drawing of a woman in a blue blouse and long blue skirt with a red bow at her neck, stood next to a man in lots of layers of beige clothing including an apron and cape. He has a large golden cravat at his neck. In the background there is a drawing of a woman playing the cello.

In Conversation

Director Jenny Sealey and Librettist Nicola Werenowska discuss the themes central to *The Paradis Files*.

Jenny: Do you remember the very beginning with the five of us, you, me, Selina, Errollyn and Andrea sat in the Graeae hub listening to Selina tell us the story of Maria Theresia von Paradis?

Nicky: My memory was being fascinated by the story of this woman, another forgotten woman. We had to start with laying out all the facts, the various timelines and of course listening to what music of hers survived. I also remember you bringing in ping pong balls and various sharp things, dressing and enacting table theatre, demonstrating the scenes of torture she had to go through.

Jenny: I had forgotten that. I do remember that so much of what is written about her is about the doctors trying to cure her and Theresia as a victim. We all vehemently agreed that this would not be the core of our story. It is an all too familiar narrative with disabled people, the need to 'fix' us; I was sent away to be 'cured' but I was completely okay with being Deaf. Very glad it did not work as I would not have my job at Graeae or be sitting here talking about our opera.

Nicky: Yes, the idea of fixing also resonated strongly with me due to my dyspraxia. You asked us all to each come up with a starting point. I think yours was to start with her funeral and someone giving an eulogy. This is when we started to sow the seeds of the character of Gerda, Theresia's maid, a woman who was completely immersed in Theresia's life, but had no real say because of her status. This opened up the telling of truths through a fictionalised character.

Jenny: The whole class system of Theresia's world and her upbringing is a huge part of her narrative and her rebellion, and our Gerda became part of this. Theresia toured and became a working woman with her own school, but she could only do all that because one, she was so good and two, she had money to start her off and then money she made herself. A feminist I think!

Nicky: Yes, a feminist! The other thing we all loved was the mother-daughter relationship. It would have been all too easy to demonise Hilde, and it felt important to find her agency and truths. A woman blamed and stigmatised for giving birth to a blind child.

Jenny: Throughout history and still today, women are 'blamed' for having a disabled child. Graeae has a mothers' group of disabled and non-disabled mothers – a safe space for these women to air the constant battle of giving their disabled child a voice.

Nicky: I need to join this group as I am a disabled mother of neurodivergent girls and I'm just trying to find my way through the education system and deal with social prejudice. Hilde was desperately trying to navigate the world for Theresia, to protect her, but she failed her in many ways.

Jenny: This gave Theresia the fire to rebel and become a self-made woman, leading the life she wanted to live.

Nicky: The other thing we have included is the press fascination, but our press is called 'The Gossips'. I loved playing with them not only as a way of driving the story, but as a theatrical aesthetically accessible device to bring audio description into the libretto.

I remember doing some early drafts and getting stuck because I had never written an opera before. I was getting lots of different advice and you said, 'We have to write an opera how we want to do it. We can break the rules and we must break that fourth wall as we want to demystify the elitism of opera. This has to be a story for everyone.' This totally liberated me as a writer.

Jenny: I think there is something about opera that scares me (probably because I am Deaf and it is not a world I know) and when I get scared it fuels my desire not to conform. Errollyn is non-conformist too wouldn't you say? Back to that first day, five rebellious women with a million ideas and a desire to do things differently with an unspoken bond of trust. What a journey we have been on.

Image descriptions

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. Director, Jenny Sealey, a white woman with blond hair and red sunglasses on her head is pictured sat at a table laughing, wearing black and white checked pyjamas.

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. Singers Maureen Brathwaite, a black woman wearing an orange scarf, and Omar Ebrahim, a mixed-heritage man with short grey hair and a grey beard wearing a beige blazer and holding a beige blanket, are stood between Chandrika Gopalakrishnan, a South Asian woman with long, dark curly hair and a black t-shirt, in the background, and Max Marchewicz, a white person with dark facial stubble and blue hair, in the foreground.

The Forgotten Enchantress

Selina Mills, co-librettist and the woman behind the original idea for *The Paradis Files*, tells the history of Maria Theresia von Paradis.

Ten years ago, I was researching blind women across the ages. As a blind journalist and writer myself, I sighed at the lack of disabled women when my sister found a two-line music dictionary entry for the 18th century composer, singer and teacher Maria Theresia von Paradis (1759–1824).

Paradis was deeply respected by her musical peers, including Mozart and Salieri, who composed for her and most likely (according to hints in these men's letters) had affairs with her. She also drew endless attention from the press and coffee house gossips alike. She toured Europe to much acclaim – the *Times* of London called her 'the Blind Enchantress'. In her thirties, Paradis started the first school for blind musicians in Vienna which by press reports, was very successful.

At her death, her catalogues show she had written at least five operas, two cantatas, 15 keyboard works, several songs and a piano trio. As of 2022, only a few of her youthful compositions survive.

We also know Paradis was an inventor. She created different-shaped playing cards so she could join in at the card tables, and tactile maps of the cities she toured to. She developed a system in which knots were tied in silk ropes that she draped across her lap to discreetly allow her to recall key and time changes while performing.

But Paradis was stoical – she endured great physical suffering owing to the curing ethos of the Enlightenment age. Her family gave permission for her to undergo excruciating procedures to try and 'cure' her blindness. While all attempts failed, Paradis never allowed 18th century society's understanding of blindness to prevent her engaging in her chosen life.

People may ask, should we be dedicating an entire opera to someone whose entire catalogue we don't have? Perhaps she was not as gifted as other female composers of the early 18th century and her one hit melody to survive, 'Sicilienne', scholars argue, may have been composed by someone else. As a historian, I believe we should give her a platform as a musician and composer who carved out her own life. She, like other creative women we don't know of yet, rose above the limits of her parents, the patriarchal court and society. We know that for women, music and composition were domestic occupations in 18th century Vienna, and women's relationship to music found its expression mainly in the private salons of home and court, rather than in the public arena. Public success and the longevity of music very much depended on your music being printed and republished; the fact that the press knew, praised and celebrated Paradis is phenomenal.

Above all, Paradis' story reminds us not to get sentimental about disability. While blindness no doubt played a key part in shaping her life, Paradis focused on her music and led a determined, fulfilled life, rather than being an object of pity or inspiration. By giving her a voice, it might be possible to place Paradis upon the

musical throne on which she so rightly belongs and remind a 21st century audience that talent is talent, blind or not.

Image description

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. Singer Bethan Langford, a white woman with short brown hair with a full fringe, wearing a purple shirt, is sat in front of a piano. Behind her is Ella Taylor, a white trans person with short blonde hair, wearing a white t-shirt and dark over-shirt.

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. From left to right Omar Ebrahim, Andee-Louise Hypolite, Ben Thapa, Ella Taylor and Bethan Langford are stood in a line singing. Behind Ella is a large gold frame in which is hung a selection of beige clothing.

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. Pianist, Jelena Makarova, a white woman with blonde-brown hair is sat playing the piano. She is wearing a red-orange long sleeve t-shirt and black trousers.

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. Maureen Brathwaite, a black woman wearing an orange long sleeve t-shirt an orange scarf, is singing. In the foreground, out of focus is a white hand holding a conductor's baton above an open musical score.

In Conversation

Musical Director Andrea Brown and Composer Errollyn Wallen reflect on the music of *The Paradis Files* and its journey.

Andrea: I first discovered your music when you were playing pieces from your songbook at Grimeborn, some years ago, and I've been a huge admirer ever since. What has always struck me most about your music is your apparent ease and brilliance at blending styles and genres - your 'Louis' Loops' incorporating the dance music of Couperin and fragments of nursery rhyme always spring to mind!

Errollyn: My music reflects my innate dramatic instinct, whether I am composing an instrumental work or an opera or ballet. For me, musical style is a wonderful way into a myriad of atmospheres and situations. It has been a great joy developing the work over the last few years and composing for this special cast.

Andrea: And for *The Paradis Files* did you intend to use much source material?

Errollyn: I have drawn from classical (18th century) music and also branched out as far as early 20th century English music hall. There is much irreverent anachronism in this score, which I'm delighted about and which chimes with Graeae's joyful and bold aesthetic.

Andrea: Telling stories, creating characters but also including known historic figures such as Salieri and Mozart, who wrote several Piano Concerti for Maria Theresia von Paradis, how much of that has had an influence on your writing?

Errollyn: When Theresia sings of her love for Mozart I have her sing a snippet of one of the Piano Concerti Mozart composed for her. I also draw on a Clementi piece I learned as a child and use techniques of the time, such as Alberti bass, harmonies and ornamentation.

Andrea: So much of the work is about relationships, how did you start to think of these in musical terms?

Errollyn: I felt it was important we didn't simply make a docudrama as can so easily happen when dealing with historical figures. By putting three women at the heart of the action (Theresia, her mother, her maid) we can explore so much. Hilde has been a resentful and ambivalent mother. Theresia finds that hard to forgive. It is Gerda who sees Hilde as the vulnerable woman she is, seeking the love and forgiveness of her daughter. The Baron is the typical authoritarian, reserved father of the time who is yet deeply moved by love for his daughter. When I understand the characters it is they who dictate what music they should sing.

Andrea: The musical characterisation of the Gossips - a sort of jaunty and irreverent Greek Chorus - is finely wrought. They are there to tell us the story, describe the mood and what is happening on stage, an operatic audio description!

Errollyn: I had a lot of fun with the Gossips! They are irreverent. They both describe what is happening onstage as well as conveying a sense of irony and comedic knowingness. In places I have given them a rather knockabout musical style which occasionally spills over to the other characters.

Andrea: The small orchestra and I are onstage. My gestures, and the gestures of our performance interpreters, are also part of the performance itself, showing not only the musical elements but the emotional rise and fall of the musical landscape and narrative.

Errollyn: That's what I love about the theatre; once you are in the environment everything is valid for stimulation. There is no 'right' way of perceiving and enjoying this form — opera is for everyone.

Andrea: Clearly the piano is at the heart of the music for this piece. Theresia was a pianist and spent much of her life performing and playing it. Our small orchestra of accordion, violin, cello, and percussion - why did you choose these specific instruments?

Errollyn: I wanted to capture the sense of both 'posh' Vienna as well as the 'street' Vienna. Even though we have a tiny band, the instrumentation allows for capturing both these atmospheres. I often reflect on the powerful influence of vernacular music on western classical music and how it may not have been given enough credit by musicologists.

Much of the music is based on scales and piano exercises. I tried never to forget the dedication and practice which made Maria Theresia von Paradis a great musician.

Image descriptions

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. Bethan Langford, a tall white woman with short brown hair, wearing a purple shirt open over a black and white t-shirt, is holding the hand of Maureen Brathwaite, a black woman wearing an orange long sleeve t-shirt. Maureen is facing away from the camera.

A digital design image by Bernadette Roberts. A drawing of a woman with dark hair in a bun wearing a blue dress playing the piano, depicted from behind. In the background there is an enlarged image of white hands wearing a gold ring holding a pile of books.

A Graeae Opera: Emphasis on the Graeae

Some of the team behind The Paradis Files reflect on the creation of the show

Bernadette Roberts, Designer

The design challenge for The Paradis Files has been to make it accessible to a modern audience while celebrating the visually rich look of the 18th Century. The design had to be visually stimulating, sensory and tour friendly. It has been exciting to be part of this new visionary opera.

Emma Chapman, Lighting Designer

I've always admired Graeae's work for its artistic ambition as well as its inclusive nature. The integration of BSL performers in addition to creative captioning has revealed how beautifully access can be included. My role is to further enhance the story for the audience through painting with light, allowing light to guide their attention and understanding.

Ben Glover, Video Designer

The Paradis Files has asked me to think in new ways, particularly with how to display words in how they are sung. This has meant exploring scale, the speed of words appearing and how they are animated.

Sarah Playfair, Casting Director

Casting for Graeae's first opera commission was a tricky task. I was learning how to work with people in an even more diverse world than much of my regular work. Nevertheless, it was fascinating as both a challenge and process.

Bill Bankes-Jones, Dramaturg

I learned so much from what it means to place access at the very centre of a production, of how to let this be a creative act. It also helped me to understand myself as a disabled artist. I hadn't really recognised my own disability as part of my working life. Like so many, I've battled through with a stiff upper lip and spit-spot attitude. I was very glad, though, to let go of this. I have since been a convenor of Hashtag We Shall Not Be Removed. Thank you, Graeae!

Daryl Jackson, BSL Consultant

As ever it has been joyful working with Graeae on various projects and The Paradis Files has been one of the most challenging in regards to translating into BSL, especially translating musically elongated words into signs. Working with two wonderful interpreters has made a huge task a lot of fun. The whole production have a great attitude to many of the challenges and have been incredibly supportive.

Maureen Brathwaite, Hilde, The Baroness von Paradis

Working with Graeae has made it clear how thrilling it can be to work within a truly diverse setting; the diversity of perspectives has informed each step of the process.

A radically kind environment in which to create work of the highest quality; challenging the way we seek to connect with and welcome our audience.

Omar Ebrahim, Joseph, The Baron von Paradis, A Doctor and Baritone Gossip

At the heart of opera is the desire to bring singing, dancing and music together in one dramatic piece. What happens if you want to make this desire accessible to all players and spectators at the same time? That's what is going on in our room at Graeae right now.

Andee-Louise Hypolite, A Doctor and Alto Gossip

As opera singers we tend to consider only the seeing and hearing audience, allowing movement to inform when voice does not. The Graeae experience has made me mindful of this not being enough. Accessibility for everyone. The rehearsal room has been the safest space; collaborative, inclusive, welcoming and kind.

Bethan Langford, Maria Theresia von Paradis

I have loved working in a rehearsal environment where every individual's needs are catered for and respected. Working with BSL has been a privilege, and is a language I want to continue learning. I hope this piece will encourage the further understanding of access in opera, and show people that access can enhance art.

Ella Taylor, Gerda, The Maid and Soprano Gossip

Working with Graeae has really opened my eyes to the ways in which opera is inaccessible for the disabled community - I really hope the opera world can come and see this piece to understand how opera can and should be for everyone!

Ben Thapa, Salieri, A Doctor and Tenor Gossip

I feel like I'm working on a show that is considering the strengths of the artists, as much as conforming to a pre-defined concept. I feel understood to an unprecedented level, and that helps us all to give our best.

Chandrika Gopalakrishnan, Performance Interpreter

Interpreting opera seemed like a daunting venture but has been a joy to do alongside such talented creatives. The theatricality of the BSL within this performance is beautifully nuanced and we hope it conveys a sense of 18th century Vienna. Integrating BSL into the singers' performance adds further beauty to this production that we hope is felt by the audience.

Max Marchewicz, Performance Interpreter

As a disabled professional, it's been beyond brilliant working in a Graeae environment. I have loved working on the interpretation of this opera. There are very few opportunities for wheelchair-using integrated interpreters and Graeae didn't blink at the idea of that. Barriers that exist in most workplaces just aren't there.

Image description

Ella Taylor, a white trans person is sat behind a piano laughing. Behind them is Max

Marchewicz, a white wheelchair user with blue hair. Max is smiling with their eyes closed and their hands up in the air in a celebratory manner.

Cast and Creative Biographies

Maureen Brathwaite

Hilde, The Baroness von Paradis

Maureen Brathwaite, soprano, studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama with Voice Teacher Johanna Peters. Whilst there she won the Anna Instone Award. An experienced Concert and Oratorio soloist with such orchestras as La Verdi, CBSO, LSO, Hallé and Orchestre de Lyon in repertoire ranging from Verdi to Gershwin. Oratorio repertoire include African Sanctus by David Fanshawe, Mass in C minor by Mozart and the Verdi Requiem. In Opera Maureen has sung a variety of roles with companies such as Glyndebourne Festival and Touring Opera, Welsh National Opera, Birmingham Opera Company, Pegasus Opera, Opera Geneva and Opra de Lyon. In 2018 she sang the role of Rosa Parks in the premiere of Quilt song by Dr Susan Self, Unexpected Delights, the premiere of Between Worlds (Tansy Davies) for ENO. Also, the premiere of Scenes from a Bar (Matthijs van Dijk), and the Oscar winning soundtrack of The Black Panther

Omar Ebrahim

Joseph, The Baron von Paradis, A Doctor and Baritone Gossip

Omar Ebrahim began singing as a chorister at Coventry Cathedral and went on to study voice at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. He served his performing apprenticeship at the Royal Shakespeare Company and Glyndebourne. He has been associated with many new music projects including The Electrification of the Soviet Union by Nigel Osborne and Birtwistle's The Second Mrs Kong for Glyndebourne Festival Opera, Ligeti's Aventures and Nouvelles aventures with Pierre Boulez and Ensemble Intercontemporain and Esa Pekka Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Berio's Un Re in Ascolto and Birtwistle's Gawain for the Royal Opera House. He appeared in Liza Lim's opera The Navigator at the festivals in Brisbane and Melbourne and gave first performances of Enno Poppe's concert and opera collaborations with Marcel Beyer - Interzone, Arbeit Nahrung, Wohnung and IQ - at the Berlin festival, Munich Biennale and Schwetzingen.

Andee-Louise Hypolite

A Doctor and Alto Gossip

Born and raised in London, Andee-Louise studied at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and the National Opera Studio.

Operatic roles have included Berta in The Barber of Seville, Dorabella in Così fan tutte, Donna Elvira in Don Giovanni, Mrs Grose in The Turn of the Screw and Mrs Herring in Albert Herring.

She has also performed the role of Frankie in Carmen Jones. Her Oratorio repertoire includes Bach's St Matthew Passion and Christmas Oratorio, Handel's Messiah and Belshazzar, Vivaldi's Gloria, Mozart's Requiem and Mass in C minor and Verdi's Requiem.

Andee-Louise is also an occasional performer of more popular music, singing songs from West End shows and jazz and blues standards.

Bethan Langford

Maria Theresia von Paradis

British mezzo-soprano Bethan Langford is a graduate of the Guildhall School Opera Course and the National Opera Studio, and is a former Scottish Opera Emerging Artist. Highlights so far include Hebe in Cal McCrystal's new production of HMS Pinafore for English National Opera, her debut at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in Maxwell's *The Lost Thing*, her debut solo recital at the Wigmore Hall, Second Lady in Tom Allen's *Magic Flute* for Scottish Opera, Angel II in George Benjamin's *Written on Skin* with the Melos Sinfonia at The Mariinsky Theatre, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* for Bury Court Opera, Third Maid in *Elektra* under Esa-Pekka Salonen for the Verbier Festival, Noble Orphan in Richard Jones' *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Glyndebourne Festival and the title role in the award-winning *The Rape of Lucretia* at Grimeborn. She looks forward to being a soloist for the BBC Proms 2022. Bethan is a Samling Artist, a Yeoman of the Musicians' Company and a proud past recipient of the Elizabeth Eagle-Bott award for partially sighted and blind musicians.

Ben Thapa

Salieri, A Doctor and Tenor Gossip

Ben Thapa studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Royal College of Music, and the Wales International Academy of Voice with Dennis O'Neill.

His operatic roles include Arbace Idomeneo and Aufidio Lucio Silla (Buxton International Festival); Melot *Tristan und Isolde* (Longborough Festival Opera); Kuzka Khovanschina (Birmingham Opera Company); Tito *La clemenza di Tito* (Teatru Manoel); Vanya Kudrjas *Káťa Kabanová* (Scottish Opera); and The President in Stockhausen's *Mittwoch aus Licht* (Birmingham Opera Company, BBC Proms). He has also performed Tamino *Die Zauberflöte* and Florestan *Fidelio* (Garsington Opera's Emerging Artists).

Ben is an active performer on the concert platform across a wide range of repertory. Highlights include Monteverdi *Vespers* (Monteverdi Choir); performances of Handel *Messiah*, Haydn *Creation* & Mozart *Requiem* (Royal Albert Hall); Vaughan Williams *Serenade to Music* (Royal Festival Hall); and Rossini *Petite messe solennelle* (Jesus College Cambridge).

Ella Taylor

Gerda, The Maid and Soprano Gossip

Winner of Second Prize at the 2020 Kathleen Ferrier Awards, Ella Taylor is a soprano with a passion for performing contemporary music and works by women and gender non-conforming artists. They graduated from the Royal Academy of Music, where they gained Distinction in MA Performance, a DipRAM for an outstanding final recital and the Charles Norman Prize and during 2019/2020 were a Young Artist at London's National Opera Studio.

Opera: Paris (*Paris and Helen* – Bampton Classical Opera), Sparrow (*Powder Down* – Shadwell Opera, world premiere), Rooster/Mrs Pasek (*The Cunning Little Vixen* – CBSO), Fox (*The Cunning Little Vixen* – ENO, cover), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte* – Wild Arts), Satan (*Paradise Lost* – The Shipwright, world premiere).

In concert, Ella has worked with many of the UK's choral societies, and leading ensembles including the London Sinfonietta, Classical Remix and Ensemble 360, as well as performing at the British Composer Awards (now called the Ivors).

Chandrika Gopalakrishnan

Performance Interpreter

A qualified BSL- English interpreter, Chandu graduated with an Advanced Diploma in Interpreting and Translation from SLI Limited in 2018. Performing from a young age, Chandu also works as an actress and performance interpreter. With experience across a wide range of different domains, Chandu works primarily in theatre and the arts. Notable interpreting credits include: Bartholomew Abominations (BBC), The Tempest (Owlspot Theatre, Tokyo, Japan), 10 Nights (The Bush Theatre), Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time (National Theatre's UK tour), Best of Enemies (Young Vic).

Max Marchewicz

Performance Interpreter

Max Marchewicz (they/ them) is a BSL interpreter based in Nottingham. They also provide training, access consultancy, sound description captioning and audio description. As a queer, disabled, chronically ill and autistic person, they are passionate about community work around intersecting identities. They are the founder of a community organisation for LGBTQ+ disabled+ people and are on the board of a local trans peer support network. They trained in various performing arts and are exploring new ways of working in this sector that meet their current access needs. Their visual art has been featured in the Queer and Trans Art Collective inaugural exhibition at the New Art Exchange in Nottingham, and they are on the board of Milk Presents, an internationally acclaimed theatre company.

Errollyn Wallen

Composer

Errollyn Wallen CBE is a multi award-winning Belize-born British composer. Her prolific output includes over twenty operas and a large catalogue of orchestral, chamber and vocal works which are performed and broadcast throughout the world. She composed for the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games 2012, for the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilees, a specially commissioned song for COP 26, 2021, and a re-imagining of Jerusalem for the Last Night of the Proms 2020. BBC Radio 3 featured her music across the first week of 2022 for Composer of the Week.

Her critically acclaimed opera, Dido's Ghost premiered at the Barbican in June 2021 and will receive its US premiere in 2023.

The April premiere and tour of her latest opera, The Paradis Files, coincides with the premiere of another new opera, Quamino's Map, for Chicago Opera Theater.

Errollyn composes in a Scottish lighthouse and her recordings have travelled to outer space.

Andrea Brown

Musical Director and Conductor

Andrea is Head of Choral Conducting at the The Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama. She is Musical Director of Tippett Voices, The Festival Chorus and The Exeter Festival Chorus and works regularly with the BBC Singers, North London Chorus and the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Recent work includes concerts in Berlin with hortus vocalis, the Czech Republic with Festa Musicale and 'Memorial'

with Tippett Voices at the Barbican Centre. She was MD and conductor on Graeae's 1418 NOW commission, *This Is Not For You* in 2018.

Jenny Sealey

Director

Jenny Sealey has been Graeae's Artistic Director since 1997. She has pioneered a new theatrical language and coined the 'aesthetics of access' as an artistic expression, experimenting with bilingual BSL and English, pre-recorded BSL, creative captioning and in-ear and live audio description methods. Credits for Graeae include: *Blood Wedding* (co-produced with Dundee Rep and Derby Theatre); *The Threepenny Opera* (codirected with Peter Rowe, co-produced with New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich, Nottingham and Leeds Playhouses and Birmingham Rep); *Reasons To Be Cheerful* (2010 co-produced with New Wolsey and Theatre Royal Stratford East); *The House of Bernarda Alba* with Manchester Royal Exchange. Radio - *Little Dorrit*, *Midwich Cuckoos*, *Bartholomew Abominations*, writing and directing *Three Sisters Rewired* for BBC Radio 4.

Outdoor productions - *Against the Tide*; *The Iron Man*; *The Garden*; *The Limbless Knight – A Tale of Rights Reignited* and for the WW1 Centenary *This Is Not For You* with disabled veterans.

In May 2021 she directed a Tokyo production of *The Tempest* with artists from Japan (live), Bangladesh (on film) and UK (on film) online and for a live Japanese audience. Jenny co-directed the London 2012 Paralympic Opening Ceremony alongside Bradley Hemmings (GDIF). She also won the Liberty Human Rights Arts Award. Jenny is also the founder member of 'Where's My Vagina?' women's collective www.wmv.org.uk

Nicola Werenowska

Librettist

Nicola Werenowska is an award winning neurodivergent playwright who is committed to exploring underrepresented voices. Nicola was 16 when she was a runner up in the Royal Court Young People's playwriting competition, but it took her another 15 years before she wrote professionally, following her life-changing dyspraxia diagnosis. Nicola has been a member of the Royal Court National Writers' group and of the BBC Writers Access Group 2019 and has been on attachment to Graeae & to the NT studio. She is Associate Artist at the Mercury and High Tide Theatres.

Credits include: *Behind Doors* (online short, Mercury, 2020); *Amy Dorrit* (Radio 4 adaptation, Graeae & Naked Productions, 2018); *Silence* (Mercury & national tour, 2018); *Guesthouse* (Eastern Angles, 2018); *Hidden* (Oxford Playhouse & on tour, 2017); *Tattooed Under Your Skin* (Theatre 503, 2016); *CASH!* (Mercury, 2013); *Tu I Teraz* (Hampstead & on tour, 2012); *BirthDate* (Nabakov, 2012); *Camulodunum* (Paines Plough, 2010); *Freedoms of the Forest* (Menagerie, 2008); *Peapickers* (Eastern Angles, 2007); *Davy's Day* (Mercury, 2004).

Selina Mills

Co-librettist and Original Idea

Selina Mills is an award-winning writer and broadcaster who is legally blind. Educated in the USA and the UK, Selina has worked as a senior reporter and

broadcaster for Reuters, The Daily Telegraph, and the BBC. Selina is also a historian of blindness and is currently finishing a partmemoir, part history book on the history of blindness titled *Life Unseen: A Story of Blindness*. Selina is interested in disability and how it shapes our world. Selina has been a contributor to a number of disability history projects, including the ground-breaking BBC / Loftus series "Disability: A New History" (2013) which has been rebroadcast around the world. The *Paradis Files* is her first libretto.

Bernadette Roberts

Designer

Bernadette Roberts has over 25 years experience working in London, the UK and overseas as a Production and Costume Designer in Television, Theatre, Opera and Events.

Bernadette has designed numerous theatre shows including work for Leeds Playhouse, The Almeida and Nottingham Playhouse.

As Designer in Residence at the Southbank Centre Bernadette has created many immersive experiences for festivals such as Meltdown, Imagine, WOW, Alchemy and The Festival of Britain.

Opera credits include work for Garsington Opera *The Magic Flute*, Glyndebourne *Ceremony of Carols*, Royal Opera House Youth Opera *Gone Fishing* and for Spitalfields Music two operas which were part of the Musical Rumpus series introducing opera to 0 - 2 year olds.

TV Series Designer credits include *EastEnders* and *Holby City*. Bernadette also has additional experience working in Film, Comedy, and Children's Drama.

www.broberts.design

Emma Chapman

Lighting Designer

Theatre credits include: *Beauty And The Beast* (Rose Theatre, Kingston); *The Ruff Tuff Cream Puff Estate Agency* (Belgrade Theatre, Coventry); *Ghost Quartet* (Boulevard Theatre); *Rosenbaum's Rescue* (Park Theatre); *The Mountaintop* (Theatre 503 & Trafalgar Studio); *The Painter* (Arcola Theatre); *Kiss Me Kate* (Theatre du Chatelet, Paris, Theatre de la Ville, Luxembourg, Oper Graz); *Utility* (Orange Tree); *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Clwyd Theatr Cymru); *The Human Ear* (Paines Plough); *Joanne* (Clean Break & Soho Theatre); *Boi Boi is Dead* (Leeds Theatre Trust); *Rose* (with Art Malik; Edinburgh Fringe); *The Machine Gunners*; *The Planet and Stuff*; *Run* (Polka Theatre); *Dublin Carol* (Donmar Season); *Sex with a Stranger* (Trafalgar Studios); *Three Sea Plays* (Old Vic Tunnels).

Opera credits include: *Xerxes*; *Carmen* (Royal Northern College of Music); *Così fan tutte* (Royal College of Music); *The Pied Piper* (Opera North); *Il Turco in Italia* (Angers/Nantes Opera and Luxembourg)

www.emmachapman.co.uk

Ben Glover

Video Designer

Ben Glover is a deaf video designer and creative captioner who uses interdisciplinary skills in both creative and technical fields producing innovative and often expressive creations typically informed by his background in theatre, film and

computing.

His recent work includes video designs for; NOISE (BBC Dance Passions), RED (Polka Theatre), Different Owners at Sunrise (Roundhouse Studio), Americana! (Hellenic Centre), Hear My Soul Speak (RADA), Coventry City of Culture, Liverpool Arab Arts Festival, Pukkelpop and Burning Man Festival.

He is currently a Fellow of the Royal Shakespeare Company working on creative captioning and a recipient of the Epic Games MegaGrants programme. He has also previously received the Mead Fellowship award for his Virtual Reality project, Simple Misunderstanding.

Sonny Nwachukwu

Assistant Director

Sonny Nwachukwu is a writer, director, and founder of Gateway Arts Productions based in London. His work is multi-disciplinary spanning across writing, poetry, dance, theatre and anything that lies beyond. His work primarily focuses on the African Diaspora. Sonny is a storyteller that incorporates dance and literature making his work relevant, unique, vibrant and thought-provoking. His academic background in Psychology informs much of his work and he is keen to tackle issues seen as taboo or 'different'.

Sonny has been a member of the Soho Theatre's Writers Lab from 2020-2021, as well as the Graeae Beyond Programme and the Tamasha Director Programme.

Sonny is currently an Associate Artist at Graeae Theatre Company in London.

Sonny's writing was nominated for the 2021 Jerwood Compton Poetry Fellowships and is a published author of Saturn Returns (published by Team Angelica). He has written articles for Disability Arts Online and Unlimited, amongst others.

Sarah Playfair

Casting Director

Following two years as a computer programmer Sarah started her arts career in straight theatre and contemporary dance before transferring to opera via two years as an operatic stage manager. She then worked as an artistic administrator for 24 years in casting and repertoire planning with English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera and finally Glyndebourne.

As a freelance consultant since 1998 she has cast both opera and music theatre with a wide range of companies and projects - specialising in new opera, liaising with many major contemporary composers. She works regularly with Garsington Opera, Birmingham Opera Company and Tête à Tête, and amongst other recent clients are ENO, Young Vic, Donmar, Almeida, Music Theatre Wales, BBCSO, Britten Pears Arts, LPO, LSO, CBSO, Minack Theatre, BBC television and Netflix. Major projects have included Kenneth Branagh's film of THE MAGIC FLUTE.

Bill Bankes-Jones

Dramaturg

With a philosophy degree from St Andrews and after a couple of years with the ITV Regional Theatre Young Directors' Scheme in Leatherhead and Farnham, Bill has been working for over 30 years as a director, writer/ translator and artistic director in both opera and theatre.

As founder and Artistic Director of Tête à Tête, he tirelessly champions new work.

Before the hiatus of the pandemic, his most recent major production was director/translator of the huge immersive Pagliacci for Scottish Opera. He is also Chair of the Opera and Music Theatre Forum, a founder director of Freelancers Make Theatre Work and was awarded the BEM in the Queens Birthday Honours 2020 “for services to opera and diversity”. He is so happy to have played his small part in this tremendous production.

Daryl Jackson

British Sign Language Consultant

Daryl has a 2.1 BA Hons in Deaf Studies with Interpreting English/BSL and Linguistics and is a sign language consultant, translator, advisor, script supervisor, television presenter/reporter and actor. Daryl was a lecturer at Wolverhampton University in Interpreting and is a Sign Theatre lecturer for Reading University. He has also worked coaching actors, deaf and hearing signers at Graeae, Unicorn, Sadlers Wells, Gate Theatre, Green Candle, Almeida, Jackson Lane, The Globe, Royal Stratford Upon Avon Theatre. Theatre credits include: Motherland, Dysfunction and Children of the Greater God (Deafinitely Theatre); The Rule and the Exception (Young Vic). Daryl acted in BBC drama Switch and several other films for BSLBT. He was nominated for a Bafta for directing a Film4 children’s drama and directed three different plays titled 4Play. He performed at the 2012 Paralympic Opening Ceremony. Presented and in-vision interpreted for many TV channels and websites and teaches Deaf awareness workshops all over the UK for a variety of theatre venues.

Raji Gopalakrishnan

Deafblind Audience Development Project Consultant

Raji Gopalakrishnan is a Deafblind performer who has worked in Paris, Russia and the UK. She has a long history with Graeae being one of the performers in In Touch (National Theatre, 2017). In 2020 Raji performed with the Where’s My Vagina women’s collective as part of the Women of the World Festival at Southbank Centre, London and again in The Unviable Cabaret as part of the 2021 digital festival alongside her daughter, Chandrika. During lockdown, Raji debuted as a writer for Graeae’s online new writing series Crips Without Constraints, in she wrote and performed her piece Butterflies.

Image descriptions

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. On the left Andrea Brown, a white-Chinese woman with short dark hair wearing a black top and grey trousers, is stood on a small black box leaning over her music stand. In the centre, Maureen Brathwaite, a black woman wearing an orange long sleeve top and orange scarf is looking past the camera with a worried look on her face. In the foreground, Chandrika Gopalakrishnan, a South Asian woman with long dark, curly hair wearing a black t-shirt, is looking and pointing towards Maureen. Her other hand is on her chest.

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. Omar Ebrahim, a mixed-heritage man with grey hair and a grey beard wearing glasses, a grey top and jeans, is sat reading his script. In the foreground to the left is a large gold frame in which is hung an assortment of beige clothes.

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. On the left, Max Marchewicz, a white wheelchair user with blue hair is signing something in BSL. On the right, Ella Taylor, a white trans person with cropped blonde hair is sat playing a piano, singing.

A rehearsal photograph by Henri T. On the left, Andee-Louise Hypolite, a black woman wearing glasses, a black top and grey scarf over her shoulders is stood singing. Next to her is Omar Ebrahim and Ben Thapa. Omar is wearing a beige blazer and looking at his script. Ben is singing, his arms are folded and he is wearing black and gold damask patterned trousers. In the foreground is Chandrika Gopalakrishnan, a South Asian women with long dark, curly hair wearing a black t-shirt. Both her hands are clasped at her chest.

Partners Biographies

Graeae

Recently celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2021, Graeae is an acclaimed and award-winning theatre company, existing to cultivate and champion the best in Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent talent on the UK and international stages.

Recent productions and co-productions have included Kerbs, Olivier Award nominated 10 Nights, and two seasons of the digital new work programme Crips without Constraints. Other work includes the hit Ian Dury musical Reasons to be Cheerful and outdoor spectacles The Iron Man and This Is Not For You.

In addition to productions, Graeae also runs an extensive programme of training, learning, and creative professional development programmes.

Since 1997, Graeae has been run by Jenny Sealey MBE, who also co-directed the London 2012 Paralympic Opening Ceremony.

Artistic Director and Joint CEO: Jenny Sealey MBE

Executive Director and Joint CEO: Kevin Walsh

Finance Director: Charles Mills

www.graeae.org

Graeae are a registered charity (no. 284589), and can be supported by visiting justgiving.com/Graeae

The Stables and IF: Milton Keynes International Festival

The Stables, based in Milton Keynes, is one of the UK's leading music venues with a vision to engage the widest range of people with music in all its diversity, presenting over 400 concerts and 200 education events annually. The concert programme features all musical genres and has included Glyndebourne Touring Opera, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, Dame Evelyn Glennie, Emma Johnson and Nicola Benedetti, in addition to Jamie Cullum, Toumani Diabate, Gregory Porter and Amy Winehouse. The Learning & Participation programme includes work with schools, families and local community groups, alongside the National Youth Music Camps.

It aims to enrich people's lives with opportunities to access, participate in and experience live music, and the arts in general. The Stables has now become synonymous with producing large-scale outdoor events and festivals, founding and producing the biennial IF: Milton Keynes International Festival. Founded in 2010, the Festival creates unique and memorable experiences through its commissions and community engagement programme.

www.ifmiltonkeynes.org

The Stables is a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England

www.stables.org

BBC Concert Orchestra

The mission of the BBC Concert Orchestra is to bring inspiring musical experiences to everyone, everywhere, with the ensemble's versatility as the key. The orchestra can be heard on BBC Radio 2's Sunday Night Is Music Night and for BBC Radio 3 it explores a wide selection of music, ranging from classical to contemporary. The orchestra has performed on many soundtracks, including Blue Planet and Serengeti

for BBC One, as well as on George the Poet's award-winning podcast for BBC Sounds. In February 2021 it performed for the BBC One and BBC Radio 2 national celebration of musical theatre, Musicals: The Greatest Show.

The orchestra appears annually at the BBC Proms and it is an Associate Orchestra at the Southbank Centre. Highlights in 2021/22 include a performance under Principal Conductor Bramwell Tovey with trumpeter Yazz Ahmed as part of the EFG London Jazz Festival, two live versions of the BBC Radio 3 programme Unclassified with presenter Elizabeth Alker, star violinist Mari Samuelsen performing Philip Glass' sumptuous Violin Concerto No.1 with Principal Guest Conductor, Anna-Maria Helsing, and to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, BBC Radio 2 and the BBC Concert Orchestra give a concert to celebrate Royalty on screen.

Along with its regular engagements throughout the UK, the orchestra tours internationally – most recently performing in Malta for the BBC Radio 2 broadcast It's a Kind of Magic – The Queen Story.

The BBC Concert Orchestra offers enjoyable and innovative education and community activities and takes a leading role in BBC Ten Pieces, the BBC Young Composer competition and the newly launched BBC Open Music programme.
www.bbc.co.uk/concertorchestra

Curve, Leicester

Over 750,000 people annually engage with Curve through performances and projects at our home in Leicester, across the UK and internationally. Under the leadership of Chief Executive Chris Stafford and Artistic Director Nikolai Foster, Curve has developed a reputation for producing, programming and touring a bold and diverse programme of musicals, plays, new work, dance and opera. All of this presented alongside a dynamic mix of community engagement, artist development and learning programmes, which firmly places audiences, artists and communities at the heart of everything we do.

In 2019, three Curve originated productions played in London's West End; On Your Feet! (London Coliseum), Sue Townsend's The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 1/2 – The Musical (The Ambassadors Theatre) and White Christmas (Dominion Theatre). Summer 2022 will see Curve's hit production of Grease return to London's Dominion Theatre.

Recent Made at Curve productions include Beautiful, The Carole King Musical, a "world-class" (The Telegraph) revival of A Chorus Line, Tennessee Williams' Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (co-produced with Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse and English Touring Theatre, supported by grant funding from the Royal Theatrical Support Trust), The Music of Andrew Lloyd Webber, acclaimed streamed productions of The Color Purple and Sunset Boulevard - at Home and West Side Story.

www.curveonline.co.uk

The Paradis Files Tour Schedule

Friday 8th to Saturday 9 April

Curve Leicester
curveonline.co.uk
0116 242 3595

Wednesday 13th to Thursday 14th April

Southbank Centre's Queen Elizabeth Hall
southbankcentre.co.uk
020 3879 9555

Wednesday 20th to Thursday 21st April

The Stables, Milton Keynes
stables.org
01908 280 800

Saturday 23rd April

Mercury Theatre, Colchester
mercurytheatre.co.uk
01206 573 948

Tuesday 26th April

Hull Truck Theatre
hulltruck.co.uk
01482 323 638

Thursday 28th to Friday 29th April

Perth Theatre
horsecross.co.uk
01738 621 031

Thursday 5th to Friday 6th May

Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama
rwcmd.ac.uk
029 2039 1391

Wednesday 11th to Thursday 12th May

Crucible Sheffield
sheffieldtheatres.co.uk
0114 249 6000

Find Graeae online at graeae.org

Twitter @graeae

Instagram @graeatheatrecompany

Facebook /Graeae

YouTube @graeatheatrecompany