

ROYAL COLLEGE OF MUSIC OPERA STUDIO PRESENTS

BERNSTEIN'S TROUBLE IN TAHITI &
BERKELEY'S A DINNER ENGAGEMENT



PERFORMANCE DATES 26, 28, 29 JUNE & 1 JULY

Michael Rosewell conductor
Stephen Unwin director
Nicky Shaw designer
Ralph Stokeld lighting designer

The Royal College of Music Opera Studio is taking audiences back to the booming fifties this summer with an evening of sparkling musical satire, led by esteemed theatre director Stephen Unwin. Join the cast for a double bill of 20th century opera and a rare chance to hear Bernstein's sardonic *Trouble in Tahiti*, paired with Berkeley's delightful comedy of manners, *A Dinner Engagement*.

In the first performance of the evening, the RCM Opera Studio lifts the curtain on 1950s suburbia with *Trouble in Tahiti*. Get ready to peel back the sunny veneer of the American dream with Bernstein's seven-scene sneak peek into the marriage of brash capitalist Sam and his frustrated housewife, Dinah. Bernstein provided both the music and libretto for his 1952 satire, penning much of his tale of marital misery while on his own honeymoon. From arias that plumb the depths of domestic woe to the infectiously cheerful Greek chorus and their swing-style songs of domestic bliss, this kitchen sink drama brings everything to the stage: big musical numbers, traditional opera and a little jazz.

Berkeley's *A Dinner Engagement* follows, providing a comedic lift to the evening with the disastrous dinner plans of its central bickering couple. Hard times have fallen upon Lord and Lady Dunmow, who are struggling to keep up appearances for some important dinner guests. The Grand Duchess is en route with her son, Prince Philippe – an eligible match for the Dunmows' beautiful, albeit sulky, daughter Susan. Unfortunately, all attempts at self-catering quickly descend into culinary calamity. As smoke begins to billow from the ovens, settle in for a charming comedy of manners, cleverly told in a light-hearted libretto by Paul Dehn and set to Berkeley's colourful score.

Both operas premiered within two years of each other, and together this coupling provides an insightful and satirical commentary on the domestic conventions of the 1950s. Stephen Unwin is an experienced theatre and opera director and writer who has directed more than 50 plays and operas and written 8 books on theatre and drama. Having held a residency at the National Theatre in the 1990s, Stephen has since traversed into the world of opera. His subsequent successes include *Gianni Schicchi* at the English National Opera and *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* at the Royal Opera House.

This production is made possible with the assistance of the Basil Coleman Bequest.

As is traditional for RCM opera productions, two casts will alternate performances, giving as many accomplished young singers as possible the chance to take to the RCM's Britten Theatre stage.

For more information and to buy tickets, call the RCM Box Office on 020 7591 4314, visit the RCM in person on Prince Consort Road SW7, or visit the RCM website: <https://www.rcm.ac.uk/events>

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Notes to Editors

For further information or press ticket requests, please contact Tessa Deterding at Premier:

Tessa.deterding@premiercomms.com / 0207 292 7355

Royal College of Music

Founded in 1882, the Royal College of Music (RCM) is a world leading music conservatoire with a prestigious history and contemporary outlook. Our 800 undergraduate and postgraduate students come from over 60 countries and are taught in a dynamic environment, leaving the RCM to become the outstanding performers, conductors and composers of the future.

For the fourth consecutive year in 2019, the RCM was ranked as the top conservatoire in the UK for the Performing Arts in the QS World University Rankings. RCM was also ranked the top UK conservatoire for music in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2019 and top music conservatoire for overall student satisfaction in the 2018 National Student Satisfaction (NSS) Survey according to the Times Higher Education.

RCM professors are leaders in their fields and, under such expert guidance, RCM students regularly achieve remarkable success around the globe.

Among our alumni are composers and performers such as Sir Hubert Parry, Benjamin Britten, Gustav Holst, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Lord Lloyd Webber, Rebecca Clarke, Dame Joan Sutherland, Dame Sarah Connolly, Elizabeth Watts, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Mark-Anthony Turnage and Sir Thomas Allen.

Regular visitors to the RCM include Bernard Haitink, Sir Thomas Allen, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Alina Ibragimova and Lang Lang. Our most recent honorary doctorates include Vladimir Jurowski, Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Sir Roger Norrington, Sir Bryn Terfel, Steve Reich and Maxim Vengerov (Polonsky Visiting Professor of Violin).