

EIGHT SONGS FROM ISOLATION

THE FIRST OPERA WRITTEN FOR A SOCIALLY DISTANCED WORLD



Toby Spence, Katalin Károlyi, Sarah Connolly and Andrei Kymach (top L to bottom R) from 'Eight Songs From Isolation'

STILLS FROM THE FILM CAN BE DOWNLOADED FROM [HERE](#)

CONDUCTOR OLIVER ZEFFMAN COMMISSIONS EIGHT LEADING COMPOSERS, INCLUDING THOMAS ADES, JULIAN ANDERSON & NICO MUHLY, FOR 40-MINUTE FILM DIRECTED BY BILLY BOYD CAPE

SINGERS INCLUDE SOPHIE BEVAN SARAH CONNOLLY AND IESTYN DAVIES

FIRST OPERA SHOT ON IPHONE

OPERA-FILM NOW AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY ON [APPLE MUSIC](#)

AUDIO ONLY ALBUM AVAILABLE ON [APPLE MUSIC](#)

Conductor **Oliver Zeffman** has commissioned the very first opera for a socially distanced world, which is now available to watch exclusively on [Apple Music](#).

Eight Songs From Isolation has been written by eight leading composers, specifically for streaming - rather than live performance - and is the first opera written for a time when the performers were unable to meet in person.

Eight texts on isolation were chosen by the composers, each drawing on what they had experienced during the last five months. The opera, shot on iPhone, directed by **Billy Boyd Cape**, weaves these eight songs into a unified viewing experience, that takes the audience on a visual journey through evolving representations of isolation. The full opera is available to watch exclusively on Apple Music.

Zeffman conducts the Academy of St Martin in the Fields and a cast of leading opera singers including **Sarah Connolly, Iestyn Davies, Sophie Bevan** and two recent winners of the BBC Cardiff Singer of the World Competition.

Zeffman was determined to engage composers and singers from around the world to highlight the connection between people, in spite of the shared experience of physical isolation during the global pandemic. Fifty people worked on creating *Eight Scenes From Isolation* with those participating coming from across North America, Europe, Africa and Asia including Berlin, Budapest, Kherson, London, Meknes, Mexico City, Munich, New York, St. Petersburg, San Diego and Shanghai.

Oliver Zeffman commented:

“Crises have often been the catalyst for artists to develop not only new work, but also new ways of working. The current pandemic gripping the world has made impossible the two fundamental requirements of most art forms - the interaction of artists with each other, and between artists and audiences. Rather than trying to repurpose something written in another context, I felt it artistically imperative to commission something that is very much of and for our current situation that speaks to the shared experience we are all going through. Music is the great unifier and I wish to thank everyone who came together with such enthusiasm and commitment to create a new opera that we hope will resonate with audiences and bring people together around the world.”

Eight Songs From Isolation consists of:

- **Thomas Adès:** *Gyökér* by Miklós Radnóti, sung in Hungarian by **Katalin Károlyi** with **Ricardo Gallardo** (marimba)
- **Nico Muhly:** *New-Made Tongue* by Thomas Traherne, sung in English by **Iestyn Davies**
- **Helen Grime:** *Prayer* by Carol Ann Duffy, sung in English by **Sarah Connolly**
- **Huw Watkins:** *How* by Philip Larkin, sung in English by **Toby Spence**
- **Du Yun:** *Every Grass A Spring*, with her own text co-authored Yang Nan, sung in Mandarin by **Shenyang** with **Wu Man** (Pipa) and **Wu Wei** (Sheng)
- **Freya Waley-Cohen:** *Spell for Reality* by Rebecca Tamás, sung in English by **Julia Bullock**
- **Ilya Demutsky:** *I Guess the Universe is to Blame*, words of Alexey Barishnikov as he held up a Russian bank at the height of lockdown, sung in Russian by **Andrei Kymach**
- **Julian Anderson:** *Le 3 mai*, a letter he received during lockdown from composer Ahmed Essyad, sung in French by **Sophie Bevan**

Zeffman conducted the orchestra in a studio, with the composers and singers virtually ‘in the room’ to ensure that the orchestral accompaniment was a collaborative process. The singers were then filmed in their own homes, recording to these backing tracks using iPhone 11 Pro. *Eight Songs From Isolation* is the first opera recorded using iPhone.

ENDS

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Notes for Editors

#eightsongsfromisolation

Oliver Zeffman

Described by The Telegraph as “phenomenally promising”, the young British conductor Oliver Zeffman was the Associate Conductor of the London Chamber Orchestra, with whom he toured to the Mariinsky Theatre's Stars of the White Nights Festival last season.

Recent and upcoming debuts include with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Ulster Orchestra, KMH Symfonieorkester, Oulu Sinfonia, Urals Youth Symphony Orchestra, Jersey Symphony Orchestra, West Green House Opera and Chelsea Opera Group.

A keen advocate for contemporary music, Oliver has, to date, commissioned and premiered twenty-one new works from some of the most exciting composers of today; and has given the Russian premieres of a number of important 20th and 21st century pieces, including George Benjamin's *Lessons in Love and Violence*, Maxwell Davies' *Eight Songs for a Mad King*, Walton's *Façade* and Ligeti's *Aventures* and *Nouvelles Aventures*.

In 2018, he was Classical Music nominee for the Breakthrough Artist Award at the South Bank Sky Arts Award.

Billy Boyd Cape

Billy is a multidisciplinary film director who works across commercials, music videos, narrative film and art film.

Since making his first commercial for Pride In London in 2018, Billy has been labelled as one of advertising's new stars, winning Best New Director awards at The British Arrows, Ciclope and the Saatchi Showcase in Cannes, multiple D&AD awards and has been listed as one of the Top 10 Directors in the country by Campaign Magazine. Recently he has created work for Nike, NHS and ITV.

While still at film school Billy's work quickly took off garnering multi-millions of views, making music videos for Kwaye, Jakwob and Mr. Hudson. Later this led to collaborations with artists such as FKA Twigs and Pendulum and having his work premiered by Nowness and winning Best of the Month awards on Vimeo.

Billy produced the experimental feature documentary *Beyond Clueless* which had its world premiere at SXSW, followed by a UK theatrical run before landing on Netflix. Billy's short films *More Hate Than Fear* and *Reach* have won numerous awards and been selected for the Royal Television Society, Camerimage, Aesthetica and London Short Film Festival.

For more information on the composers please visit:

Thomas Adès: www.thomasades.com

Nico Muhly: www.nicomuhly.com

Helen Grime: www.helengrime.com

Huw Watkins: www.en.schott-music.com/shop/autoren/huw-watkins

Du Yun: www.channelduyun.com

Freya Waley-Cohen: www.freyawaleycohen.com

Ilya Demutsky: www.demutsky.com

Julian Anderson: www.fabermusic.com/we-represent/julian-anderson

For more information on the singers please visit:

Katalin Károlyi: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Katalin_Károlyi

Iestyn Davies: www.iestyndavies.com

Sarah Connolly: www.sarah-connolly.co.uk

Toby Spence: www.askonasholt.com/artists/toby-spence

Shenyang: www.shenyang-music.com

Julia Bullock: www.juliabullock.com

Andrei Kymach: www.askonasholt.com/artists/andrei-kymach

Sophie Bevan: www.askonasholt.com/artists/sophie-bevan