



Maureen Brathwaite



Nicholas Sharratt



James Laing



Omar Ebrahim



Karina Lucas



Kevin West



Hyacinth Nicholls



Roderick Earle

This allegorical tale from the Apocrypha's 'Book of Tobit' tells the story of Tobias's journey from ignorance to self-knowledge, a journey on which he encounters supernatural creatures, dancing peasants and singing animals. Among the themes explored through Jonathan Dove's luminous score, inspired in part by the Jewish klezmer tradition, and David Lan's witty libretto are the nature of faith and the redemptive power of love.

Synopsis

In Nineveh, Tobit, a good man, defies the law to bury the body of one of his fellow Jews who has been killed on the orders of the King. His wife, Anna, is afraid but his son, Tobias, helps him.

Polluted by the burial, they sleep outside. Tobias joins villagers in a dance. He meets a Stranger who tells him to "listen for silence in the song". Tobias prefers dancing. In the morning, when Tobit wakes, birds excrete in his eyes and he becomes blind.

On the same morning, in far away Ecbatana, Sara wakes to find that her newly married husband is dead, murdered by an evil spirit, Ashmodeus, who is in love with her – the seventh time this has happened. Sara's father Raguel, who is Tobit's cousin, instructs his servants to bury the body secretly. Tobit and Sara both pray for help.

Unable to earn a living Tobit sends Tobias to Ecbatana to reclaim a debt due to him from his cousin Raguel. The Stranger goes with him.

On the journey the Stranger encourages Tobias to listen to the songs sung by the trees, mountain and river. Tobias can't hear them. He falls into the river and is almost devoured by a giant fish whose song he is unable to hear. The Stranger tells him to cut out its heart and gall.

They arrive in Ecbatana. Raguel, unwilling to repay the debt he owes Tobit, hatches a plot to get Tobias to become Sara's eighth husband, hoping that the evil spirit will kill him too. When Tobias sees Sara he at once 'hears' the song of her beauty and they are married. On their wedding night, Tobias is unable to hear the song of the evil spirit but, just in time, the Stranger advises him to throw the fish's heart onto the fire in their bedroom. The spirit is exorcised, Sara at last is free. Raguel is still reluctant to hand over the money he owes, but Sara persuades him.

On the journey back, Tobias and Sara hear the songs of the river, the mountain and the trees. At home, the Stranger tells Tobias to apply the fish's gall to his father's eyes. Tobit's sight is restored. They offer to pay the Stranger for his help, but he reveals himself to be the angel Raphael, who has descended to earth to answer Tobit's and Sara's prayers. He returns to heaven.

David Lan



Composer **Jonathan Dove** has written twenty operas of different shapes and sizes, including the highly successful airport-comedy 'Flight', first produced at Glyndebourne in 1998. He has written two operas for television and several chamber operas. A notable achievement has been his series of community operas, sometimes involving several

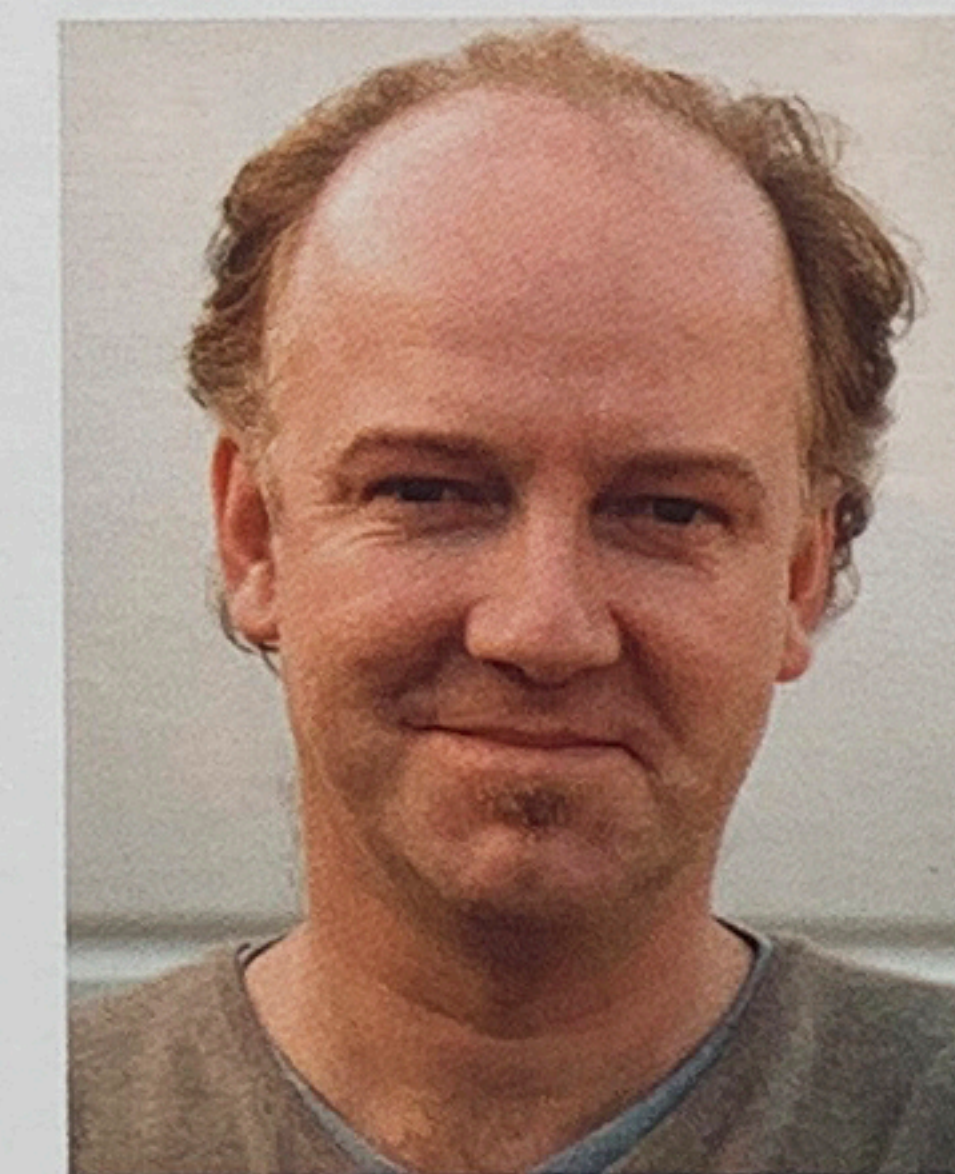
hundred performers in a single event. For one of these, 'In Search of Angels', six hundred amateur performers led an audience round Peterborough Cathedral and then out into Queensgate shopping centre where angels came down the escalators!

His most recent stage work is 'The Enchanted Pig', a musical tale which had 81 performances over Christmas 2006 at the Young Vic

and on tour. He is currently working on 'The Adventures of Pinocchio' for Opera North, Sadler's Wells and Oper Chemnitz.

Jonathan has written the music for 30 theatre productions, most recently 'His Dark Materials' for the National Theatre. In 1998 he was joint winner of the Christopher Whelen Award for his work in the fields of theatre music and opera. He is Music Adviser to the Almeida Theatre and is an Associate of the National Theatre. From 2001-2006 he was Artistic Director of the Spitalfields Festival.

Writing for non-professionals gives him a special buzz, he says. "Real people are theatre. They give off a particular energy. When adults who don't often have the opportunity to play let rip on stage, there's an energy like nothing else - an incandescence. It's when people make something better than they think they are capable of. You feel you have the key to unlock this wonderful playground for them." The joyousness of Tobias and the Angel has disarmed even the most cynical reviewer. "One review said it was like a cross between Britten's 'Turn of the Screw' and 'Fiddler on the Roof'", Dove says. "That was definitely my favourite".



Alastair Boag is Director of The Stahl Theatre, Oundle, where he has recently directed 'The Merchant of Venice'. For six years Alastair worked with Opera East Productions, for whom he directed nine productions including 'Albert Herring' (Britten), 'The Cunning Little Vixen' (Janáček), 'The Barber of Seville' (Rossini), 'Don Giovanni' (Mozart) and a

critically-acclaimed 'The Rape of Lucretia' (Britten). Other opera work includes assisting on the premiere of 'Prometheus' by Jonathan Dawe at The Guggenheim Museum, New York and 'Noye's Fludde' (St Peter's Church, Oundle). As an actor he has appeared at The Cambridge Arts Theatre and with The Open Stage Company. He appears in the films 'Some Little Joy' (Tony Britten 2005 – playing Dutch composer Bernard van Dieran in a bio-pic of Peter Warlock) and 'The Listening' (Jack Martelli 2004). With

Michael Chance and Derek Lee Ragin he devised and presents the popular Classical Counter Cabaret. Future plans include a collaboration on a new young people's opera with composer Tim Watts and a new production of 'Tartuffe' at The Stahl Theatre.

Alexander Walker

completed a music degree at Bristol University and post-graduate studies at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama before studying with Ilya Musin at the St Petersburg Conservatoire. He was Principal Guest Conductor of the Voronezh State Symphony Orchestra from 1999-2004 and is a regular guest conductor with orchestras in Finland, Denmark and Poland, as well as the legendary Russian State Symphony Orchestra. He works regularly at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and has toured with the Royal Ballet to the Bolshoi and Mariinsky Theatres in Russia, throughout the USA and to the Far East. Alexander also recently conducted a successful Gala performance with Anastasia Volochnikova at Sadler's Wells. He has conducted opera for companies including Bampton Classical Opera, Chelsea Opera Group, English Touring Opera, European Chamber Opera, London City Opera and the Ukrainian National Opera in Odessa.



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