

## AN INSIGHT INTO *HANSEL AND GRETEL* PODCAST TRANSCRIPTION

### [INTRODUCTION]

Welcome to the Regent's Park Open Air Theatre Podcast. In this episode Daniel Snowman leads a Q&A with some of those involved with *Hansel and Gretel*, our co-production with English National Opera. On the panel are Heather Lowe who plays Hansel, Elizabeth Karani who plays Gretel, the conductor Ben Glassberg, director Timothy Sheader, and Assistant Conductor Mark Biggins.

### [DANIEL SNOWMAN]

First of all, let me introduce you to Hansel and Gretel, or Gretel and Hansel. What are the two roles like and how different are they? I mean, you're singing duets, one of you is a mezzo and one of you is soprano. What's it like to sing? What's it like to learn? And what's it like – I noticed in the rehearsal that, because you're young kids, you're ten year olds, a little boy and a little girl, you're leaping around like mad all the time. And you must be absolutely A. knackered and B. out of breath and yet you have to sing all the time. Tell us how you do it? Heather, kick us off.

### [HEATHER LOWE]

It's a very physical role because we're children and children never sit still. \*Laughter\* And so I think we've both decided – well, we've all decided – that, obviously, they can't be much older than ten, and we had a discussion as to whether they were the same age, younger/older, and came to the conclusion that Gretel is the eldest and Hansel's a little bit younger. And it's very physical, isn't it? We are just running around all the time, which is fine, it's just working out when to take a breather \*laughter\* and when to keep going.

### [DANIEL SNOWMAN]

Every now and then you're asleep and she's trying to kick you awake. \*Laughter and agreement\*

### [HEATHER LOWE]

I'm the lazy one.

### [ELIZABETH KARANI]

To be honest when I was cast in the role last year I thought I need to start doing couch to 5K \*laughter\* which I did. They're really interesting roles because you would expect music for ten year olds to be quite twee – and, of course, at points it is... they have all the nursery rhymes – but it is effectively baby Wagner, so they're big sings, both of the roles. They're both quite high within our respective fachs. Gretel is very high \*laughter\* at points, and yes we do have to run about but you can't really get away from that, they are ten years old and, as you say, ten year olds don't sit still.

### [DANIEL SNOWMAN]

Dramatically, the whole opera starts with a few words from Gretel and then quite a lot of the first Act or two you're taking the initiative over this sort of naughty boy who not quite

sure what he's doing; but then the naughty boy in the final Act takes rather more of the initiatives. Is that a fair summary?

**[ELIZABETH KARANI]**

Yeah, we actually discussed it the other week. It's quite interesting that Gretel seems to always be in charge when they're in the house, when there's actually nothing to be afraid of, but as soon as they get into the woods she's completely useless, basically, for the rest of the opera. She doesn't make any decisions for herself and Hansel really takes charge and tell her what to do for the rest of it.

**[HEATHER LOWE]**

We did a work through the text and were like, ok choose two points and just walk between that scale as to where you are, and what did you say for the third Act? Gretel was going between absolute panic...

**[ELIZABETH KARANI]**

A panic attack and just listening to Hansel and just doing what he says. She's – kind of – in that position from the middle of Act 2.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

As I recall it, and I haven't seen this production, but you get locked up, she saves you from being locked up and you're the one who pushes the Witch into the oven. Is that correct?

**[HEATHER LOWE]**

Text-wise it's funny because Gretel hardly says anything in the third Act at all, and it's always Hansel saying calm down, be on your guard, let's do exactly what she says, and we'll be able to figure it out. And in this one it's more Hansel definitely working it out and making the decision that he's heard everything that the Witch has said throughout the time that he's meant to be – in inverted commas – sleeping, and I think if you're in that position where someone's locked you up you would not sleep at all. And so he's heard what she's going to do so he knows that that is what is going to happen, so I think he's very clever in going, right, ok. I mean Gretel gets a magic wand and she breaks the enchantment of keeping them locked up but I think Hansel actually takes the initiative to say, we're going to put her in the oven now.

**[ELIZABETH KARANI]**

Yeah, she's pretty much a puppet once we get into the Witch's scene. He makes all the decisions and she just does what he says. And who knows who pushes the Witch in the oven? You'll have to see. \*Laughter\*

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

Let me move to Tim. The production is taking place in a park, there's lots of forest land and greenery all around, give us a little bit of an idea of the production which is obviously being prepared – I saw it rehearsed here – for performance in Regent's Park Theatre.

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

I think the first decisions, when you're creating the opera, for me was how to do it in that space. I mean, I often think there are three questions to answer first of all: when are you putting on a production, who is it for and where is it? And those three things seem to come, for me, before what do I want to say? Because there's a slight level of vanity in that but, those three questions, for the production to be relevant and successful, need to be answered correctly. *Hansel and Gretel* posed quite a few issues for Regent's Park because we don't have flying and we don't have a sub-stage, and we don't have mechanics that are going to bring things on from right and left because right and left are so far away into the trees. So there were very strong practical decisions about how to stage a three Act opera in three/four completely different locations without those other stage tricks to help you. So the two starting points were, quite literally, how do we get from the inside a house – so the first Act, as Daniel says, is entirely in this tiny little house – how do we get from within that to the second Act, which is in the forest; and how do we get from the third Act, which is outside the Witch's house, to the second part of the third act which is inside the Witch's house? And that very quickly became a revolve, which was the first decision: that we would have a revolve, from which you would be able to see both the inside and outside of both of those houses. And so we worked outwards from that decision pretty early on. Then, also, how to get from that house, physically, into the forest, we have to make that house disappear. So the revolve was great for getting from outside to inside of the Witch's house but how would we make the family home disappear? And then we have that six-minute piece of music called *The Witch's Ride* that goes between Acts one and two, which for many productions is the curtain – and certainly in the original production would've been the curtain coming in whilst that scenic change happens – we don't have a curtain at Regent's Park \*laughter\* so there was never the possibility that I would not have to stage *The Witch's Ride*. So *The Witch's Ride* is completely staged which, again thinking practically, I had to change the set. So I figured out how to do that and then I figured out who those people might be that we were using and what the narrative might be, but I have to be honest, I did start practically, that: that has to disappear and this has to appear, this is how we're going to do it, and then I thought creatively about who those people were and what their intention is.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

And, give us some idea, also, of... is it set in any particular period or is it contemporary kids?

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

It's not very specific, I can tell you what it isn't. I didn't want it to be 19<sup>th</sup> Century, I didn't want it to be – kind of – *Heidi in the Woods* or *Heidi on the Mountainside*, or *Hansel and Gretel in the Woods*; I didn't want to be let off the hook by placing it so far into the past that it became *Me: A Fairytale*. But I didn't want to set it now because I think that takes the magic out of it, and the fact that fairy tales are for children, they are meant to be from a distant land that those children can observe from safety, things happening to other people in another world that they're not too familiar with, and that, subliminally, they would learn from that. I mean, we're familiar with that, Arthur Miller chose to talk to us about the McCarthyism through the witch trials of Salem, Massachusetts in 1692, so we're familiar with that trick. So I didn't want it to be completely modern. So I wanted to set it in an otherness, and then I started to think about the magical realism of something like *Stranger*

*Things*, which everybody's watching on Netflix – or a lot of the younger generations are watching – about how it's seemingly real that we can (or any kind of sci-fi... what's the one I watch?... *The Walking Dead*), so the world is seemingly real but these strange, odd apocalyptic/magical/enchanting things happen. So we can invest in a... so the reality is not too far from us but it also allows these magical things to happen. And so it's ended up being – kind of – of the world of *Stranger Things* which might be 70s or 80s Americana. Why is it Americana? If the designer was here he'd answer it better than I, I can't quite remember \*laughter\*. It's pleasing on the eye – sometimes these things are just about the aesthetics – it's Peter McKintosh the designer, and, quite frankly, that's his period. We've done a lot of musical comedy from the Golden Age together – you may be familiar with him, he did the Fiona Shaw *Figaro* at ENO and the Phyllida Lloyd *Handmaid's Tale* a number of years ago.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

And tell me, also, about the gingerbread children who are plastered around the central house. Do they suddenly appear, does the house suddenly appear?

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

Peter very early on decided that he wanted the gingerbread children to be very present throughout so we have this – kind of – cemetery of gingerbread children. The lyric is “and look, there's gingerbread men in a pen”, is that right?

**[HEATHER LOWE]**

“And there in a pen are gingerbread men”

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

Which I had always thought was, maybe, the pen was, they were a fence... they were the white picket fence around the house, this little gingerbread house; but the way they're placed is to make them look as if they're a cemetery/a kind of store cupboard of children that she's keeping for later \*laughter\* – that she's turned into gingerbread and she hasn't eaten them yet, so they're place in the garden. If we were doing it at the Coliseum, with the amazing stage wizardry that that theatre has, then at that moment when the children come alive again, they would be descending in a lift \*laughter\* into the ground and the children might be coming up on an elevator, but we don't have those tricks at Regent's Park.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

I was going to ask whether it's likely to be transferrable?

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

No, we can't. No, it's just about the children appearing from the woods, which – having directed many things there – there is something about – I mean, we all know the story but for those that don't, or the opera, to have twenty-plus children coming out of the trees at that point of the evening is in itself very arresting.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

The one real chorus – and Mark will know about this – is really the children at the end emerging from death back to life, I guess. Would that be a fair way of describing it?

**[MARK BIGGINS]**

Absolutely, I think that probably being envisaged by Humperdinck being an angelic all boys German choir in that fine tradition that they have – so he probably had that in mind. I think we're offering something slightly different but I think also very interesting; we are mixing some children from Pimlico Music Foundation with some children who are used to being in the West End and I think there's something very exciting about having that children's energy on the stage when – of real children, when we've had Hansel and Gretel, who are doing a wonderful children's energy \*laughter\* throughout the piece--

**[ELIZABETH KARANI]**

Do we not look like ten year olds? \*Laughter\*

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

Let's talk a little bit about the music. Ben, I was going on and on about Wagner and *Valkyries'* Riding and *Seigfried* going down the Rhine; and there are indeed musical journeys, *The Witch's Ride*, and Angels and all that, and he was very much influenced by Wagner and very much that post-Wagnerian romantic style. How does this reflect in the score, give me some examples? Sing the occasional motif \*laughter\*.

**[BEN GLASSBERG]**

You would like me to sing the occasional motif? \*Laughter\* That's definitely not going to happen.

Well it's funny, I remember when I was at secondary school and I was taking organ lessons – for some bizarre reason – and my organ teacher said that – I'd never heard *Hansel and Gretel* before and he said that, *it's basically Wagner for kids*. And I thought that sounded a bit – sort of – bizarre and probably wouldn't be true and, actually, it – sort of – is. I mean, there's so many elements of the music that are clearly influenced by Wagner but at the same time it's incredibly accessible in a way that *The Ring Cycle* might not be for young people. I suppose – as you say – the key things are this idea of – well, in Wagner it's light motifs, I don't think it translates literally as a light motif in *Hansel and Gretel* but – there are certainly musical ideas that are related to characters or themes that then reoccur. For example, in the first Act where the Mother reveals to the Father that the children are off in the woods, he picks up this broomstick and starts reminiscing about what a broomstick means for the Witch and we hear this first motif, the broomstick motif, at that moment, which then becomes the basis for the whole *Witch's Ride*, which takes us from the first to the second Act, and then comes back at the very end. Having heard it in a minor key, it then comes back in a major key with all the gingerbread children when the Witch is dead. So this idea of the music of the broomstick, of the Witch, comes back at different points in the opera in different guises – that's super Wagnerian, of course. What I find really interesting about it is that the opera is quite short for someone who was clearly influenced by Wagner, \*laughter\* that's a big change. It's two hours of music as opposed to four or five but yet there's so much of it where there's no singing whatsoever. So we have a fairly lengthy Overture for a piece of this length, *The Witch's Ride* between Act one and two, when the

two children go to sleep we have this six or seven-minute pantomime of the most extraordinary music, but quite a lot of it, and then huge interludes in the third Act between the various bits of action. So for an opera of such a short length, to have all these musical journeys is – I suppose – very much showing the influence of Wagner there but it's incredibly pictorial; so I think it's terrific that we're having to stage them, because – ok it's sometimes it's very nice to bring the curtain down and just focus on the music for a change, but I know my wife is not an opera lover, but she's becoming one, and the first few times where we went to an opera where that happens and the curtain comes down, she turned to me and asked, *why? What's going on, what am I meant to get narratively from this?*

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

That's very important in a theatre, that we're presenting this opera in collaboration with English National Opera but in a playhouse, in a theatre that many of that audience are not used to opera. So, I see it as an introduction for some people to an art form – not necessarily their first opera but it's not you guys. And I speak as... this is only my third opera I've directed, *The Turn of the Screw* was the first. Visual cues help understand and assimilate the music, they really do, and so it's very important to me that all those interludes are staged. Not least also because Ben and the orchestra are behind the stage so you wouldn't even have them to look at if we didn't stage it.

**[BEN GLASSBERG]**

And nobody wants to look at the bald patch on the back of my head for seven minutes anyway \*laughter\*.

I suppose another thing that's really nice – talking about this motif idea – that the Overture is a sort of best bits in the way that we almost have with musical theatre more, actually, than in opera. It's the best tunes from the piece, obviously arranged in a beautiful structure with this opening, slow, the music from the *Evening Prayer* that we hear later on, and then it goes into some music from the *Gingerbread Chorus*, some music from when they're stuck in the woods. And as an audience you don't know what you're listening to because you're hearing these melodies for the first time, but there's something about their clarity and simplicity that they will stay up in your head and those moments where they reoccur later, that recognition is something that's really wonderful. And I think great about this opera, the recycling of melodic information helps us to connect the story in our minds.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

Well, Wagner does that Overture to *Flying Dutchman* or *Meistersinger* play a series of tunes, all of which you'll hear again later on in the evening.

**[BEN GLASSBERG]**

*Mastersinger* is the clearest one where we have the three key themes that come back throughout the whole opera. And what's amazing about Wagner is that five hours later you still remember those tunes. We haven't got so long to wait. But it's the subtle changes, like there'll be on harmonic difference when we hear it later and it'll totally change the way we interpret it. It might make it seem much more sinister than when we hear it in the *Evening Prayer* and it's beautiful and innocent, but one diminished chord in place of a major chord suddenly changes the whole thing for us, dramatically.



**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

As Ben says, there are a number of quite long orchestral sections, so Tim, how do you stage – you're not shutting a curtain, you're staging them in each case, aren't you?

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

Yeah, so we started with *The Witch's Ride*, I guess, because that needed a practical solution – which, as I've said, was to get from the house to the outside of the house.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

And it leads from Act one to Act two.

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

Yes, Act one to Act two, into the forest. And then we worked backwards from there. The text refers to "Grizzlewitch's" and then talks about there being one particular witch, the Witch that we're going to meet, the Gingerbread Witch. So I started to think about if on some level this is a... there's some level of paedophilia in this story, isn't there, and malevolence in the woods, that maybe the woods was full of malevolent people – that we lived on the edge of the wood, and within this wood there were other malevolent people, that there was a whole host of people that might encourage these two children onto a pathway that they shouldn't take. Again, that we're really familiar with in fairy stories – the Wolf, for example, in *Little Red Riding Hood*.

The other given that I had were the 14 Angels; there have to be 14 Angels in the pantomime because that's what the lyrics are. Two stand here, two stand there, two stand at their feet, two stand at their head, that they tell us in the *Evening Prayer*. So I thought, I've got these 14 people, they'll be doing this job then \*laughter\*. So we decided to make these 14 people who live in the wood, that come to potentially take Hansel and Gretel onto the wrong path. So they're kind of witches of sorts but they are dressed as woods people. And then, so practically speaking, because I was using them in *The Witch's Ride*, I thought it could feel peculiar to just suddenly see them in that place so we'll introduce them in the Overture. So they get introduced in the Overture – and there's other things in the Overture. I find it interesting that Hansel and Gretel are not the only children, that this is a serial killer we're dealing with. There is this gingerbread graveyard, so I decided that we would see some other children running off into the forest in the Overture; so we've staged three sets of little alternative Hansel and Gretels, Peter and Janes and Paul and whoever \*laughter\*, and they get thrown into the forest by their mother too and get lost. So we staged that in pantomime: they get lost and they look up and smile, and you're to assume that's the gingerbread house they've seen, and then we revolve into their house.

So I guess all of that leads up to this staged pantomime, which in the libretto is staged. After the *Evening Prayer* when they go off to sleep, they're very specific – very very specific in the libretto – about how that's staged. We're not doing the staging in the libretto but that felt like that gave us license to stage the other interludes.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

And there are, of course, other characters. Before you go to sleep, you get put to sleep by a Sandman, and you get woken up by a rather lovely Dew Fairy. Who are they and what do they do? And what do you do when they're A. putting you to sleep and B. waking you up?

**[ELIZABETH KARANI]**

Well, they're played by Gillian Keith and He Wu, both sopranos but obviously that Sandman is a man. We had quite a lot of discussion about the Sandman, actually, because initially we're both quite scared of the Sandman but I think we decided that it was someone we'd be familiar with, whether we'd seen him before or not – we would've heard about him before. So we had quite a lot of discussion about whether he was scary, and then we decided he wasn't and we got tired. \*Laughter\*

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

I think there's a real instinct to – with me included, to – think that the Sandman is a malevolent force because she describes, *what's that old man doing in the wood at this time of night? And he's coming towards us.* And in the operatic version it's a woman dressed as an old man singing soprano so it's weird. And the preceding bars have been about, *what's that in the swamp? What's that light on the silver birch?* So it's natural to assume that they're seeing something phantom-like. But actually both the Sandman – which is not really familiar to us, I don't think, it certainly isn't familiar to my childhood, the idea of a Sandman, I think it's more European than British; Wee Willy Winky I think where I'm equating it to. In all honesty the opera, the plot stops halfway through Act two when they say, *what's that?* And it's the Sandman. You think, if you don't know the opera, you'd assume that's going to be the gingerbread house appearing but it isn't. So the plot stops and the Sandman appears, and they go to sleep with these 14 Angels, and then they're woken up by a Dew Fairy and then they skip about a bit more \*laughter\* and then eventually they see the gingerbread house and the plot is reactivated. We're used to that in opera, aren't we? But I think it was a very calculated choice that these two fairies at that point in the evening were completely benevolent, and they were a guiding good force. We see it like it's almost good teachers arriving saying, *I can't stop what's going to happen to you when you go home tonight but I can make sure that you have a very good day at school.* Or, *I can't stop what's going to happen to you tomorrow but you are going to have a good night's sleep before you wend your way to this Witch's house.* And I think that's in-keeping with a lot of the sanitisation of the Grimm's fairy tale – so in the fairy tale, as Daniel says, it's a wicked Step-Mother, not a Mother, and it's a wicked Step-Mother who dies, she gets her come-uppance at the end of the story. There's none of the business – which is a shame really for staging purposes – going out with the bread and dropping the trail of bread or stones. The parents are not as wicked as to dump their children in the forest; she just sends them out to get berries. So I think that middle section is to kind of create more positive influences and forces around the children before the Witch appears.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

Do you want to reveal anything about the Witch?

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**



We have two casts, so there are two other singers singing Hansel and Gretel because we're playing consecutive performances. So there are two Witches and they're both men. And I made that decision very early; I wanted to explore the Witch being a man, so it's being played as a man. It's a man who happens to dress up as a woman to seduce and attract these children to his house.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

It's written for a mezzo level of voice, isn't it, so that range.

**[BEN GLASSBERG]**

It's quite high for a mezzo as well. So it's interesting. It sits really well for a tenor – I mean – when you told me that you'd decided to cast a man, I was quite happy because I think that there's a lot of higher voices in this show. The only other male singer is the Father, the baritone, who sings a little in Act one and then at the very end. So I think having another male voice in there, just from an audience perspective, it's quite nice to have a slightly different range in terms of aural interest as well as the obvious narrative reasons that you've talked about.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

One of the things that interests me is that the text, in the original German it rhymes, it's clever, it's a bit kiddy, a bit funny at times, "*Hocus Pocus Malos Locus*" and all that kind of stuff, and this is a translation by David Pountney – originally done for Welsh National which I think ENO put on 20 or 30 years ago. I must say, do listen out for some of the rather witty rhymes, witty language, including during the whole Witch scene. Some of this must be quite fun to be, almost, over emphasising. Give us a few examples of what to listen out for.

**[HEATHER LOWE]**

One of my favourites, which isn't in my text at all, it's the Father's text, and he's coming in and he's really happy because he's finally made money and he says, "a boom town was a broom town" because he's finally sold these brooms, and so he's like yes! And I don't know why it's just a lyric that I think is so funny.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

And of course his broomsticks which go with witches.

**[ELIZABETH KARANI]**

Most of them are so good that you don't even notice that you're rhyming some of the time. There is one page where we had to spend a long time trying to work out what Pountney was going for there. What do you say at one point?

**[HEATHER LOWE]**

Oh, so there's a bit where Gretel's kind of talking about, I've seen these Angels, and Hansel just goes, "Exactly", and it's so adult to say, it's so grown up.

**[ELIZABETH KARANI]**

I meant the one at the end, after, "*You should say please, the window breeze*", and you say...

**[HEATHER LOWE]**

"Don't be a tease, I eat what I sees"

**[ELIZABETH KARANI]**

I mean we understand it...

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

But I agree with you, I mean, incredibly witty.

**[HEATHER LOWE & ELIZABETH KARANI]**

Definitely.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

I noticed again, watching you rehearsing the other day, there's a lot of flying. There are witches supposedly flying over the skies and so on and I see you playing with an aeroplane. Do you fly with an aeroplane? What's the aeroplane doing?

**[TIMOTHY SHEADER]**

The aeroplane is our interpretation of the Angels.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

It's going to be a very richly very visual show as well as musical and vocal and all the rest of it. And all the themes I was mentioning before are obviously being richly embodied in the performance and the production.

**[MARK BIGGINS]**

Ben was saying how it's so unusual that in two hours of opera you would dedicate twenty minutes to the orchestra alone, and, of course, there were practical reasons I think, in terms of set changes going on; but I also think this was Humperdinck's investment in the magical nature of the story. The transportational quality of the music, that when the Overture opens from the very opening with four horns playing a choral – not four horns in our production, we don't have four but you're getting the same effect – that a German 19<sup>th</sup> Century audience would, probably, immediately have been transported musically to a magical outdoor space. And then these moments of seven minutes of *Witch's Ride* and then also this pantomime are moments that when I played rather than finishing off the *Evening Play* rather normally I did give you, we did transfer into this other world and that this was Humperdinck investing time into his opera with the music's addition making sure that we understand we're in this space which is not literal and ordinary but totally extraordinary.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

Last question really about the location. It's open air, it's in the Open Air Theatre which looks wonderful, it's a joy to sit there and watch and enjoy a show; but you can't presumably have the large almost Wagnerian orchestra. Tell us about the orchestra, Ben.

**[BEN GLASSBERG]**

Today was my first day rehearsing with the orchestra and I felt a bit like a kid at Christmas this morning, because I grew up coming to watch shows at ENO and I remember seeing and thinking, I mean it's literally, it is my biggest dream to do a production at ENO. So I was like, *wow this is amazing*, going to conduct the ENO orchestra this morning. We are using a reduction by a chap called Derek Clark who used to be Head of Music at Scottish Opera. It's for 19 players. We haven't got the space or the resources to bring in the full 80/90-piece ENO orchestra, which would be wonderful. What we do have is the 19 principal players who are extraordinary. There is no recording of this reduction so none of us really knew what it was going to sound like; we studied it on paper and, of course, it looks fine but today was the first time this morning when I was going to find out if it's going to be remotely interesting or not, and it's absolutely incredible – the colours that Derek's put in. So what you'll hear is not what you're used to hearing if you've heard recordings or seen productions before, it is definitely different. So we have single strings, we have eight strings instead of 40, which is a huge difference, but the colours are still in there, and you'll still hear all those wonderful things. Being outside, of course, we can't play everything acoustically because then you wouldn't hear anything. It's a big space. So, those of you that came to see *The Turn of the Screw* last year... I went as a punter to watch and I thought it was remarkably successful actually, what they did with mic-ing each singer and mic-ing the orchestra; and Nick who was the Sound Designer on that is our Sound Designer on this. And the idea is that it shouldn't sound to you like it's amplified apart from a few moments where we will exploit the fact that we have amplification to sound otherworldly. So there might be bits where a cuckoo does not sound like it's coming from the orchestra behind the stage, but it might be coming from behind you, who knows? We'll see how that works in stage orchestras. So it shouldn't sound amplified or electronic but it just lifts the singers a little bit. So these guys will still have to project as normal, they won't be able to relax and sing pop-style. But hopefully you shouldn't notice too much other than, *wow this sounds extraordinary for an open air opera*.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

And you'll be placed behind the stage?

**[BEN GLASSBERG]**

Yes. So I will not really be able to see the singers – which is completely terrifying for me, I've not really done a show like this before – and they will only be able to see me on a series of monitors, which are obviously in black and white and not as clear as a live person. So it is hugely challenging in some ways but also quite exciting that for all of us it's a new experience.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

Quite often the orchestration suddenly stops and there's a bit of almost speech, isn't there, and then suddenly starts off again.

**[BEN GLASSBERG]**

Yeah, absolutely. It's mostly through-composed in a very Wagnerian style but then there are these moments of sort of rest at eve when the orchestra stops and there's interjection between us. That has been fun to play around with in rehearsal but I'm aware that when we

get into the space and we're not as close as we are now it's going to be an interesting challenge.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

We hear the Witch talking about the "*mouse in the house*", or whatever it is.

**[BEN GLASSBERG]**

And actually that's what's quite nice about this unique situation, moments like when the Witch is singing from inside the house and there are the echoes in the wood where they ask things like, *who's there*; things like that we can use the fact that this is slightly amplified and we have speakers and we have this technology to make it slightly more realistic in a dramatic fashion as well.

**[DANIEL SNOWMAN]**

Very exciting. Good. I'm really looking forward to going to the production, the performance. Actually in the park within the woods.

**[End Note]**

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