

\*\*\*\*\***Press Release**\*\*\*\*\*

September 2015 – for immediate use

**New Scottish opera set for CD release**

- **Julian Wagstaff's short opera *Breathe Freely* to be released on Linn Records on 16 October 2015**
- **First studio recording of a Scottish opera for over a decade**
- **Scottish Opera's Head of Music Derek Clark conducted the recording sessions**
- **Producer is Calum Malcolm, best known for work with rock and pop acts such as Runrig, The Blue Nile and Prefab Sprout**
- **Production supported by Scottish Opera and the University of Edinburgh**
- **Special launch event at the Royal Society of Chemistry in London on 13 October**

Scottish composer Julian Wagstaff announces the release of a studio recording of his opera *Breathe Freely* on the Glasgow-based label Linn Records. The new recording features world-class musicians and singers including conductor Derek Clark, Scottish Opera's Head of Music. Commercial recordings of Scottish operas are rare, and this is the first such recording since Judith Weir's *A Night at the Chinese Opera* in 2002. The 40-minute opera, commissioned by the University of Edinburgh to celebrate the 300th anniversary of its School of Chemistry in 2013, played to a full house at its world première in Edinburgh's Assembly Rooms in October of that year.

The producer and engineer on the project is Calum Malcolm. Calum has a career spanning over 35 years and has worked with some of the biggest names in Scottish Music, including The Blue Nile, Capercaillie, Fish, Lau, Runrig, the Edinburgh Quartet, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Royal Scottish National Orchestra.

Julian Wagstaff's opera *Breathe Freely* tells the story of a Polish independence fighter, socialist activist and chemist named Stanisław Hempel, who came to Edinburgh in 1943 to undertake scientific work in support of the Polish Armed Forces in the West, in which he held the rank of lieutenant. He was given a laboratory by Prof. James Kendall, Head of Chemistry at Edinburgh University at the time and a leading expert on poison gas. The lineup of characters is completed by Dr. Chrissie Miller, the first female chemist to be inducted as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Julian Wagstaff said: "I am delighted that the University of Edinburgh and Scottish Opera chose to support a professional studio recording of my most recent chamber opera. I am also thrilled that a conductor of such experience and pedigree as Derek Clark has come on board for the project, along with renowned producer Calum Malcolm and first-rate musicians and singers. To see the recording released on a label with the reputation, history and pedigree as Linn Records really is the icing on the cake!"

Alex Reedijk, General Director at Scottish Opera, said: "It's common knowledge that I am very keen on the development and commissioning of new opera in Scotland and I'm pleased that Scottish Opera has been able to provide support to Julian and The University of Edinburgh in delivering the performance aspect of such an interesting project."

The CD also features a recording of Julian's piano trio *A Persistent Illusion*, the third movement of which was created with the help of students at Edinburgh schools. Julian Wagstaff's stage musical *John Paul Jones* was revived as a concert version in 2010 in association with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. Excerpts from *Breathe Freely* and *A Persistent Illusion* featured in Julian Wagstaff's retrospective show *Song to Me* on the 2015 Edinburgh Fringe.

The *Breathe Freely* CD will be launched at a special free event at the Royal Society of Chemistry in London on Tuesday 13 October 2015 at 7.30pm.

END. Next page: **Notes to Editors**

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## Notes to Editors:

Royalty-free photographs, CD artwork and downloads can be found on Julian Wagstaff's press page:

<http://www.julianwagstaff.com/press>

The CD can be found on the Linn Records site here:

<http://www.linnrecords.com/recording-wagstaff-breathe-freely.aspx>

The opera website can be found at <http://www.BreatheFreelyOpera.co.uk>

Excerpts from the opera are on the Vimeo website here: <http://vimeo.com/julianwagstaff/breathefreely>

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### *Launch event:*

Tuesday 13 October 2015 at 7.30pm

Royal Society of Chemistry, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London. Admission free.

This special launch event will feature live performances of excerpts from the opera featuring several of the singers and musicians who appear on the recording. Those attending will have the opportunity to be among the very first to own the CD, and to have it signed by the artists. Tickets can be reserved at [www.BreatheFreelyOpera.co.uk](http://www.BreatheFreelyOpera.co.uk).

### *CD Details:*

Recorded at Scottish Opera's production studios, Edington St, Glasgow

Catalogue number: Linn Records CKD535

Includes 68-page booklet including synopsis, artist biographies, photographs and the complete libretto in German and English

Total running time: 54 minutes

Release date: 16 October 2015

### *Performers:*

Laura Margaret Smith – mezzo-soprano

Paul Curievici – tenor

Phil Gault – baritone

Pete Furniss – clarinet

Mark Bailey – cello

Andrew Johnston – piano

### *Production team:*

Conductor/musical director – Derek Clark

Producer/engineer – Calum Malcolm

Composer/librettist/producer – Julian Wagstaff

### *Julian Wagstaff - composer*

Julian is a composer, writer and guitarist based in Edinburgh. He enjoys close connections with many of the country's leading musicians, and his works are widely performed throughout Scotland and beyond. His Piano Quintet appears on the album *Frontiers and Bridges* recorded by the Edinburgh Quartet and produced by Calum Malcolm, available on the Circular Records label. His opera *The Turing Test* was a sell-out success on the 2007 Edinburgh Festival Fringe, gaining excellent reviews in the UK press and cited by the novelist Alexander McCall Smith as a cultural highlight in the Daily Telegraph's Review of the Year. His stage musical *John Paul Jones*, on the life of the Scots-born hero of the American Revolution, was revived professionally as a concert version in 2010 with musicians from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, singers from Consort of Voices and guest soloists. Julian holds a PhD in musical composition from Edinburgh University and recently served as Composer in Residence at the School of Chemistry, University of Edinburgh. He is published by Europa Edition. More details can be found on Julian's website: [www.julianwagstaff.com](http://www.julianwagstaff.com)

*Derek Clark - conductor*

Derek Clark was born in Glasgow and studied at the RSAMD, Durham University and the London Opera Centre. He joined the music staff of Welsh National Opera in 1977 as a répétiteur, making his conducting debut in 1982 and going on to conduct a wide variety of opera for them, ranging from Monteverdi to Maxwell Davies. He joined Scottish Opera as Head of Music in 1997, and since then has conducted *Samson, The Magic Flute, Don Giovanni, The Marriage of Figaro, Così fan tutte, The Barber of Seville, The Italian Girl in Algiers, Fidelio, La Traviata, Rigoletto, Falstaff, Orpheus in the Underworld, Carmen, Manon, Tosca, Madama Butterfly, La Bohème, Eugene Onegin, Hansel and Gretel, Ines de Castro* and *Clemency* (James Macmillan), *The Lady from the Sea* (Craig Armstrong) and all three seasons of the *Five:15* series. Elsewhere he conducted Rory Boyle's award-winning *Kaspar Hauser: Child of Europe* for the RSAMD, has assisted Sir Roger Norrington at the EIF and also works as a guest coach, accompanist and composer. Since 2011 he has been Music Director of Dundee Choral Union.

*Calum Malcolm - producer*

Calum Malcolm is a Scottish record producer, sound engineer and keyboardist based in Edinburgh. He started his rock music career with the band The Headboys in 1977. Since 1978 he has worked with bands and musicians such as The Blue Nile, Capercaillie, Clannad, Fish, Lau, The Go-Betweens, Hue and Cry, Maire Brennan, Nazareth, Orange Juice, Prefab Sprout, Runrig, Steve Adey, Kris Drever, The Silencers, Simple Minds and Wet Wet Wet, while Barb Jungr, Claire Martin, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and the Edinburgh Quartet are others whom Malcolm has worked alongside in the recording studio. His working credits also include The Boys of the Lough, Brian McNeill, It's Immaterial, Josef K, Mike Lindup, Stéphane Grappelli, The Happy Family, Tom Anderson, Tommy Smith, and William Jackson. Calum produced Prefab Sprout's 2013 album *Crimson Red*, which reached no. 13 in the UK charts and was top 10 in many other countries.

*Laura Margaret Smith – mezzo-soprano*

Mezzo-soprano Laura Margaret Smith, is a graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Alexander Gibson Opera School and is the Robertson Scholarship Trust Scottish Opera Emerging Artist in the 2014/15 season. Laura currently holds a Making Music Young Concert Artist Award and continues to study with Clare Shearer. Laura was awarded a scholarship to study at the Georg Solti Accademia di Bel Canto in Italy last summer under the tutelage of Luciana Serra, Dennis O'Neill, Richard Bonyngé and Daniela Dessi. She is also a Samling scholar and Britten-Pears young artist, having worked with Sir Thomas Allen, Ian Partridge and Ann Murray DBE. Scottish Opera audiences may recognise Laura from her role as Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in 2013, as well as RCS productions of *The Rape of Lucretia, Albert Herring* and her time as Carmen with Edinburgh Grand Opera. During Scottish Opera's 2014/15 season Laura will sing the role of Third Witch in *Macbeth*, as well as appearing in *Ines de Castro, Orfeo ed Euridice, Jenufa* and *Il trovatore*.

*Paul Curievici - tenor*

Paul Curievici studied at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama with John Evans and made his debut with the Royal Opera House Covent Garden in performances of Gerald Barry's *The Importance of Being Earnest* at the Linbury Theatre. Other recent and future projects include the title role in *Faust* for Clonter Opera, creating the roles of Titorelli, Flogger, and Student in Philip Glass' *The Trial* and Stephen in Huw Watkins' *In the Locked Room* for Music Theatre Wales and Scottish Opera, Monostatos *Die Zauberflöte* and Steuermann *Der fliegende Holländer* (covers) for Scottish Opera, and Painter/Young Man in Olga Neuwirth's *American Lulu* for The Opera Group. He made his debut with The Opera Group as Sam Kaplan in *Street Scene*, and recently repeated the role at Liceu Barcelona and Théâtre du Châtelet, Paris. Paul is a proud winner of Scottish Opera's John Scott Award and the Basil A Turner Prize awarded by British Youth Opera.

*Phil Gault - baritone*

Welsh baritone Phil Gault studied at St Catherine's College, Oxford, and at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama with Alan Watt before studying privately with Patricia MacMahon and Paul

Farrington. He has recently returned from a tour of Wales performing the title roles for Opra Cymru in both Verdi's *Macbeth*, in a new Welsh-language production (for which he was nominated for Best Male Opera Singer at the Theatre Critics of Wales Awards), and Rossini's *Barbwr Sefil*. He has also performed with Scottish Opera, Buxton Festival Opera, and Northampton Festival Opera, is principal baritone for Opera on a Shoestring, co-founded Black Sheep Opera, and is a Samling and a Crear scholar. Other rôles include Don Giovanni, King Roger, Nabucco, Tarquinius, Il Conte (*Le Nozze di Figaro*) Dandini, Junius, NickShadow, Escamillo, Morales, El Dancaïro, and Chao Lin (*A Night at the Chinese Opera*). Phil has performed recitals in the Usher Hall, the Wales Millennium Centre, the Riverfront Centre and Paxton House, and is an aLuMNus of Yehudi Menuhin's Live Music Now! scheme. His song repertory includes *Dichterliebe*, *Chansons Gaillardes*, *Songs of Travel*, *Italienisches Liederbuch*, and *A Shropshire Lad*, and his oratorio repertoire ranges from *Carmina Burana* and *A Sea Symphony* to the Bach Passions and cantatas, in venues from the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and the Usher Hall, to the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford. Recordings include a CD of Philip Wilby's music for Naxos with the Black Dyke Band, Wilby's *Bronte Mass* with Black Dyke and the London Bach Choir under David Hill, Caldwell for Guild records, and a CD by the Scottish composer Robin Downie.

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*Internet Resources:*

<http://www.BreatheFreelyOpera.co.uk>

<http://www.julianwagstaff.com>

<http://www.linnrecords.co.uk>

<http://vimeo.com/julianwagstaff/breathefreely>

<http://www.chem.ed.ac.uk>

*Photographs:*

Royalty-free photographs and CD artwork can be supplied on request or downloaded from Julian's press page at [www.julianwagstaff.com/press](http://www.julianwagstaff.com/press).