

CU ★ PRESENTS

2020-21 Season
Digital program



College of Music
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **BOULDER**

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CU ★ PRESENTS is the home of performing arts at the University of Colorado Boulder.



Great repertoire, lavish scenery, amazing voices and outstanding value—
these are the hallmarks of the **Eklund Opera Program**.



As we gather, we honor and acknowledge that the University of Colorado's four campuses are on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Ute, Apache, Comanche, Kiowa, Lakota, Pueblo and Shoshone Nations. Further, we acknowledge the 48 contemporary tribal nations historically tied to the lands that comprise what is now called Colorado.

Acknowledging that we live in the homelands of Indigenous peoples recognizes the original stewards of these lands and their legacies. With this land acknowledgment, we celebrate the many contributions of Native peoples to the fields of medicine, mathematics, government and military service, arts, literature, engineering and more. We also recognize the sophisticated and intricate knowledge systems Indigenous peoples have developed in relationship to their lands.

We recognize and affirm the ties these nations have to their traditional homelands and the many Indigenous people who thrive in this place, alive and strong. We also acknowledge the painful history of ill treatment and forced removal that has had a profoundly negative impact on Native nations.

We respect the many diverse Indigenous peoples still connected to this land. We honor them and thank the Indigenous ancestors of this place. The University of Colorado pledges to provide educational opportunities for Native students, faculty and staff and advance our mission to understand the history and contemporary lives of Native peoples.



Hansel and Gretel, 2014

A holiday opera with dark roots

By Olivia Lerwick

It's no secret that many of the fairy tales and lullabies we tell today have dark origins and themes. From evil stepmothers to people-eating giants, almost every story has some form of evil force the hero or heroine must face. *Hansel and Gretel* too can credit its origins to a shadowy past, one marked by famine, abandonment and a fear of the dark.

Many scholars believe that the origins of the tale are rooted in the Great Famine that struck Europe from 1315-1317. During this period, Europe lost as much

as 15% of its population, and it was not uncommon for families to abandon children whom they could no longer feed. Better, they may have thought, to die quickly in the woods than to starve slowly at home.

What's more, the forest itself—like with many other folktales—would have cast an ominous tone for early storytellers and listeners. In their real worlds, straying too far from a town or village could have dire consequences. Traveling off the beaten path through the woods might result in deadly interactions with criminals or wild animals. As such, forests earned a reputation for being mysterious and dangerous places where the normal rules of society did not apply. It's no surprise, then, that many a witch—women who lived outside the village's social conventions—could be found there.

We can be thankful that the creation of Englebert Humperdinck's opera has a much rosier hue. The composer first came up with the idea of writing *Hansel and Gretel* when his nephews and nieces asked him to write music to accompany their puppet show depicting the fairy tale. What started as fun and games soon developed into something more serious, with Humperdinck eventually adding

orchestration and asking his sister to write a libretto loosely based on the original story (additional characters include the angels, the sandman and the dew fairy).

A close friend of Richard Wagner and respected composer in his own right, Humperdinck saw in *Hansel and Gretel* an opportunity to bring German culture and its people to the stage. The score is filled with references to various German folk songs and Wagnerian techniques, making it an instant favorite at its premiere on Dec. 23, 1893. Its popularity was such that it was the first radio broadcast done by the Royal Opera House in London and also the first opera transmitted live from the Metropolitan Opera in 1931.

Love for the opera has never waned, and like Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*, it has become as much a part of the holiday season as Santa Claus and Christmas caroling. The tale's origins may be sinister, but it's comforting to know that across the world, the opera sends children to bed with dreams of candy, gingerbread and a family safe at home.

Hansel and Gretel

An opera by Engelbert Humperdinck

Dec. 11, 2020-Feb. 15, 2021

Composed by Engelbert Humperdinck

Libretto by Adelheid Wette

Stage Director	<u>Leigh Holman</u>
Music Director	<u>Nicholas Carthy</u>
Scenic Designer	Alan Smithee
Lighting Designer	<u>Ron Mueller</u>
Costume Designer	<u>Ann Louise Piano</u>
Technical Director	Ron Mueller
Assistant Director	Nnamdi Nwankwo
Assistant Conductor	<u>Miguel Ángel Ortega Bañales</u>
Production Assistant	<u>Christie Conover</u>

This production was rehearsed and recorded in accordance with government and CU campus health protocols related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Company members had regular access to viral testing, and during rehearsals we reduced the capacity of our venue, increased our physical distance, wore masks, and took regular breaks to allow air circulation in the venue. Today and every day, our students' wellness remains our top priority.

Please note: This production features fictional moments that might trouble sensitive viewers, including the use of prop weapons and children locked in cages after being separated from their parents.

Saturday Cast

Hansel and Gretel

ROLE

Gretel

Hansel

Witch

Witch Study Cover

Mother

Father

Dew Fairy

Sandman

Chorus

NAME

Olivia Lerwick

Helen Hass

Tanner Johnson

Kyrie Laybourn

Sarah Cain

Tyler Padgett

Mara Riley

Tyler Vinnola

Anna Hansil

Jessica Kim

Mia Kopera

Joy Johnson

Asha Romeo

The production with this cast will run approximately one hour and 20 minutes.

Sunday Cast

Hansel and Gretel

ROLE

Gretel

Hansel

Witch

Witch Study Cover

Mother

Father

Dew Fairy

Sandman

Chorus

NAME

Linsey Duca

Kelly Riordan

Tommy Bocchi

Kyrie Laybourn

Kyrie Laybourn

Nnamdi Nwankwo

Megan Pryor

Kaisa Herrmann

Anna Hansil

Jessica Kim

Mia Kopera

Joy Johnson

Asha Romeo

The production with this cast will run approximately one hour and 20 minutes.

English Outreach Cast

Hansel and Gretel

ROLE

Gretel

Hansel

Witch

Witch Study Cover

Mother

Father

Dew Fairy

Sandman

Chorus

NAME

Anna Whiteway

Christine Li

Will Floss

Kyrie Laybourn

Alexis Cairy

J. Healy

Sophie Engerman

Jessica Kim

Anna Hansil

Jessica Kim

Mia Kopera

Joy Johnson

Asha Romeo

The production with this cast will run approximately 60 minutes.

Synopsis

Act I

Hansel and Gretel are supposed to be working, Gretel on stitching and Hansel on his father's broomsticks for market. Instead, the two children shirk their duties at every turn. Gretel reveals that a neighbor has given them a jug of milk and that they will make cream to have and enjoy. Mother comes home to find the two children slacking off and barely any of their chores completed. While trying to discipline the kids, the jug gets broken to pieces. Mother angrily sends the kids out to find strawberries to make up for the lost milk. She is heartbroken that there isn't enough food to feed her children.

At this point, father comes home drunkenly jovial with a bag full of food. He tells of how he sold his brooms at the highest prices to the people preparing for the oncoming festival. Mother and Father celebrate, but the celebration is cut short when Mother tells Father that she sent the kids to the woods to pick berries. Horrorstruck, Father reveals that those woods are the Ilsenstein woods where the Witch resides. The two parents rush out to save their children from being turned into gingerbread.

Act II

Hansel is searching for strawberries while Gretel makes a flower crown. Gretel offers the crown to Hansel, but Hansel scoffs at it (believing that boys don't wear silly flower crowns). Gretel puts on the crown herself and Hansel calls her the "Queen of the Wood." He offers some strawberries to Gretel and the two proceed to eat them all as they play. Realizing their mistake, the two argue over who is at fault and frantically look for more berries. In this time, the wood has gotten dark and all the surrounding sounds scare the children. Then, the Sandman shows up to sprinkle sand in the children's eyes to make them sleep. The two sing their evening prayer and fall asleep, and angels surround them to protect them as they dream.

Act III

The Dew Fairy wakes up the children with morning dew. Once awake, they find a gingerbread house and are unable to help themselves from trying a bit of it. The Witch captures the children with her magic wand. With the children in her clutches, she intends to turn them into gingerbread. Seemingly doomed, the children outwit the Witch and toss her in an oven. Previously captured children are returned

to normal and rejoice. Mother and Father find the children and celebrate being reunited with their children, who are safe and sound.

Stage director's note

By Leigh Holman

Humperdinck's masterpiece has been a favorite of mine since childhood. The lush orchestra, the gorgeous tunes and the finely-paced dramatic arc make *Hansel and Gretel* a tasty treat for children and adults alike. And though this is my fourth time directing the piece, it feels like the first when viewed through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is a little background on the journey we took to the forest.

Eklund Opera is lucky to have benefited from the brilliance of epidemiologists. All that we learned influenced our process. Singing projects aerosols further than speaking, so masks were needed in rehearsal, staging had to be executed with 12 feet of distance in mind, and after 30 minutes of any unmasked singing, everyone was required to break from the room. Our pianists were surrounded by plexiglass; our production staff sanitized all

properties, set props and fabrics between each use; we staged the entire third act on Zoom while campus was under a temporary remote order.

The final product is unique, too. Audiences are not allowed on campus, so we decided to share our hard work through film. Opera singing for the camera is a different artform. The camera demands more subtlety than an auditorium does, and our students learned the value of adding a multitude of skills to their performance toolbox. The pit is not a safe space in the time of COVID-19, so Maestro Carthy created beautiful orchestral tracks in lieu of live music. Finally, our video director Brad Stabio filmed, edited and refined the film for a release before the holiday season.

This has been a creative project for the archives and a joy to experience myself. Thanks to the donors, students, faculty and production team that have made this work possible for our talented students. Happy holidays and enjoy *Hansel and Gretel*!

Music director's note

By Nicholas Carthy

To read the original, extended music notes that were written pre-pandemic [visit here](#). But we now live in different times.

When the opera world shut down in March, we made the then novel decision to create an online performance of our April show. With the help of a lot of software and a very steep learning curve, I created a virtual orchestra that sounded authentic and could also build in the breathing and phrasing needed to make a performance sound alive. That project turned out to be quite successful, so when I got the news that there would be no orchestra available this fall, I decided to expand on what I had learned in April and do the same with *Hansel and Gretel*. I would recreate the Wagner-sized orchestra that Humperdinck demands. If only I had known...

Writing every single note and dynamic of this massive work into the computer was an onerous, if ultimately fascinating, task. (Wonk alert: coping with horns in E and E-flat, trumpets in A and the strangest transpositions for clarinets that I have ever seen.) Then comes the big question: how to make it musical, whatever that might mean.

Musicians do a thousand things instinctively, like tapering off a phrase or playing expressively. (Try converting that word into code!) They understand the composer's shorthand and understand that tempo is subjective. But what does a *ritardando/rubato* look like on a graph? How much time do you need to take a breath? And how do you give that time back?

Creating this has been a journey both enlightening and entrenching. It will never replace a living, breathing orchestra, but what it can do, in these straightened times, is give our students an idea of what it is like to sing with a romantic symphonic orchestra guiding them through this wonderful fairy tale of a piece.

Music staff

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Vocal Coach

Mutsumi Moteki

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Alaina DeBellvue

Hyeji Park

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With gratitude, we acknowledge Publishing House for our longstanding relationship collaborating on print programs for the Artist Series, Eklund Opera Program, Holiday Festival and Takács Quartet. We eagerly look forward to the day we can start printing with them again.

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As of Nov. 30, 2020

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2020-21 Digital Programs

October-December 2020

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