

Mami Wata



“Sadness, humour and hopefulness”

REVIEWS JUL 19, 2021 BY CLAIRE SEYMOUR LINBURY THEATRE, ROYAL OPERA HOUSE, LONDON



Mami Wata at the Linbury Theatre, Royal Opera House, London. Photo: Ellie Kurtz

The Engender Festival concludes with a programme of disparate voices, projecting power and hope

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The Royal Opera House’s annual Engender Festival seeks to address gender imbalance in opera and music theatre and promote the creative work of female and non-binary artists.

After a week of talks, debates, operas-in-progress, workshops and concerts, the 2021 Festival has drawn to a close with concert performances in the Linbury Theatre of Mami Wata – a programme curated by Pegasus Opera’s artistic director, Alison Buchanan, bringing together female artists to celebrate vocal works by British-based composers Bushra El-Turk and Errollyn Wallen, alongside international voices including Nkeiru Okoye, Lettie Beckon Alston, Dorothy Rudd Moore, Margaret Bonds and Nahla Mattar.

Water is the connecting theme, symbolising movement, rebirth and freedom. Embodied by the fluid grace of dancer-choreographer Monique Jonas, the spirit of Mami Wata – the first Black mermaid, found in creation myths across West Africa – flows through and binds the diverse works, some being heard in the UK for the first time.

Prefaced by short video introductions, the works unfold like an underwater stream of ever-changing light, colour and texture. Kamilla Arku plunges to the depths of the piano’s keyboard, and into its interior, conjuring an atmospheric soundscape to accompany four divas of the deep – sopranos Alison Buchanan and April Koyejo-Audiger, and mezzo-sopranos Camille Maalawy and Simone Ibbett-Brown. With sadness, humour and hopefulness, they sing of journeys, literal and symbolic. A string quartet provides soft support, with Davina Shum’s cello an eloquent solo voice.

The diasporic currents are woven by director TD Moyo into a continuum, promising a world reborn.



Claire Seymour
LECTURER

Claire Seymour is an associate lecturer in Music and English Literature at the Open University. She is an independent scholar, writer and musician.

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Production Details	
Production name	Mami Wata
Venue	Linbury Theatre, Royal Opera House
Location	London
Starts	16/07/2021
Ends	17/07/2021
Running time	1hr 20mins
Composer	Bushra El-Turk, Errollyn Wallen, Nkeiru Okoye, Lettie Beckon Alston, Dorothy Rudd Moore, Margaret Bonds, Nahla Mattar
Director	TD Moyo
Choreographer	Monique Jonas
Cast includes	Alison Buchanan, Camille Maalawy, Ronald Samm, Simone Ibbett-Brown, April Koyejo-Audiger, Mikel Sylvanus
Producer	Pegasus Opera Company

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