Half Moon

OPERA UP CLOSE
INTIMATE IN SCALE. MIGHTY IN IMPACT

# FLOTSAM

## DIGITAL PROGRAMME



A NEW OPERA FOR YOUNG CHILDREN BY KERRY ANDREW



SOUTHAMPTON & IOW MUSIC

@operaupclose

Supported using public funding by ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND



# Hello fellow explorers! And welcome...



**...to *Flotsam*, an opera made especially for you.**

Have you ever found treasure on the beach? A shiny shell, a twisty piece of driftwood, a pebble with a hole right through it? Pip has a whole collection. Step into their fantastical world and, together, you'll see magical and extraordinary things.

We have brought David Wiesner's beautiful picture book to life in words and music by Kerry Andrew, with the help of some brilliant Reception and Year 1 children on the Isle of Wight: young people just like you! They helped shape every element of our ***Flotsam*** world (sound, story and setting) - look closely and you'll find their fingerprints everywhere.

We are signing with Makaton throughout ***Flotsam***, another way of communicating that enhances the experience for all, so do join in with the signing and the singing!

Making this work with and for very young people has been an inspiring and illuminating experience. We brought our first creative ideas and the children, meeting this world with brilliant curiosity, leaped in without a moment's hesitation and transformed them. They offered questions, ideas and possibilities we would never have imagined, challenging and inspiring us as artists and storytellers.



A huge, ocean-sized thank you to our partners Half Moon and Southampton and Isle of Wight Music; to the trusts, foundations, Friends and supporters who make our work possible; to our brilliant cast and company; to every child who shared their ideas with us; and to you, for joining us today.

Of course, OperaUpClose doesn't just make operas for young people. Have a look at our website to see the other brilliant shows we have coming up: the whimsical romantic comedy of ***OperaCocktail***, the sharp-witted murder mystery ***Gianni Schicchi (or Where There's A Will)***, and the dark psychological horror of ***Salome: Dance Toward Ruin***. There's something for everyone, so come and experience the power and brilliance of operatic storytelling.

**But now, it's *Flotsam* time: sea, sun, music!**



# Flora McIntosh

Artistic Director and CEO
OperaUpClose

# Synopsis




**David Wiesner's magical picture book, *Flotsam*, adapted and brought to life in words and music by award-winning composer and writer Kerry Andrew.**

Pip likes to play alone. In their bedroom, they explore a collection of treasures from the beach—flotsam! What are these objects and creatures? Who are they? What stories might they tell? With the help of an old camera, Pip's imagination takes hold, conjuring extraordinary underwater worlds—strange, beautiful, and entirely their own.

Guided by the idea of photographing the world, curiosity and wonder leads Pip to discover a world beyond their own, connecting with other children across time and place, and finding the courage to reach out and make friends.















Photography: Bettina Adela



# Production Overview

**Running time:** 35 mins

**Music and words:** Kerry Andrew

**Accessibility:** ***Flotsam*** is for children aged 2 - 6 and their families. Please contact the touring venue for more information on accessibility.

**Makaton is integrated throughout *Flotsam*...**



"It has been a joy and privilege to be part of the ***Flotsam*** journey. The incorporation of Makaton into this production is truly inclusive for all.

Makaton is a communication programme using speech, symbols and signs. The delivery of these signs always follows the spoken word and relies heavily on gestures and facial expression. These tools are key elements in the delivery of any opera production. The inclusion of Makaton is a natural progression which can enhance the understanding, processing and therefore the connection between audience and performers. With this level of inclusivity the whole experience can be deeply meaningful and fun."

**Helen Brew, Makaton Specialist**



# Production Cast & Crew

**Cast:**

- **Susie Buckle** - Pip
- **Gabriella Liandu** *(she/her)* - Mum
- **Meera Maharaj** *(she/her)* - Anemone/Flute
- **Benjamin Saffir** *(he/him)* - Hermit Crab/Double Bass
- **Phil Wilcox** *(he/him)* - Melville/Accordion

**Creative:**

- **Kerry Andrew** *(they/them)* - Composer and Librettist
- **Flora McIntosh** *(she/her)* - Director
- **Nikki Charlesworth** *(she/her)* - Set and Costume Designer
- **Claire Childs** *(she/her)* - Lighting Designer
- **Rori Endersby** *(they/them)* - Assistant Director and Tour Manager
- **Phil Wilcox** *(he/him)* - Music Director

**Production:**

- **Helen Brew** *(she/her)* - Makaton Specialist
- **Robin Simon** - Costume Supervisor
- **Chloe Stally-Gibson** *(she/her)* - Production Manager
- **Chuck SJ** *(they/he)* - Technical Stage Manager
- **Paul Grace** - Set Build

# Creating Flotsam

## Kerry Andrew

### Composer and Librettist



**It's been a joy to work with David's beloved and award-winning wordless graphic novel, *Flotsam*. The book's message speaks deeply, I think, to young children through to adults, and for me is about connection to the natural world and to each other. It has a real sense of wonder and is a celebration of our imagination.**

After a chat with David to understand the genesis of the book, I worked on a libretto that reflected the story and themes. Incorporating work from the imaginations of children on the Isle of Wight was key - myself, Flora, Nikki and other musicians did three visits to six schools over a school year. Reception and Year one students helped create sounds and descriptions for magical creatures found under the sea (the robot fish song) and the song about the children back in time (My favourite thing is Lego). They also learnt how to draw and compose freely with shapes and colours, and made awesome, colourful graphic scores which helped influence some of my music, later inserted into the score in places to inspire players improvisations.

My music always draws on lots of flavours and it's no different here: there's contemporary classical, jazz, improvisation, musical theatre, and a sort of silly polka! It's all led by what feels right for the story and the words at each point.

I tend to write for individuals rather than parts (i.e. 'Meera' as opposed to 'Flute'); being present for auditions and interview chats with the performers before was also important to create my libretto and music. I wrote very much for the performers' musical personalities, and so it's lovely to observe rehearsals and see that coming to life! It's also brilliant to see Flora's interpretation of the opera, elevating what's on the page to something very enchanting and dynamic.

**I'm really excited to see how audiences, young and old(er!) respond to *Flotsam*. I hope it invites people to enjoy opera and expand their understanding of what it can be.**

# The story behind *Flotsam*



## A word from David Wiesner...

Most of my career has been spent making picture books without words. It is an approach that asks the reader to immerse themselves in images without text to guide them. This means that the story is open to interpretation and different for each reader.

When OperaUpClose asked me if they could create an opera from my book Flotsam I was immediately excited by the prospect. This was taking the idea of interpretation to whole new level. A book without words being given a voice - voices! Not just words, but songs and instrumentation.

Stories are so malleable and I am thrilled that my story is being re-envisioned in such a dramatic way. I would love to say I had a hand in it, but I was completely happy to turn ***Flotsam*** over to all of these diverse creators to tell the story anew. I'm especially delighted that children will be able to experience what may be a familiar book in such a different light, showing them the range of paths that creativity can take.



# Creative



## KERRY ANDREW
Composer and Librettist

A West Yorkshire-based composer, author and performer/producer. The winner of four British Composer Awards, Kerry has created chamber and community operas for Wigmore Hall, Mahogany Opera and Tete a Tete Opera...



## FLORA MCINTOSH
Director

Flora is a highly experienced performer, producer and director. Directing credits include *OperaCocktail* and *Riders to the Sea* for OperaUpClose. Flora's passionate about co-creation, opening the creative process to audiences and communities...



## NIKKI CHARLESWORTH
Designer

A Theatre Designer, Maker and Facilitator, Puppet Designer and Puppeteer. Passionate about access, inclusion for Deaf and disabled artists and audiences, Nikki works at the forefront of disabled-led theatre, championing the creative integration of access...



## CLAIRE CHILDS
Lighting Designer

Claire has designed the lighting for a wide range of shows, including theatre, dance, opera and puppetry. She is an associate artist with Half a String, where her credits include *Tiny Planet*, *The Snowsmith*, *Boulder and Under the Frozen Moon*...



## RORI ENDERSBY
Assistant Director & Tour Manager

A queer and neurodivergent director and theatre maker. Rori has a background in technical theatre and stage management that informs and aids their creative work. Telling stories that haven't always been told...



## PHIL WILCOX
Music Director

A baritone and accordionist with a passion for versatility, Phil conducts several choirs and is proud to be the Learning and Participation Manager for Leeds Song. As an animateur he's collaborated with English National Opera, The Royal Ballet and a range of projects...

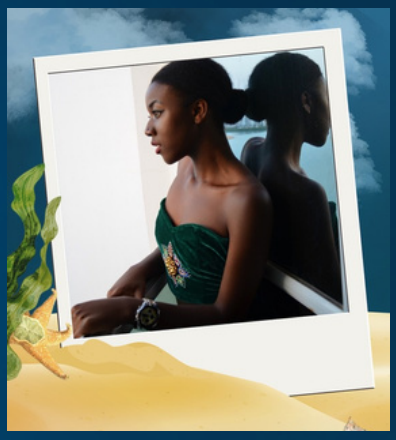
FULL BIOS

# Cast



## SUSIE BUCKLE
Pip

Susie Buckle trained at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and has sung roles with companies including Opera North, Opera Holland Park, If Opera, Vache Baroque, Charles Court Opera, Mahogany Opera Group and British Youth Opera...



## GABRIELLA LIANDU
Mum

A Zambian-Scottish mezzo-soprano known for her versatility from baroque opera to contemporary jazz. Since 2018, Gabriella has been a member of Ex Cathedra... Vocal and Operatic studies were at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire...



## MEERA MAHARAJ
Anemone/Flute

Meera Maharaj's duo with pianist Dominic Degavino has enjoyed much success, ft. as Countess of Munster Recital Scheme, Tunnell Trust and Park Lane Group artists. Since 2013, she has frequently performed with guitarist James Girling, as the Meraki Duo...



## BENJAMIN SAFFIR
Double Bass/Hermit Crab

Benjamin began his professional symphonic career in 2019 with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra and since appeared with Orchestra Victoria, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, and the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra...



## PHIL WILCOX
Melville/Accordion

A baritone and accordionist with a passion for versatility, Phil's career is a patchwork of opera, oratorio, choral conducting, and education leadership. Inc opera roles with English Touring Opera, Grange Park Opera, Buxton Festival and Waterperry Opera...

FULL BIOS



# From child's minds to the stage....

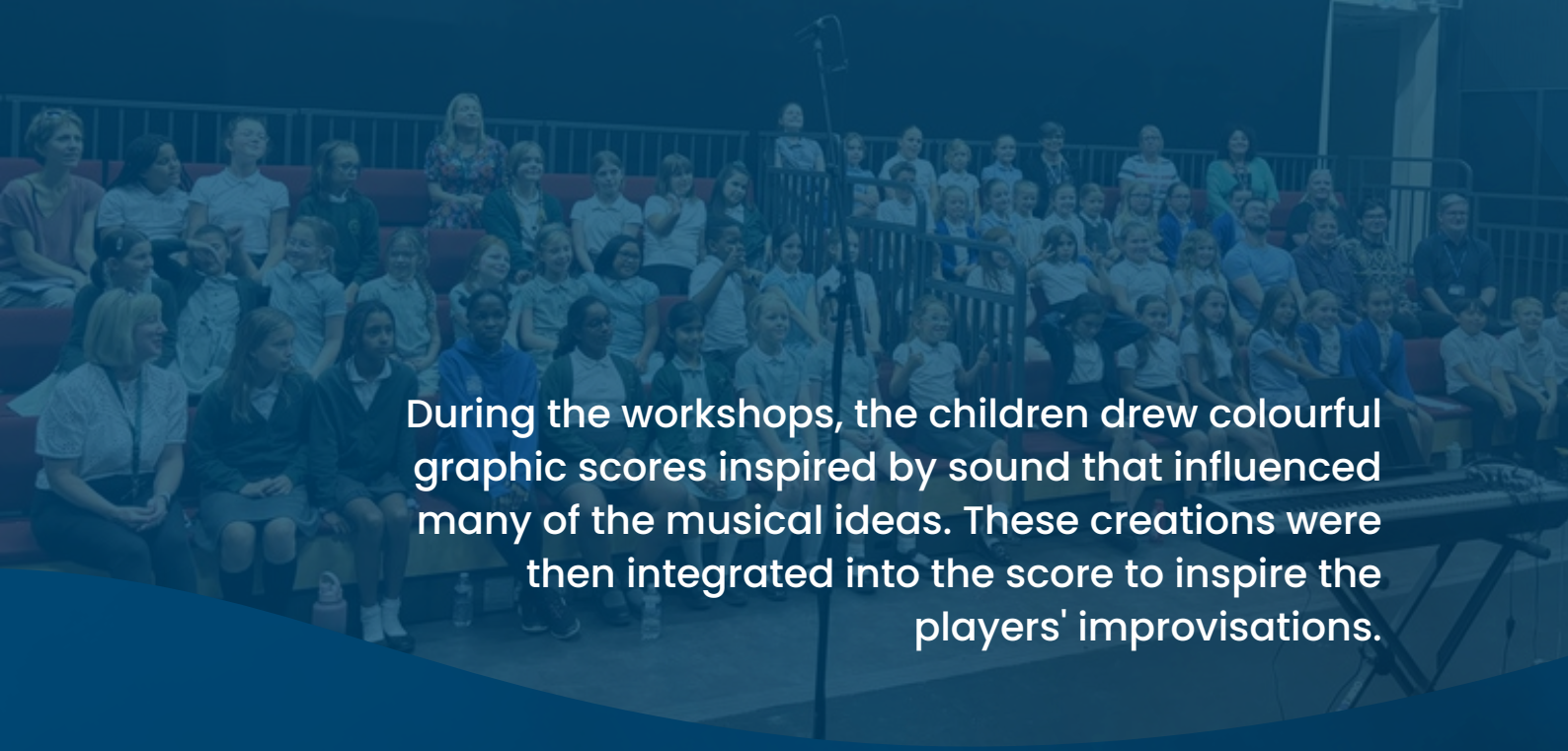
***Flotsam*** was created through a series of co-creative workshops with children from five schools on the Isle of Wight in partnership with Southampton and Isle of Wight Music Hub.

As part of the early development process, the core creative team behind ***Flotsam*** visited six schools over a school year. Reception and Year One students helped create sounds and descriptions for magical creatures found under the sea, not only inspiring Kerry Andrew's words and music, but also giving direction to both the concept and design of the production.

## A huge thank you from everyone at OperaUpClose and the *Flotsam* creative team...

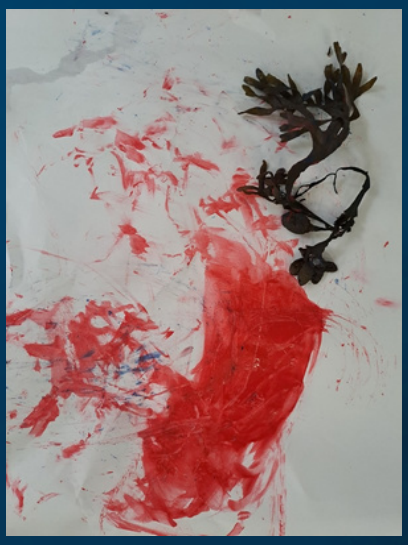
To all the brilliant children and teachers at Gatten & Lake, Godshill, Haylands, St Mary's Primary Schools and Medina House. We couldn't have made ***Flotsam*** without you!

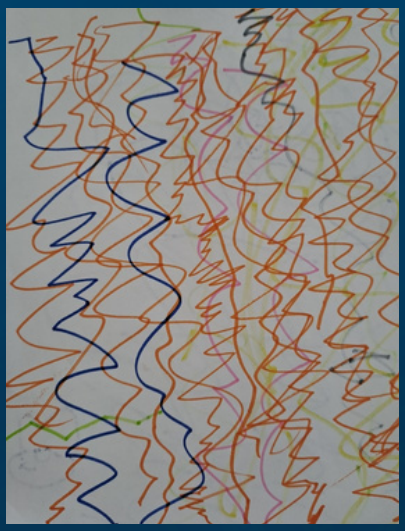




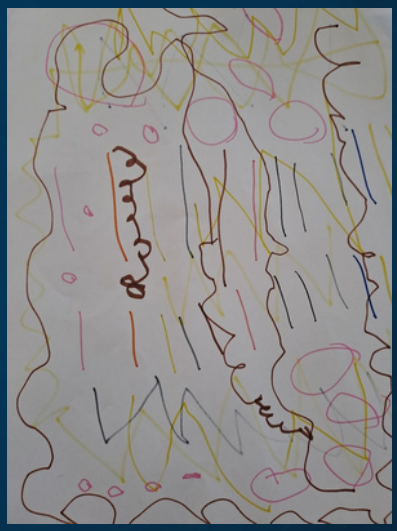
During the workshops, the children drew colourful graphic scores inspired by sound that influenced many of the musical ideas. These creations were then integrated into the score to inspire the players' improvisations.













# About OperaUpClose

**OperaUpClose** is a national touring opera company with a mission to bring the power, immediacy and joy of musical storytelling to diverse audiences across the UK.

Part of the Arts Council National Portfolio since 2023, OperaUpClose was born out of a belief that opera could be experienced differently. It has grown from its first award-winning production of ***La Bohème*** in a 35-seat pub in 2009, to becoming a trailblazer for London's fringe opera scene, to a nationally touring company championing a new model for creating and producing operatic work.

At the heart of that model is our Ensemble of Storytellers: singers and instrumentalists share the stage as equal partners, each playing a living part in the narrative and bringing audiences closer to the music and drama. Recent projects include ***The Flying Dutchman*** (National Tour, 2023), ***Riders to the Sea*** (National Tour, 2025), ***Gianni Schicchi (or Where There's A Will)*** (Tour, 2026) and ***Peace At Last***, an opera for 3–5 year olds based on the picture book by Jill Murphy (Tour, 2023).

- **Artistic Director & Chief Executive** - Flora McIntosh
- **Executive Producer & Deputy Chief Executive** - Ally Rosser
- **Development Manager** - Emily Jundi
- **Digital & Creative Campaigns Manager** - Jennifer Le Roux
- **Company Manager** - Enya Angell
- **Junior Producer** - Clara Allison
- **Trustees:** John Andrews, Amanda Arriss OBE, Abigail Bratcher, Chris Brown, Charith Cabraal, Matthew Lyons, Joe McFadden, Jane Morgan, Hazel Province (Chair), Carolyn Ward, Clare Williams

# Partners

**Half Moon** is the UK's leading small-scale young people's venue and touring company. It is a local organisation with a national remit, committed to supporting artists and young people at every stage of their creative development. Working from their base in East London, they specialise in new writing and artform development, acting as a gateway organisation that provides pathways for progression and experimentation.

Their wide-ranging programme reaches around 50,000 annually and engages those who are often excluded from arts activity. Activity includes a season of professional plays for young audiences, national touring productions and an extensive creative learning programme, including eight youth theatres. Half Moon is a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England.

**Southampton & Isle of Wight Music** is a growing partnership of local, regional and national organisations, working together to build an inspiring and inclusive programme of music making that reflects the cultural diversity of our areas.

Together they are dedicated to delivering life-changing music experiences that enrich the life, health and well-being of our children and our communities.

Southampton and IOW Music is the strategic lead for Southampton and the Isle of Wight for the South Coast Music Partnership, the Music Education Hub for Solent, Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.

# Supporters

***Flotsam*** is generously supported by:




## The Reinventions Donor Circle

Mike Anderson, Genista McIntosh, John Ward, Carolyn Ward and those who wish to remain anonymous.

## Friends of OperaUpClose

Amanda Ariss, Jane Earl, Richard Hale, Liz Meek, Martin Parrott, Jeffrey Tobias and those who wish to remain anonymous.

# UK TOUR | Oct–Nov 2026




24 OCT

**SOUTHAMPTON**
MAYFLOWER STUDIOS



26 OCT

**LICHFIELD**
THE HUB AT ST MARY'S



27 OCT

**GAINSBOROUGH**
TRINITY ARTS CENTRE



28 OCT

**NORWICH**
STAGE 2, NORWICH THEATRE



29 OCT

**LUTON**
HAT FACTORY ARTS CENTRE



30 OCT

**SOUTH LONDON**
STANLEY ARTS CENTRE



31 OCT

**EAST LONDON**
HALF MOON THEATRE



6 NOV

**MILTON KEYNES**
THE STABLES (JIM MARSHALL)



7-8 NOV

**BATH**
THE EGG THEATRE



13 NOV

**WINCHESTER**
THE NUTSHELL



14 NOV

**WEST LONDON**
GRAND JUNCTION



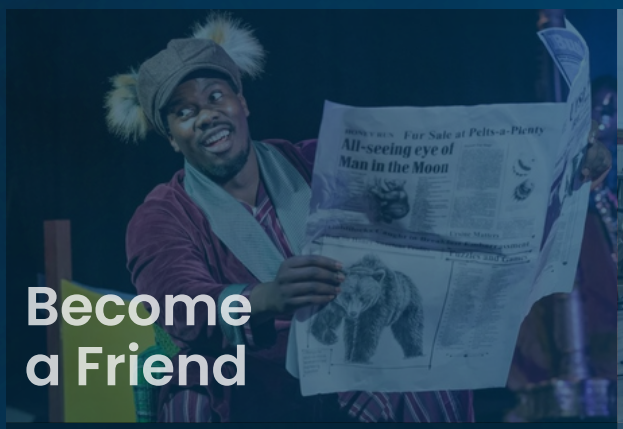

15 NOV

**NORTH LONDON**
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# Get Involved

Make a vital and direct contribution to our commissions and productions, securing the availability, impact and reach of this extraordinary and joyful artform both for today and for the future.













LEARN MORE

## Interested in Corporate Partnership?

**OperaUpClose** is a national touring opera company rooted in theatre with partnership and innovation at its heart. A partnership with **OperaUpClose** will align your brand with artistic excellence, cultural enrichment, and community impact.

LEARN MORE

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