



Cape Town Opera Newsletter
11 October 2024

La Traviata
with

Noa Naamat
Director

Noa is the Director of Cape Town Opera's current production of Porgy and Bess on tour in China.



1. How would you describe your job to a child?

I would say that my job is about turning sounds into pictures. I read and listen to stories, imagining the worlds where they can come to life. So, from page to stage, together with the performers, we make these narratives jump off the paper and create a space where music and drama transform into a full-on immersive experience!

2. Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

As cliché as it sounds for a director, there is a lot of: "What's the subtext?", "What's your intention?", "Change of thought," "energy!", "breath!" and, of course, the classic, "This needs to happen dead centre!"

3. Which talent would you most like to have?

At this very moment, to speak Mandarin! We're heading to China with this production, and I believe communication is everything! Being able to connect with the crew in their language would help make the experience even richer!

4. What is your most treasured possession?

My most treasured possession is a hamsa necklace my mom gave me at birth. Despite having very little, it was important for her to have this symbol of protection and love.

5. If you could have dinner with three people, living or dead, who would they be?

If I could have dinner with three people, I would choose Lorenzo Da Ponte to hear firsthand about his adventurous life choices (no judgment!), Chekhov, my favourite playwright, to introduce a serious existential element to the conversation, and Puccini to lighten things up with his charm and flair.

6. What's the most interesting thing about you that people don't know?

People may not know that my cultural influences were heavily Middle Eastern, and European culture—let alone classical music and opera—wasn't part of my upbringing at all. I grew up in a Jewish family in Israel with my grandparents coming from Iraq and Afghanistan. So, it just goes to show that opera is a beautiful art form that isn't necessarily elite or exclusive.

7. What would your autobiography be called?

Sempre Libera: A Director's Guide to Controlled Chaos

8. If you could redesign the food pyramid without any dire health consequences, how would it look?

I'd call it "La Dolce Vita Pyramid." At the bottom, a solid foundation of pasta and pizza, because carbs are essential for happiness! Then, fresh veggies, followed by rich sauces and a selection of cheeses. To finish it off, comforting pastries like cannoli and sfogliatelle.

9. If you could steal credit for any great piece of art (music, film, book, visual art), which one would you claim?

I really like the book *The Empty Space* by the British director Peter Brook. It beautifully captures the essence of theatre's transformative power.

10. What's currently on your music playlist?

My playlist at the moment is a strange mix of *Aida* (one of my next projects), the classic sounds of Frank Sinatra, and the wonderful Italian beats of Vasco Rossi.

Opera Director Noa Naamat is quickly establishing herself as one of the most exciting and fresh voices on the international opera scene. A native Israeli, she has worked across the UK, Europe, America and Asia on a vast range of productions, from mainstream repertoire to world premieres. She is noted for her innovative vision, compelling storytelling, and bringing to life original and captivating interpretations.

Her directing credits include Henze's *Phaedra* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden), *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor* (Staatsoperette Dresden), *The Rape of Lucretia*, *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Royal Danish Opera), *La Bohème* (Mecklenburgisches Staatstheater), *Benvenuto Cellini* (Royal Opera of Versailles), *La Traviata* (Alden Biesen Opera Festival), *Le nozze di Figaro* (Helsinki Music Centre), *Suor Angelica* (Copenhagen Opera Festival), *Don Pasquale*, *L'elisir d'amore* (Arezzo Opera Festival), *Così fan tutte* (Diva Opera), *Il matrimonio segreto* (Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music), *Don Giovanni* (Saluzzo Opera Academy), *La voix humaine* (Studiotheater Schloss Belvedere Weimar), *Salieri's Prima la musica e poi le parole* (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and the world premiere of *A Different Story* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden).

Noa became the youngest director ever accepted to the prestigious Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. She made her house debut directing the Young Artists Summer Performance on the main stage. Before completing her MA in Directing at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Noa studied Theatre Practice at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama as well as Italian and History of Opera at the Accademia Europea di Firenze. She was the Apprentice Director at Lyric Opera Studio Weimar and at Oberlin's Summer Opera Program in Italy. Supplementing her operatic work, she also held a directing residency at Shakespeare's Globe, where she staged scenes from *The Merchant of Venice* on The Globe stage.

Noa is dedicated to the development and training of young talents and has delivered classes and workshops for the Royal Opera House, Mascarade Opera Studio Firenze, Royal Academy of Music, University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music (CCM), Baldwin Wallace Conservatory of Music, Clonter Opera and Oberlin Conservatory of Music. Noa has also worked extensively as an assistant and staff director for international opera houses such as Wiener Staatsoper, Royal Opera House, Scottish Opera, The Israeli Opera, Deutsches Nationaltheater Weimar, Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, and Teatro dell'Opera di Roma.

Among the awards and honours Noa has received for her work, her production of *Benvenuto Cellini*, in which she collaborated with Sir John Eliot Gardiner, won the Oper! Awards for 'Best Opera Recording'. Her production of *Il matrimonio segreto* was a winner of the National Opera Association's Opera Production Competition. Noa has also been named the distinguished Bayreuth Bursary from The Wagner Society and was the recipient of the Accademia Europea dell'Opera Stage Director Fellowship. Her production of Henze's *Phaedra* at the Royal Opera House was nominated for an Olivier Award for 'Outstanding Achievement in Opera'.