

The Garden

A short opera

Written and directed by Zinnie Harris

Music by John Harris



Promoter information



The Garden

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Composer:	John Harris
Libretto and Direction:	Zinnie Harris
Cast:	Pauline Knowles and Alan McHugh
Duration:	40 minutes
Commissioned and produced by:	sound

"The Garden" is a gentle tale of love and hope, set in a high rise flat where a couple discover a strange plant growing through the floor of their kitchen. The more they pull up its roots, the more it grows back, its gentle insistence eventually reminding them of important but forgotten emotions, and ultimately providing a way of reconnecting and finding each other. "The Garden" is based on the original short play of the same name by Zinnie Harris, which was commissioned by the Traverse Theatre in 2009 and won a Scotsman Fringe First Award as part of "The World is Too Much With Us" season.

Although a through-scored opera, it is of a new musical form that seamlessly combines spoken-word, sung-spoken and fully-sung elements. It casts two singing actors - Pauline Knowles and Alan McHugh - and the score is performed by the composer using full-range studio monitor speakers and sub-woofers on a vintage Yamaha DX-7 synthesiser, with additional computer-triggered samples.

Following its premiere and sell-out performances at **soundfestival** 2012 in Aberdeen, Scotland, "The Garden" has been well received by audiences in London, Edinburgh, Berlin, Potsdam and most recently in Shanghai, June 2016.

"Overall, the most striking aspect of "The Garden" is an overwhelming sense of truth that permeates the entire production. Zinnie and John Harris have produced an intense, bold take on the dystopian genre that brings a mature insight into what an apocalyptic future would actually look like to most people... refreshing and well done." Susan Lowes, All Edinburgh Theatre.com (****), August 2015



The Garden at Edinburgh Fringe 2015: Pauline Knowles and Alan McHugh. Image by Mihaela Bodlovic

Biographies

John Harris's most recent opera *M'dea Undone* premiered in Toronto in May 2015, directed by Tim Albery, following commissions for Scottish Opera's 5:15 series and Tapestry Opera's LibLab programme. His music includes over 35 productions for the Royal Shakespeare Company, National Theatre of Scotland, West Yorkshire Playhouse, the Traverse Theatre, Dundee Rep Theatre, and the Edinburgh and Naples International Festivals, as well as concert music, film and animations for S4C and Channel 4.

Zinnie Harris is an award-winning British playwright, screenwriter and director. Her plays include *How to Hold Your Breath* (Royal Court Theatre), *The Wheel* (National Theatre of Scotland) and *Further than the Furthest Thing* (RNT / Tron theatre). She has won the Berwin Lee, the Peggy Ramsay Award, the John Whiting Award, the Arts Fellowship Playwriting Award, the Amnesty International Freedom of Expression Award and four fringe firsts for her work. She is also the Associate Director at the Traverse Theatre, and a senior lecturer in playwriting at St Andrews University. Her writing for Television includes the recent BBC1 series *Partners in Crime*, and *Spooks*.

Pauline Knowles' theatre work includes: *Crazy Jane* (Birds of Paradise); *The Effect* (Firebrand); *Miss Shamrock's World of Glamorous Flight* (Oran Mor); *A Slow Air* (Borderline); *Marilyn* (Lyceum/Citizens); *While You Lie*, *Gorgeous Avatar*, *Heritage*, *Tressel at Pope Lick Creek*, *Knives in Hens*, *The Speculator*, (Traverse); *Tir na nOg* (Fringe Best New Musical); *A Christmas Carol*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Cuttin' a Rug* (Edin Royal Lyceum); *Othello*, *Cinderella*, *Wizard of Oz* (Citizens), *Tutti Frutti* (National Theatre of Scotland); *Liar*, *Sunset Song*, *A Scot's Quair* (TAG), *Vassa* (Almeida); *Shining Souls* (Old Vic).

T.V. Inc: *Case Histories*, *Personal Affairs*, *Garrow's Law*, *Manhunters* (BBC); *Taggart* (STV)

Alan McHugh graduated from RSAMD in 1991, and has since worked with the country's leading theatre companies including The Citizens, Traverse, Royal Lyceum, Tron, Arches, Wildcat, Borderline, Perth Rep, Dundee Rep, The Byre and 7:84. Television credits include Taggart, High Road (*STV*), Limmy's Show, Rab C Nesbitt, Still Game, Dear Green Place (*Comedy Unit*), Single Father, Sea Of Souls, River City. (*BBC*) Film work includes: Small Moments (*Oxygen Films*) Wild County (*Gabriel Films*), and Jim The Fish (*Altapage Productions*)



The Garden at Edinburgh Fringe 2015: Pauline Knowles and Alan McHugh. Image by Mihaela Bodlovic

Reviews and audience feedback

"It's a very bleak play that somehow left me feeling incredibly uplifted. But also what I liked about it is this idea of trying new forms of opera because opera is notoriously expensive, notoriously overblown at points and to see this ("The Garden") in this tiny tiny studio theatre made me think that there's great futures ahead for opera." Louise Welsh on Saturday Review, BBC Radio 4, August 2015

"Small-scale new opera is seen too rarely in Scotland. This piece – which is short...and convincingly designed...and in which the composer plays his own subtly effective music – is a powerful advert, both for the art form and for the show's producer, **sound**." Mark Brown, Sunday Herald, August 2015

"The acting and vocals are directed so intensively by Zinnie Harris that this opera, with its two actors, can compete with the best of British or Northern European contemporary cinema." Berliner Zeitung, August 2013

"This is like a quiet Greek tragedy, quietly affecting as the couple realise that in this barren wasteland, Eden can never be recreated. Beautifully performed by McHugh and Knowles, this is a small shoot, but a delicate and tender one whose tendrils take root in the heart" Lyn Gardner, The Guardian (***), August 2015

"The Garden" may possibly herald the advent of a new genre" Philip Fisher, British Theatre Guide (***)

“An intimate city-centre flat was the location for “The Garden” by Zinnie and John Harris, a bleakly dystopian tale of overpopulation and a despairing urban couple (played compellingly by Pauline Knowles and Alan McHugh) who discover an apple tree growing in their living room. The real revelation, though, was the way Harris’s astonishingly expressive vocal lines slipped effortlessly back and forth between speaking and singing.” The Scotsman newspaper (****), October 2012

“Excellent combination of opera and theatre - weirdly uplifting. Thanks for the apple!” Audience member, August 2015

“Brilliant intimate honest drama: a skein of operatic grandstanding threaded through.” Audience member, August 2015

Promoter information and tech spec

Show Running time	40 mins (No interval)
Minimal playing space	3m by 4m (complete black-out required)
Number in Company	5 (2 cast, 1 female and 1 male. 1 composer/musician, male. 1 stage manager, female. 1 writer/director female)
Get in	Min 2 hours (4 hours if no lighting has been rigged) Note: access required 1.5 hours before each performance for vocal and physical warm up
Crew	Min 1 venue tech
Running	No tech required just Front of House ushers
Get Out	1 hour

SET

The piece is best set site specific in an apartment but can be adapted to other forms of playing space if required. This must be discussed and agreed upon in advance.



(show in site-specific venue)



(show adapted to traditional venue space)



(show adapted to restaurant)



(show adapted to restaurant)

The company will travel with Lino, 2 chairs, props, laptop, keyboard, small audio mixer, monitor stand in a transit van.

The promoter must supply the following:

Keyboard stand, RAT stand (or other lit music stand), piano stool, PA and lighting.

SOUND to be supplied by the promoter unless agreed otherwise (see below):

- 2 full range speakers/amplifiers (set on the playing area) suitable for the size of the apartment/venue; the specification of the speakers to be agreed with the company in advance.
- 1 Sub-woofer speaker/amplifier (separate), range <30Hz → crossover with main speakers (approx 105 Hz)
[If no suitable speakers/amplifiers are available, company will bring in van at extra cost. Speakers used in the original production were ATC studio monitors, with a Genelec sub-woofer.]
- [Note: for larger venues, a larger rig will be required. This to be agreed with the company in advance]
- Speaker cable and patch leads

NB It is imperative the keyboard position is in view of the actors on stage and vice versa.

LIGHTING to be supplied by the promoter:

This is dependent on venue. The minimum amount of 6 channels is required.

- 4 x ½ K Fres
- 1 x Par 64 or ½ k flood
- 1x source4 or equivalent with gobo holder.
- Programmable lighting desk (24 lighting Q's) and dmx

NB the control position for the stage manager to operate from must also enable access her to do the scene change as well.

OTHER

Risk assessments and Lx designs available upon request.

Performance cost

Approximately £7,500 for one week (based on 8 performances over 4 days, with two days get-in/rehearsal) EXCLUDING:

- Travel and accommodation for 2 actors, 1 musician, 1 company / stage manager and 1 director;
- Technical hires (lights, sound);
- Venue hire and fit-out;
- Transport of set elements and technical equipment (if needed).

Negotiable for specific touring options and individual performances.

Touring history

2nd & 3rd November 2012	Premiere at soundfestival , Aberdeen (United Kingdom)
8th & 9th August 2013	Tête à Tête: The Opera Festival, London (United Kingdom)
13th & 14th August 2013	Paterson's Land, Scottish Opera, Edinburgh (United Kingdom)
17th & 18th August 2013	MOVE OP! Opera Festival, NeuKöllner Oper, Berlin (Germany)
12th June 2015	Potsdam Sanssouci Music Festival (Germany)
18 th – 30th August 2015	Made in Scotland Showcase, Traverse Theatre Edinburgh Fringe (United Kingdom)
14 th – 19 th June 2016	Xintiandi Festival, Shanghai (China)

Trailers

<https://vimeo.com/138896392> (Trailer)

<https://vimeo.com/138895557> (Extract)

Website page

<http://sound-scotland.co.uk/explore/the-garden>

Further information / bookings

Producer: **sound**, Kadri Soerunurk +44(0) 1330 826 526, admin@sound-scotland.co.uk

Technical: Camilla O'Neill camillaoneill@hotmail.co.uk

Composer: John Harris john@rednoteensemble.com



sound is a new music organisation based in North East Scotland.

We organise the annual **soundfestival** 20th October - 6 November 2016

www.sound-scotland.co.uk