



# Opera Unplugged

Practice, Performance & Workshops  
Learning from the Past & Planning for the Future

**An International Conference**

**Tyne Theatre & Opera House, Newcastle**

**2nd - 6th September 2025**

In partnership with

**opera  
north**

*“As a Tynesider it gives me enormous pleasure to be able to invite you to attend the third annual conference at the Tyne Theatre & Opera House which will include an exciting programme of workshops, lectures, and performances. This is a unique opportunity for opera companies to re-discover many lost techniques of the nineteenth century – lighting, effects, stage machinery - in one of the finest acoustics in the land. Come and explore this fascinating world with us at the Tyne Theatre & Opera House in September 2025 – we are on an exciting journey!”*



John Wilson, Artistic Director & Conductor - Sinfonia of London  
TT&OH Project Patron



The Tyne Theatre & Opera House in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK was built in 1867 and fully equipped with the latest technology of the time. Unlike so many theatres it was never really modernised and so when it became a cinema in 1919 its backstage areas fell asleep.

In the late 1970s the theatre was converted back to a 1,200 seat theatre and the historic stage machinery was fully restored. In 1983 Placido Domingo appeared here in Tosca and the theatre prospered until Christmas Day 1985 when a dreadful fire engulfed part of the stage.

Following the fire, the stage machinery was partially restored, and in 2022 we received a heritage grant to complete the restoration.

In September 2023 we held our first annual International Conference entitled “*Victorian and Edwardian Theatre in Performance: Music & Machinery - Stagecraft & Spectacle*” and in 2024 we held a similar event to study nineteenth century scene painting technique.



Throughout the last 3 years we have also been researching the “lost repertoire” of the nineteenth century – creating a historic performance calendar and researching lost manuscript music written specifically for the theatre which we recently re-discovered in the British Library.



In early 2023 we received another significant grant to begin the restoration of our second “lost” theatre space which was originally built in 1869. When completed it will serve as our smaller experimental space with a seating capacity of 325, built in the traditional manner with a proscenium arch and a stage that connects directly at the same height to our main stage.

By December 2024 we will have completed Phase I of this work and we will be able to use it as a studio space for performance – the first time for over 100 years!

## Opera Unplugged - Invitation for Proposals

The time has now come to launch our biggest and most ambitious International Conference to date. Our third annual conference will be 'Opera Unplugged', an opportunity to speak, meet and perform - to talk about technique, acoustics, traditional crafts, staging - bringing the past back to the future, and making opera relevant in today's society.

Our beautiful 1,200 seat Grade I listed theatre will host a number of different activities over a 5 day period from **Tuesday 2nd - Saturday 6th September 2025**. We are now looking for proposals from opera companies, theatre historians, academics, musicians, musicologist and traditional opera craftspeople. There will be papers, performances, workshops, demonstrations and provocative discussion in both our main auditorium, and our new Black Box studio which seats 80.

We are also delighted to announce that we will be hosting the Carl Rosa Opera Company retrospective exhibition throughout the event.

To bring all this together we now invite you to send us the following proposals for consideration:

1. **30 minute papers** on your chosen relevant topic (*Proposals should include a paper title, an abstract of no more than 350 words and a short biography*).
2. **Performance extracts** from a chosen work – with discussion and interpretation
3. **Small scale performances** for our new Black Box studio
4. **Collaborative mini-workshops** on a chosen topic

*People or companies interested in submitting to options 2, 3 or 4, please contact [conference@ttoh.uk](mailto:conference@ttoh.uk) for further discussion.*

Conference topics include; acoustic performance, staging opera in the 19th century, the stage - the pit and the audience, historic stage machinery in performance, lighting technique in the nineteenth century, touring opera companies of the period... but there may be others that you might wish to suggest. Above all we are very keen to see practical demonstrations – show and tell, not just talk!

Please send proposals by email to **[conference@ttoh.uk](mailto:conference@ttoh.uk)** no later than 5pm on **Friday 31 January 2025**.

To register to receive delegate information, email [conference@ttoh.uk](mailto:conference@ttoh.uk) and add **DELEGATE INFO** to the email header.