



**The Grange Festival announces the world premiere of a specially-commissioned orchestral version of Jonathan Dove's *Mansfield Park*, commemorating the 200th anniversary of the death of Jane Austen**

**Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 September 2017**

The Grange Festival's Artistic Director Michael Chance is delighted to announce the world premiere staging of a new orchestral version of *Mansfield Park*, the critically-acclaimed chamber opera by composer Jonathan Dove and librettist Alasdair Middleton, in September 2017.

This production of *Mansfield Park* puts down a firm marker for The Grange Festival's desire to extend its work outside the festival season. The Grange Festival's inaugural summer season, 7 June-9 July 2017, includes brand new productions of Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Britten's *Albert Herring*, as well as a performance of Verdi's *Requiem* and an evening devoted to the music of Rodgers & Hammerstein and Rodgers & Hart with the John Wilson Orchestra. *Mansfield Park*, in September, is a welcome addition to the year, and the first world premiere of specially-commissioned work to take place at The Grange.

This newly-orchestrated version of *Mansfield Park* was commissioned from Jonathan Dove by The Grange Festival to celebrate the serendipity of two significant milestones for Hampshire occurring in 2017: the 200th anniversary of the death of Austen, and the inaugural season of The Grange Festival in the heart of the county with what promises to be a highly entertaining musical staging of one of her best-loved novels.

*Mansfield Park* was originally written by Jonathan Dove to a libretto by Alasdair Middleton based on the novel by Jane Austen for a cast of ten singers with four hands at a single piano. The scale of this new version, with 13 musicians instead of piano, is ideally suited to the theatre of The Grange, and its setting in the magical estate hidden away in the Hampshire countryside, famed for its Greek Revival architecture and overlooking an ornamental lake. It can be imagined as Mansfield Park itself.

The commission also allows a continued relationship between the works of Austen, one of the world's most recognised and admired authors, and Jonathan Dove, one of Britain's most successful living composers. This orchestration of *Mansfield Park* follows a year in which Dove won a BASCA for *The Monster in the Maze*, a community opera commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra, Berliner Philharmoniker and Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, and performed under the baton of Sir Simon Rattle in three separate productions.

The Grange Festival production will bring together director **Martin Lloyd-Evans** and conductor **David Parry**. The cast celebrates the best of British – a dream team of some of the

best emerging talent with well-known stars. Casting includes **Martha Jones** (Fanny Price), **Sarah Pring** (Lady Bertram), **Grant Doyle** (Sir Thomas Bertram), **Angharad Lyddon** (Julia Bertram), **Henry Neill** (Edmund Bertram), **Jeni Bern** (Aunt Norris), **Daisy Brown** (Mary Crawford), **Nick Pritchard** (Henry Crawford) and **Oliver Johnston** (Mr Rushworth).

The Grange Festival's Artistic Director Michael Chance said:

*"I am so pleased that Jonathan Dove has agreed to orchestrate Mansfield Park for The Grange Festival. It's such a perfect piece for our gem of a theatre. The setting and the conceit of a play within a play is a crucial part of Jane Austen's story - in a house within the house which gives rise to a unique relationship between the opera and the company. My hope is that devotees of Jane Austen, of opera and of The Grange will all come to see what promises to be a highly entertaining musical staging of one of her best-loved stories."*

Nicholas Suffolk, Exhibitions and Interpretation Manager at Hampshire Culture Trust, said:

*"We are delighted that The Grange Festival is staging this premiere of Mansfield Park. The performances will form an important part of the Jane Austen 200 celebrations; a programme of exhibitions, performances, lectures and more, celebrating Hampshire author Jane Austen on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death. We aim to bring national and international audiences to our county to celebrate Jane's life in Hampshire, and partners like The Grange Festival are key to doing this. They make a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the county."*

Priority Booking for The Grange Festival is now open and audiences are encouraged to become a Friend or Founder to gain access to the tickets: [www.thegrangefestival.co.uk](http://www.thegrangefestival.co.uk) .  
General booking opens in Spring 2017.

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### **About Jonathan Dove**

Born in 1959, Jonathan Dove's early musical experience came from playing the piano, organ and viola. Later he studied composition with Robin Holloway at Cambridge and, after graduation, worked as a freelance accompanist, répétiteur, animateur and arranger. His early professional experience gave him a deep understanding of singers and the complex mechanics of the opera house. Opera and the voice have been the central priorities in Dove's output throughout his subsequent career.

Starting with his breakthrough opera *Flight*, commissioned by Glyndebourne in 1998, Dove has gone on to write over twenty operatic works. In 2010 *A Song of Joys* for chorus and orchestra opened the festivities at the Last Night of the Proms. Throughout his career Dove has made a serious commitment to community development through innovative musical projects. His 2012 opera *Life is a Dream*, was performed by professionals and community choruses in a disused Birmingham warehouse, and a church opera involving community singers *The Walk from the Garden* was premiered at Salisbury Cathedral.

2015 brought the world premieres of *The Day After*, commissioned and produced by Holland Opera with a libretto by April de Angelis, a post-Apocalyptic setting of the myth of Phaeton, written specifically to be performed outside; and *The Monster in the Maze*, an opera for children, young people and adults, with a libretto by Alasdair Middleton, commissioned by the Berliner Philharmoniker, London Symphony Orchestra, and Festival d'Art Lyrique d'Aix-en-Provence, and led by Sir Simon Rattle and Simon Halsey.

In 2016 *The Monster in the Maze* was further translated into Taiwanese/Chinese for a production at the National Taichung Theater, and received a BASCA British Composer Award. Away from opera, Dove's solo piano piece *Catching Fire* was premiered by Melvyn Tan at Cheltenham Festival with further performances in the UK, Netherlands, Singapore, and Australia.

[www.jonathandove.com](http://www.jonathandove.com)

### **Alasdair Middleton**

Alasdair Middleton was born in Yorkshire and trained at the Drama Centre, London.

His work as a librettist includes: with Jonathan Dove – *The Monster in the Maze* (Berliner Philharmoniker, London Symphony Orchestra, Aix-en-Provence Festival), *Diana and Actaeon* (Royal Ballet), *The Walk From The Garden* (Aegeas Salisbury International Arts Festival), *Life Is A Dream* (Birmingham Opera), *Mansfield Park* (Heritage Opera), *Swanhunter* (Opera North),

*The Enchanted Pig* (The Young Vic, ROH2), *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (Opera North), and the cantata *On Spital Fields* (Spitalfields Festival, winner of a Royal Philharmonic Society Award;

*The Feathered Friend*. He has written four plays; *Aeschylean Nasty*, *Shame On You Charlotte*, *Casta Diva* and *Einmal*.

### **About The Grange Festival**

The Grange Festival was founded in 2015 to continue opera at Grange Park in Northington. A magical estate hidden away in the Hampshire countryside, famed for its Greek revival architecture and overlooking an ornamental lake, The Grange has an award-winning theatre which is intimate yet flexible and known for its excellent acoustics.

The only opera festival in the country with a singer as Artistic Director, The Grange Festival is committed to bringing the highest standards of performance to audiences through a range of opera and theatrical work by working with world-class directors, musicians from the UK and abroad and creating the most exciting artistic collaborations. In the years ahead, The Grange Festival aims to make its work as accessible as possible through an ambitious programme of events and education work, which will utilise the theatre for more of the year, as well as extensive outreach work and a subsidised ticket scheme.

[www.thegrangefestival.co.uk](http://www.thegrangefestival.co.uk)

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