



## **CHORUS OPEN CALL: ECSTASY OF THE VIRTUES 2026**

**We are looking for six dynamic performers to form an ensemble of singers & dancers for our new commission by Nwando Ebizie**

*If it would be more accessible to have this information in another format, please email [bridget@mahoganyopera.co.uk](mailto:bridget@mahoganyopera.co.uk)*

***Ecstasy of the Virtues*** is a multisensory operatic performance inspired by Nwando's exploration of the life of Hildegard von Bingen, viewed from Nwando's perspective as a Neurodivergent Afrofuturist. Hildegard von Bingen (1098-1179), Benedictine abbess, composer, visual artist, writer and mystic; not only a visionary, but also, uniquely for the time, a woman whose visions were recorded and preserved in musical scores, writings and illuminated manuscripts, lives again in new form. *Ecstasy of the Virtues* will be a 75-minute performance inspired by Hildegard's opera/mystery play of the same name. It will feature 12 performers; singing & live instruments, spatialised electronic soundscapes, dance, and sculptural lighting and projections.

Rooted in creative accessibility, theatrical signing, creative captions, audio description and a 'relaxed' feel are all embedded into the piece rather than added on.

**The truth gleams forth in human form,  
and therefore we shine clear  
We are the word - spirit incarnate,  
Shining souls**

### **CREATIVE & PRODUCTION TEAM**

|                                   |                      |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Lead artist (composer, director): | Nwando Ebizie        |
| Assistant Director:               | Jennifer Muteteli    |
| Experience Dramaturg:             | Stephanie Singer     |
| Deaf expression lead:             | Chisato Minamimura   |
| Choreographer:                    | Krystal S. Lowe      |
| Creative Technical Director:      | Tom Richards         |
| Producer:                         | Emily Moore          |
| Executive Producer:               | Bridget Rennie       |
| Artistic Advisor:                 | Frederic Wake-Walker |

Commissioned & co-produced by Mahogany Opera

### **CAST**

Principal performers to include: Cevanne Horrocks-Hopayian, Yfat Soul Zisso, Chisato Minamimura, Grace Nyandoro, Chisara Agor



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**We're now launching an open call to find six chorus performers for the production.**

### **WHO ARE WE LOOKING FOR?**

We're looking for a range of performers who can sing and dance (at the same time) to play the Virtues in Nwando's interpretation of Hildegard's Ordo Virtutum. You should have an interest in experimental and devised work.

**Dance skills** – must have two of the following: professional level ballet, contemporary, traditional African/Caribbean

**Singing** – sopranos and altos with professional level experience of sight-singing, performing contemporary work and singing off copy. We're looking for a diversity of styles which could include jazz, classical, gospel, opera, musical theatre, folk.

Although the six singers function as an ensemble, there will be solo lines for all the parts.

We value diverse perspectives and would like to receive applications from a broad range of artists. For this production, we'd particularly welcome applications from people of colour, disabled artists and older performers – but anyone who fits the above criteria is welcome to apply.

We are committed to making these opportunities as inclusive and accessible as possible, including – but not only – by budgeting for access costs for both auditions and the production itself.

You must have the right to work in the UK.

### **DATES**

Performers must be available for rehearsals and performances in London, Leeds & Barrow on the following dates: **14-27 September; 2-7 October 2026**

*NB Successful candidates will need to guarantee availability for these dates; NAs will not be granted.*

### **FEES AND EXPENSES**

The fee for this project will be based on a day rate of £195. We anticipate approximately 12-16 days' work in rehearsal and performances for the chorus; a detailed schedule and therefore final total fee will be agreed at contracting stage in April 2026.

UK travel, accommodation and per diems will be provided for time away from your home base.

The audition/working session is unpaid but some travel bursaries are available.



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## **HOW TO APPLY**

To apply please complete this form with your information and:

- A CV or biography
- Link/s to one or two recordings showing singing and dancing together in a contemporary piece of up to five minutes total (or provide timestamps). This doesn't need to be professionally recorded.

Please upload your documents to this [Google Form](#) by **9am on Wednesday 15 April**. To enable us to monitor the diversity of the candidates we are attracting, we also ask all applicants to complete our anonymous diversity monitoring form; this can be done online here: <https://forms.gle/UBC7nXgjuWaRYghU8>

Following the submission deadline:

- We will make a shortlist, and notify all applicants by the end of the day on **Friday 17 April**.
- Working sessions to select the chorus performers will take place on **Wednesday 29 April** in London. If these dates or the location are impossible for you, please let us know in your application and we will discuss options if you are shortlisted.
  - For the working session, we will ask you to prepare a short section of the score as well as two sung pieces of your own choice:
    - A piece which you know from before your training / from your culture – this could be a folk song, a lullaby or devotional song
    - A piece which exemplifies your professional practiceA piano accompanist will be provided but you can sing unaccompanied if you prefer.
  - The choreographer will work with you in the session, you may be asked to improvise but we won't ask you to perform a prepared dance piece.
  - The working session will be a group session with other candidates. Further details will be supplied if shortlisted.
- Some travel bursaries are available.
- We will hold sessions in an accessible venue.
- Please let us know after shortlisting if you have any access queries about the working sessions.

## **MORE INFORMATION**

The piece draws on Nwando's exploration of Hildegard as viewed through a Neurodivergent Afrofuturist lens. Hildegard (1098–1179) was an abbess, composer, visual artist, writer and mystic whose visions were captured in music and illuminated manuscripts. *Ordo Virtutum* stages a battle between the Devil and the Virtues for the soul of Anima. Our text weaves Hildegard's words with Nwando's dreamlike association with a scene from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. The aim is to create a ritualistic journey from intimacy to ecstatic vision, reflecting Hildegard's vivid sensory descriptions and Nwando's Visual Snow syndrome, which produces halos, static, auras and glowing lines. These shifting sensations shape the visual world of the work.



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The project advances Mahogany Opera's mission to expand what opera can be and who it is for, countering elitist perceptions by creating inclusive experiences for artists and audiences—particularly Black, neurodivergent and disabled communities. It aligns with our wider interest in reimagining radicals and rituals of the past through contemporary practice, as seen in works such as *Sky in a Small Cage* (inspired by Rumi) and new projects inspired by biblical stories, French baroque and medieval mystery plays.

### **About Nwando Ebizie**

Nwando Ebizie a British-Nigeran multi-disciplinary artist; a constellation point for a spectrum of multidisciplinary works that call for RADICAL change.

She challenges her audience to question their perceived realities through art personas, experimental theatre, neuroscience, music and African diasporic ritualistic dance. Carving out her own particular strand of Afrofuturism, she combines research into the neuroscience of perception (inspired by her own neurodiversity) and an obsession with science fiction with a ritualistic live art practice.

Works include her immersive sensory environment *Distorted Constellations*, her pop persona *Lady Vendredi* (a blaxploitation heroine from another dimension!) and the building of her long-term operatic experience, *Hildegard: Visions*. This award winning work has toured across the world. She has performed in Tokyo (Bonobo), Rio de Janeiro (Tempo Festival), Berlin (Chalet), Latvia (Baltais Fligelis Concert Hall) and Zurich (Blok) as well as across the UK from Home MCR to the Barbican and Southbank Centre.

### **About Mahogany Opera**

Mahogany Opera is a leading commissioner and producer of new opera and music theatre. We work across the UK and internationally. Mahogany Opera exists to unlock creative expression, reflect diverse perspectives, and spark human connection. Our mission is to create opportunities to make and experience boundary-pushing, inclusive new work.

We are committed to developing diverse artists and audiences through three programmes:

**New Works** – developing, commissioning and producing new staged works with a wide range of artists and organisations

**Snappy Operas** – award-winning participatory young people's programme

**Meet Me @ Mahogany** – discussions, events & workshops exploring & opening up the process of making new work.

Website: [www.mahoganyopera.co.uk](http://www.mahoganyopera.co.uk)  
Instagram: [@mahoganyopera](https://www.instagram.com/mahoganyopera)  
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