



THE RPS CONVERSATION – OPERA

with

Elizabeth Llewellyn soprano

Trystan Llŷr Griffiths tenor

Sir Antonio Pappano Music Director, Royal Opera House

Lorna Price Head of Costume, Scottish Opera

and **James Murphy** Chief Executive, Royal Philharmonic Society

transcribed by Lois Heslop

James: Welcome to the RPS Conversation. I'm James Murphy, Chief Executive of the Royal Philharmonic Society. These are extraordinary times for us all, and particularly for the performing arts. We've created this new series of short conversations especially for classical music lovers. Right now, you're likely hearing a tsunami of animated advocacy from all sorts of voices, each speaking out for music whilst – in lockdown – it can hardly speak for itself. Yet on the other hand, you may be wondering how all that squares with the unlimited luxuries of classical music still bringing us so much comfort from our radio stations and streaming services, not to mention the deluge of inspired performances musicians are sharing with us all from home.

Our intention with these conversations is to cut through some of the current noise and try to give music-lovers a candid, sincere and human impression of how music-makers are faring through all this. Today we're talking opera, and the pandemic's impact on Britain's proud operatic heritage. We hope to give you a glimpse into what happened the moment opera productions suddenly came to a halt. We'll look at how opera has spoken and resonated in potent and surprising ways during lockdown, and ask how it might return and how it may change in light of all this. Joining me are four guests whose lives are dedicated to making and sharing opera. Sir Antonio Pappano, Music Director of the Royal Opera House; Elizabeth Llewellyn, who has gone from singing title roles at the New York Met and the English National Opera to finding herself at home for the last three months in rural Yorkshire; Lorna Price, Head of Costume at Scottish Opera; and tenor Trystan Llŷr Griffiths, who has sung himself with Scottish Opera and lives in Cardiff. Thank you all for joining us.

We've lots to talk about but I wanted to ask first, what were you in the midst of working on when lockdown began? Tony, maybe you can kick off...

Tony: I was in the middle of a run of Beethoven's *Fidelio* – a new production – and there was a lot of hype around it, especially around the fact we were doing a live cinema performance, which was to be the last performance of the series. Although we didn't get to do it because it was on the Monday that stopping performing started and lockdown was on the Tuesday, the 17th of March I believe. It was really a tough blow, I must say, because there were a lot of people who hadn't come to see it in the theatre and who were dying to see it in the cinema. And when you think it was going to be shown in 1500 theatres worldwide – think about that number, it's amazing – it was a terrible opportunity lost, but of course the circumstances were what they were. I have to say though, we were all surprised that we were performing as long as we were because the week before was looking quite dark. I actually finished performing myself on the Sunday with the London Symphony Orchestra – I finished with them with Vaughan Williams' Sixth Symphony, which has a very disturbing and unusual final movement, which is all in *pianissimo* and is very – shall we say – post-Holocaust, post-terrible-happening and it's extremely desolate, and it kind of set the tone for what was to come.

Elizabeth: I was in Germany in the middle of a run of *Aida*, and it was a bit Verdi-tastic because I had just finished his opera *Luisa Miller* and had flown back to Germany to sing one performance of *Aida* and the following week we were meant to be having rehearsals for the Verdi Requiem and doing two performances of it then another performance of *Aida*. We didn't have the *Generalprobe* (dress rehearsal) – that was when we were called to a general meeting and we were told that everything was shutting down. All schools, restaurants, venues would be closed, and I had to find a flight back to the UK early the next morning

Tony: So you never got to do the first night?

Elizabeth: No, we'd already done six of the nine performances and it just so happened because there was a big gap between seven and eight they decided to put the Verdi Requiem in the middle, pretty much with the cast: we had our Amneris and Radames so we had the soloists to do it. We had wonderful rehearsals of the Verdi Requiem until the Thursday. On Thursday the dress rehearsal was cancelled and we were called to a meeting, and Friday morning first thing I was on a flight home. It was all very odd, and I knew everyone was grieving because we were really looking forward to it. *Aida* had been sold out and the Verdi Requiem had also sold out and everyone was singing their 'A-game' and we were really excited and then it didn't happen.

James: Trystan, I think you had just started a run – you had done one performance, was it?

Trystan: Yes. We had just done the premiere of Handel's *Alcina* out with Opéra National de Lorraine, out in Nancy, France. We had done opening night on the Wednesday and on the Friday morning President Macron had done a speech which

meant you weren't allowed to have more than a hundred people in the audience so that took it out of everybody's hands and the performances were cancelled, unfortunately. Spending six weeks rehearsing a brand-new opera then only getting to do one performance was a gutting feeling really. At least we had one performance to look back on. I found a flight and came straight back to Cardiff before anything more serious like locking down the country came in, so I got back just in time.

James: So how do you just step out of an opera, is that possible? Is it just in your head, your ecosystem, for days afterward?

Trystan: Spending six weeks blocking *Alcina* from start to finish, it's been in you for six weeks and it's not that easy to come out of it. There's still adrenaline in your body and for weeks I was thinking, 'what a shame, we only got to do one performance.' But you've got to look at the bigger picture and it was for the best, and I hope it clears up soon – but it doesn't look likely at the moment.

James: And Lorna, it isn't just the musicians who are missing out on a lot. Where were you?

Lorna: We were in the middle of a really busy season. We'd just finished John Adams' *Nixon in China* and we had Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which was about to go into the theatre. We were going to do a dress rehearsal but even that didn't happen in the end. We were a week away from costume fittings for our principal singers for a production of Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Gondoliers*. These were 18th Century costumes so huge costumes, really big panniers and stays, a huge production, but we just had to stop, which was gutting because I started buying fabrics for this back in November and my team had been working on this for four or five months.

James: Are there just sewing machines left with costumes in them?

Lorna: Luckily they gave us a few days to clear up when we actually first finished. We took a lot of stuff home – this was before the whole furlough thing. We were finishing off bits and pieces and trim just in case we did get back within the next six weeks, but clearly that didn't happen. So we had a good tidy-up, but it's just such a shame.

James: I wanted to ask each of you, how do people with opera truly in their blood like yourselves continue to find a way to be operatic in lockdown?

Tony: I think that for any artist to just stop, the opportunity to stop and take stock and think: what am I doing? How am I doing it? How can I do better? And the rest that your body and your voice get are positive things. We must say this. Although we've had lots of time, I live my life at 200 miles an hour, so to slam the breaks on and go to zero and I found very difficult, mentally and physically. But things have to be prepared: the edit of this, the DVD of that, and a recording edit has to be done, so there was a lot of

frenetic activity at first before we settled into a rhythm. I think every artist needs space to think, but many artists are in trouble right now who don't have the possibility to go on a furlough scheme which guarantees their job and for freelancers, that's really tough. There was a hope at the beginning that this wouldn't last very long, that it would pass, that some miracle would happen, then you realise you're in this for the long haul.

Of course you can study and learn things, but we realise that a different culture of work has developed, what we're doing right now, I don't remember doing this before. I'm doing these clips for the Royal Opera House website - informative analysis of scenes, virtual duets with people. I'm trying to do everything with an educational aspect to it, we have to feed our audience who are very hungry. The people who support us love music, coming into a theatre, so we need to give them something. At some point we've got to get back what we do. At the moment it doesn't look great economically getting back to normality. And all normality will be based on whether the government comes through and gives us a lifeline so we can survive through the period through December. If we can get far there might be a chance we can get back to normality. In the meantime, we're doing smaller things, trying to imagine smaller things. Streaming that is being done, even with a nominal payment from the audience – these are new initiatives. Will some of this stay when we get back to normal? Maybe. When I see the numbers of people who watch broadcasts of opera, 700,000 people, that's a lot of people. It's quite amazing. So we're going to have to reconcile ourselves and really focus and bite the bullet and think what is good about this period, in all senses, individually and communally, and work really hard to convince people and to make sure that the science is right, that they're giving us the true information, not based on fear but based on actual facts, so that we can get back to work sooner rather than later.

Elizabeth: It's not just the government, it's also the British people, and if we get a second spike. We still haven't reached flu season. I was speaking to a casting director the other day and they were concerned that these two things are still potentially ahead of us. We hope there won't be a second spike, but we've still got to get through flu season. I was asking about a production I'm meant to be starting at the end of January and running through February and they made the point that so much depends on whether we're legally allowed to gather and to rehearse, and that is completely out of our hands. It's about the British people doing what the government says and sticking with the rules and trying to avoid this second spike, which I think would trip us all up if that happens. We've got to be realistic about how desperately people want to get back to their normality.

I would say that for me, I'm probably not your typical artist because I was delighted when it all came to a halt. It sounds kind of perverse, doesn't it? I hadn't been home since March 2019, I hadn't seen the inside of my home for the best part of the year, and I wasn't due to see my home until the end of May this year. So the idea of being home for more than a few days was an absolute delight for me. I've lived here four

years and I've been away more than I've been here because of my work. I had my big wobble a few weeks ago; that whole reaction to the situation we're in was delayed for me because I was so delighted to be home and so delighted to be able to work in my own way on learning new roles and my technique and things like that; being able to sleep in my own bed for the first time in nine-or-so months and not think I have to pack again next week; being able to go for long walks and just being able to enjoy my own home, which I hadn't been able to do since March 2019. So I think my reaction was delayed.

James: But you've had enough of that now?

Elizabeth: Oh no! Not at all! I've spoken to friends around the world who are opera singers and we've all grieved at different times. For some, the grief was immediate and real and devastating, and for others it took a few weeks before that began to creep in and for us to see the enormity of it. For me personally, up until a few weeks ago, generally I would say I was fine because I was having the break I needed, vocally, mentally, physically, and it wasn't until a few weeks ago that it really hit me. Friends were saying 'when is your industry going to go back to normal?'. I was saying 'come back to me in six months, or make it six to twelve, because we don't know what's going to happen, and we will probably be the last ones to get back to normal'.

James: Trystan and Lorna, it would be great for you to tell us what you've found yourselves doing which might have seemed surprising departures but – looked at a different way – could be seen as very true to the spirit of opera-makers. Trystan, the urge for you to keep singing saw you step out onto your street and start singing to the neighbours. Tell us a bit about how that happened.

Trystan: Straight away when I came back from France, the Clap for Carers had just started. One night, a Thursday night, I had just been out for a run to clear my head because I am a full-time 'daddy day-care' now which is another level of stress. I have got to admit now that I am a bit fed up. It's so lovely to spend so much time with my daughter but I want a further goal to aim for now. I was clinging on to my last contract. I was supposed to be with Scottish Opera right now singing Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, but that got cancelled. So that's where my heart sank a bit because I didn't have anything else past that. But going for a run to clear my head one night, the Clap for Carers had begun. The clapping had started and my wife and my neighbour knew I had come back from singing in France and they said, 'go on, give us a verse of something,' so I was still out of breath and I gave a quick rendition of a Welsh hymn. The next week, after the clapping ended, I noticed that people were hanging around a bit more and then every week I sang something. It varied from Welsh hymns to 'O sole mio' and popular stuff like that, so it went a bit crazy really.

James: I love this sense that opera can't help itself, it needs to find its audience one way or another, it needs to get out there and meet the community...

Trystan: For me, it gave me a goal for the week because everything else had stopped except looking after my daughter, and then on a Thursday night it gave me a bit of excitement. It gave me a bit of that feeling again when you perform, and I actually got quite nervous, when I saw the whole street fill up. I was like, 'oh God, now I have to be on my A-game' because people came with their cameras and everything goes on social media. I stopped running on Thursday nights then!

James: And Lorna, you found pretty quickly something else to do which has a real civic quality. A lot of us in classical music have been thinking, 'what can we do to help?' but you were out there proving how opera-makers can give to society in different ways. Tell us what you've been doing.

Lorna: We found ourselves making lots of scrubs for the NHS. We have a transferrable skill. We can make 18th century costumes so of course we can make glorified pyjamas. It was our tailor Ali Currie who had seen a Facebook page called 'For the love of scrubs' – there's been lots all over the country. I have a lot of contract workers and I saw them all signing up for this group. I thought it would be more effective if I got in contact with the company, and go into work and use the workspace and have three cutters just cutting then we could go and deliver them all off to our makers all working at home. I got in contact with the company and they said they could let us in a few days a week and I think we ended up with 2200 metres of fabric. It was a lot. We've made 820 sets of scrubs in five weeks for the NHS. Last weekend I had a lovely letter from the Royal Infirmary in Glasgow saying thanks for supporting us. It was a lovely thing to do but it wasn't just the costume department. Marian Colquhoun in our props department got lots of the production department who don't sew to make face shields. And they made just over 9000 face shields. The whole of Scottish Opera was doing what we do best which is making stuff and solving problems – that's just what we do.

James: I have to ask: you're so used to making fabulous extravagant costumes, did you succumb to the urge to bling them up any regard?

Lorna: Sadly, we were working a bit too fast. We put our nice little labels in there of course so whoever was wearing them knew we had made them, but you couldn't really. There were such specific standards they had to be made to. Even the weight of the cloth that was used, the NHS is quite specific that it has to be '195 gsm' otherwise it is too lightweight. It would have been nice to have popped a few sequins on but we didn't.

James: What we're seeing here, despite the horrors of the situation, is a recasting of opera. As opera-makers we've always known that opera has a lot to give to its community. All the opera companies have brilliant education departments and do great work, but getting out there and singing in the streets and making scrubs and getting that response is a nice reminder that opera has more universal properties than we sometimes remember. If you go back to when this was all sweeping our way, one of

the first things that really struck me was seeing opera sung on balconies in Spain and Italy, and when we were all fastidiously asked to wash our hands back in February and March, the way to ensure that we did it for long enough was to sing. So there's this idea of singing and everything around singing actually being much more central to the fabric of our society than we perhaps thought. What would you each say to that? Obviously, you all as opera-makers have always felt that opera is part of the community, but it's exciting to see it making that case again.

Tony: You've just mentioned the word 'singing' which seems to be the big stumbling block, doesn't it. Now they're saying you can only have six singers together singing which decimates the whole idea of the chorus. It's not clear to me what the actual exposure is and the emission of droplets and spray: I hear different things and if you talk to people in Germany or Austria compared to here it's a different thing. That's why I was saying earlier I hope we get the science right, because it seems very contradictory to other information from other places. So singing is actually the stumbling-block. That's what we're prohibited from doing. I think there was a statement saying, 'fine, musicals can come back, but no singing'. How is that possible? It shows you what a huge thing singing actually is and what a part of the business it is, whether it's opera or pop music, pantomime, musicals, everything. That's also why we're paralysed. There's the problem of the audience: it's not clear how to handle so many people coming into a building. I was very happy to read that Andrew Lloyd Webber is trying something in the Palladium which he did in Korea on how to clean a place on how to get audience in. I'm glad that someone that high-powered is doing such an experiment to push back against some of the vague or unclear or contradictory science that is out there. Just to say 'no singing', the music industry will fall apart. That has huge economic ramifications, in London, and all over the United Kingdom where culture plays such an important part in the society. We've got to sort that out, to get some real information, which is not just about covering one's behind. We've got to be seen to be preparing for a second outbreak of COVID-19 which is a serious business, but you can also be very serious about how you're trying to tackle the problem. Just saying 'we can't tackle the problem' is unacceptable to me.

James: And Lorna, as you already said, in opera you're used to solving problems, though this particular problem needs help from outside the opera community.

As opera has been around for hundreds of years, we might naturally think it can see off this episode as it has many things before. But can it? I'd like you to be quite frank now and give listeners a picture of what you each feel is really at stake. Elizabeth you've already mentioned grieving colleagues – is that where we're at?

Elizabeth: Yes, I think that's part of the stage that we're at. There's grief because you do, as a performer, put certain store against the next thing you're supposed to be doing – Trystan was meant to be singing Don Ottavio, that's a big deal, it's a great role. There are lots of other singers, myself included, whether its concerts or a role they

were particularly looking forward to, conductors, directors, or companies that they were particularly looking forward to working with suddenly not happening, there is a legitimate grief in that because we all want to build our careers. Certainly for me, it's given me a chance, as Tony was saying earlier, to take stock, think about what it is I really want to do, where I've arrived in my career, and what going forward I would like to do, assuming things go back to normal. For me personally, it has included learning roles, and not just learning the role but reading the source material in a leisurely, scholarly way, which has been lovely, and not being rushed because I have a deadline to learn this by and get it in the body.

I've been working on my technique – there's an album of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor songs which will be my solo debut album and it's been lovely to work on that material in a good, measured, thoughtful way, so hopefully by the time we get round to recording it and the thing being released, it will be something of quality. That's been something lovely to look forward to. I've just finished learning Ellen Orford (from Britten's opera *Peter Grimes*) which is a role I'm hopefully singing at the beginning of next year. To have the time to learn that role and not be watching the clock... that's incredible.

James: So everyone out there, I hope you're hearing this: she's ready to sing every role, she's got them down...

Elizabeth: [laughs]... including all the bass ones and the tenor ones, I'm there! It's a legitimate thing: time is a really precious commodity and if you have a busy career, time is the thing you have the least of: you're 'time poor'. If I'm going to make the best of this opportunity, I have to take advantage of the gifts that time gives to me. Grief aside, this is real – I have up days and really down days, and that's been a real surprise, but I feel strongly that I must redeem the time because this period won't be forever.

James: Trystan, you and I were talking the other day and you said that in another life before you fulfilled your vocation in opera, your work included making industrial doors, and if things aren't solved soon, apart from the opportunity perhaps for you to open a creche, you were saying that you might have to consider going back to the labouring, despite having built a really promising opera career these last few years.

Trystan: I was an industrial door fitter for three years before I went off to study singing. To think I'd have to go back to that work is not very good, and since I've been singing I've been getting my foot in different companies, especially recently. This year was supposed to be my best year of work where I was busy all year. It's really gutting that the opportunity to perform for major opera companies has come to an end and my opportunity to get my name out there further: it's very gutting. As Lorna knows, I'm a happy chappy and I try to look at everything positively. I've already been at a bit of

woodworking; I've created my own raised flower-beds and I've got an order from a woman down the street who wants another one.

James: I'm sure you'll get a lot more orders after this. We'll flash the number for your gardening business up on the screen perhaps!

One of my worries is that the public might hear a lot of noise from struggling artists and think oh it's very like Puccini's *La bohème*. But you are real people with real needs here. Lorna, in this conversation you represent the wider community within opera, we're talking the set-makers, stagehands, painters, ushers, so many people like that. You talked about making scrubs to keep morale high – how do you feel that all those making opera behind the scenes are feeling about their livelihoods and the future?

Lorna: It's desperate. A lot of the people in my industry are freelancers, they're contract staff. My whole team, we have been very lucky because Scottish Opera have been very supportive and they have managed to keep people on furlough, so even the contract and casual staff are being paid through the furlough system, but when that finishes, and obviously we are not going to be back in the theatres until next Springtime possibly, what are those people going to do? I'm really worried about my staff. It's not like they can go out and find other work because there isn't any other work, unless the film industry kicks off or TV. It's really desperate. People are really looking into other things that they can do. Technicians are quite a hardy bunch, when there isn't work, they'll get a bar job, a waitressing job. At the moment they can't even do that, there's nothing. It's really desperate. My hope is that we can get back into being in a theatre again. You guys can sing and do recorded performances, but I costume people. If I'm not making a costume for you, then I can't give work to other people. It's a bad time.

James: Let's talk about getting back: what needs to happen and who needs to help. It seem to me as an already very creative industry, we need to be doubly creative now. Tony, you've led the march in some regard on this with the really lovely and spellbinding concerts that we've seen the last couple of weeks at the Royal Opera House. It seems to me there that you're almost reclaiming the space in some ways. Last week with Mahler's *Song of the Earth* we saw the orchestra, which we don't usually see in opera, which was a delight, and there's a sort of intimacy in the performances you're creating presently there which you don't usually associate with the grandeur and the scale of the Royal Opera House. I loved the way that you turned it around so we could see the wonderful auditorium as a gesture to who's missing and who you'd like back. Were these conscious decisions, and what do you feel about the opportunity to be inventive at this moment?

Tony: With these concerts, we've tried to break the ice and tried to reanimate the spirit of the space, this gorgeous auditorium. Of course, when you're doing streaming it's just you, the artists and cameras, and I tell you it feels quite lonely. I have to say in the first concert when it was just piano and voice, it was really lonely. It was a little bit

better in the second performance of *Song of the Earth* where I had about 15 musicians with me and I felt like ahhh there was a community, this is closer to what we actually do. What we're trying to do is make little steps towards activity that is recognisable, that is close to what we do. Of course I want the whole orchestra, I want the whole chorus, but I'm not able to do that at the moment, but you do what you can. I think that to do nothing is not acceptable. Yes we are having a very rough time, but we do have to think about our audience out there that has showed incredible loyalty over the years and perhaps with all this modern technology we can attract new people to what we do and entice people to just taste a little bit of what we do and I think that is a wonderful opportunity. I am so happy to hear Lorna, what you're doing, making the scrubs and really helping society. I think that's what we have to do, and of course my staff, the technical and costume staff have done the same thing in London, and it's a time to give, especially since we are asking for the government's help for us to survive. We have to be ready to show our generosity. The worst thing that could happen is for us to think that we're artists and that we're somehow special in our society. We are givers. We want to give. Sure, we need to make a living but we're here to share emotion and to share visions and beauty and poetry, and that's a wonderful thing we have. Sometimes we just need to do the basics to support our public, and support our society, and show people 'I'm a mensch, you're a mensch', you know?

James: Trystan, you were telling me the other day that you were on a walk with your daughter and you saw a bandstand and you thought oohh...

Trystan: Yes, it has crossed my mind of doing some sort of online concert. A couple of my friends who are singers have done some Facebook Live concerts in their living rooms. I was on a walk and saw a bandstand in the middle of a park and it would feature very well in a little concert, I thought. You can do something like that really, and if I'm going to do something like that, I'd want to do it right, not just from my living room, I'd want to make more of a feature of it. So that crossed my mind. It's very hard at the moment to get the enthusiasm and the motivation to go back and sing and practice and rehearse, because there isn't an end goal for me basically. I don't know when I'm going to sing next for the public, and it's scary. It's scary financially and mentally as well, trying to keep everything positive. I've said I'm a positive person but it's hard to keep positive – I get my up days and my down days, like Elizabeth said.

James: One of the nice things of Tony's concerts is that you dusted off Schoenberg's chamber arrangement of Mahler's vast *Song of the Earth*. For me, that revealed some of the resonance, the inner workings, the atoms and the architecture of Mahler which I never really noticed before. Elizabeth, we were talking the other day about the opportunity with repertoire...

Elizabeth: Yes! Chamber music is king. It's not just voice and piano but these chamber arrangements of larger pieces or orchestral pieces. I've put out there an idea to an opera company of reworking one of Britten's song cycles, including things like

animation, and reducing the score down from chamber orchestra to the maximum amount of people we can have in a room, so right now six people. The conductor might have to be the pianist and/or something else. Part of being creative is not just putting art out there but it's trying to think creatively about how we can present this work in a different format in a way that is lean so it could be done outdoors as well as indoors, so it would be easier for our audiences to attend, because distancing is easier in a park than it is in a venue... that would mean it could be done by two people or by six or maybe as restrictions are lifted we could add more musicians to it. What will be really interesting for a new audience who have never been to the opera, who have never met an opera singer in Morrisons supermarket (as I was talking about to James last week), what will that look like if we take it outside or make it smaller or add another element of art to it.

I guess I feel that it is important to make this art and to be generous with the way we offer our art around us, but at the same time we have mortgages, rent, children, elderly parents, and when I got back from Germany I was slapped with a very big bill to do repairs to my house, and I didn't have the money to pay it but I had to do it, so there is a big hole in my bank account I wasn't expecting. So I would like to see, going forward, between streaming things for free and tantalising people with the ideas and the music and the art, that at the same time, for the next thing, which is going to be really good and you're really going to enjoy it, we sell it in some sort of way. I would like to see some of our streaming actually creating revenue, not just for singers but for folk like Lorna and her team, and the backstage team and the techies, and that any income we make, part of that goes to those people in our opera family who won't find it as easy, in inverted commas, to make money. We have an incredible product. Why aren't we selling it more? I think people will pay for it, whether they are the audience we know and love and we treasure, or whether they are people who just love music in any form. I think people will be prepared to pay for it. We just need to ask them to do so.

Tony: That's what we're doing with our concerts. We gave one free concert and then for the second and third programme we charged a nominal fee of £4.99...

James: Such a bargain!

Tony: I think it is a bargain and I don't think we should be ashamed of that, that we're charging. I think one of things we have to be careful of creating is a society which expects everything for free, and that is a little bit the expectation. That said, I think that all these videos that have made by my musicians, by my choruses, in Rome and here in London, it has been fantastic to keep the morale of the institutions to do these virtual creations that they've been making. That's been like a therapy for the musicians and for the singers, and that's great. But if you're offering a concert that is being streamed, I think you can and must charge for it. Nothing outrageous, but it's the respectful and right thing to do, because we are in trouble.

James: We are out of time, with so much more to talk about, but I was wondering if there are a few words that you might like to say to those who may be listening, while we can't see them in the usual ways right now.

Elizabeth: Carrying on from what we've just spoken about, any opportunity that our audience has, not just to listen and to enjoy and consume what we're offering, any opportunity to make even a small donation... none of us has vast amounts of money coming in at the moment... but even making a small donation, or a commitment to a musicians' charity, I think if every one of our audience members, old and new, could do that, that would be fabulous. Not just for the people you're seeing but for the people like Lorna you don't see. That would be fabulous. Stick with us and anything that you hear or enjoy, please be prepared to pay for it and support us that way too.

Lorna: I would just like to say to people that when it all starts up again, please do go out and see stuff. Go out to the theatre, pantomime, opera, ballet, because that's what we really need. Go out and see it and don't be scared of sitting in an auditorium with someone two metres away from you. Put a mask on, go and do it.

James: For me, just the thought of hearing an orchestra tuning up, waiting for the curtain to go up, is such an exciting prospect.

There is so much more to say but, with time against us, we hope this at least has given you at home a small impression of what's at stake for opera and the many people around the UK devoted to it, and whose livelihoods depend on it. As we've seen, these are people who are keen to get back to work, keen to connect and keen to share. And as Tony said: keen to feed the audience, and to do it better. Please do keep them in mind, and follow and support them however you can in the months ahead.

We've more RPS Conversations to come, so hope you'll join us again. You might like to go one step further and consider becoming an RPS Member and join us as we set out to explore and to celebrate what makes Britain 'philharmonic'.

Many thanks indeed to our guests today: Elizabeth Llewellyn, Lorna Price, Trystan Llŷr Griffiths, and Sir Antonio Pappano.