



ROYAL BALLET & OPERA

Tales of Love and Loss

A Visual Story for the Relaxed Performance. This performance also contains British Sign Language interpretation, Captions and Audio Description. There will be a Touch Tour one hour before the performance.

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Visual Stories are intended to be used by everyone to help with their enjoyment and understanding of a Relaxed Performance.

You can use this information for all performances of Tales of Love and Loss at the Royal Opera House, but some of the information will be more relevant to the Relaxed Performance.

Relaxed Performances can help support neurodiverse audiences, those living with dementia and those who have learning disabilities or experience anxiety. These types of performances are also helpful if you are anxious about sitting in one place for a long time or need to access the bathrooms and exits quickly. Our usual House rules don't apply to Relaxed Performances, but this can mean it might feel busy or sound noisy in the theatre and building.

Arriving at the theatre



You may have to wait in a queue to get into the theatre. Someone from the security team will ask to check inside your bags.



There will be members of staff or volunteers who can assist you with directions to all our spaces, step-free routes and any other questions you may have. Some wear red lanyards and t-shirts, some wear red lanyards and smart suits.



You will need to download your digital ticket onto your phone before you arrive and show this to staff when going into the theatre.



The accessible toilets are located on the ground floor by the café, in the Linbury Foyer on Level -1 and by the bar on Level 5. There are accessible toilets opposite the Clore Studio on Level 6. Our accessible toilets are gender neutral and have an alarm pull cord for emergencies.

For the Relaxed Performance, there will be a quiet space in the Taylor Learning Room 2, which is located in the Linbury Foyer. There is step-free access down to the Linbury Foyer and the room will be signposted. Here, you can take a moment, relax and sit in the quiet if it becomes too overwhelming in the theatre or building.

Information about the performance

The story of Tales of Love and Loss is told through singing, music and acting. Some characters may seem upset or angry; this is part of the performance, has been rehearsed and is safe for the cast and crew. An intimacy coordinator is part of the production team, ensuring all artists are safe and consenting.

During the Relaxed Performance, there will be a British Sign Language interpreter at the side of the stage using sign language to communicate the words being sung to d/Deaf audiences. Captions and surtitles will be displayed above the stage and on various screens around the auditorium. Audio Description headsets are available at the Linbury cloakroom in the Linbury Foyer.

Guidance: Suitable for ages 12+

This production contains scenes of a sexual nature and death, as well as the use of a prop gun. There are flashing lights, smoke, sparks and haze used during the performance.

Running times: The performance lasts approximately 2 hours with one interval.

The Departure: 30 minutes

Making Arrangements: 25 minutes

Interval: 25 minutes

Four Sisters: 40 minutes

The Relaxed Performance will take place Wednesday 6 May 2026 at 7.15pm.

Information about the stage



This performance takes place in the Linbury Theatre, which has wooden walls and purple seats. You will have a seat number on your digital ticket and an usher can help you find where you will sit.

At the beginning of the performance, the lights over the seats will be dimmed.

At the end of the performance, all of the lights will come back on, and people will begin to leave the theatre. It might feel busy but please take your time – there is no rush.

Information about the music

Tales of Love and Loss is a collection of short operas, sometimes called chamber operas, that tell three stories. Musicians from the Britten Sinfonia will play the music that you will hear from a pit in front of the stage.

You might not be able to see all the musicians from your seat, but you will hear the music play. The music can be loud at points, with overlapping instruments and sound effects.

Sometimes you will hear sounds, such as sirens and ringtones, which are part of the story, but you might not always see where the noise is coming from. The third story, Four Sisters, has especially loud sound effects.

The audience may cheer or clap throughout, and this can be unpredictable. In Relaxed Performances, there are no rules around being completely quiet so you might hear other people moving or talking around you.

You can wear ear defenders and staff can lend you some if you require them. They are sterilised between performances.

Before Tales of Love and Loss begins

A member of the cast or crew will come onto the stage to introduce themselves and tell you about the access provisions available and signpost any adaptations made to sound or lighting.

About Tales of Love and Loss and the characters

Tales of Love and Loss is made up of three short operas telling three different stories: The Departure, Making Arrangements and Four Sisters.

The Departure

The Departure is set in a bedroom in the 1960s and is a ghost story about death.



Julia

Julia is married to Mark, and they have a baby together. She appears to us as a ghost, getting ready for death. At first, Mark cannot see her.



Mark

Mark is Julia's husband and he is experiencing grief after losing his wife in a car accident. He has just returned to their home after her funeral. At first, he cannot see her.

Making Arrangements

Making Arrangements is set in a different bedroom in the 1970s and is about a another man trying to move on after his wife has left him.



Hewson Blair

Hewson has recently been left by his wife, Margery.



Margery

Hewson's wife who has recently left him to be with another person, Leslie.



Leslie

Leslie is Margery's new partner.



Mary

Mary is Hewson's gossipy maid.

Four Sisters

Four Sisters is about three sisters whose father has just died. They are waiting to discover what he has left them in his will before finding out about a family secret that jeopardises their plans.



Masha, Olga and Irina

Three sisters whose father has recently died. They are looking forward to spending their inheritance.



Maid

The three sisters' maid, who has a secret.



Krumpelblatt

The family lawyer who is there to read the father's will.

The Departure



Julia is sat at a dressing table singing about feeling odd because things are not where she left them. She holds her hand out and it is shaking. She hears music from outside. It is coming from a nearby funeral. She thinks it must be for someone she knows because she can see her husband, Mark, and their friends. Mark is shaking hands with them.



She cries out of the window to get Mark's attention, but he cannot seem to see or hear her.



Mark returns home and comes into the bedroom. He appears to be full of grief and sadness. Julia cannot get his attention and sings to him about the first time they met. Mark is thinking about her and calls out her name.



He finally notices her and Julia realises how frightened he is. It is because she is a ghost and the funeral he attended was hers. She remembers the car crash that killed her.



Mark, overcome with emotion at seeing her again, tries to make her stay, singing of their happy memories, especially that of a ball they attended and reminding her of their baby son. Julia reminds him that she has died but he and their son will be happy again one day.



She leaves. Mark lies on the bed, distraught. His son starts to cry, and he gets up to tend to him.

Making Arrangements



Mary is in the bedroom on stage. She is packing up some brightly coloured dresses into boxes. She tells the audience that Margery has unexpectedly written to Hewson, but he has not yet opened her letter.



Hewson comes into the room with the unopened letter. He dismisses Mary. He imagines Margery is writing to ask to come back and he says that it is too late. He opens the letter.



Margery comes onto the stage and performs her parts of the letter as a vision in his mind. She tells him how happy she is with Leslie, and that they will remain abroad while he makes the arrangements for their divorce, tells their friends and, most importantly, asks him to send on her dresses. She gives him permission to get rid of her dogs and then talks about all the things she dislikes about him.



Hewson is distraught. He imagines Margery and Leslie discussing him and how he will sort it all out for them. This is represented by both characters being on stage as in Hewson's imagination.



Margery is not entirely happy. She does not like living in a hotel and wonders why Hewson ever wanted her as his wife. She wonders if he only loved her for how much she was admired in her colourful dresses. Margery thinks he will find a nice new wife and make the rock garden nice again after her dogs spoiled it.



Hewson is filled with rage, and he starts to destroy her dresses at first inadvertently and then purposefully.

He imagines returning them to Margery like a bleeding corpse and enjoys the fact that Leslie will not enjoy her in these dresses. Mary comes into the room and notices the mess. Hewson pulls himself together and asks Mary to tidy up in the morning.

Four Sisters



Olga, Irina and Masha lie across sofas in the centre of a luxurious apartment set on the stage. They are hungover from a night of drinking alcohol after their father's funeral. The Maid tries to tidy up around them reminding them that the family lawyer, Krumpelblatt, will be arriving soon to read their father's Will. They all rush off the stage to get ready.



The Maid is alone on stage and reflects on the shortness of life and urgency for pursuing dreams.



The sisters return to the stage and perform exaggerated mourning to convince everyone that they are sad that their father died. They bicker between themselves, calling each other names and accusing one another of only caring about their father's money. The Maid returns and gives them an alcoholic drink to try and calm them down. They toast to their father and discuss their new wealth, singing about what they will do with their money. They discuss how their father had a mistress – the 'Russian princess', and how they would rather live anywhere than Moscow.



The Maid notices this conversation, and it appears to trigger a feeling in her. She sings of wishing to escape New York and move to somewhere calm and beautiful.



Each sister speaks to their different mothers on the phone. Irina sings of wishing to be in California with a lover and is comforted by her sisters.



The family lawyer Krumpelblatt arrives. The Maid gives him whiskey to distract him so she can secretly take the Will from him. She reads it and looks upset about what is written but hides it.



Krumpelblatt notices the Will is gone from his briefcase, so closes it quickly. He reminds the sisters how much he has always cared for them. They are more interested in the contents of his briefcase and flirt with him, wanting to discover what is in the Will. He admits he doesn't have it. The sisters are furious. Krumpelblatt takes a swig of alcohol from his flask as he escapes for a moment.



The Maid secretly slips a replacement Will into Krumpelblatt's briefcase while the sisters mothers relentlessly phone, demanding to know the contents of the Will.



Masha sings of her Caribbean dream and comfortable life post-inheritance, Olga discovers that the folder she is fanning her with contains the Will. She doesn't know that this is a new Will that was planted by the Maid.



Krumpelblatt leaves to read the details and while they wait, Olga sings a cabaret-style aria expressing her innocent desires for love and a future anywhere.



When Krumpelblatt returns, he reads that a condition of the Will is that the sisters must move to Moscow and that the money will go to a secret fourth sister, the daughter of their father's mistress, the Russian princess. The Maid informs the sisters that she is the fourth sister and mourns their father in the same overblown way they did. She tries to embrace her sisters, but they reject her.



A flag of the United States of America drops from above. The Maid reveals that the Moscow in question is Moscow in Idaho. She celebrates her good fortune by toasting with Russian vodka and plans to pursue her dreams of rural living. Her sisters and Krumpelblatt are in despair and Masha pulls them away from the stage to hatch a plot.



The Maid luxuriates in her new-found wealth and being able to pursue the American dream. The sisters return and toast her in Russian. Masha takes out a gun and shoots the Maid, killing her. Blank shots are fired from the stunt gun which can be loud, but they are props.

Sensory Highlights

The information below aims to highlight moments of sound, lighting and action that may be surprising. Sound and lighting can be used to help evoke emotions and is part of the performance.

Sound:

Each short opera features music, singing and additional sounds which add more context to the story.

Four Sisters is especially loud with the sound of sirens, phones and a gun being shot. Blank shots are fired from the stunt gun which can be loud. The sound is adapted for Relaxed Performances, but you might still find it quite loud.

Lighting:

Flashing lights, smoke, sparks and haze are mainly used during The Departure.

You might be able to smell the odour made from the smoke machine.

Action:

Each story is about people experiencing different human emotions such as grief, sadness, anger and jealousy.