



THE ROYAL OPERA

Music Director JAKUB HRŮŠA
Director of Opera OLIVER MEARS

Peter Grimes

OPERA IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS

Music BENJAMIN BRITTEN
Libretto MONTAGU SLATER after The Borough by
GEORGE CRABBE
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Conductor JAKUB HRŮŠA
Director DEBORAH WARNER
Set Designer MICHAEL LEVINE
Costume Designer LUIS F. CARVALHO
Lighting Designer PETER MUMFORD
Choreographer KIM BRANDSTRUP

ROYAL OPERA CHORUS
Chorus Director WILLIAM SPAULDING

ORCHESTRA OF THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE
Concert Master MAGNUS JOHNSTON

A co-production with TEATRO REAL, MADRID,
L'OPÉRA NATIONAL DE PARIS and
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In loving memory of DR RICHARD PHILLIPS

Approximate Timings

The performance lasts approximately 3 hours and 35 minutes,
including two intervals

ACT I: 65 MINUTES
INTERVAL: 25 MINUTES
ACT II: 55 MINUTES
INTERVAL: 25 MINUTES
ACT III: 45 MINUTES

Language

Sung in English with surtitles

Guidance

Suitable for ages 12+

This production contains themes of child cruelty, the death of
a child and depictions of suicide

Cast

Peter Grimes ALLAN CLAYTON
Ellen Orford MARIA BENGTTSSON
Captain Balstrode BRYN TERFEL
Swallow CLIVE BAYLEY
Ned Keene JACQUES IMBRAILO
Auntie CATHERINE WYN-ROGERS
Mrs Sedley CHRISTINE RICE
Bob Boles JOHN GRAHAM-HALL
Hobson BARNABY REA
Rev. Horace Adams JAMES GILCHRIST
First Niece JENNIFER FRANCE
Second Niece NATALIA LABOURDETTE
The Boy JOHNNY IMBRAILO
Aerialist JACK HORNER

The role of Peter Grimes is supported by
JANE HEMSTRITCH AO and MALCOLM HERRING

Extra Chorus
Sopranos KATHRYN JENKIN, ALISON RAYNER,
ELIZABETH ROBERTS, ROSALIND WATERS,
VANESSA WOODFINE
Mezzo-sopranos JEANETTE AGER, MARIA BROWN,
FELICITY BUCKLAND, SIOBHAIN GIBSON,
MARIA JONES, JENNIFER WESTWOOD
Tenors SIMON BIAZECK, ANDREW BUSER,
RICHARD MONK
Basses OSCAR CASTELLINO, OLIVER GIBBS,
GAVIN HORSLEY, PETER WILLCOCK

Actors DOM BLACKWOOD, BARRY CALLAN,
KIERAN DEE, CRAIG HAMILTON, SIMON JAYMES,
XAVI MONREAL, DOUGLAS SANTILLO,
CHRISTOPHER SHERWOOD, ANNA SMITH,
BRYONY TEBBUTT

SATURDAY 2 MAY 2026 AT 11.30AM
General Rehearsal

Synopsis

The Borough, a small and impoverished fishing community on the East Coast of England.

PROLOGUE

In a dream, the fisherman Peter Grimes relives the recent inquest held into the death of his young apprentice. The coroner has cast an open verdict, leaving the town speculating and gossiping. Ellen Orford, the school mistress, arrives and lulls Peter into a calmer sleep.

INTERLUDE I

ACT I

SCENE ONE

When Grimes returns from fishing, only the retired sea captain, Balstrode, and Ned Keene, the local 'chemist', are willing to help bring in his boat. Keene tells Grimes that he has arranged for a new apprentice to come and work for him. When asked to collect the boy, Hobson – the carrier – refuses, but consents when Ellen offers to accompany the boy on the journey. A powerful storm threatens, during which Balstrode suggests to Grimes that he should leave the town or marry Ellen and change his solitary ways. Grimes rejects his advice, declaring 'I am native, rooted here,' and that he will only marry Ellen when he has enough money to earn the respect of the Borough.

INTERLUDE II

SCENE TWO

With the storm raging outside, the townsfolk are sheltering in the local pub. To the annoyance of Auntie – the landlady – Mrs Sedley, a widow addicted to laudanum, arrives to wait for Ned Keene, her supplier. Auntie's 'nieces' are teasing the inebriated Methodist fisherman Bob Boles, when Ned Keene arrives with the news that part of the cliff has collapsed by Grimes's hut. To the astonishment of the onlookers Grimes bursts in – as wild as the storm – distracted and disoriented. When a fight threatens to break out between him and Boles, Balstrode calls for a song to calm the atmosphere. The song is interrupted by the arrival of Hobson, Ellen and the new apprentice, soaked to the skin and exhausted from their journey. Instead of allowing him to rest, Grimes insists on taking the boy straight home and carries him out into the night.

INTERVAL

ACT II

INTERLUDE III

SCENE ONE

It is Sunday and Ellen has decided not to go to church, but to question the silent apprentice about his life. While trying to encourage the boy to speak, she notices that his clothing is torn and that he has a bruise on his neck. Grimes arrives and orders the boy to go fishing. Ellen intervenes, reminding him that the apprentice is entitled to a day of rest. He loses his temper, pushing Ellen to the ground and running off with the boy. When the locals emerge from church, Bob Boles, who has witnessed this incident, stirs the Borough into action against Grimes. Allowed to vent their anger, the townsmen resolve to set out for his hut to get to the truth – 'with the branding iron and knife'. They leave Ellen, Auntie and the two Nieces alone on the beach, reflecting on their role and relationship to the men in the Borough.

INTERLUDE IV

Grimes and the apprentice prepare for the fishing trip. Grimes is very distracted, fearing that his dream of marrying Ellen is now crushed. When he hears the men from the Borough approaching, he panics and hurries the boy down the steep

ladder to the beach. With the knock on the door he hears the boy scream, and fearing an accident, scrambles quickly after him. Reverend Adams, Mayor Swallow, Keene and Balstrode enter the hut and are surprised by its orderly state, but neither Grimes nor the boy are there.

INTERVAL

ACT III

INTERLUDE V

Grimes finds the dead apprentice at the base of the cliff.

SCENE ONE

The annual Borough dance is in full swing. Auntie's 'nieces' are teasing the lawyer Swallow, who, like everyone else, is extremely drunk. Mrs Sedley, re-imagining herself as the local sleuth, tries to convince Ned Keene that Grimes has killed his apprentice. A few days have passed, with no sign of him or the boy. Balstrode arrives with Ellen, who has discovered the boy's jumper on the tide line. Balstrode tells Ellen that he has seen Grimes's boat, and together they commit to finding him before the mob do. When they have gone, Mrs Sedley, who has overheard their conversation, incites the Borough to action and the manhunt for Grimes begins.

INTERLUDE VI

SCENE TWO

Grimes is alone, seized by visions and tortured by the death of the two boys. In the distance is the sound of the mob calling his name. Ellen and Balstrode find him, but in his distressed state, he does not fully recognise them. Balstrode tells him to sail his boat out into deep water and sink it.

Dawn breaks and Swallow reports that a boat is sinking out at sea. The Borough turns its back and goes about its business – as it always has, and always will.

— Deborah Warner

Production

Music preparation CHRISTOPHER WILLIS, SUSANNA STRANDERS, RICHARD HETHERINGTON, NICK FLETCHER, JO RAMADAN, KATE GOLLA
Assistant Directors DAN DOONER, ISABELLE KETTLE
Assistant Choreographer JOANNA O'KEEFFE
Interlude Projections JUSTIN NARDELLA

The Royal Opera

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Music Director JAKUB HRŮŠA
Director of Opera OLIVER MEARS
Director of Casting PETER MARIO KATONA
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