

# Legend backs singer to tune of £17K

Soprano singer Alexandra Lowe, from Cleveleys, has been awarded the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Sarah Brightman scholarship

By KATIE UPTON

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A soprano singer has hit the high notes and won the backing of one of the theatre industry's biggest names – Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Alexandra Lowe, 23, has been awarded a scholarship worth tens of thousands of pounds to continue her studies at the Royal Northern College of Music.

Ms Lowe, from Cleveleys, is one of the first to have been awarded the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation Sarah Brightman scholarship.

She, and tenor Alexander Grainger, will have their postgraduate studies on the two year Master of Music Programme, fully funded – worth £17,600.

The soprano has already made a name for herself in the opera world, having won five awards for her work and used her talents to raise more than £25,000 for charity.

She said: "It's really great to have this scholarship."

"To be supported by such well known names holds real prestige."

The money for the singer's scholarship came from a donation made to Andrew Lloyd Webber's Foundation by his ex-wife Sarah Brightman.

The classical singer used the proceeds of sales from two pieces of tiger jewellery by Cartier, formerly from the collection of the Duchess of Windsor, which had been given to her by Mr Lloyd Webber.

He said: "I am grateful for Sarah's donation and it fills me with great joy that my Foundation can help Alexandra fulfil her potential."

And Sarah Brightman said: "The jew-

*"To be supported by such well known names holds real prestige"*

Below: Alexandra as Helena in Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Royal Northern College of Music

els which Andrew bought gave me immense pleasure and I'm so pleased proceeds from their sale will now play a part in enabling Alexandra to enjoy her training without financial concerns."

Ms Lowe said she felt relieved to not have to worry about tuition fees, and instead be able to focus on her studies and singing.

She has raised money for Aiming Higher charity, who support disabled children and their families in Blackpool, as well as armed forces charities Help For Heroes and Combat Stress.

The soprano started singing aged 13, while living in Palma, and went on to achieve a First class honours undergraduate degree from the RNCM.

She said: "I've developed a real passion for opera, I love it. I love being able to portray such drama through my music, it's an amazing feeling."

She has played Mabel in *Pirates of Penzance*, and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, as well as having played the role of Sylvaine in the RNCM's production of *The Merry Widow*.

During her two-year course she will study opera, take singing and acting classes and work with esteemed opera singers.

Ms Lowe's goal is to perform at leading opera houses in London and New York.

She added: "I feel like I'm on the right track for that."



# Concern grows for missing man after hotel stay

Police are growing increasingly concerned for the welfare of a 56-year-old man who has been missing from home for more than a week.

The last known sighting of Mark Doyle is believed to have been in Blackpool last Wednesday, staying at the resort's Grand Metropole Hotel on the Promenade.

"We, along with Mr Doyle's family, are becoming increasingly worried about his welfare since he went missing," said Sgt Duncan Arthur.

"I would urge Mr Doyle, or indeed anyone who may have seen him or knows of his whereabouts to get in con-



Mark Doyle is missing

tact with us immediately."

Mr Doyle was last seen at home in Whitworth at the Sportsman pub on July 19.

# Promenade blocked

A woman was taken to hospital after two cars collided on the Promenade in Blackpool yesterday.

The casualty, believed to be a passenger in one of

the vehicles, was treated for what were described as minor injuries. The collision, which happened shortly before 7am, blocked the road for some time.

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# Weekend

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## Theatre steps up autumn content

### Dance

THE STANLEY and Audrey Burton Theatre has launched a new season of dance for this autumn.

The Leeds theatre will welcome Royal New Zealand Ballet for the first time with three European premières and returning visits from renowned dance companies.

Rarely seen in the UK, Royal New Zealand Ballet makes its debut in Leeds on November 3 and 4 with a mixed programme celebrating New Zealand and Pasifika culture.

Phoenix Dance Theatre presents its annual showcase featuring two exciting mixed bills of work from September 30 to October 3, combining soaring aerial dance, contemporary choreography and a darkly comic piece.

James Cousins' Company presents *Without Stars and There We Have Been* on November 14, a powerful double bill inspired by Haruki Murakami's novel, *Norwegian Wood*, a story of love, loss and friendship.

Ballet Black presents a Gothic fairytale created by celebrated choreographer Mark Bruce on November 20 and 21. Visit [theatreleeds.com](http://theatreleeds.com) or call 0113 2208008 to book tickets.

## Beacons Metro acts

### Festival

BEACONS have announced the first events in Leeds and Manchester for their revamped festival Beacons Metro. Organisers, who in the past ran their festival in a Skipton field, promise cutting-edge music, film, art and food.

The Leeds season starts on August 16 with a party at Belgrave Music Hall, then moves to Headrow House for 12 weeks. The programme includes relentless 303 bass lines of *Factory Floor*, and *Hookworms* collaborating with *Ghostpoet* and *Wild Beasts* producer Richard Formby. There will be riff onslaughts from punk heavyweights *Titus Andronicus*, *TRAAMS* and *Ex Hex*, subtle *Son Lux*, *Lonelady* and *East India Youth*.

# Singer set to perform in hometown

## Opera

OPERA singer Alexandra Lowe – who has just won a scholarship with the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation – will return to Bolton Abbey next weekend.

Following a successful concert last year, she will perform at the Priory Church on August 8, with the proceeds going to the Boyle and Petyt School Foundation at nearby Beamsley. It will be something of a "homecoming" for Alexandra as her manager, Carol Dawson, lives in Beamsley.

"I have been her manager since she was 17 (she is now 23) and I have always believed she will make it as a famous opera singer," said Carol.

And her protege is certainly heading in that direction. She has just been awarded one of two newly-created Sarah Brightman Scholarships for postgraduate studies at the Royal Northern College of Music.

It will help to fund a two-year Master of Music Programme, which will include masterclasses with leading performers, coaches and directors, world-class performance opportunities and varied professional experience with RNCM partners such as Opera North.

"It is crucial that proper training is available for the performers of the future," said Lord Lloyd Webber.

"It fills me with great joy that my foundation can help Alexandra and



Opera singer Alexandra Lowe who will perform at Bolton Abbey Priory Church

Alexandra fulfil their potential at RNCM and take vital steps towards a professional career."

Alexandra is a classically trained soprano from Lancashire. Born in Mallorca, she began singing at the age of 13 when she became a prominent member of Centre Stage Productions (Palma). Following her success in musical theatre, Alexandra

turned to classical music and opera in 2008. She started her classical training at the Junior Royal Northern College of Music and was awarded the Singer of the Year in 2011. She secured a scholarship to the Royal Northern College of Music and she has just completed her Bachelor of Music degree with a first.

For the Bolton Abbey concert,

Alexandra will be joined by baritone Thomas Isherwood, mezzo soprano Hollie-Anne Bangham, violinist Joy Becker and pianist Simon Passmore.

The concert starts at 7.30pm and will be preceded by a champagne reception at Bolton Hall.

For more information and tickets, call Carol on 01756 710258 or the priory office on 01756 710238.



Tobias Batley as Winston in Northern Ballet's 1984  
Photo: Guy Farrow

# Classic text comes to life with dance

## Ballet

ORWELL'S *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is to be brought to the stage in dance with a world premiere by Northern Ballet.

The dystopian masterpiece has been recreated as a ballet and will be performed at West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds from September 5 to 12 before touring nationally.

Choreographed by Jonathan Watkins, whose recent credits include *Kes* for Sheffield Crucible Theatre, the production is the first full-length ballet adaptation of George Orwell's renowned novel.

It is set to an original score by Tony nominated composer and arranger Alex Baranowski, who recently worked with Mercury Prize winning band The XX. The creative team also includes set and costume designer Simon Daw, whose work includes productions with the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Opera House and Rambert Dance Company; Dramaturg Ruth Little, previously Literary Manager of The Royal Court Theatre; and Lighting Designer Chris Davey, well known for his work in dance and theatre including collaborations with Matthew Bourne.

In the production, Ministry of Truth worker Winston Smith lives in a world of absolute conformity, his every action scrutinised by Big Brother. Whilst outwardly conforming to Party doctrine, he is secretly disillusioned, illegally documenting his thoughts in a diary.

When one day he receives a love note from Julia, a colleague he suspected on spying on him for the Thought Police, the pair instead begin an illicit affair leading a dangerous double life putting physical desire above Party discipline. As their romance develops and they prepare for an act of political rebellion, Winston and Julia discover that Big Brother is always watching and no one can be trusted; least of all themselves.

Jonathan Watkins said: "George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has been a constant inspiration to me since I first read it at 15. It is a powerful and thought-provoking allegory that now, more than ever, has resonance with the times in which we are living.

"I am excited to be working with Northern Ballet and a wonderful creative team to realise this new full-length ballet for the audiences of today and I look forward to exploring through dance, music and film, a new way of seeing this modern classic."

Northern Ballet's Artistic Director, David Nixon, said: "Jonathan is an exciting choreographic talent and I am delighted that he accepted my invitation to create 1984 with us. This production promises to challenge the idea of what stories can be told through dance and the dramatic talent of our dancers will draw the audience into the very core of this literary masterpiece."

Tickets for the World Première of Northern Ballet's 1984 are on sale now and can be booked online at [wyp.org.uk](http://wyp.org.uk) or by calling the box office on 0113 213 7700.