



Jonathan Dove

The Palace in the Sky

ENO's Hackney Community Opera, *The Palace in the Sky*, was developed and produced by the Baylis Programme (ENO's education, outreach and community team) in partnership with arts and community organisations from across Hackney. It involved more than 350 participants of all ages in the huge cast of Street Kids, Builders, Caterers and Onlookers; in instrumental groups and choirs, showcasing the diversity of music-making in Hackney; and providing vital support backstage. A small team of professional singers, instrumentalists from ENO, music and production staff worked alongside the community performers. The piece was commissioned by the ENO Studio from locally-based composer Jonathan Dove and writer Nick Dear, and developed in workshops with local schools and community groups. *The Palace in the Sky* was performed at the Hackney Empire on 2-5 November 2000.

The opera tells the story of property tycoon, Parlaine, who decides to build a giant skyscraper on the last patch of wasteland in the city. He plans it as a monument to the people; his opera singer mistress Mila wants to love-nest in the clouds; the ambitious young architect Nimrod wants finally to see her designs realised. Only Jericho, the retired gangster whose home has been demolished, stands against the project. Can one man's curse dent such a massive enterprise? And as language mysteriously breaks down, will they be able to finish the Palace in the Sky?

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