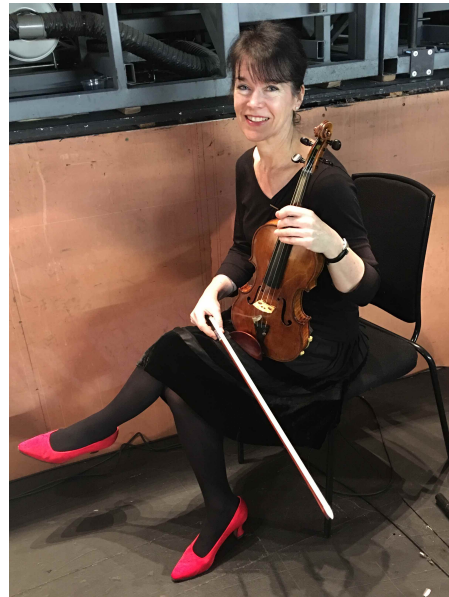


## SPOTLIGHT – Gina McCormack, Violinist & Leader of the Orchestra, The Red Shoes

*Thurs 26 January 2017*



***Tell us a bit about your role in Matthew Bourne's production of The Red Shoes:***

I play violin and lead the orchestra. I have led the orchestra for many of Matthew's productions including *Swan Lake*, *Edward Scissorhands*, *The Car Man* and *Sleeping Beauty* (recording). Coincidentally I was also part of the orchestra for one of Matthew's early performances of "Town and Country" at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank, many years back, when he himself was still dancing, so I have enjoyed a long relationship with the company. I have always loved dance and costume. Ballet as a child and then ballroom-dancing long before "Strictly" hit our screens - in fact I was teased as being ever so old-fashioned to be enjoying a quickstep or two back then, so working as a musician with a dance company is a fabulous fusion of all those worlds.



*Town and Country production shot from 2012,  
which is due to tour with **Early Adventures** from next week! (Photo: Roy Tan)*

***Have there been any highlights in your career so far, if so what are they?***

Playing recitals in The Wigmore Hall, London must be every solo violinist's dream, and I was lucky enough to give my London debut recital there when I was 21 and have performed there many times since. The Hall

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has one of the best acoustics in the world and is my favourite chamber music venue! Another very special and quite unforgettable experience was playing in the orchestra at Westminster Abbey for the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

A recent highlight was leading the orchestra at the Royal Albert Hall for Carlos Acosta's Classical Farewell, a week of performances where the orchestra was seated on a raised platform above the stage and WE COULD SEE! We don't see much of the stage from *The Red Shoes* pit, just the odd wrist or ankle flying by. Another highlight (not necessarily from a musical point of view) has been playing recitals aboard cruise ships and seeing some incredible places: The Amazon River, all the way to Manaus; Spitsbergen, North of Norway, where I saw polar bears; Madagascar and the East Coast of Africa. My violin has certainly been to many places.

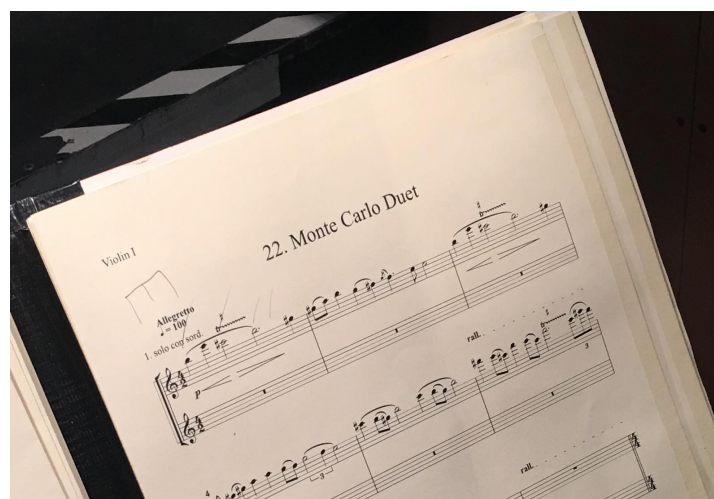
***What advice would you give to someone looking to do something like your role in the show? How did you get to where you are today?***

An orchestral leader has to be able to play at the required level for that position, but in a ballet orchestra there are other necessary skills: one needs to feel confident as a violin soloist in the large ballet solos like those in *Swan Lake*, yet be able to be a team-player the rest of the time. You have to be extremely alert and flexible as the conductor responds directly to what happens on stage so his timing might alter and have to react immediately, bringing the whole orchestra with you.

Then there is also the challenge of playing the same music night after night as perfectly as possible, and even more importantly keeping the atmosphere positive in the pit. A degree in diplomacy is useful, as is the constant supply of cakes and biscuits brought in by members of the band - thank you, team! In my own career I combine being a soloist, a chamber musician (I led the Sorrel Quartet for 13 years) and an orchestral player, and I think the combination of those three skills really helps in this particular role.

***What is your favourite point in *The Red Shoes*?***

As a player, there are so many lovely Bernard Hermann melodies to enjoy, and I particularly love the music for the Company Party, the Funeral and the Monte Carlo duet.



***A snippet from one of Gina's favourite scores to play in *The Red Shoes****

***Are there any fun stories that you can share with us from your time with *The Red Shoes*:***

I brought red shoes to wear with my black clothes in the orchestral pit for a bit of fun, and all the ladies of the orchestra soon raided their wardrobes and the Upper St charity shops to find similar. I have now been completely upstaged by their 6-inch heels, sequined mules and sparkly pumps in various shades of red!