Jonathan Dove’s breakthrough work, *Flight*, was commissioned by Glyndebourne and premiered there in 1998 with further performances in 1999 and 2005. The question from the then General Director, Anthony Whitworth-Jones, was whether Jonathan Dove could create ‘A Marriage of Figaro for the 1990s’. And the answer was a superb original modern-day operatic comedy which has found universal popularity, with many different productions and over 85 performances to date across the world.

With a libretto by leading British playwright April de Angelis, the opera has both laugh-out-loud and more serious moments as the story of the refugee who lives in the airport – inspired by the true-life story of an Iranian refugee who lived at Charles de Gaulle Airport, Paris, for 18 years – unfolds around the different characters who find themselves delayed in the terminal.

Written for an ensemble cast of 10 singers, this opera, with its dynamic airport setting and scintillating orchestral writing – including the thrilling aeroplane take-off – continues to have a compelling immediacy.

“It can be summed up in one word: charm. Dove writes music that is tuneful, tonal and tangy. And it is sensationally orchestrated. In short, it’s instantly beguiling.”

Richard Morrison | The Times
“Flight is that rarest thing, a popular new comic opera... Dove’s music flies, the opera is fun, and people are going to love it.”

Tom Sutcliffe | The Evening Standard
Act One – Dawn: and the Controller sits in her tower. People start to arrive at the airport – for the Refugee to ‘befriend’: a married couple, Bill and Tina, are going on holiday to rediscover romance; the Older Woman is meeting a young man whom she met in Mallorca – she would like to remain inconspicuous; the Steward and Stewardess go about their business – some of the time. Another couple arrive, almost late for their flight to Minsk, to emigrate; the Minskwoman is pregnant. At the last moment she refuses to board the plane and her husband leaves without her. The Refugee offers her a magic stone to comfort her. The travellers are preparing to depart when the Controller announces that, because of storms, flights are indefinitely delayed.

Act Two – Night: the storm rages. The Controller leaves her tower and wanders about outside. Everyone tries to sleep, but, in pairs or alone, they secretly approach the Refugee, fascinated by his magic stone. He gives them all what each thinks is the unique stone and they make wishes. Bill is restless and seeks out the Stewardess, but finds the Steward instead: they go off to explore the control tower. The women and the Refugee decide to get drunk, and, as they become more garrulous, the women discover that each of them has ‘the’ stone. They vent their anger, with dire consequences for the Refugee. The consequences of Bill and the Steward’s explorations are no less cataclysmic.

Act Three – Dawn: the storm abates, flights resume. The Minskman returns, unable to face his separation. Bill and the Steward have a surprise for their partners. Tina has a nasty surprise for Bill. The Refugee has a surprise for the women. The Minskwoman has a surprise for everyone. When the Refugee tells his story, even the Immigration Officer has a surprising reaction. Flights are called and under the Controller’s watchful eye, the airport returns to normal...
Duration, Technical Information and Resources

**Flight** (1998)
Opera in Three Acts | 135 minutes
Libretto by April de Angelis
German singing translation by Ralf Nürnberg
2S.3Mez.CT.T.2Bar.B Soli
2(I+II=Picc).2(I=CA).2(I=BCl).2(I=CBsn)—2.2.2.1—
Timp.—3Perc.—Pf(Cel)—Hp—Str([8.6.4.4.3 minimum]
Commissioned by Glyndebourne
First performed 24 September 1998, Glyndebourne Opera House, Glyndebourne Touring Opera, directed by Richard Jones and conducted by David Parry
Best Opera – 2006 Helpmann Awards, Australia
EP 7511
Recording: Jonathan Dove, *Flight*, Glyndebourne Festival Opera, London Philharmonic Orchestra/David Parry, Chandos CHAN 10197(2)
Vocal score available

**Production History**

- **Glyndebourne Touring Opera**, UK September to December 1998.
- **Glyndebourne Festival Opera**, UK August 1999
- **Vlaamse Oper**, Belgium [Glyndebourne production], February to March 2002.
- **Oper Leipzig**, Germany [New production by Ralf Nürnberg], sung in German translation by Ralf Nürnberg, April 2004.
- **Moores Opera Center**, USA [New Student production], January 2006.
- **British Youth Opera**, UK, [New production], September 2008.
- **UCLA Herb Alpert school of Music**, USA April to May 2010.

**Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Voice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refugee</td>
<td>Countertenor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controller</td>
<td>Coloratura soprano</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tina</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
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<tr>
<td>Older Woman</td>
<td>Mezzo-soprano</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stewardess</td>
<td>Mezzo-soprano</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steward</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minskman</td>
<td>Baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minskwoman</td>
<td>Mezzo-soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Officer</td>
<td>Bass</td>
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</tbody>
</table>