Life is a Dream
An Opera in Three Acts
Libretto by Alasdair Middleton
after the play by
Pedro Calderón de la Barca

Commissioned by Birmingham Opera Company
World Premiere: Birmingham Opera Company, Birmingham, 21 March 2012

Life Is a Dream was commissioned by Graham Vick’s extraordinary Birmingham Opera Company for professionals and the people of Birmingham to perform together in a disused chemical works in the city.

Jonathan Dove’s full-length operatic version of Pedro Calderón de la Barca’s ‘philosophical play’ La vida es sueño with a libretto by Alasdair Middleton has echoes of 19th-century grand opera. The polarised struggles between father and son, freewill and predestination, dream and reality are passionately carried along with powerful choruses and strongly etched characters including a tour de force for bass-baritone in the role of the Prince.

The original orchestration, designed for the Birmingham production, is for 28 players, but in opera-house productions the opera may be performed with a conventional string section.
“The music, conducted by William Lacey and excellently played by an orchestra sitting in a mini bullring, is burblingly melodic, with some impassioned arias and big-hearted, musical theatre-style lusty choruses.”

Fiona Maddocks | The Observer
Synopsis

Prince Segismund has been imprisoned in a remote tower since his birth, and the only human face he has ever seen is that of his jailor. Then, one day, he wakes up in a palace, and finds himself king. Is this really happening? By the end of this eventful day, he has ordered the execution of his jailor, thrown a courtier out of the window, and attempted to rape the beautiful Rosaura. He wakes again to find himself locked up back in his tower. Was everything that happened just a dream? Is life itself a dream? But his story is not yet over...

A father fleeing destiny, a woman bent on vengeance, a man discovering himself.
### Life Is A Dream [2012]

*Opera in Three Acts | 120 minutes
Libretto by Alasdair Middleton after the play by Pedro Calderón de la Barca
S.Mez.2T.B-Bar.B Soli—SATB Chorus
2(I&II=Picc).1.1.1(CBsn)—2.2.2.1—3Perc—Pf—Hp—Str(3.2.2.1 minimum)
Commissioned by Birmingham Opera Company
First performed 21 March 2012, Argyle Works, Birmingham
EP 72221

### Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Voice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rosaura</td>
<td>Mezzo-soprano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segismund</td>
<td>Bass-baritone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clotaldo</td>
<td>Bass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astolfo</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estella</td>
<td>Soprano</td>
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<tr>
<td>King Basil</td>
<td>Tenor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guards, Supporters of Estella and Astolfo, People of Poland, Courtiers</td>
<td>Chorus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### Production History

*Birmingham Opera Company, UK March 2012.*
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