

Editorial

Are you a grand opera buff or a light opera fan? Or (preferably) both? Do you enjoy anguish, emotion and death or jolly tunes and a happy ending? Our programme for this season can provide both, but seems to reverse the usual categories:

The Yeomen of the Guard (technically a light opera or operetta, because it contains spoken dialogue like a musical) is the most serious of the G & S Savoy Operas, while *The Elixir of Love* (which is “through-composed” with no spoken dialogue and therefore a grand opera - ?) is light and bubbly with beautiful melodies and comic situations. Note: we don’t commit ourselves on the ending of either show - come and take part, or come and see!

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The Yeomen of the Guard

From Martyn Harrison - Stage Director

I am delighted to be working with Southgate Opera for the first time. I have seen the company several times in the past, but not since the move from the college.

The Yeomen of the Guard is the most operatic of the G&S shows yet it has great humour, wit and pathos. It is a show I know very well, having sung Jack Point on a number of occasions in my youth, and graduated through First Yeoman to Colonel Fairfax for the New D'Oyly Carte inaugural season. [Yet still I pronounce Beauchamp wrongly!] I have also directed the show - across the country from Taunton to Hereford and on to Saffron Walden, to name a few venues.

I have found the ongoing renovation to the Tower of London over recent years a hook on which to hang my approach to the show. Today you will see the White Tower covered in scaffolding and polythene sheeting with groups of strolling players in the grounds re-enacting scenes to the delight of visitors. So it will be for us, with groups, parties and individuals entering the Tower during an acted-out overture.

This will not be a ‘stand and sing production’: halberd drill, croquet, tennis and Morris dancing all logically take their place in the action. Yet not a word of dialogue or music needs to be changed for this to work. Traditional and modern concepts in the one show.

I look forward to guiding you on this journey where chorus and principals will play a very active role.

Martyn Harrison combines his career as a professional opera singer with that of Stage Director. His professional singing career began with Glyndebourne and, since then, he has sung with all the major UK opera companies (Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Kent Opera and the New D'Oyly Carte) as well as in major houses across Europe .

He has directed over 120 productions, ranging from opera through to pantomime, both for professional and community theatre companies.

He was Artistic Director of CAMEO Opera Group [Essex] and is about to embark on another County based project – Music Theatre Works with composer John Trent Wallace.

He is also a regular speaker on Musical Theatre for many organisations including ABTA, the Freemasons, Probus and other professional bodies.

The Yeomen of the Guard Cast List

Phoebe Meryll Philippa Christer
 Wilfred Shadbolt John Simpson
 Dame Carruthers Christine Hunter
 Kate Emma Tirebuck
 Jack Point Colin Davis
 Elsie Maynard Lee Mason
 Sir Richard Cholmondeley David Roberts
 1st Yeoman John Hardy

Other roles still to be cast:

Colonel Fairfax
 Sergeant Meryll
 Leonard Meryll

Sheila Marjorie Easton

1926-2010

Life Friend,
 Southgate Opera



On the 12th of August, several Friends of Southgate Opera attended a service in celebration of Sheila's life. Friends' Presidents Vera and Maurice Bentley, Friends Ken and Val Forbes, Allan Girdlestone, Rhoda Fletcher and joint secretaries Ann and Rex Bourne made their way to the lovely village of Roydon, where Sheila and husband Bill, founder Principal of Southgate College, our traditional base, had lived for many years, and joined a large congregation at St Peter-Ad-Vincula, the village's medieval church, to remember Sheila.

We heard that Sheila had enjoyed an idyllic childhood and then in later life met and married Bill and was a huge support to him throughout their life together and in his final illness. Southgate Opera used to sing at events in the village and afterwards be entertained to the Eastons' generous hospitality. Southgate Opera was specifically mentioned in the address.

We will all miss Sheila as a consistent supporter of the opera group; she used to attend almost all of our operas, operettas and concerts.

Opera
 www.southgateopera.co.uk

the Yeomen of the Guard

By
**Gilbert
 &
 Sullivan**

9th to 12th February 2011
 Performances 7.30pm
 Saturday matinée 2.30pm

WYLLYOTTS THEATRE
 WYLLYOTTS PLACE
 DARKES LANE
 POTTERS BAR
 HERTS EN6 2HN

BOX OFFICE: 01707 645005

Members' Concert

"Hugely enjoyable" is how one person described the Members' Concert last April. Sixty-six tickets were sold, but Rex Bourne claims he put out at least eighty chairs!

The talent on show was considerable – not only many fine renditions of classical and modern songs and arias, but also highlights such as Anne Golding's comic monologue and Judy Prior's Hungarian dance.

We would like to thank everyone who took part either as a performer or as audience for helping raise £80 with the raffle in aid of the North London Hospice.



But especially we would like to thank Neil Cloake who expertly accompanied many of the singers, even if on one occasion he started to play the wrong song - which surprised Rita Ullo and greatly amused the audience!

Next year we hope to organise another Members' Concert & Social Evening to which Members and Friends are invited (date to be confirmed).

GP/CH



Wedding Bells

Anna Tamba and John Lanigan O'Keefe delighted their friends in the company by announcing their wedding which took place on July 9th 2010 at St Paul's Catholic Church, Wood Green, and was attended by friends and family. The service was conducted by Reverend Father John McKenna, and the bride was given away by her brother Daniel and attended by her goddaughter Amanda as bridesmaid. The reception was held afterwards at the Penridge, Arnos Grove. We join in celebrating this happy event and wish Anna and John many years of wedded happiness.



Friends' Corner

The Joint Secretaries write:

Thanks to all the Friends of Southgate Opera who have renewed their subscriptions to take them through to May 2011, many of whom have added a little extra to their subscriptions or standing orders. The establishment of standing orders has proved a boon both financially and to our administration. Thank you all.

We were pleased to meet and chat with Friends at *A Masked Ball*. Your next opportunity to catch up with us and see the group in action is on October 2nd at the Friends' Concert. We have eighty places and forty-five have been taken so far. Pop your form (from the last mailing) into the post, with a SAE, and join us for what promises to be an enjoyable evening. We can be contacted on 01992-700847.

Regards,

Ann & Rex

A New Baby

Congratulations to Philippa and Richard Christer on the birth of their third child Archie Fergusson Christer, brother of Sophie and Iona. He was born three weeks early on May 9th by emergency caesarian, and weighed 6 pounds 2 ounces then - but within 11 weeks he had already doubled his weight!



Friends' Reminder

A reminder to Friends' that subscription renewal for 2011 was due in May. If you have not yet renewed, please take this final opportunity to continue to be a Friend and enjoy the benefits including this magazine, *Spotlight*. Payment to Southgate College Opera to go to Ann and Rex Bourne - £6 single, £10 couple. Tel 01992 700847.

Singing Flora in Benjamin Britten's Turn of The Screw

After saying goodbye to an emotional mother I boarded a plane for Venice, feeling both nervous and very excited, having never experienced anything like this before. Seeing Venice for the first time I knew that this city was like no other in the world. We took a water taxi to our new home for the month. We walked through the piazza in front of our flat where we first saw the coop and the bakery that I would be ordering cappuccinos from every day I had free.

The very first day we arrived we were told we didn't have time to unpack, we could change our clothes, but then we had to go straight out again to our first music rehearsal. We all piled back on to the water taxi and were off to La Fenice.

The music rehearsal took place in a chorus rehearsal room inside the theatre. There we were introduced to the other members of the cast, our conductor, Jeffrey Tate, and our director, Pier Luigi Pizzi, who didn't speak a word of English.

When production rehearsals started it was very exciting as they were in the theatre on stage with the full set. However, it was only at the dress rehearsal that we realised the lake was actually going to be filled with water and Miss Jessel was going to be thrown into it.

Production rehearsals were taken by our choreographer Roberto who was a dancer and very interesting in making pretty shapes on stage, even if they weren't entirely comfortable, like lying on my leg on the floor while the governess finishes an aria. We rehearsed 6 days a week including Sunday for between 3 and 6 hours a day.

The set was very dark, all blacks and greys, with Miles dressed in white and Flora (thats me) dressed in a black and white sailor suit.

The performances were the most nerve-racking and exciting times of my life. Before I went on stage I would have butterflies in my stomach and panic about getting hiccups or forgetting words, but as soon as I stepped under the lights I forgot all about my nerves. After every performance I just wanted to do it again.

The other good thing about performance time was, we weren't performing every day, allowing us to finally explore the city we'd been living in. We had become used to all the winding passages and learnt our way around, only getting lost a couple of times in the last two weeks. When we were finally let out to explore we went to all the places we hadn't gone to on our daily path from San Giacomo dell' Orio and La Fenice. We went to the Ghetto and the Giudecca, which is known as real Venice because the tourists haven't made it across that part of the Grand Canal.

It was sad leaving Venice after having so much fun there. It was an experience of a life time where I learnt so much about stage-craft from the other singers and from the conductor and director. Singing in Venice has made me ever more determined to succeed in a career as a classical singer. Hopefully I'll be able to go back to that gorgeous theatre and sing again.

Emma Tirebuck

Many will remember Emma as the Queen of the Night in Southgate Youth Opera's production of Mozart's The Magic Flute last year. We congratulate her warmly on the launch of her international career with a principal role in a company recruited by the famous La Fenice opera house where The Turn of the Screw received its world premiere in 1954. - Ed.

Southgate on the Road

The cabaret group 'rested' between January and May, while most of them were occupied with *Pirates* and the preparations for *A Masked Ball*, but then resumed in June with two performances that month and one in early July for which we welcomed Muriel Ray as our accompanist.

Our audiences seem still to be happy with our programme of chorus medleys of popular songs interspersed with solos both serious and comic. A letter received after the last cabaret reads,

Thanks for your lovely entertainment on Wednesday. The residents spoke to me about it so I know they enjoyed it immensely. We all hope it is possible for you to come again, maybe December.

However, we plan to rehearse a new series of medleys for next season, as we've been singing the same ones for quite a while now. There's no lack of materials, but they need sorting out! Any offers, folks?

FR

A Masked Ball Reviews

Frances Richardson saw the production on Saturday, 3 July

As a 'resting' member of the Southgate chorus I had seen nothing of this production in rehearsal, so I came to it unprepared except by distant memories of our last production in 1991. I enjoyed David Barrell's accomplished and very different version of Verdi's opera greatly, and it has given me several new insights into this beautiful work.

The two aspects I particularly enjoyed were the uses made of the set and the chorus. At first I wondered whether the difference in style between set and costumes was a good idea - the set being so stark, symbolic and contemporary, while the costumes radiated traditional period splendour. But in fact the contrast turned out to be very effective, as the set was used in various ways to point up the blend of comedy and tragedy which is central to the opera, to show when doom was threatening to overwhelm humour, or to make the human beings on stage seem small, like puppets of fate.



The chorus singing was strong and their part in the dramatic action meticulously rehearsed. I was reminded

of Verdi's statement about the chorus of witches in his *Macbeth* - that they, as a group, functioned like a single principal role. In *A Masked Ball* the chorus appears in four different roles - as anxious petitioners, superstitious townspeople, furtive conspirators and elegant courtiers. David Barrell's production placed the chorus



each time in a distinct part of the stage to show they were a group with a particular emotional tone. Southgate chorus members are accustomed to acting as individuals, creating their own characters, and interacting with the principals, so it must have been difficult for them to play down their individuality, but they did achieve this, and the effect was powerful. I found it most marked in the Ulrica scene and the ball scene. In the first, the townspeople seemed ordinary and real while Ulrica (aided by the lighting and the melodramatic music) had a supernatural quality which sent shivers down the spine. In the final scene, Lee Mason's appropriate period

choreography and the leisurely movements of promenading couples created a mobile aristocratic backcloth and sustained the tension while not distracting from the actions and words of the principals.

Verdi tells the story of *A Masked Ball* in such subtle and varied music, and I felt that Southgate's orchestra and principals were in the main equal to the challenges he presents. Although there had been some cast changes during the rehearsal



period, the principals had clearly not been unsettled by these and performed with professional assurance, although there were some differences in volume between them. I particularly enjoyed the performances of Christine Hunter as the doomy Ulrica and Aurélia Jonvaux as her polar opposite, the bubbly and sophisticated page Oscar. Audience comments overheard in the foyer confirmed my view that this was another success to add to Southgate's long list.



Don Ray saw the production on Thursday, 1 July

A *Masked Ball* was not an opera I had seen before. I knew the story and the background but was glad to read the excellent programme notes which increased the air of expectancy I felt around me. Maybe this was just my feeling but I have not always experienced it.

From the opening bars of the overture the conductor (Neil Cloake) had the orchestra with him and they supported him right through the evening. The chorus also did the same, with the male side being particularly strong in the conspiracy scenes. As to the principals, most could perhaps have benefited from a little stronger characterisation. One who stood out as an exception from the others in this respect was Oscar (Aurélia Jonvaux), who had a nice light touch in handling some of the humour. Amelia (Andrea Munro) unfortunately comes in for a little criticism. She must learn to moderate her voice to the size of the hall: at times she managed to overpower some of the others.



As usual the show was well dressed and the decor very effective. The director/designer (David Barrell) is to be complimented.

I left the theatre happily recalling various scenes, feeling that once again Southgate Opera had lived up to its reputation.



Mike McKinley saw the production on Saturday, 3 July



I enjoyed your production of *A Masked Ball* on Saturday night: certainly a large and ambitious production. There is some very fine music in this work and some splendid moments for the chorus with some of the soloists. I especially liked Aurélia Jonvaux as Oscar, a very talented young lady. Oscar's appeal for clemency was beautifully sung. Christine Hunter's interpretation of the sorceress was brilliant and the lighting on her face was very effective. Andrea Munro has a very commanding operatic voice and made for a very strong Amelia. James Kinsella's portrayal of the king was delightful. He died very well; a very emotional end.



Photographs taken by Gillian Porter, Jo Raworth and Anna Tamba

Image recognition



Can you identify the *Masked Ball* performers in their 18th century disguises? And what about the characters in these 'sketches, associated with *The Yeomen of the Guard*? G&S aficionados will probably be aware that WS Gilbert, before he turned his talent to writing librettos for light operas, composed a number of poems for the journal *Fun*, illustrated with his own drawings signed Bab. These were subsequently published in a collected edition titled *The Bab Ballads*. Some of the poems contain characters and situations which Gilbert later worked up in the Savoy Operas.



[PS - One of the sketches is not from *The Bab Ballads*, as you will easily guess.]

Ed.

Southgate Symphony Orchestra

The orchestra continues to grow in numbers and expertise under its inspiring conductor Adrian Brown and the leadership of Angela Hunt.

On Saturday 4th July an audience of over 170 greatly enjoyed their concert given at St. Mary Magdalene Church, Enfield. The concert ended with Tschaikovsky's emotion-packed *5th Symphony*, preceded by Weber's *Clarinet Concerto No.1 in F minor*, a work strangely 'Beethoven-ish' at times in its dark passages and sudden swings of mood. Some members of the orchestra thought it 'better than Mozart's!' The amazingly agile soloist was Stephen Bennett.

The programme started with a *Waltz Fantasy*, a short piece by Terry Hawes, based on themes from the musical *Vanity Fair* (based on Thackeray of course) which Terry wrote with John Dervish when the latter was a Royal Academy of Music student in 1995. (The whole show was given a concert performance at the Academy, and there was a complete production by LOST Youth Theatre at Fulham in 1996.) On Saturday the Fantasy was played twice because, as Adrian said, it was "almost shorter than the security announcements".

A DVD has been made of this event. Gordon Giles plays first flute in this orchestra and the camera (or whatever it is) catches him several times tootling away. Anyone interested in obtaining a copy, contact the orchestra secretary contactus@southgatesymphony.co.uk

LOST YOUTH THEATRE is no longer at Fulham but at Lambeth, 180 Wandsworth Rd., London SW8 2JU - in a brand new, purpose-built 180-seat theatre. The grand opening was on January 20th and Ralph Fiennes was among old alumni who attended.

Cecil Hayter, who has worked for this so hard all his life (or all his time in London, that is, from 1968) has been made President, and hopes this is not a case of being kicked upstairs!

In case you don't know, LOST (the London Oratory School Theatre) was started at the school in the late 1960s by Cecil Hayter, who has directed the majority of Southgate's operas since 1969, the most recent being the triumphant *La Bohème* last year.

Find out more from the website, www.losttheatre.co.uk

A Quick Look at our Future Programme: THE ELIXIR OF LOVE, June 2011

This happy comedy, blending fun with feeling, was twice performed by Southgate at the Gladys Child Theatre. Some of us, performers and audience, will recall the first production, in 1972, while more of us will remember the second in 1999, directed by Cecil Hayter with Neil as the Musical Director. Familiar names in the of 1999 cast include Lee Mason, Colin Davis, Clive Bebee and David Luck - and the last-named will be directing our new production next year. It is also cheering to note that about half of the 1999 chorus members are still active in the company - so if you were not among them, ask around among your friends to get an idea of the show.

Gaetano Donizetti is said to have composed *The Elixir* in two weeks (but we shall never know for sure). It was premiered in 1832 with instant success and was one of the most popular Italian operas staged in England during the 1800s. After a period of eclipse it came back into favour, together with several of Donizetti's other operas, after World War 2, in the era of Joan Sutherland, Maria Callas et al.

Recently London has seen modern-dress productions like Jude Kelly's, set in some Mediterranean bureaucracy during the 1950s, and Jonathan Miller's, located in "Adina's diner" somewhere in the Midwest during the same period. We look forward to finding out what David Luck will do with this most tuneful and moving comic opera.

Ed.

Dates for your Diary

Location: St Mary Magdalene Church Hall, unless stated otherwise.

Rehearsals for Friends' Concert

Mondays 13/20/27 September, plus Sunday 26 September and Saturday 2 October (afternoons)

Friends' Concert - *Songs you Remember*

Saturday 2 October, 7.30 pm (first half in St Mary Magdalene Church, second half in the hall)

Annual General Meeting

Monday 4 October, 7.30 pm - see notice on this page

Sunday & Monday 10/11 October - *The Yeomen of the Guard* rehearsals begin for Principals/Chorus, and continue to **Monday 13 December**

Sunday 17 October - Auditions for *The Elixir of Love*, from 2.00 pm

Monday 20 December - Company Christmas get-together

Monday 3 January - Rehearsals resume

Saturday/Sunday 15/16 January - Weekend rehearsal

Sunday 6 February to Saturday 12 February - Wylyotts

The Yeomen of the Guard - Show Week

Performances 7.30 pm Wednesday 9 to Saturday 12 with matinée Saturday 2.30 pm

Sunday 12 June to Saturday 18 June - Wylyotts

The Elixir of Love - Show Week

Performances 7.30 pm Wednesday 15 to Saturday 18
- no matinée

For up-to-date information on the company, visit our website at:
www.southgateopera.co.uk

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Please post, e-mail or deliver by hand any contributions to one of the Joint Editors.

SPOTLIGHT

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Joint Editors:

Frances Richardson and
Andrea Whittaker

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2010

This will be held on Monday 4 October at 7.30 pm in St Mary Magdalene Church. Details and relevant papers are being circulated to all fully paid up members. If you are uncertain about your eligibility to attend, please contact the Company's Hon Secretary, Suzy Gaughran.



CHAPEL END SAVOY PLAYERS PRESENTS

A GILBERT & SULLIVAN CHRISTMAS CAROL

On November 26th & 27th 2010
7.30PM

At St John's Church, Billet Road,
Walthamstow E17

Tickets £8 from Marjorie on 020 8529 3143
Also available on the door



Spotlight is the newsletter of Southgate Opera, and is published twice a year for free distribution to members of the Company and registered Friends. The views expressed in it are not necessarily those of the Editors or of the company as a whole. Contributions are always welcome, though for reasons of space, balance of material, etc, no guarantee can be given that all those received will be published, or published in entirety. The authorship of each contribution must be clearly identified to the Editors: anonymous pieces are not acceptable. However, a contributor's request to be published anonymously, or under a pseudonym, will be respected. The Editors' decision is final.