

- La Vie Parisienne -

La Vie Parisienne is a diverting and tangled tale of flirtation and romantic intrigue. The story recounts the amorous adventures and misadventures of two Swedes, Baron and Baroness Gondremarck, on their Parisienne holiday. The opening act takes place at a railway station and introduces not only our Swedish couple, but a wild Brazilian who vows to paint the town red! The Baron and Baroness are befriended by a Parisian dandy (pretending to be a guide) who promises to show them Paris and introduce them to high society, but all is not what it seems.....

Offenbach's music gives us tune after tune of the utmost simplicity, yet memorable and fascinating. *La Vie Parisienne* includes the famous cancan dance which first became popular in the music halls of 19th century Paris and is now synonymous with Offenbach's name.

Originally set in the 1860s, Director, Lee Mason, has updated this glittering version of life in Gay Paree to the period 1900-1910. Expect irrepressible, vivacious music, dancing, wonderful costumes and scenes of rapturous hilarity. No wonder it is one of Offenbach's most popular shows!



WEDDING BELLS ARE TUNING UP!

We are delighted to announce autumn weddings for two members of Southgate Opera:



Christine

Andrea Whittaker and Tony McTeare are getting married on Friday 7th October at East Finchley Methodist Church.

Christine Hunter and Steve Rogers are getting married on Saturday 5th November at Our Lady of Mount Carmel and St George Catholic Church, Enfield.

We send our best wishes to both couples.



Andrea

THE FRIENDS OF SOUTHGATE OPERA NEWS

In the last edition of *Spotlight* we gave you advance notice of the next **Friends' Concert** and sent Friends a ticket application form. Many of you responded and we look forward to seeing you on Saturday October 1st at our new venue in Southgate.

To other Friends, may we remind you to apply for tickets now by post - details below.

We would love to recruit new Friends, so if you have a personal friend who would like to become a 'Friend' of Southgate Opera this would be a great time for them to join and start their membership with our very special evening! If you do not have the form please contact us to reserve a place.

Saturday 1st October 2011

A Gilbert & Sullivan Evening

The first half will consist of G&S solos and ensembles

The second half will be a semi-staged production of

Trial by Jury

Tickets £8.50 each including refreshments

7.30pm (doors open 7pm)

Church House, Waterfall Road, Southgate

(Opposite Christ Church near Ye Olde Cherry Tree)

With car parking

A cheque made payable to 'Southgate Opera' should be sent to the joint Friends' Secretaries: Ann and Rex Bourne, 44 Shepley Mews, South Ordinance Road, Enfield Lock EN3 6JP. Tel: 01992 700847
Email: rex_bourne@talk21.com

Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

He is sadly missed, not only by me but by everyone here in Devon, for his tireless dedicated work and his loyalty to all the activities in Down Thomas and Heybrook Bay.

Fortunately I have good health in both body and mind which has enabled me to carry on with my piano playing for our local choir (20 concerts to date) and also to take over David's Phoenix Singers which he rescued from closure.

My love and best wishes to Southgate Opera for their continued success. Long may they give such great pleasure to so many people.

Thank you Southgate Opera.

Sold Out!

The Members' Concert and Social Evening in July was a great success. "What a fantastic and enjoyable way of getting to know other company members", is how one new member put it!

Twenty members of the group performed in front of a capacity audience. Songs from musicals, lieder, operatic arias and comic items made for a varied and interesting programme accompanied by our musical director, Neil Cloake.

Special mention must go to the youngest performer, Scott Folan, who gave us a wonderful rendition of "Little People" from *Les Misérables*.

The concert finale was led by Linda and Colin who encouraged and sang with the enthusiastic audience in a sing-a-long medley that brought a delightful musical evening to a reluctant close.

Next year the concert will be on Saturday 7th July.

PHYLLIS WATERS REPLIES –

In the last issue of Spotlight we offered congratulations to Phyllis, a Life Friend of Southgate Opera, on her 90th birthday. She wrote to thank us and we are sure that those who remember Phyllis and David Waters would like to see her reply:

Thank you for your kind recognition of my 90th birthday. I had a whole week of celebrations.

Reading all your news is a constant reminder of the many happy memories of our time with Southgate Opera, and the years of opportunity, fun and enjoyment the group gave to David.

Had he been alive I'm sure he would have been very tempted to come to audition for his favourite opera *A Masked Ball*. The strength and purity of his top B flat was still perfect the week before he died so unexpectedly.

AGM 2011

This will be held on Monday 3rd October at 7.30pm at St Mary Magdalene's Church Hall. Details and relevant papers are being circulated to all fully paid up members. If you are uncertain about your eligibility to attend and vote, please contact the Company's Honorary Secretary, Suzy Gaughran, on: 020 8372 2383 or Email: enquiries@southgateopera.co.uk

A Sonnet for The Royal Wedding

Martin Eggleton saw an advert on the web for a competition run by the Writers' Bureau – to submit a sonnet on the Royal Wedding. He wrote, entered, and won the prize of a Poetry Writing Course. Congratulations, Martin! The judging panel commented, "His lovely sonnet really captures the spirit of the wedding and feeling of those who decided to celebrate the day."

Let me not to the marriage of two hearts
So noble and so true, find feeble fault,
Here in this ancient holy place now starts
A journey that no earthly force can halt.
Sealed with a two-fold kiss that charms the crowd
The student prince receives his greater prize,
The commoner ascends, her smile so proud,
Her eyes alight with love, both young and wise.
Beyond the bishop's words in finest cope
And whispered vows, looks innocent and coy,
The flags of day bespeak the nation's hope,
Then sparkling night repeats its common joy.
I need not bow my head or gently kneel
But tell myself this fairytale is real.

MEMORIES OF TRIAL BY JURY

TERRY HAWES

I was once in a professional production of *Trial by Jury* at the Old Bailey (where it is set), in the late 90s, I think.

I went with Alex Hudson, veteran member of Southgate, to see this independent production in which his son-in-law Bruce Graham was playing the counsel for the plaintiff, a part in which Gilbert made use of his own not-entirely-happy experience of the law with the lines referring to the defendant's ditching his fiancée:

*Doubly criminal to do so,
For the maid had bought her trousseau!*

I'm not sure where Alex's daughter Caroline (Bruce's wife) was that afternoon. Possibly performing elsewhere, as she was also 'in theatre'.

The production was in modern dress. Some of the female chorus were reporters and fashion photographers, but performed in a way that did not detract from the original.

The male chorus was only six in number (there should be 12 jurors plus some men in the public seats) and an announcement was made asking for two men from the audience - not to sing, but to help fill the ranks and just do what the others did production-wise - so with Alex's encouragement I volunteered.

I knew the score almost by heart so I sang with the others and could easily anticipate the moves; stand up - sit down - wave your fist: I think the ones next to me were a little surprised. 'Who's this chap who knows it better than we do?'

Bruce gave his usual richly-rounded performance, and I was quite good too, though obviously the talent scouts were not out that afternoon as I did not receive any offers!

An Afternoon of Tudor Music

On Sunday 26th June Terry Hawes directed an afternoon of singing music from the Tudor period, some madrigals and motets, just for fun, no concert at the end. Those taking part were members and ex-members of Southgate Opera, St. Peter's Church Choir, the Hoddesdon Players and others - 27 in all.

Unless you belong to some specialised group there are not many opportunities to sing this glorious music and everyone seemed to enjoy the informal atmosphere (lots of laughs along the way).

One problem is hiring copies of the music. Apparently Enfield libraries do not contain one madrigal, let alone a set, and the set ordered from out of the borough arrived on the Monday! Fortunately copies were obtained elsewhere.

It was a bright sunny afternoon and with the church doors wide open it was the next best thing to singing in the open air. The tea break was a good opportunity to catch up with old friends. The afternoon was a great success and people are asking for another.

Rossini on Wagner:

"It is a music one must hear several times. I am not going again (of *Tannhäuser*). Wagner has lovely moments, but awful quarters of an hour."

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE

REVIEWS

Paul M. Holgate – NODA

This production of the Donizetti opera transferred the setting from the Italian countryside to Barnet Fair at the turn of the 19th century.

Musical support under Neil Cloake was excellent with good communication between the stage and the pit. Diction was clear from both principals and chorus.

Direction from David Luck was sound, if somewhat pedestrian in places. The first act did drag a little, the second was better paced. Chorus arranged themselves into straight lines on occasions though general movement and reactions were effective with a great deal of characterisation. Exits, notoriously difficult at this venue, were exceptionally well done. The barcarolle seemed to get rather 'lost in the mix' and may have benefited from more prominent placing for the performers.



The English fairground setting worked well and the set was both colourful and of interesting design. The central entrance/exit required a darker background to give more impression of depth. The stage was well lit with no black areas although lighting needed to be warmer to represent the outdoor setting.

Costumes conformed to period. Both Act I and Act II ladies' chorus looked particularly effective. Good costuming also for Nemorino, Dulcamara and Belcore. Having a chorus of policemen rather than soldiers was a bold idea and worked well, adding greatly to the humour of the piece. Make-up needed to be darker to show that these people spend most of their time out of doors in the summer.

Renato Cordeiro was a perfect Nemorino and was a joy to watch. He gave a great performance of 'una furtiva lagrima'. He was also very funny in the 'drunk' scenes which were played with a great deal of insouciance. 'Dell' elisir mirabile' was also a very entertaining scene with sound support from the ladies' chorus

and featuring Yvette Litchfield as a lively and vivacious Giannetta.

Alexandra Hutton was an aloof Adina. She was occasionally upstaged. It was difficult to discern much of the character's affection for Nemorino which is so essential to the story. She had a pleasant singing voice and 'Della crudele Isotta' was nicely performed, being very well phrased; one perceived the character's empathy with the story that she was relating. Derek S Henderson was a colourful Dr Dulcamara in every sense. He used his considerable stagepresence and strong singing voice to very good effect, creating a flamboyant yet very believable character. One felt that there was nothing he could not talk his way out of. David Roberts was a solid and likeable Belcore with a clear voice. He could have done more with the character's pomposity but it was a fine performance including a lot of humour.



The programme had an interesting front cover. It is nice to see a cover that gives the bare minimum – just title and composer – giving the picture maximum impact. The contents were clearly laid out and easy to read. It included a clear synopsis. Cast photos were all rather dark. Thank you for including the NODA crest.

Many thanks for your invitation and your hospitality. I look forward to seeing *La Vie Parisienne* next year.

Judy Rees

There was much to enjoy in Southgate Opera's latest production *The Elixir of Love*, cleverly and nostalgically set by director David Luck in nineteenth century Barnet Fair. He had a fine clutch of talented young



soloists to work with who vividly brought to life his vision of itinerant fairground folk.

Derek S Henderson as Dulcamara was suitably blustering and manipulative and had a hilarious assistant in Dave Adams who managed to not quite upstage him. Belcore as played by David Roberts was gravely amorous although he had one or two distracting mannerisms on stage.

The undoubted vocal highlights of the evening, though, were provided by Renato Cordeiro as Nemorino and Alexandra Hutton as Adina. Cordeiro's voice although a little husky in his lower register was expressive and very stylish. He was also a favourite with the audience who audibly sympathised with the ups and downs of his troubled relationship with Adina. Alexandra Hutton was a delight as Adina, singing Donizetti's demanding coloratura flawlessly and apparently almost effortlessly; she is definitely a talent to look out for in the future. Yvette Litchfield looked and sounded lovely, but sadly in the rather thankless role of Giannetta had few opportunities to shine.

I was impressed with the relatively small chorus, who were much improved since I last saw them. They were all individual characters who acted and responded well to the action. The men in the chorus, who were outnumbered by a ratio of 2 to 1 by the ladies, nevertheless held their own



and a good choral balance was achieved. Musically the chorus as a whole was much more disciplined with good tight ensemble.

Neil Cloake as usual was conducting and maintained excellent control over the proceedings, providing good tempi for the

singers and some fine orchestral playing.

Altogether an accomplished and enjoyable evening's performance.

Stella Masters

saw the opera on Thursday 16 June

We have become accustomed to David Luck being able to steal a scene without saying or singing a word. Here, as Director, he gave other people a chance to distinguish themselves, and the show was entertaining from the start.

It is unusual for an opera composer to expend one of his best tunes so early in the proceedings, but Renato Cordeiro won the audience's approbation with his mellifluous singing of "She's a darling, I adore her". Indeed, the company was fortunate in having such fine singers for all the main roles, all with admirable technique, well displayed in meticulously performed runs, trills, and other vocal acrobatics; and they have academic qualifications to match! Alexandra (Lexi) Hutton was delightful as Adina, and Yvette Litchfield, as Giannetta, could hardly have been bettered. For good measure, they were both beautiful too.

David Roberts as the conceited police sergeant, Belcore (a variation on the army officer specified in the libretto) contrasted well with his accompanying policemen, who delighted the audience by playing the parts of the Three Stooges – and every one with a fine moustache!



Derek S Henderson as Dr Dulcamara, a travelling seller of his own cures for everything, was a fine, imposing figure, with an imposing voice and manner to match.

But they were all in danger of being outdone by the 'sorcerer's apprentice', Dave Adams, who must have learned from David Luck how to steal a scene without saying a word. When he wasn't busy rearranging the bottles of 'cure-alls', he was hungrily munching on a variety of snacks, including tasting the various pots of lotions. He also had a delightful way of scratching his head – almost knocking off his wig – then licking his fingers (Ugh!).

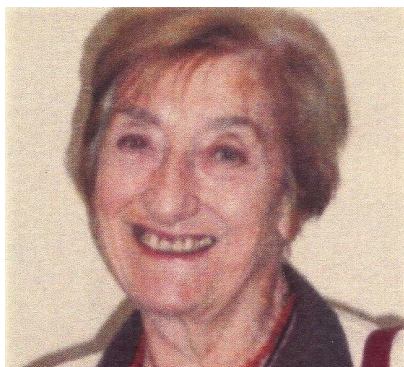
The chorus, as usual, did much more than simply give background support, with fine singing and inventive acting. But then, they don't simply 'mark things through' at rehearsals, but throw themselves into the action. It is astonishing how a cloth cap and shabby waistcoat can completely alter the appearance of a man who at other times plays the roles of distinguished Lords or Judges – but the costume doesn't do it all, and convincing acting is also needed.

It may seem irreverent to criticise Donizetti, but some duets,

although well-performed, did go on for rather a long time. Like Beethoven before him, he missed many good stopping-places: we can suffer from a surfeit of delight. However,



the company as a whole – and that includes the backstage helpers – are to be congratulated on a grand performance.



RHODA FLETCHER

It is with great sadness that we record the passing of Rhoda Fletcher, who died on 15th June 2011 from cancer.

A primary school teacher by profession, Rhoda had a very busy and productive life in which singing played a major role.

After considerable experience in choirs, including the Southgate College Singers run by Terry Hawes, she joined Southgate College Opera in 1974 and was active in many areas of the company until 2009. As well as performing in the chorus in all the productions and undertaking some cameo roles, she was a loyal supporter of company fringe activities such as the former Southgate Musical Theatre, Old Time Music Hall, and the more recent Southgate Cabaret group.

For many years, she made costumes, especially hats, for the company and with other members built up a large costume store. For some years she was also the company's Honorary Secretary and Auditions Secretary.

Rhoda also sang in the prestigious Crouch End Festival Chorus at major venues in England and on the continent, and in a small madrigal group. She had wide interests in art, architecture and conserving wildlife, and she travelled extensively in Britain and around the globe.

Rhoda was determined to live life to the full and to see its funny side. She was always ready to help and befriend people and was beloved by her family and all who knew her. She will be greatly missed.

DIARY DATES

2011

Saturday 1 October

Friends' Concert
Church House, Waterfall Road,
Southgate

7pm for 7.30pm start

Monday 3 October

Southgate Opera
Annual General Meeting
St Mary Magdalene's Church Hall
7.30pm

Monday 10 October

Auditions for Verdi's *Otello*
Further information from Joanna
Raworth, Auditions Secretary: 0208
529 3094 or Email:
jo_star_light@yahoo.co.uk

2012

**Wednesday 8 February to Saturday
11 February**

Offenbach's *La Vie Parisienne*
Wylllyotts Theatre, Potters Bar
Performances at 7.30pm Saturday
matinee 2.30pm

**Thursday 21 June to Saturday 23
June**

Verdi's *Otello*
Wylllyotts Theatre, Potters Bar
Performances at 7.30pm
No Saturday matinee

Saturday 7 July

Members' Concert
St Mary Magdalene's Church Hall
7.30pm

Spotlight is published by Southgate Opera. **Deadline for contributions for the next issue is Friday 17 February 2012.** Please post, e-mail or hand-deliver contributions to one of the Joint Editors:

Frances Richardson

46 Woodfield Drive, Barnet
Herts EN4 8PA (020 8368 7569)
ferichardson@plustsl.net

Andrea Whittaker

2 Sylvan Avenue,
London N3 2LE (020 8346 7325)
andreawhittaker@talktalk.net

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.

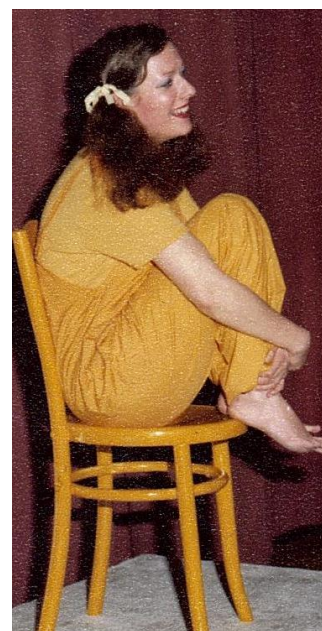
Julia Poppo

21.10.1956 – 13.08.2011

Julia was a member of the Southgate Opera Group along with her husband, Martin, before moving to Cheshire. She had been fighting cancer for the last couple of years and leaves her husband and three children Christian, Naomi and Isabel of whom she was extremely proud. She requested *no black at my funeral* which was typical of Julia.

A staunch member of the alto line she appeared in review, operas and the lighter shows over a number of years including the role of the Baroness in the 1992 production of *La Vie Parisienne* alongside John Baker's Baron. She joined as a young student whilst at Middlesex and played the role of *the mute* in the Octagon production of *The Fantastiks* (see picture). Her husband, Martin, played the horn in the orchestra for many years.

Julia and Martin hosted many Opera Group parties. Often departing to the sounds of the dawn chorus followed by



about two hours sleep before the Sunday get out at the college theatre. Their front door was always open with a warm welcome awaiting any visitor.

Her career, as a teacher, took her from the East End to Staffordshire. Julia's love of music and performing was ever present from her days with the Staffordshire Youth Choir to The Amici Chamber Choir whose members sang at her Thanksgiving Mass which was held in Middlewich, Cheshire. The service, music and addresses to a packed church celebrated a life that was cut short.

She had a zest for life which she enjoyed to the full. Perhaps I remember her laughter most. Having stubbed my toe on the concrete base of a revolving ice cream sign the heavily pregnant Julia collapsed in tears of laughter in the middle of the road stopping the traffic.

David Luck