

A Night at the Opera – 29th March 2014

From the Chair...

An opera begins long before the curtain goes up and ends long after it has come down. It starts in my imagination, it becomes my life, and it stays part of my life long after I've left the opera house. (Maria Callas)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to an indulgent evening of opera tunes. Operas invariably have complex plots usually intertwining love, humour (sometimes farcical), betrayal and more often than not culminate in tragedy. We have music from all aspects of opera - overtures, arias, duets, choruses, incidental music – and they all have passion, wonderful melody and harmony, but this evening, no words!

We begin in Seville where Carmen seduces Don Jose, then falls in love with toreador Escamillo only to be struck down by Jose in a fit of jealous rage.

Three of Verdi's operas feature in our programme this evening. The chorus of the Hebrew Slaves comes from his opera *Nabucco* (Nebuchadnezzar), which recounts the biblical story of the plight of the Jews in Babylon. The Anvil Chorus from *Il Travatore* depicts gypsies striking their anvils at dawn, while extolling the praises of hard work, good wine and gypsy women. *Aida* is set in ancient Egypt where Ethiopian princess Aida has been captured. She falls in love with soldier Radames who is torn between military duty to the Pharaoh, whose daughter's love for him is unrequited, and his love for Aida.

Mascagni's *Cavalleria Rusticana*, which follows the ill-fated love triangle between Turiddu, Santuzza and Lola, is set in a village in Sicily on Easter Morning. Our evening would not be complete without the exquisite Intermezzo and the Easter Hymn.

Our Opera Cocktail comprises snippets from several works. Listen out for Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* and The Humming Chorus (*Madame Butterfly*), Smetana's *The Bartered Bride*, Delibes' Flower Duet (*Lakmé*) and Borodin's Polovtsian Dances (*Prince Igor*).

The Love for Three Oranges by Prokofiev perhaps is not as well known as some other operas featured tonight, but the March may be familiar. In contrast, few people will not have heard Wagner's Ride of the Valkyries from the second opera within his epic four opera Ring Cycle.

Puccini's *La Bohème* follows of the fate of young bohemians living in the Latin Quarter of Paris in the 1840s, and arguably boasts some of the finest melodies from the world of opera.

Our evening concludes with the overture to *Die Fledermaus* (The Bat), Strauss' operetta full of disguises, a gala ball and humorous plot twists.

Opera glasses at the ready as we start our whistle stop tour of opera, without the voice.

Barbara Sykes

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TONIGHT'S PROGRAMME

1. Overture from *Carmen* Georges Bizet
(arr. John Avery)
2. Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, from *Nabucco* Guiseppe Verdi
(arr. George Pollen)
3. Intermezzo and Easter Hymn from *Cavalleria Rusticana* Pietro Mascagni
(arr. Charles Godfrey, Jr)
4. Anvil Chorus, from *Il Trovatore* Guiseppe Verdi
(arr. George Pollen)
5. Marsch der Priester, from *The Magic Flute* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
6. Opera Cocktail arr. Richard Ling
*Lakmé – The Bartered Bride – Manon Lescaut –
Humming Chorus – Polovtsian Dances*
7. March from *The Love for Three Oranges* Serge Prokofiev
(arr. Harold Perry)
8. Ride of the Valkyries Richard Wagner
(arr Nigel Wicken)

Interval

9. Overture from *The Marriage of Figaro* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(arr. Aubrey Winter)
10. Suite from *Aïda* Guiseppe Verdi
(arr. Stanford Robinson)
11. *La Bohème* Selection Giacomo Puccini
(arr. Charles Godfrey, Jr)
12. Dance of the Hours, from *La Gioconda* Amilcare Ponchielli
(arr. Angelo Fumagalli)
13. *Die Fledermaus* – Overture Johann Strauss
(arr. Aubrey Winter)

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This evening's musical programme

The combination of voice and orchestra has thrilled audiences around the world and it is opera that has stood the test of time, with its raw emotive power and subjects that range from realism to fairy-tales. Opera has something for everyone. Tonight The Pelly is pleased to perform some of the best-known music from some of the world's best-loved operas. Although the concert tonight lacks the other important element in opera – the voice, the music speaks for itself and for those who are listening closely the voice can be heard in one or two of the pieces played this evening.

Tonight's programme includes music from many of the top composers in the genre. We open with the Overture to *Carmen*, Bizet's tour de force opera that tells the tale of the famous gypsy who is flippant with her lovers and pays the ultimate price. Moving on to Italy and few have attained such fame and fortune as the two Italian composers, Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini.

From Verdi we have three of his most famous pieces, The Chorus of Hebrew Slaves from *Nabucco*, The Anvil Chorus from *Il Trovatore* and an orchestral suite from *Aida*. *Nabucco* follows the plight of the Jews as they are assaulted, conquered, and subsequently exiled from their homeland by the Babylonian King Nabucco (in English, Nebuchadnezzar). The historical events are used as background for a romantic and political plot. The best-known number from the opera is the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, "Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate" (Fly, thought, on golden wings), a chorus which is regularly given an encore in many opera houses when performed today. The Anvil Chorus has a band of Spanish gypsies singing the merits of hard work and gypsy women, but it is *Aida* that has become one of Verdi's most beloved operas. It tells the tale of the poor servant girl who is secretly a princess and she falls in love with her captor's daughter's lover; a suitably convoluted story that any opera composer would be proud of. The selection featured in the second half of tonight's concert is mainly made up of the opening of Act II, the famous boudoir scene from Act I, and the ballet music.

Another Italian opera composer who features tonight wrote one of the most beautiful orchestra interludes ever written for opera. The Intermezzo and Easter Hymn from Mascagni's opera *Cavalleria Rusticana*, written in 1890, are familiar to audiences worldwide and we play them for you tonight in their orchestral versions.

Outside Italy opera had begun to take a foothold in the mid 1700's. The young Mozart was no stranger to opera and began at an early age, composing his first opera in his early teens. Fast forward some years and he is one of the most important opera composers ever to have lived. Tonight we play the March of the Priests from his magical opera *The Magic Flute*. Played as the priests of Osiris assemble for their daily rituals, it has a solemn air but contains some beautiful Mozartian touches.

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The opera cocktail gives an opportunity to hear snippets from some of the repertoire's best loved and most exciting works from *Lakmé* to *The Bartered Bride*, there is sure to be something for everyone in this jolly romp through the operas of the 19th century.

A brief detour into the 20th century now, with the colourful March from Prokofiev's opera *The Love for Three Oranges*. Opera in the twentieth century went in many different directions and became more and more fragmented in its definition compared to the 19th century. Now, many things were possible and many subjects were explored but sometimes a good fairytale with its own intrigue and twists in the plot was enough to inspire a composer to write great music.

In Germany, during the late nineteenth century, opera was undergoing a change. It was Richard Wagner who took opera from the nineteenth century and polarized it and some would say all music, through and into the twentieth century. It was his operas *Tristan und Isolde* and *Die Meistersinger* that would polarize composers and composing styles for the next century. However, it is not to these operas that we turn for our Wagnerian offering but instead to the opera that he was composing before he took a break to write the latter two. The Ring Cycle, one of opera's greatest achievements, comprises four operas and tonight we play the Ride of the Valkyries from *Die Walküre*. This prelude is supposed to depict the great female warriors of Valhalla, thundering across the sky on their winged horses, to pick up the bodies of fallen warriors and carry their souls back to Valhalla.

Puccini is a master at melody and mood. He can create an instant emotional reaction both on stage and in his audience. It is for this reason that *La Bohème* became one of the best known and best loved operas in the world. As with many operas from this era, tragedy is never far off, no matter how happy things seem at the beginning. For Mimi and Rodolfo this would mean the loss of a great love, but the music that Puccini was inspired to write for this opera was amongst his greatest and it is presented tonight in the form of selected highlights.

Opera had many changes and additions over the years. During the 19th century it was popular to put a ballet divertissement in the middle of the opera action. The Dance of the Hours from *La Gioconda* is one such moment. Made famous by the Disney *Fantasia* movie, where ballerinas were characterized by hippopotami and depicting the hours of the morning, day, evening and night, this work is still one of the most popular of all ballet music from within an opera.

For our final offering tonight, we play the Overture to The Bat or *Die Fledermaus*. Johann Strauss was well known for his Viennese waltzes and these are still as popular today, much like this fantastic champagne popper of a piece. It is all dazzling light and whirling waltz; close your eyes and be transported to the ballroom, with all its intrigue and laughter.

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1st Violins

David Wallace
Judy Dudley
Jinny Gribble
Rachel Haver
Lynne Thomson
David White
Simon Waddington

2nd Violins

Lesley Lemon
John Beckett
Polly Dickinson
Sue Gillis
David Grocutt
Ann Highley
Michael McConnell

Violas

Tony Smith
Tracey Milne
Clare Stevinson
Douglas Hannah
Philip Thorne
Bob Perry

Cellos

Lynda Trice
Martin Heath
Sarah Higgs
Margaret Houston
Clive Jackson

Double Basses

Lorraine Collins
Michael Atkinson
James Slade

Flutes/Piccolo

Elaine Herbert
Barbara Sykes

Oboes/Cor Anglais

Barry Collisson
Katy Warren

Clarinets

Alison Husted
Helen Lister

Bassoons

Paula Burton
Karen Carter

French Horns

Peter Kaldor
Alison Wyld
Roger Doulton
Brian Taylor

Trumpets

Roy Falshaw
David Gray
Tim Stoney
Thomas Carter

Trombones

Frances Jones
Mike Thomson
Len Tyler

Tuba

Paula Gee

Percussion

Katie Tyler
Neil Marshall

Harp

Charlie Grimsey

The Pelly Concert Orchestra Committee 2013 - 2014

Chairman – Barbara Sykes (Flute)
Vice-Chair – Karen Carter (Bassoon)
Secretary – Lynda Trice (Cello)
Treasurer – Clive Jackson (Cello)

Personnel – Barry Collison (Oboe)
Patrons Secretary – Sue Gillis (Violin)
Assistant Librarian – Paula Burton (Bassoon)
Musical Director – Christopher Braime
Leader – David Wallace

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Christopher Braime: Conductor and Musical Director

Christopher was born in Beverley in 1983. He was awarded a Foundation Scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music where he studied oboe with John Anderson, Christopher Cowie and David Theodore; and conducting with Neil Thomson and Richard Dickins.

Christopher was the Musical Director of the Imperial College String Ensemble from 2003 - 2007



and now works as assistant conductor for the Kensington Philharmonic Orchestra, the Farnborough Symphony Orchestra, and the Sussex Symphony Orchestra. In 2007 he took up the role of Musical Director of the Pelly Orchestra, and in 2010 Musical Director of the Grosvenor Light Operatic Company. In 2011 Christopher beat significant competition to become Musical Director of the London Gay Symphony Orchestra, and in March 2012 was invited to guest conduct the Redhill Sinfonia.

David Wallace: Leader

David Wallace studies violin with Suzanne Stanzeleit. Previous teachers include Maeve Broderick at the Royal Irish Academy of Music and during his undergraduate years at the Cork School of Music he studied violin with Cornelia Zanidache. He was one of the youngest members of the National Youth Orchestra of Ireland (over 18's) at 16, where he had the pleasure of working with some of the greatest conductors in the world in some of the greatest venues in Europe.

Following classes with Natalia Tchitch he started to play viola in 2004 and since his move to London in 2005 he has played viola with many orchestras in many venues throughout the capital. He has attended masterclasses and coachings with Hugh Maguire, Suzanne Stanzeleit, Pal Banda, Constantin Zanidache, Robin Ireland and Andrew Fuller.

Ensembles he has played with include GSMD Symphony Orchestra, YMSO, LGSO, Pelly Concert Orchestra, Sinfonia Tamesa, London Charity Orchestra, National Youth Orchestra of Ireland, RIAMSO, CSMSO, Lambeth Orchestra, Wexford Sinfonia, Kilkenny Youth Orchestra, Bloomsbury Symphony and British Police Orchestra. He also leads a busy chamber music career on both violin and viola.



He teaches violin at James Allen Girls and is Head of Music at Reedham Park School in South London. He is a music scholar (violin) at Roehampton University in London.

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THE ORIGINS OF THE PELLY CONCERT ORCHESTRA

Even as recently as a few years ago we could not have imagined that we would be able to give even one of our concerts in this lovely venue, let alone a complete season. We are delighted to announce that all next season's concerts will once again take place in The Church on the Heath, where we have been made to feel most welcome and where we have enjoyed such excellent facilities and surroundings. But the orchestra started life on a much smaller scale.

As far as we can establish the orchestra was formed in 1967 or 1968 in Yateley. Jack Stilwell, a local resident and benefactor, after whom Yateley's Stilwell Close was named, had put an article in the Yateley parish magazine inviting players to form an orchestra. Only about three people turned up at the first meeting at Jack's house in Stevens Hill. One of those attending was John Lewis, who had been trained at Kneller Hall and who went on to become the nascent orchestra's conductor. According to Paddy Mansfield, one of the founding members, "he was very good, and very professional". Principal Oboist Barry Collisson joined only a few weeks later and is currently the longest-serving member of the orchestra. Another early member was flautist and organiser of the committee William "Drummy" Baldwin, who used to ride the drum horse in Trooping the Colour, and who eventually became a Chelsea pensioner.

The first couple of rehearsals were held at Jack's house, but it rapidly became apparent that there was no room for expansion, and the orchestra moved to Moor House in Moulsham Lane, Yateley, at that time the home of Pat Draycott (née Walker). Pat is thought to have joined the orchestra in 1968, a short time after it had started. To begin with there were only about 6 or 7 members, but it rapidly expanded to over twenty, and within about a year there was no longer enough room in Moor House.

It was some time before the orchestra started to give concerts, and there was no regular schedule of public appearances. Perhaps the first serious concert was that which took place in the Wokingham Theatre one December: the precise date is unknown, but it is believed to have been "in the late 1960's". A contemporary newspaper cutting shows a photograph of the orchestra, clearly taken at the same time as the one reproduced here, with the caption "**Musical venture for theatre**" and the following text:

A new line in entertainment comes to Wokingham Theatre on Sunday, December 1. A concert of light classical music is being given by the 28-strong Yateley Orchestra conducted by John Lewis. The two hour concert will include music from Faust and a selection from Mary Poppins. Yateley Orchestra has been going for nine months and includes members from Crowthorne, Sandhurst and Yateley areas.



Front row, left to right: Mr Rayburn, Doris Curry, Paddy Mansfield, Pat Draycott, John Lewis (Conductor), Alan Hammer, Helen Lewis (wife of John Lewis), Marjory Pryer at the piano.

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Back row, left to right: Unidentified, William “Drummy” Baldwin, Unidentified, Jack Stilwell, Unidentified (possibly a dep).

Although the original name was **Yateley Orchestra**, some time later it was re-named the **Yateley Light Orchestra**, not so much a conscious decision that there would be a focus on light music, although it did indicate the nature of the repertoire, but more a simple reflection of the music the orchestra could lay its hands on. Paddy commented that “we had no music when we started, but a lot of military bands were disbanding at that time, and they all did orchestral music as well, so we welcomed anything we could get”.

The next rehearsal venue was Yateley Hall Convent, in Firgrove Road, where there was much more room, even a stage, and the occasional concert was also given there. The nuns seem to have been well disposed towards the orchestra, because at Christmas time the players would be treated to sherry! This may have been influenced by the Reverend Mother Pelly at Yateley Convent. She was a playing member and an enthusiastic supporter of the orchestra. When the junior school at the Convent closed down, she moved to Farnborough Convent, where she was known just as Sister Pelly.



Although the orchestra continued to rehearse at Yateley, it gave concerts at Farnborough Convent, where it became well enough acquainted with the nuns to be given food – for a time at least, but it seems likely that someone objected to such (mis)use of the Convent's assets and eventually the party was over.

In those days the orchestra gave concerts in all sorts of places, often by invitation and not always as self-promoted concerts. One such concert had to be cancelled because the flute player objected to playing for Masonic events! A number of concerts were given at the MVEE (Military Vehicles Engineering Establishment) at Longcross. Paddy reported that “there used to be a military flavour to the concerts. The Queen first, then overture, march or waltz – there was a definite order of things.” Drummy obtained many extra players through his army connections.

“In 1980 the orchestra was re-named in memory of Sister Pelly, the Mother Superior of Yateley Convent who had been an enthusiastic supporter and playing member of the orchestra until her death [from cancer] in 1977.” (Farnham Herald)

The Pelly Concert Orchestra, as it was now known, continued to rehearse at Yateley Hall until July 1985. From September of that year the rehearsal day had to change from Tuesday to Monday to fit in with the availability of Frogmore School. However, this was not ideal, partly because the classroom used was too small, and partly because pop groups also rehearsed at Frogmore on the same night. The orchestra reverted to Tuesday nights when it moved to the Catholic Hall, Kings Road, Fleet. Paddy recalled that they were treated very nicely by the priest. “Then he moved and a new one came and he complained bitterly that he didn't like us playing on Tuesday nights.” Apparently, it was suggested that he simply close his window!

In 1994 the rehearsal venue was changed yet again to its present location at Oak Farm School (now the Samuel Cody Specialist Sports College), and in November that year it was the venue for a concert, which coincidentally was also **Michael Fielder's** last concert as conductor. Michael had started to play the clarinet at the age of 15 and shortly after joined the army in the R.A.M.C. Band. By the age of 18 he was their solo clarinet, a position he held for 25 years. He played for many orchestras, and after retirement from the army he remained in Farnborough as teacher, player and clarinettist in the Pelly Concert Orchestra. Mike conducted the orchestra from 1982 until that last concert in November 1994. He then stepped down as conductor and joined the woodwinds as Principal Clarinet, where he served until 2006.



(... to be continued)

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Forthcoming Concerts

Please let us know if you would like to be notified by e-mail or post of future Pelly Orchestra concerts.

19th July 2014 at 7.30pm Last Night of the Pelly Proms

It will be a particular delight to welcome back Amanda Lake as our Guest Artiste to perform the violin solo in Vaughan Williams' evocative composition *The Lark Ascending*. We will also present music from Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* and a selection from *The Sound of Music* by Richard Rodgers.

The score of *A Grand, Grand Festival Overture* by Malcolm Arnold includes provision for vacuum cleaners and rifles, and although the latter could give rise to some Health & Safety concerns, overall it will be good, clean family entertainment.

The second half of the concert will include the usual traditional Pelly Proms fun, with Henry Wood's *Fantasia on British Sea Songs*, Edward Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No1*, and Hubert Parry's sing-along classic *Jerusalem*.

And after the joy, the sadness, as we bid a fond farewell to Christopher Braime at the end of his last concert as Musical Director. However, with our Union Jack hats and flags to supplement the hooters, clapping and singing that disturb the peace in this quintessentially British institution, we will ensure he does not depart quietly!

Next season

Although the winter rains and floods may still linger in our memories, we invite you to look ahead to next season, as we have some Very Important Dates for your diaries:

25th October 2014 at 7.45pm in The Church on the Heath

17th January 2015 at 7.45pm in The Church on the Heath

18th April 2015 at 7.45pm in The Church on the Heath

18th July 2015 at 7.30pm in The Church on the Heath

Acknowledgements

The Pelly Concert Orchestra would like to thank the following people, who have in their various ways made significant contributions to this evening's concert:

- Front of house helpers - Mary Grocutt, Brenda Kegel, Lesley Nicholls, Roland Trice, Martin Burton and Polly Dickinson
- All those who donated raffle prizes
- Our Patrons and Friends
- Tony Roberts and the team at The Church on the Heath
- David Wallace for contributing programme notes on the music being played and for leading the orchestra
- Michael McConnell for maintaining the website
- Our inspirational Conductor and Musical Director Christopher Braime

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From October 2013 tickets are priced as follows:

	Adults	Concessions	Children under 16
Purchased in advance:	£11	£9	£6
Purchased on the door:	£13	£11	£6

Friends and Patrons Scheme

The Orchestra's Friends and Patrons Scheme offers a three-tier system as detailed below.

Patron: for a minimum of £45 per annum a Patron will be entitled to:

- Advance notice of forthcoming concerts
- A champagne reception before the first concert of the season
- A ticket for each of the four scheduled concerts in the season with a reserved seat for the subscriber
- Their name in each programme as a 'Patron' of the orchestra

Junior Patron: for a minimum of £20 per annum a Junior Patron (under 18) will be entitled to:

- Advance notice of forthcoming concerts
- A soft drinks reception before the first concert of the season
- A ticket for each of the four scheduled concerts in the season with a reserved seat for the subscriber
- Their name in each programme as a 'Junior Patron' of the orchestra

Friend: for a minimum of £35 per annum a Friend will be entitled to

- Advance notice of forthcoming concerts
- A champagne reception before the first concert of the season
- A ticket for each of the four scheduled concerts in the season (no reserved seat)
- Their name in each programme as a 'Friend' of the orchestra

For more information or to become a Patron or Friend, please contact Sue Gillis (Second Violin) by e-mail on: susancgillis@ymail.com. We are very grateful to all our Patrons and Friends for helping to support the orchestra:

Patrons:

Mr J and Mrs Allan	Mr R W and Mrs Neave
Mr P and Mrs Ashford	Miss I New (Junior Patron)
Mr K Baker	Mr K and Mrs Over
Mr J and Mrs Cowley	Mr G and Mrs Pollen - life members
Mr M and Mrs Cox	Mrs G Rose
Miss G Daley	Mr J Smedley
Mr B and Mrs Emmins	Mr P and Mrs Smith
Mr R and Mrs Hicks	Mrs B Thomas
Miss D Houghton	Mr E J and Mrs Wacey
Mrs L Jackson	Mr B and Mrs Young
Mrs B Kegel - life member	

Friends:

Mr T Jones	Ms X Zhang
Ms A Fice	Mrs S Nathan
Mrs G Redman	Mrs N Jeffries

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Karen Ford, Friends of the Cavendish School



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