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Saturday 24th June 1995
Programme 80p

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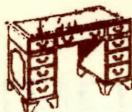
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Banbury Symphony Orchestra



Tony Ayres (Conductor)

Tony's first musical training was as a choirboy in Leamington Spa, subsequently singing tenor in various church choirs and choral societies. He furthered his musical training by studying piano, organ and percussion.

Deputising at choir rehearsals gave him an interest in conducting, and he became Assistant Musical Director of the Leamington Spa Opera Group in 1971, taking over as Musical Director in 1975. In 1972 he also became Musical Director of Coventry's Savoy Opera Group, and in 1986, Birmingham's Midland Music Makers Grand Opera Society. In 1990 he was invited to become Musical Director of a new company based in Nottingham, called Lirica, and they made two successful concert tours of Italy and one of Germany.

As well as conducting Orchestra da Camera, he has conducted the Birmingham Philharmonic, Warwickshire Symphony Orchestra and the Beauchamp Sinfonietta. Soloists have included Moray Welsh, Richard Weigall, Kenneth Page and Julie Robinson.

Tony is a professional orchestral timpanist and percussionist, playing throughout the country with Orchestra da Camera, Midland Symphony Orchestra, East of England and Performing Arts Orchestras, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company and English National Ballet. He has also appeared on recordings for albums and BBC Radios 2 and 3. Tony is also principal percussion tutor for Warwickshire, North Warwickshire College, and the University of Warwick.

Anne Bardsley (Soprano)

Anne is a graduate of Durham University, where she was a member of the University Opera Group and of various choirs. More recently, she has been a member of Opera Exchange, with whom she sang several leading roles. She has become well known locally as a soloist, performing with a number of local choirs and choral societies, and giving concerts accompanied by her husband, Michael Bardsley, on the harpsichord and piano. She is at present a pupil of the counter-tenor Ashley Stafford.

Ruth Holleley (Soprano)

Ruth studied music at Royal Holloway College, and since 1977 has sung with Oxford Opera Studio, Aylesbury Opera Group, Milton Keynes Opera Group, and Opera Exchange. Her operatic rôles include Zerlina and Donna Anna in "Don Giovanni", Pamina in "The Magic Flute", Despina in "Cosi fan Tutte", Suzanna and Cherubino in "The Marriage of Figaro" and Michaela in "Carmen". Her oratorio experience includes Handel's "Messiah", Fauré's Requiem, Mozart's Requiem, and the "St. John Passion" by Bach.

She sings now with a group called Friends in Concert, who provide a repertoire ranging from Purcell to Noel Coward.

Wendy Holden (Mezzo Soprano)

Wendy was born in Blackburn, Lancashire. At school she sang in various Gilbert and Sullivan operas, and sang the leading rôle of Mrs. Noye in Benjamin Britten's "Noye's Fludde" whilst studying for her 'A' levels. After thirteen years as a teacher, Wendy decided to make a career move to allow her to devote more time to her singing. Following masterclasses at Dartington International Summer School and the Great Elm Festival, with Esther Salaman and Laura Sarti, Wendy embarked on a period of study with April Cantelo of Sutton Courtenay, her present teacher.

Last year Wendy sang Edward Elgar's "Sea Pictures" with the Banbury Symphony Orchestra, and in March of this year she gave a lunchtime début recital in the Hoywell Music Room. Wendy will be singing with Stowe Opera this August in their production of "Tales of Hoffmann"

Mark Stanley (Tenor)

Mark was born and educated locally, where his interest in music was first developed as a chorister at his parish church. A love of singing and choral music led him to formal studies of the piano and organ. Early training in singing, which first started as a baritone, was with Marilyn Mitcham, and as such he has sung most of the standard choral and solo repertoire. He has also taken part in various competitions and participated in masterclasses with some of the most respected teachers in the country. As his voice changed (in the upward direction) he withdrew from solo singing for over two years to concentrate on choral directing and playing the organ.

He has now made his return to the concert platform as a tenor after serious vocal studies with April Cantelo.

Graham Dinnage (Baritone)

Graham has appeared in a broad range of oratorio, recital and opera performances, and his oratorio work has encompassed a substantial proportion of the major works in the repertoire, including Mendelssohn's "Elijah", Elgar's "The Kingdom" and Britten's "War Requiem". Concert appearances have taken him to a wide variety of venues, including The Barbican, Southwark Cathedral, St.James' Piccadilly, Aldeburgh, Salisbury, Christ Church Cathedral Oxford, and Norwich Cathedral, as well as to Bayeux Cathedral as part of the Bayeux Music Festival. Opera performances have included Fiorello in Rossini's "The Barber of Seville", Aeneas in Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas", Zuniga in Bizet's "Carmen", and he has sung with Bath City Opera, now Wessex Opera. He has given a number of first performances of new works, including the première of the song set "Nostalgia" by the Czech composer Antonín Tucapsky.

Graham is currently working on a D.Phil. at Magdalen College Oxford, researching into English singers and the singing profession in late seventeenth and eighteenth century England. This he combines with teaching at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama, as well as being a freelance organist.

Mozart

(1756-1791)

Overture; "Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja"; "Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön"

Opera is for many the greatest art form in the world, combining music, words and spectacle into an exciting musical, dramatic experience. The use of singing as an element in drama dates back at least to the ancient Greeks and the medieval mystery plays also used it. But opera as we know it traces its birth to the Renaissance and in particular to the period of about 1600 in Florence. The pastoral and masque "Daphne", produced in 1597 with music by Jacopo Peri is considered the first 'real' opera.

Just under 200 years later, Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute" was given its première in Vienna, just nine weeks before his death. The librettist, Schikaneder, and Mozart were both Freemasons, and much of the music has Masonic influence, as in the opening bars of the overture. At the other extreme is the light-hearted song sung by Papageno, the bird catcher: "*Der Vogelfänger bin ich ja*" (*I am the jolly bird catcher*). Papageno and Prince Tamino are sent by the Queen of the Night to rescue her daughter Pamina from Sarastro's temple, to which she has been abducted. Tamino has been shown her portrait by the three Ladies in Waiting of the Queen of the Night and he immediately falls in love with her. His aria "*Dies Bildnis ist bezaubernd schön*" (*O loveliness beyond compare*) is one of Mozart's finest tenor arias.

Mozart

Le Nozze de Figaro

"Sull' Aria"; "Voi che sapete"; "Vedro, mentr'io sospiro"

Five years before the première of the Magic Flute, the première of possibly the greatest comic opera ever written was given in Vienna in 1786. "The Marriage of Figaro" is an opera about masters and servants and the complications in that relationship caused by sex. Briefly, Figaro, the Count Almaviva's valet, and Susanna, the Countess' maid, are about to be married when Figaro discovers that the Count intends to revive an old custom - the seignorial right to anticipate the bridegroom on a servant's wedding night. Figaro vows to outwit his master, and after much intrigue involving the Countess, the pageboy Cherubino (sung by a soprano) and a lawyer, Doctor Bartolo, the Count, outwitted at every turn, is forced to apologise to all. We hear first the "*Letter Duet*" from Act 3, in which the Countess instructs Susanna to write to the Count, setting up a false assignation in which he will find himself trapped. In the duet, Susanna repeats what the Countess dictates. Next we hear Cherubino's famous aria "*Voi che sapete*" (*Tell me fair ladies*), which he sings to Susanna and the Countess when he enters the Countess' boudoir to change into girl's clothing, in

another part of the plot to outwit the Count. In our final excerpt from Figaro we meet the Count, in the aria "*Vedro' mento'io sospiro*" (*Must I forego my pleasure?*). Susanna promises to meet him in the garden - though with some confusion between 'yes' and 'no', which arouses his suspicions. When she goes, the Count again becomes suspicious as he overhears some tell-tale words which he says to Figaro, and he vents his anger in this aria.

Mozart

Cosi fan Tutte

"Soave sia il vento"

"Cosi fan Tutte" was premièred in 1790, just one year before "The Magic Flute". The translation literally means "All women do it": that is, all women show fickleness in love. Such is the idea of this comic opera.

Don Alfonso, an old cynic, is determined to prove to his two young friends, Guglielmo and Ferrando, that their fiancées, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, are not to be trusted any more than are other women. In the first part of the plot, Alfonso tells the girls that their lovers have been 'called up' for duty abroad. The fickle young ladies do not realise that the two 'new' lovers who call are in fact their old lovers in disguise, nor that the 'notary' is their own maid Despina, also disguised. The trio we now hear comes from Act 1. Their lovers departed, Fiordiligi and Dorabella show real feeling, so that Alfonso joins them in the wonderfully evocative "*Soave sia il vento*" (*May the breezes gently blow*), as they pray for a calm sea for the travellers.

Bizet

(1838-1875)

Carmen Suite No.1

1. Prélude; 1a. Aragonaise; 2. Intermezzo; 3. Seguedille;
4. Les Dragons d'Alcala; 5. Les Toréadors

It is incredible to audiences of today that Bizet's "Carmen" was a failure at its first production. It is full of wonderful distinctive melodies and ensembles, yet was considered by some to be too Wagnerian. Indeed, its tunes are so well loved, its plot so well understood, and its heroine so widely recognised, that we scarcely think of what a shocker the opera originally seemed. Girls smoking on the stage (in 1875); such a disgusting death for the heroine and on the stage of the Opéra-Comique, dedicated by tradition to much less sordid fare! The Suite No. 1 contains many of the famous melodies from the opera, including the preludes to each of its four acts and the Seguidilla from Act 1 where Carmen persuades Don Jose to release her from prison in return for her love.

Gounod
(1818-1893)

Faust

"Jewel Song"

Sixteen years prior to "Carmen's" première, Charles Gounod's opera "Faust" was given its première, also at the Opéra Comique, which does not mean comic opera, but in the French sense, a work using spoken dialogue. Interestingly, "Carmen" became more popular after a pupil of Bizet's added recitatives, but most performances today revert to the original idea of spoken dialogue. This is in contrast to "Faust", which Gounod himself arranged for the Paris Opera and replaced the speech with recitative, the form in which the opera is always performed. The philosopher Faust sells his soul to Mephistopheles for the promise of youth and the possession of Marguerite. He is led to her by the devil who has placed a casket of jewels on her doorstep. Marguerite opens it and cannot resist bedecking herself in them and sings with delight the famous "Jewel Song".

Saint-Saëns
(1835-1921)

Samson et Dalila

"Softly Awakes my Heart"

Two years after the première of "Carmen", Saint-Saëns' opera "Samson et Dalila" was premièred in Weimar under the baton of Franz Liszt. Like "Carmen", "Samson et Dalila" was considered by many in France to be too Wagnerian and was not performed in France until 1890. This aria for Dalila is a wonderful gift for any mezzo-soprano, as she sings "*Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix*" (*Softly awakes my heart*). Who can resist this lovely melody? And of course Samson reveals to her the secret of his strength, which is his long hair.

Bizet

The Pearl Fishers

Duet: "Au Fond du Temple Saint"

Bizet's opera "Les Pêcheurs de Perles" (The Pearl Fishers) has never achieved the popularity of "Carmen", but in recent years, productions by Welsh National Opera and others have given the piece a new lease of life. Set in Ceylon, the opera concerns two boyhood friends Zurga and Nadir, who have not met for many years. There is a fond reunion and they recall their rivalry for the hand of the beautiful priestess Leila. Their love for her had brought enmity between them, but they recall that the oath of friendship which they swore has never since been broken. Their duet "Au Fond du

Temple Saint" (*In the depths of the temple*) is an example of Bizet's melodic inspiration at its finest and is one of the most beautiful tenor-baritone duets in all French opera.

INTERVAL

Refreshments will be available

Verdi
(1813-1901)

La Forza del Destino

Overture

For the second half of our concert, we stay in the birthplace of opera, Italy, and hear music from two of her greatest composers, Verdi and Puccini. The overture to "The Force of Destiny" was Verdi's last attempt at producing a full-scale operatic overture and is probably his best. His thematic material is drawn from some of the opera's more important motifs - the 'fate' theme and Leonora's prayer to the Virgin standing out particularly.

Verdi

Rigoletto

Quartet: "Bella Figlia dell' Amore"

Rigoletto is an opera to stir the moral passions. It is this quality which helps to make the opera a persistent favourite - apart from the sheer musical gifts of Verdi that have made "*La Donna è Mobile*" and the main theme of the quartet we hear tonight among the best known tunes in the world. Rigoletto is a hunchback jester who is made the cruel sport of an idle Count, but the hunchback's vengeance is destined to go badly wrong. The quartet "*Bella figlia dell' amore*" (*Lovely daughter thou of pleasure*), comes from Act 3, which is set at an inn owned by Sparafucile, a professional assassin. With him lives his sister, Maddalena, a young gypsy woman, who lures men to the inn, there to be robbed or killed. Sparafucile has been hired by Rigoletto to kill the Duke of Mantua, his master, who has recently numbered among his many conquests Gilda, Rigoletto's daughter. The Duke and Maddalena are inside the house, where the Duke is light-heartedly wooing her, while outside observing them are Rigoletto and Gilda, who has been brought by her father to see the kind of man the Duke really is. The Duke is gallantly urgent and pleading; Maddalena laughingly resists his advances, whilst Gilda is moved to despair as she hears the same words he used to her, and Rigoletto mutters of vengeance.

Puccini
(1858-1924)

Madame Butterfly

"Un Bel Dia"

"Puccini looks to me more like the heir of Verdi than any of his rivals." That was the verdict of a young London music critic called Bernard Shaw in 1894, a verdict made on the evidence of Puccini's first major success "Manon Lescaut". In the summer of 1900, Puccini was in London and saw a performance of a new American play, "Madame Butterfly" by David Belasco, and he immediately conceived the idea of basing an opera on it. The story concerns a U.S. Navy Lieutenant, B.F. Pinkerton, who marries a Japanese child bride and shortly after sails back to America. Butterfly is alone in her plight - her husband has deserted her, her relatives have renounced her, the sympathetic consul gives her advice she cannot take, and her servant Suzuki cannot grasp her single-mindedness. Act 2 takes place three years after Pinkerton has left and Butterfly, still believing he will return, tries to persuade Suzuki with the lovely aria "*Un Bel Dia*" (*One fine day*), in which she imagines the scene when the ship sails into the harbour and her husband returns.

Puccini

La Bohème

"Che Gelida Manina"; "Si, Mi Chiamano Mimi"; "O Soave Fanciulla"

"La Bohème" was Puccini's fourth opera, premièred in 1896 in Turin. Its wonderful melodies and pathos have made it possibly the most popular opera in the world! It is Christmas Eve and the Bohemians are huddled around a stove watching the dying embers of a play Rodolfo has been writing, which they have burned to keep warm, when another of their number, Schaunard, arrives with food, wine and money earned by him from an Englishman who wanted music lessons. They decide to go out to the Café Momus to celebrate, but Rodolfo says he will follow in five minutes as he has an article to finish. He makes little progress. Suddenly there is a knock at the door. Mimi, a frail young girl who lives in a room above, is on the threshold, half fainting, her candle has blown out and she wants it re-lit. Rodolfo helps her to a chair and gives her wine. She soon feels better and starts to go, but her candle goes out again and she then loses her key. His candle conveniently goes out, and as they grope about in the dark, looking for her key, their hands meet. "*Che gelida manina*" (*Your tiny hand is frozen*), he exclaims and whilst warming it into life, he introduces himself. Will she now tell him about herself, he asks. "*Si, mi chiamano Mimi*" (*Yes, they call me Mimi*), she tells him that she embroiders artificial flowers, but it is nature's flowers that delight her. In the following duet "*O soave fanciulla*" (*Lovely maid in the moonlight*), Rodolfo and Mimi find themselves falling in love and they go off together to join the others at the Café Momus.

Verdi

Macbeth

Ballet Music

Eighteen years after its first performance in Florence in 1847, Verdi's French publisher suggested a French translation of "Macbeth" for the Paris Opera and asked to composer if he would consent to revise the opera and also add the obligatory ballet sequence always demanded by French audiences. Verdi agreed and it is usually this 1865 revision which is performed today. Act 3 of the opera (Act 4, Scene 1 in the play) is set in the witches' cave, where we find, not Shakespeare's three witches, but three covens of at least six witches in each. And why not? They make a more effective noise than three! Macbeth returns to consult the witches, who conjure up apparitions for him. The ballet is usually omitted from performances, but the music is very exciting. the opening allegro vivacissimo, for the arrival of the spirits who dance around the cauldron, is skilfully and originally orchestrated: in particular, there is a daring use of the brass. Hecate, for her mime, is given an almost noble andante theme, and the catchy allegro finale is a kind of 'valse un peu macabre'. Verdi wrote to Leon Escudier, the publisher: "Please ask the conductor to keep an eye on the dance music so that the dancers keep to the tempo I have laid down. You know ballet dancers always change the tempo. (At the Opera, for example, they say the Tarantella can't be danced the way I want it. But any street urchin in Sorrento or Capua could dance it very well at my tempo)".

Programme notes by Tony Ayres



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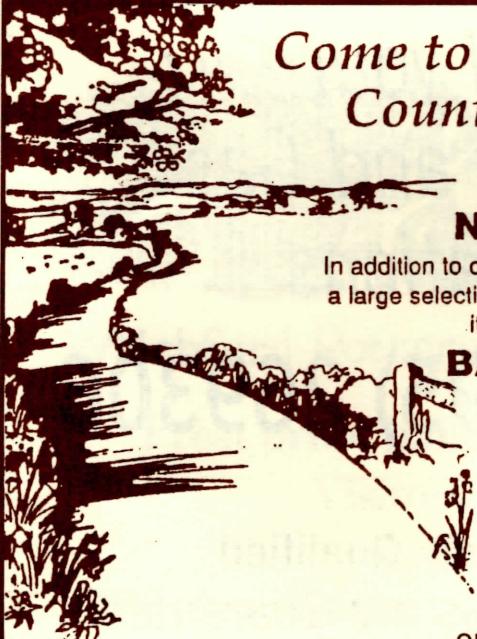
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BANBURY**

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The Pottery
East End Farmhouse
Hook, Norton, Oxon; 25737414

Visitors Welcome at the pottery Showroom
Open Mon — Sat: 9:30—5:30. Range of
domestic pottery, garden pots, as
well as individual pieces for sale.

Chipping Norton Sibford Banbury
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