



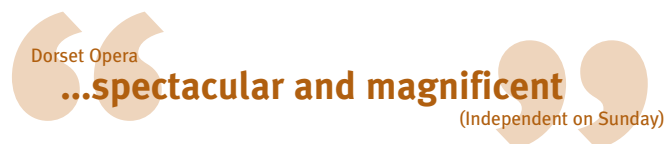
Tosca: Te deum from Act I

Festival format judged a success

Dorset Opera's first foray into the festival format was ultimately deemed to be a huge success with participants, supporters, opera-goers and critics.

Feedback suggests that mounting two operas was greatly welcomed by patrons, and (with a smaller chorus in *Tosca*) offered choristers a less strenuous night in which to relax the voice. As a result there were thankfully fewer voice-related illnesses than in previous years.

The addition of an extra performance resulted in further expansion of our audience-base, leading one reviewer to comment: 'This is a much-appreciated positive move in the right direction for this forward-looking and innovative company.'



Attending Dorset Opera ('ashamedly', for the very first time), Michael Tanner, writing in *The Spectator* said:

Apart from the thrills of the performance, what was amazing was that in ten days, such an expertly polished and smoothly running show...had been accomplished... It was a wonderful day and, given the time frame, might well be called miraculous.

Praise indeed from an expert who is not known for generous compliment. Mr Tanner's reviews of *Tosca* and *Otello* - along with those from other critics - can be found inside this edition of *DONews*.

What's in store for 2012?

One of the greatest difficulties facing the artistic and technical teams when planning our festivals, is the requirement for two or more operas to be able to utilise the same basic set structure. There are neither change-over, flying, or storage facilities at the Coade Theatre, to allow for complicated set designs for each individual production.

A great deal of thought goes into which operas might dovetail well together, once the confines of the set and other conditions are taken into consideration. The factors contributing to the choice are:

- A sufficient work balance for summer school participants
- The appeal of our opera selections to participants and audiences
- Innovation (historically important to Dorset Opera)
- The availability of sufficient adaptable rehearsal space
- The number of sessions required for choristers to learn the music prior to commencement of production rehearsals
- Orchestra size, pit space and rehearsal requirements
- The number of principal singers required
- Solo opportunities for young and emerging artistes

The operas chosen for the 2012 Festival have been selected to further push the boundaries of ambition for our chorus. In what promises to be a bumper year for Dorset Opera participants, we have chosen works that will show off the virtuosity of our men's and women's choruses as individual entities. Please turn over to find out what those operas are likely to be.

Dorset Opera would like to wish all our supporters a Very Merry Christmas, and the Happiest of Opera-Going New Years!



Otello: Carolyn Dobbin (Emilia) & Stephanie Corley (Desdemona)

Au revoir to Carolyn

Mezzo-soprano Carolyn Dobbin who appeared as Mercedes in *Carmen* and Emilia in *Otello* and was a WNO Associate Artist, is off to pastures new. Carolyn has recently been starring in Weinberg's harrowing concentration camp opera, *The Passenger*, at the ENO.

From autumn 2012 she has opted to take a principal contract with the opera of Lucerne. The company has agreed that she should honour several existing engagements here in the UK including appearances at the Royal Festival Hall and more locally, Britten's *Spring Symphony* with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Carolyn's December diary is manic: four *Messiahs* in various parts of the country on the run up to Christmas; Handel's *Theodora* at Croydon's Fairfield Halls on 12th; the Verdi *Requiem* in Brighton on 13th; followed by 'opera pops' concerts at the Royal Albert Hall from 18th-21st; a similar arena concert in Manchester on Boxing Day, and Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* in Plymouth on 27th. At the same time, she is covering Nicklausse in *The Tales of Hoffmann* and then she's off to Poland to sing Adronico in *Tamerlano* over New Year. Phew!



ONE DAY THEY TOO, WILL NEED US!

EASTBURY HOUSE

RESIDENTIAL HOME

SHERBORNE

DT9 3BZ

TEL. 01935 812132

www.eastburyhouserestidentialhome.co.uk

British Stage Premiere for 2012

The 2012 Dorset Opera Festival is set to build on the success of this year's performances of *Otello* and *Tosca* with the promise of another Verdi spectacular, plus not one, but TWO more operas in the form of an unusual double-bill. One of these is to be a British Stage Premiere.

Enrico Caruso (or was it Verdi himself?) said of our first choice, it requires simply the four greatest singers in the world to pull it off. The story is complicated, harrowing and many say, rather too operatically implausible in nature. But *Il trovatore* (the Troubador) contains some of the most well-loved and exciting music in all opera. Everything from the Miserere, the Anvil and Soldier's Choruses, to the thrilling tenor aria *Di quella pira...* Best of all, it is a tour-de-force for the men's chorus, which will be on stage for more than half of the two-hour opera!

The women's chorus do appear in *Trovatore* but in order to balance their contribution we have given them a show all of their own - Puccini's glorious but heart-rending one-act opera *Suor Angelica*. It is a virtuosic showpiece entirely for the ladies (the gentlemen of the chorus are involved in the final vision sequence!)

The British stage premiere is to be a fascinating and colourful comedy by the English polymath and eccentric, Lord Berners. *Le Carrosse du Sainte-Sacrement* is set in the Peruvian capital Lima, and is taken from a play of the same name by none other than Prosper Mérimée, the author whose story was the basis for Bizet's *Carmen*. It tells the story of a viceroy who rashly gives his mistress a new carriage, resulting in rather unexpected consequences!

You won't find much about the Berners in recognised tomes but suffice it to say that the piece was premiered in Paris in 1923, with *The Times* describing it as 'An unqualified success... Berners' music makes the work an unalloyed enjoyment.' That music is utterly delightful and full of atmospheric rhythms from South America. There is a recording from 1983 with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Nicholas Cleobury.

Whilst we never release the names of cast members until the Spring/Summer edition of *DONews*, we can reveal that DO Music Director Jeremy Carnall is now fit and well, and is looking forward to a triumphant return to the Bryanston podium with the double-bill, and *Tosca* maestro Phillip Thomas is back to conduct *Il trovatore*.

Dorset Opera

**...consistently on a par with the UK's
five main opera companies**

(Opera Now)

Who was Lord Berners?

Born in 1883, the Right Honourable Sir Gerald Hugh Tyrwhitt-Wilson had embarked upon a career in the diplomatic service when he succeeded his uncle to the Berners title in 1918. With several English estates, he was ostensibly a country gentleman. But his music drew the highest praise from none other than Igor Stravinsky, and his literary and painting skills had him dubbed 'the versatile peer' by the national press.

Amongst his many works, his last three ballets were written in collaboration with Frederick Ashton as choreographer, and Constant Lambert as music director. He was a patron of the young William Walton whose *Belshazzar's Feast* is dedicated to him.

In the 1940s he took to one final medium – the cinema. He wrote scores for several films, the music being unmistakably Berners in style. He wrote nothing for the last four years of his life until, as his friend John Betjeman wrote: 'He turned his face to the wall and died' in April 1950.

Reviews for Tosca:

The Spectator - Dorset delight

An annual event I'm ashamed not to have caught until now

Dorset Opera dates back to 1974, but I have only just been for the first time. The quality of what I saw and heard was such that I'm annoyed with myself, ashamed even, for not having been before. The Coade Theatre, in which the performances take place, is a delight. It seats 600, the orchestra seemed comfortably disposed and the acoustics are excellent.

I went on the last day, when, heroically, *Tosca* was given at 2.30 p.m. and *Otello* at 7.30 p.m. Josephine Barstow, a seasoned *Tosca* herself, directed the first of these, and did what all directors used to do, until they began to think theirs was the most important input: she made the action lucid at every point, got the singers to react to one another plausibly, and made good use of the smallish stage and few props. I haven't seen many *Toscas* that were so convincing and absorbing.

The title role was taken by Lee Bisset...with a strong, steady voice, plenty of temperament, but also a sly sense of humour in the few places that permit it, she will surely soon be in the world's leading opera houses. So, undoubtedly, will Adriano Graziani, her Cavaradossi. He flooded the theatre with golden tone, and made one regret that his part is, really, so small. The ghastly Scarpia was delivered with aristocratic relish and silky disdain by Phillip Rhodes, completing a stylish trio.

The orchestral playing neglected none of Puccini's imaginative orchestration, and the conductor Phillip Thomas paced the opera so that everyone had time to make their points, but he didn't loiter. Apart from the thrills of the performance, what was amazing was that in ten days such an expertly polished and smoothly running show, in every respect, had been accomplished...

Michael Tanner

What'sOnStage.com - WOS Rating: ★★★★★

Seeing Dorset Opera at the end of their two week summer residency at Bryanston's Coade Theatre was a revelation, both in terms of the extremely high quality of production and in what can be achieved with an astonishing ten day rehearsal period. One would expect to have to make concessions for these conditions but none were necessary, especially for soprano Josephine Barstow's directing debut with a flawless *Tosca*.

The theme that connects *Tosca* and *Otello* is, of course, jealousy and the company drew some strong parallels between the two works. Scarpia brings attention to the connection himself by likening the Attavanti fan to Otello's handkerchief, and Iain McGregor's attractive, adaptable set, shared between the two productions, had Scarpia's study dominated by a huge painting of Otello with Desdemona.

Barstow's superbly controlled and detailed production was hugely impressive from every angle. Lee Bisset...was a pert and beautifully focused heroine, and Adriano Graziani, a ringing and triumphant Cavaradossi. Swarthy Phillip Rhodes was a bit on the young side for Scarpia but is sure to mature into the role and become a formidable interpreter. Altogether these were performances that, even allowing for the small auditorium and good acoustic, wouldn't be out of place at Covent Garden.

Traditionally staged, Dame Josephine's production was full of insight and clarity, with strong casting throughout. Phillip Thomas's conducting thrilled from beginning to end. The large amateur chorus, expertly drilled by Nicolas Mansfield, shone in both productions.

Roderick Kennedy is attracting names and producing work here that puts better-publicised companies to shame. You have to be quick to catch them, as their summer season is here and gone in a flash, but for anyone travelling from further afield, the journey to rural Dorset is enormously rewarding.

Simon Thomas



LARMER TREE

Tollard Royal

WEDDINGS - CEREMONIES AND RECEPTIONS

"Experience Something Different" | 01725 516971 | www.larmertreegardens.co.uk

Opera Magazine - Dorset Opera 2011

Not having been to Bryanston for Dorset Opera before, I was naturally first struck by the beauty of the place, the immense grounds, the imposing...buildings, and then, when it came to it, the two performances which I saw in the same day. Given that everyone connected with the enterprise only arrives ten days before the first night, the achievement is hardly credible...

Anyway, *Tosca* went like a bomb. The three principals were all completely into, or/and on top of their parts, and the tenor in particular, born in Wales but called Adriano Graziani, sang with that kind of rapturous abandon that reminds you why, for all the things that one curses tenors for, they are still, at their best, an irreplaceable source of musical nourishment. Graziani must be about to hit the big time. So, I'd have thought, must be Lee Bissett, Longborough's superb, uninhibited Sieglinde last year, and so much more thrilling than many singers we regularly encounter in London. Phillip Rhodes, the Scarpia, was less sensational but still very fine, an insinuator and a classy near-rapist, with voice to match.

Dame Josephine Barstow directed, very straightforwardly, helpfully, and with a minimum number of props. She had Tosca stab herself at the end - fast forward to the end of *Butterfly* for non-Puccinians - but otherwise was effective in getting the performers to react to one another. Phillip Thomas was the excellent conductor...

Michael Tanner

Blackmore Vale Magazine

There is a strong connection in the dark heat of the two operas in this first Dorset Opera Festival - *Scarpia*, the immoral villain of Puccini's *Tosca* actually refers to Iago as he plots the seduction of the heroine and the death of her lover.

Tosca...marked the directing debut for Dame Josephine Barstow... Her production at Bryanston moved the audience away from the familiar Zeffirelli-Callas-Gobbi vision of the opera, something that seemed to disconcert some members of the audience expecting the usual candles by the corpse and leap over the battlements.

Dropping the melodramatic clichés, Dame Josephine brought out the powerful conflicts of love, jealousy and deep religious faith in the heroine - Tosca stabs herself with the same knife she used to kill Scarpia, which in her confusion and guilt she has brought with her, wrapped in her stole.

Lee Bissett's Floria Tosca was a more complex character than the passionate Maria Callas, and her relationship with the cold ravisher Scarpia (the charismatic Phillip Rhodes) was one of dread. Her confusion after his death added a profound and human dimension to what has become a melodramatic and dated reading.

Adriano Garziani's Cavaradossi gained in passion and stature from the awkwardly directed opening scene in which *Recondita armonia* was declaimed to the audience rather than incorporated in the story.

Did he know that Scarpia had tricked Tosca into believing he would be freed? In this production, yes, he did. The orchestra, conducted by Phillip Thomas, filled the Coade Theatre with the thrilling score in a performance that would not have been out of place at the Royal Opera House.

The extraordinary thing about Dorset Opera is that once the casting is done, the chorus, made up of local singers and vocal students from a wide area of the UK and mainland Europe, come together to rehearse the productions in a couple of weeks. Choristers attend an intensive summer camp at the school near Blandford, and only meet the soloists and orchestra days before the opening, subjecting them to professional opera house discipline and pressure. And this year, for the first time, they were learning two operas - all the choruses for *Tosca* and *Otello* - under the direction of chorus master Nicolas Mansfield, who takes over as artistic director of the Nationale Reisopera in the Netherlands in January 2013.

GP-W

Opera Now - The Dorset Festival Experience 2011

...this was for me and my friends, the operatic discovery of the year. Having seen an advert for Dorset Opera earlier in the year, I set off with perhaps somewhat muted enthusiasm - a little-known festival in the depths of the West Country was an unknown quantity.

The first opera we saw was Puccini's *Tosca*, which took off as soon as the brilliant Phillip Thomas raised his baton, and the best orchestra I have heard in a very long time started to play. It was magical.

Dame Josephine Barstow, who has sung the role of Tosca so often around the world, turned her talents to directing for the first time, presenting us with a traditional production where the acting was deeply felt and convincing. Lee Bissett...was magnificent. One of our party, an avid opera-goer, thought she was the best Tosca she had ever seen. Tenor Adriano Graziani sang his heart out as a mellifluous Cavaradossi, and the young New Zealand baritone Phillip Rhodes was a strong Scarpia.

The young voices in the chorus of both operas were a treat. What an opportunity for youngsters to have a concentrated two weeks of training under chorus master Nicolas Mansfield.

The Dorset Opera Festival gave us an experience that has changed our view of the UK's unsung opera companies.

Margrette Jones



Tosca: Lee Bissett (Tosca) who went on to sing the role for Opera Memphis & Phillip Rhodes (Scarpia)

Reviews for Otello:



The Spectator - Dorset delight

An annual event I'm ashamed not to have caught until now

Otello...is rarely staged even in the big houses, and not only because the title role is so demanding. Dorset Opera was extraordinarily lucky to get Ian Storey for the main part, a tenor whose list of roles makes exhausting reading. Actually, he wasn't in his best voice, though at the great moments he rose to the challenges. *Otello* is a convulsive work: the fury of the opening storm gives way to strange quietness, until the drinking song gets under way. And Otello is required not only to have the trumpet tones of his entrance, a wonderful moment from Storey, but also to sing pppppp in the love duet. No one does it, or ever has, but when Storey cut down on volume, there and elsewhere, his voice almost disappeared.

The rate at which things happen in *Otello*, in the first three acts, until they are virtually immobilised for the first 20 minutes of Act IV, does mean it can give the impression of sheer mania, and that can only be avoided if there is a fair amount of *mezza voce* singing, not just a series of eruptions followed by dazed near-silence. Even so, Storey was moving, impressive and harrowing in his disintegration. Stephanie Corley, in the still more difficult part of Desdemona, was mainly exquisite. The love duet went beautifully, it's a pity they didn't spend more of it standing close together. And in the great Act III scenes, the fearful duet at the start and the huge finale, she had all the colours in her voice to convey this role's anguish.

Iago, played by Luca Grassi, managed to be both detestable and plausible; and all the smaller roles were well taken. The chorus, which plays such a large part, was rather seriously underpowered. It must be one of the most complex scores to learn, for them, in the whole of opera. And there was some tired playing from the orchestra, under Robin Stapleton. He contented himself with holding things together. But I enjoyed *Otello* and was stirred by it much more than these few criticisms suggest. It was a wonderful day and, given the time frame, might well be called miraculous.

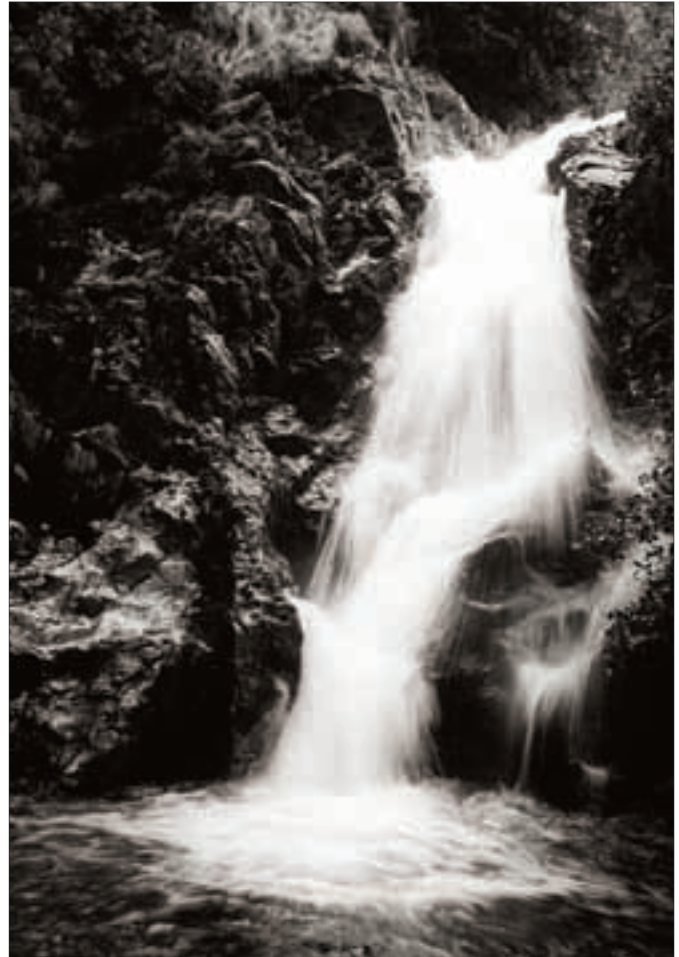
Michael Tanner

What'sOnStage.com - WOS Rating: ★★★★★

Given that *Otello* is a more demanding and difficult work to get right, Anna Gregory's production of the Verdi wasn't as consistently excellent (as *Tosca*), although the final act was every bit as focused and moving... Balance was occasionally an issue (Robin Stapleton conducting)... Ian Storey is an experienced Otello, not least for having sung it in Los Angeles under Domingo, where he must have picked up a trick or two...he's a commanding presence with all the heft one would expect from a La Scala Tristan. Luca Grassi's Iago...had bags of oily charm and drove the action convincingly. Stephanie Corley (fresh from playing the part in Graham Vick's innovative Birmingham production) grew enormously in the fourth act, poignant in the *Willow Song* and with a wonderful stillness for the *Ave Maria*.

The large amateur chorus, expertly drilled by Nicolas Mansfield, shone in both productions.

Simon Thomas



STILL PRIVATE, STILL INDEPENDENT

At Church House Investment Management, we look after private individuals and family groups, along with their pension funds, trusts and charitable foundations.

Service, expertise and discretion characterise our relationships with clients, some of whom we have looked after for generations.

You will find more detail about who we are and what we do on our website:

www.church-house.co.uk

**CHURCH
HOUSE** | Investment
Management

Church House Investment Management is the trading name of Church House Investments Ltd, which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority

Opera Magazine

Otello...began with a rather ragged storm, quite exciting but less than if there had been a bigger chorus and a more lusty one. Ian Storey, no less, entered immensely imposingly as Otello, but after that his voice did rather come and go, though when it came it was viscerally involving. Somehow his most reflective passages - there are quite a few of them - went for less than they should. His Desdemona, Stephanie Corley, sang exquisitely and got a welcome move-on in her long scene in Act IV, but her acting was too restrained.

I liked the Iago very much. Luca Grassi is a fairly short man, and his villain suggested the kind of indignation that nature hadn't given him more stature that is quite realistic; Grassi was the best actor on stage. A good supporting cast, and a slightly weary orchestra, not surprisingly, but there were quite enough big moments to make me glad I had gone, and to look forward to revisiting.

Michael Tanner

Blackmore Vale Magazine

Verdi's operatic version of *Otello* strips the story down to its barest bones. Starkly contrasting the glorious homecoming of the vanquishing hero and the drunken brawling that follows with the intense and solitary passion of jealousy from a man obsessively in love with his blameless wife.

Anna Gregory's production for Dorset Opera opened the first DO Festival at Bryanston last week, treating the audience to a visual, aural and emotional feast. The insistent power of the music, subtly drawn from the excellent orchestra by guest conductor Robin Stapleton, was enhanced by a design and traditional costumes that made the best use of the Coade Theatre stage. From its opening nod to *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the production filled the stage with a fluid, vibrant chorus awaiting the return of the hero, and Iago's pernicious and jealousy-fuelling gossip visibly took its full effect.

Ian Storey returned to the company to sing his first Otello in

England, triumphantly leading a powerful cast. Stephanie Corley's Desdemona captured the resigned confusion of innocence, and Luca Grassi's Iago was a chillingly evil manipulator.

Otello and Desdemona's great first act duet was ravishing, the poignancy and exquisite balance providing a strong contrast to the sound and fury of the opening storm and noisy crowd scenes. And the famous Act Two duet between Otello and Iago - arguably the greatest of all tenor-baritone duets - was intensely powerful, ratcheting up the tension as the amoral Ensign relentlessly turns the screws of jealousy into Otello's brain. It was amazing to learn that this was Grassi's debut in the role.

Otello: Howard Haskin in the title role



The director, in her Dorset Opera debut, brought intelligence and clarity to the characterisation of the lesser principal roles, particularly Cassio (Jonathan Stoughton), here a real 'man's man' rather than the usual virtuous cardboard cut-out and Carolyn Dobbin brought courage and warmth to Emilia, the only character with whom the audience can really identify.

GP-W

Opera Now - The Dorset Festival Experience 2011

We saw the second of two casts for Verdi's *Otello*. Anna Gregory's production was traditional, and the marvellous orchestra was... conducted by the extremely experienced Robin Stapleton. Otello was the huge-voiced Howard Haskin and his Desdemona, Australian soprano Catherine Bouchier, got completely under the skin of this poignant role. Luca Grassi as Iago was the personification of evil and jealousy.

Margrette Jones

Experience....



For more information please call

**01935
813222**

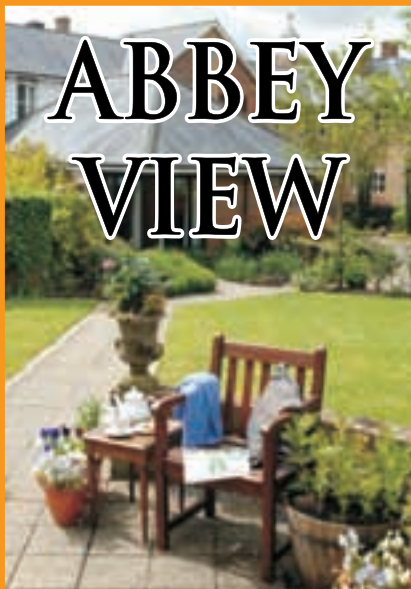
or email:

abbeyview@coltencare.co.uk

Fairfield
Bristol Road
Sherborne
Dorset
DT9 4HD

Please visit:
www.coltencare.co.uk

Quality Nursing & Residential Care



- Individualised 24 hour care and service
- A warm and friendly atmosphere
- Comfortable and relaxing lounges
- Tastefully decorated bedrooms
- Delicious home cooked cuisine
- Outings, events and activities
- One to one social care
- An attractive garden
- Close to local amenities

Otello: Stephanie Corley & Ian Storey

The financial picture

Dorset Opera is often asked how we manage to fund our productions year on year. As a charity and a non-profit making organisation, we endeavour to work to a 'zero' budget. This tight budgeting is a requirement of any grant funding we might receive from the Arts Council of England.

The Board was pleased that the (currently) unaudited accounts of our inaugural opera festival, suggest that we have made a minor surplus of just £1,000 on a turnover exceeding £250,000. This enables us to maintain competitive ticket pricing and honour our charitable commitment to our supporters and participants.

Members attending our AGMs each year are provided with a full set of accounts, and these are also available via Companies House.

The Friends of Dorset Opera

The Friends' Secretary, Celia Harvey, has recently moved. Her new contact details are listed below.

The FODO Trustees agreed that an increase in subscription should be discussed at the AGM this year. A decision was taken to make the minimum subscription £25. Accordingly, 180 people who were not paying a minimum of £25 have been contacted, and the result has been encouraging. Half have increased their subscription immediately, one or two have decided not to continue their membership, leaving some people still to reply.

All support for Dorset Opera is greatly appreciated.

Useful Dorset Opera addresses

Friends' Secretary:

Mrs Celia Harvey, Middle House, Powys Green, Sherborne, DT9 3TA
Tel: 01935 815883
celia.m.harvey@gmail.com

Patrons' Secretary:

Mrs Elspeth Brown, 3 Salisbury Street, Cranborne, BH21 5PU
Tel: 0207 631 0900 (weekdays) Tel: 01725 517581 (weekends)
elsp21@gmail.com

Dorset Opera HQ:

Dorset Opera, Witchampton, Dorset BH21 5AU
Tel: 01258 840000
info@dorsetopera.com
www.dorsetopera.com

Dorset Opera is a Registered Charity No: 1105318 and
a Company Limited by Guarantee No: 5170704

DO Photographs © Patrick Frost & Harry Armytage
DO News is printed by Xadon t:01202 481234



SIMON THOMAS PIRIE | BEAUTIFUL CONTEMPORARY FURNITURE



Simon Thomas Pirie Ltd
The Courtyard Workshop
Rogers Hill Farm Briantspuddle
Bere Regis Dorset DT2 7HJ

Telephone 01929 471900
mail@simonthomaspirie.co.uk
www.simonthomaspirie.co.uk/blog



Up to
50% OFF*
Christmas Shop



Don't
Forget our
Beales Gift
Cards

Gift
Wrapping
Service

*The perfect
gift for everyone.
In one place.*

Christmas is in the bag at Beales!



BEALES

Bournemouth 01202 552 022 Poole 01202 675 721

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK beales.co.uk

*Up to 50% off our usual price, on selected Christmas Shop items, available while stocks last. Information correct at time of going to press. Not all products available in all stores, please check with your local store before setting out. * Terms and conditions apply, see in store for full details.