



Outreach syndicates...

Patrons who attend our lunch at Bryanston each July will already know of the success of our 2019 opera-in-education outreach projects. Sadly, there is very little singing in schools nowadays and our aim is that the Dorset Opera family should do something to ameliorate this. Many of our wonderful supporters have expressed a desire to become further involved and several of them have offered funding towards our expanded 2020 opera-in-education projects.

In July, our outreach suprema, Lynsey Docherty, took her team into Durweston Primary School where it was gently expressed that 'the pupils may not react well to opera'. As you will see from some of the feedback to the right and throughout DONews, these worries were wonderfully unfounded. Providing an opportunity for young people to connect with music through opera, we enabled them to communicate and express themselves with newly discovered confidence. One workshop involved little 5-6 year-olds and then with the whole school, working with around 120 children, singing opera in Italian!

The community day at Durweston Village Hall was a great success. We held a mini-concert featuring our singers for the project and the children from the school - making the occasion a multi-generational celebration involving tots to very elderly.

The team also visited the Purbeck School in Wareham for a four-day workshop, culminating in a performance of the pupils' own version of *Nabucco*. Purbeck's students created their own story, lyrics and music - the vital aspect of the project being that we never just turn up and force prescribed ideas upon them.

As part of the expanded outreach initiative in 2020, we hope to return to those schools to carry out follow-up work. Pupils, parents and staff from both schools along with many from the Durweston community, will again be welcome to join us for our dress rehearsals and performances. Please read on...

"He is a very troubled boy. He is $5\frac{1}{2}$. We have not found anything to provoke a response from him or engage him in anything or with anyone, until today. His face lit up, he sang in front of the whole school and his behaviour has been so positive and different."

"I have seen the children bored doing singing lessons in the school hall when I start preparing for their lunches but this was something else: this was magical! Their eyes were so wide and they were alive, even the naughty ones were joining in. I had never heard any opera in my life but it's really relaxing. I stayed all afternoon to listen..."

Dinner lady/cleaner

"I have never seen my child so animated and engaged by anything!" Parent of a boy aged 10

"The school has been buzzing all day. This is the best day of teaching I have ever had." Year 2/3 teacher

If you are interested in joining the Outreach Syndicate to support our 2020 projects, please email: info@dorsetopera.com

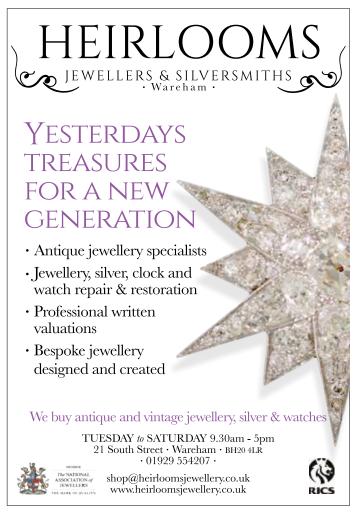
Where are they now?

Nabucco director, Peter Relton, has just returned from New York where he has been mounting the ENO production of Philip Glass's Akhnaten with the acclaimed countertenor, Anthony Roth Constanzo in the title role. You might have see the production Live from the Met at your local cinema on 23 November?

Meanwhile, our glorious Lucia, Letitia Vitelaru, has been in Mexico City where she has been singing all four heroines in *Les Contes d' Hoffmann*. She pairs up again with *Lucia* director, Christopher Cowell, when he directs her in *Don Pasquale* in Sweden this January.

Many of us will have been to the Millennium Centre or the Mayflower in Southampton to see the WNO production of Verdi's *Rigoletto* featuring two Dorset Opera favourites - Mark S Doss in the title role and David Junghoon Kim as the Duke. Those who went to Southampton will have also hit the triple because David's wife, Haegee Lee, who sang at the Jette Parker concert at Milton Abbey in 2018, will have been singing the role of Gilda.





AGM, Annual Report and Accounts...

The joint AGMs of Dorset Opera and the Friends of Dorset Opera will be held on Monday 27 January 2020 at 18:30 for 19:00 at Duke's, Copper Street, Brewery Square, Dorchester DT1 1GA - with grateful thanks to our Chairman, Garry Batt, and his fellow directors. There should be plenty of parking on site and refreshments and canapés will be available before the meetings as usual.

For Members, Patrons and Friends of Dorset Opera, an AGM Calling Notice is enclosed with this newsletter. Should you require electronic copies of the full Report and Accounts prior to the meeting, please send a detailed request email to info@dorsetopera.com

Ticket pricing for 2020

It's great news for our loyal and supportive audiences: there won't be any rise in ticket prices for the 2020 Festival.

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Priority booking in 2020

Priority booking for the 2020 Festival begins in January. Each of our Patrons' Circles will get their opportunity to book in plenty of time.

President's Circle
Chairman's Circle
Director's Circle
Conductor's Circle
Friends of Dorset Opera
General Booking

Tuesday 21 January
Tuesday 28 January
Tuesday 4 February
Tuesday 11 February
Tuesday 18 February
Tuesday 3 March

Once again, we will be using the Regent Centre in Christchurch as our box office. Marquee tables and chairs should be booked through dorsetopera.com

Unless you have elected to have booking material sent to you electronically, you will automatically receive booking forms in good time to make a postal application. When printing your tickets, please download the information sheet which will answer any FAQs you might have about your visit to Bryanston.

Until now, the Regent Centre has not charged Dorset Opera customers a booking or administration fee but, sadly, that has now had to change. Each transaction will now incur a booking fee of just £1. They will continue to charge a further £1 if you ask for your tickets to be sent by post.

For telephone booking, the box office number is 01202 499199.

Dorset Opera-in-Education 2019

"I have been teaching this age group for 9 years and never seen them so excited by anything - ever!"
Year 3 teacher

Events Diary 2020...

The 2020 Events' Diary is packed with even more dates than ever. It will be landing on doormats with your priority booking information early in the new year. But let us tempt you with a just a few of the regular events as well as new highlights.

- There will be a further eight Bluffers' lunches featuring new speakers such as Seymour Adams and Charlotte Collier alongside regulars Nigel Beale, Simon Rees and Hugh Watkins, with Adrian Thorpe celebrating our 50th Bluffers' Lunch.
- Another unmissable Celebrity Lunch with one of The Metropolitan Opera's top brass.
- The Mad Hatter's Ritzy Tea Party at the home of milliner to the glitterati, Cosma Jenks, in the Blackmore Vale at the foot of Bulbarrow Hill.
- Our annual late Summer Firework Fiesta on the waves of Poole Harbour (with fish & chips, of course).
- A Three Tenors dinner at the Russell-Cotes Art Gallery and Museum in Bournemouth.
- Two further Opera Cinema evenings.
- Keep your diaries free for Thursday 2 July as we hope to be announcing a marquee event at the home of someone you will all know...





Berlin, here we come...

Our trip to Berlin in the spring was sold out within days of it becoming available. Several supporters were disappointed and are now on a waiting list. Some 30 Patrons and Friends will be travelling with our usual tour organisers, Travel for the Arts, and we will get the opportunity to visit all three of Berlin's opera companies.

We arrive on the afternoon of Saturday 28 March and transfer to the 4-star Westin Grand Hotel in the centre of the city - right next door to the Komische Oper where we will attend the performance of Weinberger's *Spring Storms* that evening (in only the second production since the premiere in 1933).

The performance on 29 March at the Deutsche Oper will be Verdi's *Otello* with a stunning cast. That follows our day of sightseeing in the former East Berlin with visits to Friedrichstrasse, Unter den Linden (where the Staatsoper can be found), the Old Museum, Alexander Platz, the unique Museum Island and the Pergamon Museum.

On Monday 30 March, it has been arranged for us to take a backstage tour of the Komische Oper, after which dinner will be served in a local restaurant.

The last day gives us time to further enjoy Berlin, with our final performance being at the Staatsoper - Mozart's *Idomeneo* with Sir Simon Rattle in the pit.

A full report on our antics (with photos to prove it) will appear in the next edition of DONews. We can't wait!

Dorset Opera-in-Education 2019
"I had tingles down my spine and had to go into the toilet to cry" Anon

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REVIEWS:

Dorset Opera Festival 2019

What the critics said about our production of:

Nabucco

The Daily Express | ★★★★☆ Martina Bet

Most summer opera companies play it relatively safe with their repertoire choices each year. At the Dorset Opera Festival - in its 46th year - the chorus, who come from all over the world to participate, are at the forefront of the Company's decision-making when it comes to which operas will be performed.

Always over 60 in number, often 80, the sound they produce is every bit as thrilling as their Royal Opera and ENO counterparts - and with former ENO/WNO/Scottish Opera chorus master, Stephen Harris now in charge, they should be! In a gala concert mounted as part of this year's Festival, the high C at the end of the finale of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, is still ringing in my ears.

But what of this Festival's two productions? Verdi's *Nabucco* is paired with Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* - neither is easy to pull off at the best of times. But there is no doubt that this Lucia was the production of the Festival with a truly international cast that any opera house would be proud to field.

Verdi's first operatic success, *Nabucco*, saw Grammy award-winning American, Mark S Doss in the title role. Doss brought his considerable dark bass-baritone to the role rendering a top A-flat at the end of his 'O prodi miei...' cabaletta, all the more exciting. To find a bass to sing Zaccaria that has a darker timbre than Doss cannot be easy, but in this instance Artistic Director, Roderick Kennedy, managed to entice the Minsk-based Andrey Valentiy to take command as the high priest. A fine British debut!

The role of Abigaille, Nabucco's adopted daughter, is never easy to cast and I cannot think of a British singer who would be able to do justice to the role other than Claire Rutter. Indeed, it was she who turned up in Dorset. The role is written for that very rare operatic beast: the dramatic coloratura soprano. Rutter has proved on more than one occasion that she is certainly up to the task and in the performance I saw, she even added a high E-flat alternativo at one point.

The smaller roles were all well taken with Adriano Graziani as love-interest Ismaele; Dobbin again as Nabucco's real daughter Fenena, Suzanne Manuell as Zaccaria's sister Anna, emerging artist Tim Bagley a notable 'chancellor' and in a fit of luxury casting, Jung Soo Yun (again) as Nabucco's henchman, Abdallo.

Dorset's well-rehearsed orchestra played superbly under both the

Argentinian conductor José Miguel Esandi (*Lucia*) and the company's music director, Jeremy Carnall (*Nabucco*). Carnall, in particular, is a powerful force on the podium; he clearly lives every moment of the opera and is a joy for audiences to behold.

Naturally, the highlight of Peter Relton's production was the Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves ('Va pensiero...') the final chord of which was held in pianississimo for longer than I have ever heard it and the audience's initial breathless silence afterwards indicated just how they had been affected emotionally. Mr Harris should take great satisfaction from this.

I'm now looking forward to Welsh National Opera's *Rigoletto* this autumn: it has Mr Doss in the title role and Junghoon Kim as the Duke. What a treat it will be to have them together in the same production!

The Observer | ★★★★☆ Fiona Maddocks

Two late-season operas deserve mention. Dorset Opera festival runs as a hard-working, highly professional summer camp, culminating in two operas, this year Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Verdi's *Nabucco*. It has an enthusiastic atmosphere, and a can-do attitude, thanks in part to its artistic director, former international bass Roderick Kennedy. With a 70-strong chorus and an orchestra that negotiated solo string and woodwind passages admirably, the company's *Nabucco* reached high musical standards.

If the staging didn't entirely match up - recreating the Hanging Gardens of Babylon against the clock and on a tight budget is never easy - this was a welcome chance to hear the work that launched Verdi's career. The Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves may be well known, rousingly sung here with some well-drilled pianissimo, yet the work is not so often staged. The challenging role of Abigaille was sung with sterling top notes, dignity and vigour by Claire Rutter. Mark S Doss (Nabucco), Carolyn Dobbin (Fenena), Adriano Graziani (Ismaele) and Andrei Valentiy (Zaccaria) led an assured cast, idiomatically conducted by Jeremy Carnall.

Opera Magazine | George Hall

Every July Dorset Opera runs an operatic summer school that ends with full-scale productions at a professional level. Obviously the <u>availability of a sizeable chorus...partly determines the</u>

programming and, this year, there were none of the first British stagings (six so far) or even premières that have helped raise the event's profile over its 45 years of existence.

Peter Relton's Verdi staging managed the feat of moving large bodies of diverse and often opposing groups and principals effectively around on a limited stage, though it was less sure-footed in explaining exactly who these groups and individuals were and why they were at each other's throats.

The period identified in April Dalton's costumes matched with the Risorgimento and there were Habsburg insignia among Louis Carver's designs, but the programme synopsis, with its lean mentions of a citadel and foreign invaders, was unhelpfully vague. The quality and firm dramatic intentions of the principals made up for it. Mark S Doss communicated the instability of the Babylonian king, with moments of vocal waywardness - deliberate or not - that were entirely fitting.

As his supposed daughter Abigaille, Clare Rutter conveyed her character's burning anger in confident, technically impressive vocalism from the top to the bottom of the range including flouncing expertly through swathes of coloratura. Andrey Valentiy's prophet Zaccaria, was stern and focused, Adriano Graziani's Ismaele was voiced with graceful liquidity.

Carolyn Dobbin provided an effective contrast to her adopted sister's persistent fury via her more contained, lyrically voiced Fenena. Jung Soo Yun began ineffectively as Abdallo, though he picked up considerrably later on. Tim Bagley made striking interventions as the High Priest of Baal - or, in this less religion-specific dramatic scheme, Abigaille's Chancellor.

Beginning with the exciting overture the orchestra maintained a good showing, while the chorus, once past some minor ensemble glitches early on, melded into a unit, delivering a flawlessly subtle account of the so-called Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves - one of the evening's highlights. The company's music director, Jeremy Carnall, showed his Verdian mettle in the pit.

Andrey Valentiy and the Dorset Opera Festival Chorus | Nabucco

There are further reviews in *Opera Now, The Stage* and *The Fine Times Recorder*

What's in store for 2020?

There's excitement a-plenty at DOF Towers because we've just been told which operas have been chosen for your delectation at the 2020 Festival. We always like to be quite adventurous with our opera choices, and the coming season is no different.

Puccini lovers can rejoice: there's a Dorset Opera first for his 'comic' opera *La rondine* (The Swallow). As with all Puccini operas, the music is sensuous and deeply evocative. It is set in Paris and on the Riviera - where the premiere took place in Monte Carlo in 1917. if you don't know the piece, listen to it on YouTube. Look for the production with the fine Russian soprano Ekaterina Bakanova in the title role.

La rondine is 'Traviata-esque' in nature. Like Violetta, the heroine, Magda, has a 'protector'. Back in the day, she would have been termed a courtesan - a young woman kept by a rich admirer. She is introduced to a young man named Ruggero and the two immediately fall in love. The relationship blossoms and marriage beckons... But should Magda risk telling Ruggero the truth about her past?

To complicate matters further, the verismo maestro wrote three endings for this opera and sadly died before making his final choice.

Argentinian maestro, José Miguel Esandi (*Le comte Ory; Lucia di Lammermoor*) conducts, and Christopher Cowell (*Faust; Le Cid; Lucia di Lammermoor*) directs.



Is Boris good enough?

No, not a political question - with sincere apologies for the dreadful, hackneyed pun. We merely refer to our second opera for 2020: the stunning masterpiece by Modest Mussorgsky that is *Boris Godunov*. What more is there to say?

Usually performed in only the grandest of opera houses, DOF has long had the urge to mount this opera for you. In its various editions with add-ons by Rimsky Korsakov or Shostakovich, it can become an extremely long evening. However, in its original 1869 form by the composer himself, it is a superb work of perfect length, with a focus on our wonderful chorus.

This is now the preferred version of the great conductors of today including Valery Gergiev at his Mariinsky theatre (which in Soviet times was known as the Kirov).

Dorset Opera music director, Jeremy Carnall, takes to the podium for this once-in-a-lifetime presentation and we welcome back Paul Carr (Suor Angelica; Die fliegende Holländer; Aïda; Un ballo in maschera; Eugene Onegin) to direct.

Live from... New Venues near you

More and more of us are attending broadcasts of live opera in cinemas around the country. Whilst the possibility of watching a performance 'live' as it happens somewhere else in the world has a certain excitement about it, none of the broadcasts is actually 'live'. There is always a slight delay built into each broadcast to allow for any unforeseen circumstance and some screenings are what are termed 'encore' showings (repeats of previous recordings).

Live from the Met, which started off the whole concept in December 2006, was a great idea to bring opera to the masses at affordable prices. However, whilst the Met broadcasts now bring millions of dollars into their coffers, there are concerns that previously packed performances at the opera house itself still have empty seats when the curtain goes up.

The Regent Centre in Christchurch was at the forefront of venues that signed up for live streaming back in 2006-7. They have since won the award for the largest UK audience for *Royal Opera Live* on numerous occasions. Not many cinemas, or other venues for that matter, can give over a 400-seat auditorium to streamed opera. For those of you who live quite some way from the venues that have traditionally shown broadcasts, there are now new ones to be added to the list. In west Dorset, the Bridport Arts Centre has invested in *Live from the Met* for several years, but that is now augmented by their sister venue, the Electric Palace, which is showing *NTLive* (productions from the Royal National Theatre), ballet from the Bolshoi and of course, live screenings from the Royal Opera House.

Closer to home, you may have noticed large speakers on the walls of the Coade Theatre at this year's Festival. These were in preparation for Bryanston to show screenings from the Royal Opera House and, in future, NTLIve and who knows, hopefully Live from the Met?

Dorset Opera-in-Education 2019

"We know that the arts can have an impact of our children with additional needs but this has been something else. What we have experienced today has been the best thing I have ever seen in school as a teacher with over 20 years' experience! The quality and the way ALL the children engaged."

Special Educational Needs Coordinator

Are you, or were you, a Chartered Accountant?

Dorset Opera is looking for a Chartered Accountant to join the Board. The Board meets about six times a year and the duties would include giving advice on financial and tax matters, overseeing the financial reports prepared by our Company Manager and taking responsibility (along with the auditors) for the preparation of the annual report and accounts. They will need to keep abreast of charity tax changes, SORP, TTR and any initiatives that a new government might put in place.

If you think you might be interested and can contribute to the ongoing success of Dorset Opera, please call 01258 840000 in the first instance or send an email to our Chairman, Garry Batt, at info@dorsetopera.com







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REVIEWS:

Dorset Opera Festival 2019

What the critics said about our production of:

Lucia di Lammermoor

The Daily Express | ★★★★☆ Martina Bet

Most summer opera companies play it relatively safe with their repertoire choices each year. At the Dorset Opera Festival - in its 46th year - the chorus, who come from all over the world to participate - are at the forefront of the Company's decision-making when it comes to which operas will be performed.

Always over 60 in number, often 80, the sound they produce is every bit as thrilling as their Royal Opera and ENO counterparts - and with former ENO/WNO/Scottish Opera chorus master, Stephen Harris now in charge, they should be! In a gala concert mounted as part of this year's Festival, the high C at the end of the finale of *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, is still ringing in my ears. But what of this Fesitval's two productions? Verdi's *Nabucco* is paired with Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* - neither is easy to pull off at the best of times. But there is no doubt that this *Lucia* was the production of the Festival with a truly international cast that any opera house would be proud to field.

Lucia herself was a revelation! The young Latvian soprano, Letitia Vitelaru, who studied with the great Mirella Freni at the Accademia della Scala in Milan, has a wondrous upper register: she was born to sing this role and gave us a show-stopping Mad Scene in duet with the now infamous glass harmonica - which Dorset had authentically provided.

Partnering her as her doomed lover, Edgardo, was the Korean tenor, David Junghoon Kim, well-known to regular opera-goers as a Jette Parker alumnus, he sings so stylishly and powerfully, his future stellar career must already be assured.

It was a delight to find Canadian baritone Brett Polegato in Dorset. Fresh from singing Posa in Grange Park's *Don Carlo* (alongside Dorset alumnus, Leonardo Capalbo) Polegato brought his muscular baritone to the role of Enrico Ashton - Lucia's overbearing brother. Pauls Putnins (Raimondo), Carolyn Dobbin (Alisa), Jung Soo Yun (Arturo) and veteran tenor John Hudson as Normanno, all made significant contributions to Chris Cowell's production.

Dorset's well-rehearsed orchestra played superbly under both the Argentinian conductor José Miguel Esandi (*Lucia*) and the company's music director, Jeremy Carnall (*Nabucco*). Carnall, in particular, is a powerful force on the podium; he clearly lives every moment of the opera and is a joy for audiences to behold.

The Fine Times Recorder | GP-W and FC

IF *Macbeth* is The Scottish Play, Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* is THE Scottish opera. So it was an interesting and logical idea for Christopher Cowell, directing the tragedy for Dorset Opera Festival to nod to the Shakespearean precedent, with three hags and a ghost.

Not everyone approved - some critics have been disparaging of the innovation - but Lucia, adapted from Sir Walter Scott's novel, is a grand melodrama, and the haunted figure of the young woman who was murdered by her Ravenswood lover heightened the tension and the drama. The role was danced by Miranda Spencer-Pearson, making her professional stage debut.

Lucia (the glorious soprano Letitia Vitelaru - what a find!), whose brother Enrico Ashton owns the former Ravenswood lands, is torn between her love for Edgardo Ravenswood, and her brother's need for her to marry for money and secure his position against the shifting sands of Scottish politics.

The ghost haunts the moors above the Ravenswood estate. She draws closer to Lucia as the heroine's fate is sealed by her brother's treacherous behaviour. As the climax nears - the famous mad scene - the ghost mirrors Lucia's movements and emphasises her isolation and anguish. It worked for us.

Going back to the original orchestration, conductor José Miguel Esandi's excellent forces included a glass harmonica, played by the German soloist Friedrich Heinrich Kern. The ethereal, other-worldly sound highlights Lucia's fragility and provides an eerie soundscape to her dying moments.

As Edgardo, Dorset Opera Festival was lucky indeed to have the brilliant young South Korean tenor, David Junghoon Kim. This is a voice that thrills like the young Pavarotti - you can only wonder in delight what heights it will take him to.

One of Dorset Opera's favourite singers, the versatile baritone Pauls Putnins, brought real sincerity to the role of the Presbyterian minister, Raimondo. This was a man of God and of deep compassion. A lovely performance.

The chorus, always one of the great joys of Dorset Opera Festival, was in fine voice for *Lucia*, and even more so for *Nabucco*, a work in which the chorus is almost the star. *Va pensiero* is rightly famous, and the mainly young singers did it justice.

Opera Magazine | George Hall

Ghosts are perilous things in opera, as in other staged performances: it was Mozart, in a letter to his father, who expressed the opinion that the ghost in *Hamlet* would be more effective had there been less of him.

In Donizetti's Scottish tragedy a ghost is mentioned, though none is actually scheduled to appear; and while he did not stymie his production to the extent of having two ghosts - as Katie Mitchell did at the Royal Opera - there was far too much of the silent apparition of Miranda Spencer Pearson (as the victim of an earlier Ravenswood lover) in Christopher Cowell's Dorset staging. Indeed, none would have been preferable to less; attention-seeking is one thing, but taking a violent part in the action looked ridiculous.

That said, Cowell's show otherwise maintained a broadly traditional approach to the material, while both Louis Carver's massive stone-circle-like tomb stones (cleverly lit by Marc Rosette) and April Dalton's 19th century costumes, fitted the bill well.

As always at Dorset the show displayed canny casting. The Romanian soprano Letitia Vitelaru had all the notes for Lucia - which is saying quite a lot - plus a certain sence of style, but the unusual level of passivity accorded the central character in this staging won her considerably less dramatic than vocal impact.

David Junghoon Kim's Edgardo also needed to step more keenly up to the dramatic mark, but the intelligently shaped lyricism of his vocal line was rewarding and his engagement with the text gave him some backbone.

Brett Polegato's Enrico was rough around the edges, but he was no less convincing as a fraternal bully for that. Pauls Putnins explored the duplicitous role played by Raimondo, here described as a Presbyterian minister, his mixed moral compass eventually turning towards a fierce verbal attack on John Hudson's Normanno. Jung Soo Yun made his mark in Arturo's brief but crucial appearance while Carolyn Dobbin's Alisa was to the point.

This was another good night for Dorset's chorus and orchestra, with the conductor José Miguel Esandi bringing dynamism to the score, though there were one or two moments when balance needed more care.

There are further reviews in *Opera Now*, *The Stage* and *The Fine Times Recorder*



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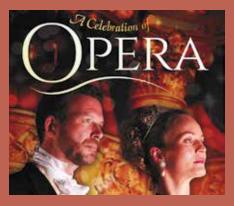
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