

ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

Opera that *moves*

English Touring Opera returns to Poole with two great operas encompassing love, war and epic tragedy.

FRI 10 MARCH

OPERA

Giulio Cesare

A story of passion and revenge featuring music and drama of immense intensity as Julius Caesar conquers Egypt and falls into an uneasy alliance with the Egyptian Queen, Cleopatra.

Performed in Italian with English surtitles.

SAT 11 MARCH

OPERA

Lucrezia Borgia

ETO's first production of this historical tragedy featuring one of opera's greatest characters. Infamous poisoner, Lucrezia, is a complex woman in a dangerous situation, a cunning strategist and a loving mother at the same time.

Performed in Italian with English surtitles.

Time 7.30pm | Tickets from £25.03 Discounts U18s, Students, Live for £5, Seniors ATL&L, Groups | Theatre

Published prices are inclusive of the ticket booking fee.

SPECIAL OFFER

Purchase tickets to both ETO productions from just £40.04*

*T&Cs: Offer only valid on Guilio Cesare and Lucrezia Borgia when tickets are purchased in the same transaction. Cannot be used on tickets already purchased or in conjunction with any other offer.





Royal Opera House present opera in the cinema. Filmed in front of a live audience, sung in Italian with English subtitles. All screenings certified 12A.

NEW IN THE CINEMA

WED 15 FEBRUARY

The Barber of Seville

Time 7pm

WED 22 MARCH

Turandot

Time 7.15pm

THU 27 APRIL

The Marriage Of Figaro

Time 6.45pm

THU 13 JUNE

Il Trovatore

Time 7.15pm





Looking forward to our Golden Anniversary in 2024

You may not be aware that 2024 will be our Golden anniversary.

Dorset Opera was conceived and inaugurated in 1974 by the great Patrick Shelley who became Director of Music at Sherborne School. To briefly tell the story, Patrick decided he wanted to conduct and chose to put on Smetana's *The Bartered Bride* - directed by Classics master, Robert Glen. The third person in the triumvirate was our very own Augusta Miller, who was Chorus Master (and, of course, Director of Music at Sherborne Girls'). The icing on the cake that year was that the future King Charles III attended the first night!

There weren't enough funds in the kitty to repeat the exercise in 1975, so a committee of the great and good got together to find the wherewithal. To afford *Carmen* in 1976, Patrick allegedly sold a house he'd inherited!

The Golden Anniversary Fund

So, here we are, almost 50 years later and we're getting ready to celebrate Patrick's foresight and this incredible milestone. In 2014, we created the Ruby Fund to help us achieve our specific goals. We hope to do the same for 2024 only this time, of course, it will be our Golden Anniversary Fund.

To celebrate our 50th birthday, the Golden Anniversary Fund, or Syndicate, will support the commissioning of an opera to celebrate our milestone.

The Marriage of Figaro for 2023...

With the success of our production of *Magic Flute*, we felt that it wouldn't be a bad idea to look again at the maestro's catalogue. Therefore, the first opera we have chosen for the 2023 Festival is *Le nozze di Figaro*!

It will be conducted by José Miguel Esandi (who so brilliantly took on all eight of this summer's performances) and directed by the one-and-only, Paul Carr.

AGM Date...

The Annual General Meetings of both charities - Dorset Opera and the Friends of Dorset Opera (FODO) - will take place on Monday, 30th January 2023 at 18.30 for 19.00. Drinks and canapés will be provided.

Once again, the venue will be Duke's in Copper Street, Dorchester DT1 1GA - by kind invitation of our chairman, Garry Batt, and his fellow directors. (Please note, only registered Members of the Company may vote if called upon so to do.)

Do let us know if you intend to join us. If you would like an electronic copy of the annual report and accounts, please send a request email to: info@dorsetopera.com



Priority booking in 2023

Priority booking for the 2023 Festival begins in January. Each of our Patrons' Circles will get their opportunity to book online in plenty of time from the dates below. The performance week is 24-29 July.

President's Circle Chairman's Circle Director's Circle Conductor's Circle Overture Circle Friends of Dorset Opera General Booking Tuesday 24 January Tuesday 31 January Tuesday 07 February Tuesday 14 February Tuesday 21 February Tuesday 28 February Tuesday 14 March

Excellent news: In spite of spiraling costs, there will be no increase in ticket prices for next year. The box office will be open at 10.00am for online booking: should you need to speak to a human, the telephone number is 07570 366186. Our booking brochures, along with the 2023 Events' Diary, will be winging their way to you in good time for the opening of your booking period by which time, the performance dates will be fixed.

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Assistant Administrator...

We are looking for an enthusiastic, organised person with excellent interpersonal skills to help with some of the admin that ensures the smooth running of the Dorset Opera Festival.

Reporting to the Operations Director, this is a paid, short-term, self-employed appointment from June until early August 2023. Much of the work will be done from home - but we will often need you at Bryanston during the Dorset Opera Festival period in the second half of July.

You need to be a competent computer user, but you do not need to be an opera buff. If you think you have the skills to assist us and would enjoy being part of the Dorset Opera team, please contact info@dorsetopera.com

News from FODO... Christmas Gift Voucher

At a loss to think of a unique Christmas present? What about Friends' membership? Single membership is £40 and joint membership for a husband and wife, or for close family members, is just £60 per annum. We will provide you with a voucher to send with your Christmas card or, we can send it directly to your friends with a covering letter. Please order your voucher by going to dorsetopera.com/boxoffice or emailing fodo@dorsetopera.com

When compared with other support organisations, our rates are extremely reasonable. The member(s) will receive prior notice of our events and details of each year's Festival, as well as priority booking for tickets, individual picnic pavilions, opera dinners, picnics and marquee table reservations.

The Chairman of FODO has indicated that to keep pace with RPI the Trustees propose increasing the Friends' subscriptions slightly after our 2023 festival.

In other news, FODO trustee (and DO Vice President) Tim Lee, is stepping aside. The former Dorset Opera Chairman and his wife, Susan, are moving away from Dorset to be nearer their family. There will be more about Tim and how he saved Dorset Opera from complete collapse after the sudden death of Patrick Shelley in 2003, in the Spring edition of DONews.

Ukrainian National Opera in Yeovil...

Dnipro Opera is appearing in Yeovil under the guise of the Ukrainian National Opera as part of a UK tour. They were to be giving a single performance of Bizet's *Carmen* on 31 March 2023 at the Westlands entertainment complex.

It seems that the promoters have now come to their senses and realised that they need a 'proper theatre' for the performance. The opera will now be staged at the Octagon theatre on Wednesday 5th April 2023.



Opera No.2... Massenet's Le roi de Lahore

Our second choice for 2023 is an opera that we have long determined to perform. It is another blockbuster stunner from Jules Massenet. Who can forget Leonardo Capalbo and Lee Bisset in our British stage première of *Le Cid*, in 2018? Go back a little further and you will recall *Hérodiade* in 2006.

Our latest discovery is an opera that several supporters have mentioned over the years, but only now do we feel ready to tackle it. The conductor's and vocal scores are not in the best condition and will require a considerable amount of work before the opera is ready for the rehearsal room... It is *Le roi de Lahore* - an oriental fantasy of traditional Grand Opera at its best. Where possible, we hope this will feature a chiefly South Asian cast of principal singers.

The opera will be conducted by our Music Director, Jeremy Carnall and directed by Bence Dávid Kálo, who has been working with us for many years now. It was his *Acis and Galatea* that you enjoyed so much in 2021.

Listen to it on YouTube in the Sutherland/Bonynge version with Milnes, Tourangeau, Lima, Morris and Ghiaurov: CLICK HERE





REVIEWS:

Dorset Opera Festival 2022

What the critics said about our production of:

Manon Lescaut

Opera Now | ★★★☆☆ George Hall

Over the period while former bass Roderick Kennedy has been the company's artistic director, Dorset Opera has extended its season and raised its standards: in particular, his long experience as a leading singer has helped bring in quality casts year after year to undertake the roles in the festival's two major summer productions.

The 2022 season at Bryanston opened with Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* - the first of the composer's great operas, but equally a work that makes huge demands of the singers of the two central roles

As Des Grieux, there were moments here and there when American Todd Wilander's sizable tenor faltered; but even though somewhat stiff on stage he gave a solid account, both vocally and dramatically, of a character whose alliance with the equally unfortunate Manon leads them both to disaster.

Following her success as Donna Anna for Nevill Holt in 2021, Puccini's title role was another major achievement for Anna Patalong; during the lengthy course of the opera's trajectory her lush, rich-toned soprano kept faith with Puccini's notes every step of the way.

Combined with her apparently tireless singing, her dramatic acumen allowed Patalong to explore the role in a way that balanced skilfully Manon's desire for true love with her equally pressing need to live in luxury. The result was a formidable interpretation.

The opera's secondary roles are just that: but Gyula Nagy nevertheless created a three-dimensional portrait of Lescaut, Manon's deplorable pimp of a brother, while Amber Reeves-Pigott brought her memorable mezzo to bear on the solo sung by the Madrigal Singer in Act II.

Worthwhile performances from Eddie Wade as Geronte - Manon's elderly admirer, though more harmless than he should be when treated as a comic character - and from Alberto Sousa's altogether likeable Edmondo.

Christopher Cowell's production was regrettably encumbered with silent actors playing the roles of Manon, Des Grieux and - to add further to the confusion - the Abbé Prevost, whose 18th-century novel has inspired countless other works besides Puccini's 1893 dramma lirico. These additional figures were seriously distracting.

Placing the action on board the ship that takes the two disaster-impelled lovers to North America didn't work either, though Bridget Kimak's spare set for the final scene was ideal - until suddenly the silent Manon character turned up in time to seize the audience's attention from a soprano and a tenor who had just knocked us sideways with their vocally empowered desperation.

Opera MagazinePeter Reed

Dorset Opera felt very much business as usual, with the artistic director Roderick Kennedy working wonders for the six-day festival's two productions, The Magic Flute and this Manon Lescaut. And it is only two years until the festival's 50th anniversary in 2024. The singing was good, the two leads especially so, but their talents were sabotaged by a production that came tainted with a concept of sorts that did nothing to explain or broaden. Christopher Cowell introduced not one but three silent roles, a voguish gimmick that has had much exposure. Two of the doubles emanated from Puccini's tragic heroine and her lover Des Grieux, the third the presence of Abbé Prévost, who wrote the original novel and whom we saw writing down the story as narrated by Des Grieux's double, imposing a framework of sorts that was at odds with Puccini's compulsive momentum. The doubles were a fussed-up, rather moralizing distraction - as if the opera doesn't make the morality point succinctly - and it was a mercy that for this second performance they were abandoned for the short and gruelling last act.

There was another intervention, with the Intermezzo that Puccini placed before Act 3 to set up the misery of the lovers' deportation to Louisiana also being pressed into service as a gloomy, handwringing overture before Act 1. People do take liberties. Bridget Kimak's set, having placed Abbé Prévost at Le Havre from the start, stayed there for the first three acts, which made a nonsense of Act 2, with Manon as Geronte's bejewelled mistress living a very short-lived good time in his fabulous apartment, here surrounded by all sorts of harbour paraphernalia and a chorus of sailors and prostitutes, not forgetting the doubles.

The singers took this in their stride, and the excellent and personable Anna Patalong as Manon showed considerable form in Puccini's unique brand of vulnerability-with-substance. She conveyed the headstrong Manon caught between passion and a more pragmatic need for money with great perception, surging into her two duets with Des Grieux, and transcending the awkwardness of the last act. For subtlety and drama, this was quite an achievement, and she was well matched by the American tenor Todd Wilander's romantic Des Grieux, seducing her with lyrical singing and convincing ardour. Gyula Nagy was very effective as Manon's unpleasant, spivvy brother; Eddie Wade hardly had a chance to make clear the power that the old roué Geronte has over Manon's life. Alberto Sousa and Amber Reeves Pigott both registered strongly in the small roles of Edmondo and the Madrigal Singer. José Miguel Esandi drew full-blooded playing from the Dorset Opera Festival Orchestra and some electrifying ensemble with the singers.

Gyula Nagy as Lescaut and Eddie Wade as Geronte | Manon Lescaut 2022

REVIEWS:

Dorset Opera Festival 2022

What the critics said about our production of:

The Magic Flute

Opera MagazineBrian Robins

... The opera was given in a racy and at times witty new English translation made specifically for the production by Christopher Cowell. The audience was given a clear idea of what to expect when entering Bryanston's Coade Hall. The raised curtain revealed the single set: slightly sloping tiers of seating much of the kind found in Roman forums, with a background of colourful drapes and bunting. A notice informed us that we were to see a performance by Sarastro's Travelling Circus, the star performer being the high trapeze artist, the Queen of the Night. Among other members of the circus, we had Papageno, fired from a cannon twice nightly (a rather good running joke); Pamina, the assistant of the highly inefficient knife thrower, Monostatos; Three Ladies, who included the circus's bearded lady, fortune teller and tattooed lady; and the ringmaster Sarastro. The Speaker, for reasons not made clear, appeared to be a punk biker. In addition, the chorus included members of the circus's audience, seemingly a 1960s crowd that incongruously included a cloth-capped, pullover-clad prince called Tamino.

All this resulted in a highly colourful show, led by the circus troupe in amazing Technicolor garb, who all entered into the concept with considerable verve. It was in sum a Magic Flute for the 2020s brash, garish and not a little vulgar. Unexpectedly, much of the burlesque side of the plot, led by the personable and well sung Essex-boy Papageno of Felix Kemp, worked in a way that accorded well with the spirit if not the letter of the piece. But of course, the opera is about much more than knockabout fun. Rather it is unique in the repertoire in its juxtaposition of that fun with elevated Masonically-inspired gravitas. In this respect, the conceit of the circus simply did not, could not, work in Paul Carr's production. Musically there was much to enjoy, not least in the stylish conducting of José Miguel Esandi, standing in for the indisposed company musical director Jeremy Carnall. Apart from an over-deliberate 'Ach, ich fühl's', Esandi's tempos were exemplary and he drew some fine playing from the Dorset Opera Festival Orchestra. Ted Black as Tamino used his lyric tenor to fine if not strong effect. His Pamina was the Canadian soprano Jamie Groote and her strongly projected performance was satisfying in many respects but I don't feel she is an ideal Mozart singer; she will surely make her mark in later music. Her mother, played by Hannah Sawle, looking magnificent in a black and silver gown, despatched both the formidable Queen of the Night arias with confidence and technical accomplishment, though it was a pity that her presence was belittled by having her (and her waywardly sung Ladies) appear as drunkards in the final scene with the excellent Monostatos of Aled Hall. Ossian Huskinson's Sarastro was too lightweight both as to voice and characterization. Stuart Pendred's Speaker was well sung. The large chorus - always a feature of Dorset Opera - had obviously been exceptionally well trained.

Despite enjoyable and amusing moments - the ultimate transformation of the enchanting Papagena of Caroline Kennedy in particular being a delight - there was for me simply too much that was discordant and not in keeping with Mozart's problematic opera, but it's only fair to report that the audience were greatly diverted and loved every minute.

Opera Now | ★★★★ George Hall

Far more successful was Paul Carr's staging of *The Magic Flute*, sung in a clever English version by Christopher Cowell. The concept - if that's not too hifalutin a term - was that the characters were members of a travelling circus which Prince Tamino wished to join.

Sarastro was the ringmaster, the Queen of the Night the chief attraction as a trapeze artist, Monostatos the knife thrower, Pamina his assistant, and so on.

While such a set-up clearly meant that the piece's Masonic and philosophical elements didn't get much of a look-in, the visuals - and especially Stewart J Charlesworth's bright and breezy costumes - were regularly delightful. Overall, this was a fun show - as Mozart's Singspiel needs to be.

It was also superbly well sung from everyone on stage. Jamie Groote's limpid, liquid soprano excelled as Pamina, with Ted Black's fluent tenor (Tamino) ideally scaled for Mozart's line in a theatre of this size.

Hannah Sawle brought off all the difficulties for which the role of the Queen of the Night is notorious, while Ossian Huskinson's Sarastro showed remarkable breath-control, clarity of diction and tonal refinement.

Papageno - the role librettist Schikaneder wrote for himself to play requires an ability to make the audience warm to you which Felix Kemp possesses in spades: his vocal performance was delivered with distinction and his dialogue perfectly judged.

Marvellous contributions from Aled Hall's horrid Monostatos - the balance of villainy and comedy astutely caught - and Caroline Kennedy's entirely successful Papagena.

Excellent teams of Ladies (Naomi Harvey, Anne Marie Owens, Gaynor Keeble and Clowns, usually called Boys, Lydia Mee, Charlotte Forfar, Annie George) - were further assets. Stuart Pendred was a notably strong Speaker, sharing the duos of Priests and Armed Men with the equally fine Jamie Formoy.

The chorus is always a central focus of Dorset's set-up and once again made a strongly positive impression: Nicolas Mansfield was guest chorus director, Christopher Middleton his assistant.

Due to the indisposition of the festival's music director, Jeremy Carnall, José Miguel Esandi - already slated for Manon Lescaut - took on both shows. His command of each score was total and his technique enlivening, bringing tremendous character and engagement to his task. The orchestra was on top form for both scores.





Should ENO move to Manchester?

Most of our readers will have heard about the appalling way that the English National Opera (ENO) has been traeted in the recent round of cuts by Arts Council England (ACE) announced in early February. The ENO is no longer a National Portfolio Organisation and any funds they do manage to prise out of ACE, may be granted on an annual application basis in the way that smaller organisations have to go cap-in-hand.

ACE - supposedly a totally independent body - admit they were instructed to ditch the ENO by the government in the hope of saving several million pounds that could be ploughed into grass-roots culture on 'every high street in the country'. A look at the ACE website will show that they very much favour street theatre and carnivals. (Didn't we always manage to stage carnival processions without them being considered to be 'artistic' and without ACE funding, back in the good old days?)

Whilst it is intended that ENO will retain its ownership of the London Coliseum (gifted to them by local opera lover and critic, David Mellor, who handed them the Frank Matcham-designed theatre when he was a minister back in the Major government - an act, apparently, he, like Miss Otis, now regrets). It is alleged that the ENO will still be 'allowed' to mount regular seasons at the Coli, the idea being that the rest of the time, London's largest theatre will be hired out the likes of Sir Cameron Mackintosh and Lord Andrew Lloyd Webber, as a superb home for 'the musical'. We shall see.

What about that move away from London? Sir Nicholas Serota - currently chair of ACE - has suggested Manchester as a base. However, no one has even been formally or informally approached about any move. Neither those that run the ENO, nor Andy Burnham, mayor of Greater Manchester! This abject failure to communicate is a disgrace.

The north of England used to be well served by both Opera North (formerly English National Opera [North]) - and Scottish Opera, which used to tour to Newcastle, Liverpool, Leeds (when ON was away!), Oxford and occasionally to the Dominion Theatre in London.

What calumny! A complete and utter shambles. But what's wrong with opera for the masses? Two opera houses in London appear to be one too many for those that do the government's financial bidding... but allow me to refer you to Paris, Prague, Berlin and Budapest each of which sports three institutions unashamedly devoted to opera and all heavily supported by the state. In Germany's case, there are a further 80 state-funded regional opera houses - all with fully functioning companies!

Maybe ENO is not quite what it was in those heady, 'Powerhouse' days under the legendary leadership of the triumvirate of 'Sirs', Peter Jonas, David Pountney and Mark Elder. Maybe the current ENO team is no longer able to programme as once they did but let us not forget those young artists (singers, directors, musicians and designers) who have found their feet over the years through the guardianship of the 'affordable' ENO. What will the London opera scene look like post-ENO? Less vibrant - yes! Less accessible - probably! Less professional - undoubtedly!

The situation is fluid. We are told that negotiations are now taking place. That doesn't mean that Britain's second opera company has been saved. We would urge you to sign Bryn Terfel's petition to the Secretary of State in support of the move to restore funds to the ENO. Go to https://chng.it/kByYpcnhQG

(Dorset Opera's trip to Berlin's three opera houses takes place from 19-23 April 2023.)





Farewell Susanne Parkin...

Many of our readers will have already heard of the sudden death of the chair of our Events' Committee (EvCom), the truly indomitable, Susanne Parkin. We are all in total shock. Her family - husband Michael; children Natasha, Julia and Charles, along with her grandchildren, the greater Dorset Opera family and her belovèd friends around the world - will all miss her terribly. We will include a full obituary of Susanne in our next newsletter.



Can you help us?

We are looking for a willing soul to join our friendly team of year-round volunteers, to be responsible for selling advertising space in our two annual Newsletters and summer Festival programme. Reporting to the Operations Director, you will liaise with our existing panel of advertisers and seek out new ones. If you might be interested, please email info@dorsetopera.com to find out more.





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