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THE DORSET OPERA
FESTIVAL
FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY YEAR

1974–2024

Dorset Opera News | Spring 2024 | Issue 37

Sir Mark Elder CH CBE



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Sir Mark Elder receives his CH from the then Prince of Wales who himself attended our first performance in 1974

We welcome our new President...

We are thrilled to announce that following a long courtship, old-Bryanstonian and esteemed conductor Sir Mark Elder CH CBE has agreed to become our President.

Sir Mark hails from Hexham in Northumberland. He is rightly celebrated for his profound interpretations of opera and orchestral music and is especially recognised for his leadership and transformative influence on various musical institutions - particularly the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, where he has been Music Director for the past 24 years.

Elder's musical journey began early, displaying a keen interest in music during his childhood. Whilst at Bryanston, his instrument was the bassoon. He was a pupil at the school in 1966 when HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, opened the Coade Hall Theatre. He attended Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, where he studied music and served as a choral scholar. His formal training continued at the Royal College of Music in London, where he honed his conducting skills.

He became a protégé of conductor, Sir Edward Downes - who, as Music Director of the Australian Opera, took him as his assistant to the newly opened Sydney Opera House. Mark's career took a significant leap forward when he became the youngest conductor to take to the podium at the English National Opera (ENO) in 1974, at the age of just 27. During his tenure as Music Director from 1979 to 1993, Elder was instrumental in expanding the company's repertoire and enhancing its artistic profile. His innovative productions and commitment to modernising opera earned him enormous critical acclaim and established his reputation across the operatic world.

After leaving the ENO, Sir Mark's career continued to flourish internationally. He held guest conducting positions with several prestigious orchestras and opera companies, including the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera in New York, and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. His versatility and deep understanding of both the operatic and symphonic repertoires is evident in his performances and recordings.

In 2000, Elder was appointed Music Director of the Hallé Orchestra, one of Britain's oldest and most revered symphonic ensembles. Under his leadership, the Hallé experienced a remarkable renaissance, both artistically and financially. Elder's programming choices, commitment to education, and community outreach efforts revitalised the orchestra, attracting new audiences and critical acclaim. His tenure has seen numerous successful recordings and national and international tours, solidifying the Hallé's reputation as a leading orchestra.

Sir Mark Elder was appointed a Companion of Honour in the 2017 Queen's Birthday Honours; he was knighted in 2008 for his services to music, reflecting his significant impact on the cultural landscape of the United Kingdom. His CBE was awarded in 1989. He won an Olivier Award in 1991 for his outstanding work at ENO and in May 2006 he was named Conductor of the Year by the Royal Philharmonic Society.

Beyond his professional achievements, Sir Mark Elder is known for his dedication to nurturing young talent and advocating for the arts. He has taught and mentored aspiring conductors and musicians, emphasising the importance of maintaining high artistic standards and fostering a deep connection with the music. Elder has been president of the London Philharmonic Choir since 2014 and is currently the Royal Academy of Music's Barbirolli Chair of Conducting. In November 2021, the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra announced the appointment of Elder as its principal guest conductor.

Sir Mark Elder's distinguished career as a conductor is marked by his innovative approach to both opera and symphonic music; his transformative leadership of the Hallé Orchestra, and his enduring commitment to the arts. His legacy continues to inspire musicians and audiences alike, making him a pivotal figure in the contemporary classical music world.

Many of our Patrons will recall that he was the guest speaker at our Celebrity Lunch in 2019 and the Bryanston concert hall - where we carry out production and orchestral rehearsals - is appropriately named after him.

We look forward to a long and fruitful relationship with Sir Mark as our President.



50 | Did you miss out on your picnic pavilion last year?

We are delighted to report that all our picnic pavilions sold out at every performance last year. If you missed out, there is still limited availability on Monday *Butterfly*, Thursday matinée *Butterfly*, Friday *Gala*, and Saturday matinée *Greenwood*. You can also reserve a table in the marquee - do so via the box office at dorsetopera.com or 07570 366186. We do get the odd cancellation as July approaches so it's worth adding your name to the waiting list if you are keen on a date that is not currently available. Email js@dorsetopera.com giving the performance you are coming to, and we will let you know if anything comes up.

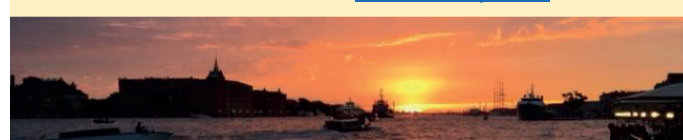


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50 | Join the Golden Anniversary Fund

Would you help us meet the increased costs of mounting our Golden Anniversary festival this year?

It's not too late to join our Golden Anniversary Fund, by making a donation of £1,000 or more, (over and above your regular giving, please). This Fund has been inaugurated with a generous donation from longstanding Patrons, John and Margrette Jones.

Other ways that you can help us fund our work:

- Support our Summer School - contribute towards young people's bursaries (not covered by individual trusts).
- Support the orchestra in general or choose an individual instrumentalist
- Support the orchestra Academy Players' bursaries - £500 each
- Support our continuing Wardrobe partnership with the Historical Costume Dept. of the Arts University, Bournemouth - assist with the costs associated with four valuable work experience students staying on campus
- Support a soloist of your choice
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- Become a sponsor of Butterfly conductor, José Miguel Esandi
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- Support our Costume Designer, Stewart Charlesworth
- Support our Lighting Designer, James Smith
- Support this year's Assistant Directors
- Support our Chorus Manager, Frannie Hewitt
- Support our Répétiteurs, Janet Haney and David Smith

Or simply ask for your extra donation to go towards supporting the chorus or the orchestra in this, our Golden Anniversary year...

If you would like to discuss the possibilities available to you, please don't hesitate to contact DO HQ on 01258 840000 or email info@dorsetopera.com



50 | New Partnership... Langham Wine Estate

We are delighted that the Langham Wine Estate is a sponsor of Dorset Opera Festival for 2024. You will be able to enjoy their range of exquisite award-winning wines throughout the festival. Nestled in beautiful Dorset countryside with a south-facing aspect, chalk soils and a unique microclimate, their vineyard at Crowthorne Farm provides the perfect terroir for ripening the classic Champagne varieties - Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. The Langham Wine Estate have been friends for years and we are delighted to have taken our partnership to a new level.



50 | Under the Greenwood Tree...

May's Bluffers' Lunch lecture was given by composer, Paul Carr - who gave an inspired insight into the skills and patience involved in creating his wonderful music - especially a work of the complexity of a two and a half-hour opera.

Along with his librettist, Euan Tait, Paul has set Thomas Hardy's second novel, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, to a score that will delight and exhilarate audiences. Rarely - for Hardy and for opera - this work has a happy ending!

The 70 supporters who attended the Lunch were treated to a 'taster' of Greenwood, with baritone Thomas Humphreys - who plays Mr Maybold, one of the three suitors in the opera - singing two delightful arias.

Audiences at Poole's Lighthouse will be able to hear another of Paul's works when the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra gives the world premiere of his *Awakening*, on 9th June.

Having begun his directing career with Dorset Opera, Paul is now in demand throughout the operatic world both as a composer and an opera director. Who can forget his *Suor Angelica*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Aïda*, *Un ballo in maschera*, *Eugene Onegin*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Magic Flute*, *Le nozze di Figaro* and the British stage premiere of Lord Berners' *Le Carrosse du Saint-sacrement* - nine key productions over the past 11 years, that have undoubtedly helped put Dorset Opera firmly on the UK's operatic map.

As a feted composer, Paul is no stranger to the airwaves where his compositions are enjoyed almost daily by listeners to all classical music stations, but mainly Classic FM and BBC Radio3...

50 | Opera Dinners Reminder...

Instead of bothering to prepare your own picnic and working out where to eat it if the weather is inclement, why not avail yourselves of the Opera Dinner? Take advantage of our formal four-course dinners which will be served in the Cowley Room of Bryanston House at the *Butterfly* performances on Thursday 25, and Saturday 27 July. Two courses are served before the opera, the dessert and cheese courses (along with coffee and petits fours) during the interval. Wines and bottled water are included in the price.

Check out the menus, prices, and please book at dorsetopera.com. Bookings close on 18 July. Vegan, gluten-free and vegetarian options are available. Please inform your guests that they should be seated by 17:45.



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1974-2024

Finalist in the 2023 International Opera Awards

Marquee Bar | Picnics | Formal Dining

World Première
UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE
An opera in four seasons
Composer: Paul Carr
Librettist: Euan Tait (*After Thomas Hardy*)
23, 25 July at 19:00 | 27 July at 14:00

The Golden Anniversary
GALA CONCERT
Friday 26 July at 19:00

Coade Theatre, Bryanston, Blandford Forum
Box Office: dorsetopera.com
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50 | New picnic suppliers for 2024...

Our new picnic supplier, Ogilvy & More, will be opening a shop on Half Moon Street in Sherborne in June. We wish them the best of luck with this exciting venture. Pre-order festival picnics at dorsetopera.com.



5 | Butterfly Cast Eri Nakamura



Eri Nakamura is an alumna of the Osaka College of Music, the Opera Studio at the New National Theatre, Tokyo, the Opera Studio Netherlands and the Jette Parker Young Artist Programme at the Royal Opera House. Whilst on the Programme, her roles at Covent Garden included Musetta *La bohème*, Frasquita *Carmen*, and Lauretta in *Gianni Schicchi*. Upon her graduation from the programme, she returned to Covent Garden as a guest to sing Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro* under Sir Colin Davis and Sophie in *Werther* under Sir Antonio Pappano (which was recorded by Deutsche Grammophon). Recently she sang the role of Cio-cio-san in the Royal Opera's production of *Madama Butterfly*, to great critical acclaim.

5 | Butterfly Cast José Simerillo Romero



Praised for his 'ample voice of arresting quality' (Opera News) and 'power, passion and lyrical finesse' (Opera Magazine), in the 2023/24 season, rising young Argentinian-Spanish-American tenor José Simerilla Romero stepped in to join the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra to make his debut in the Verdi *Requiem*; he made his ENO debut as Alfredo in *La traviata*, made his Deutsche Oper, Berlin debut singing Ismaele in *Nabucco* and returned to Staatsoper Hannover for his debut as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin* and Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*. Last season, he made his Komische Oper debut as Laërte in *Hamlet* and joined the ensemble of Staatsoper Hannover for Rodolfo in *La bohème*. José sings B F Pinkerton in all performances.

5 | Butterfly & Gala Cast Letitia Vitelaru



Unforgettably, Letitia stunned Dorset audiences singing the title role in our production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 2019. More recently, she sang performances of Violetta, *La traviata*, in Barcelona, Madrid, Zaragoza; she then went on to sing Gilda in *Rigoletto* in San Sebastian, the Verdi *Requiem* with the National Philharmonic Orchestra in Sofia under the direction of Gustav Kuhn, then at the Cathedral of Bressanone, under Roberto Zarpellon. In November, she returned to San Sebastian for her debut as Mimi in *La bohème*. She sings Cio-cio-san in *Madama Butterfly* at the matinée on 25 July.

5 | Butterfly Cast David Kempster



Copenhagen-based baritone David Kempster was born in North Wales and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music. He began his career as a company principal with English National Opera and has subsequently appeared with many leading houses throughout Europe and the USA. Recent projects include Germont *La traviata* (Royal Danish Opera); the title role in *Rigoletto* (Gothenburg Opera); Scarpia *Tosca* (Danish National Opera); Michele *Il Tabarro* (Copenhagen Opera Festival); and Balstrode *Peter Grimes* (Welsh National Opera). David is making his Dorset Opera debut in the role of Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*.

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Sam Furness – Tenor

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50 | Love is alive... by George Hall

Few people have studied or worked in so many aspects of opera as Paul Carr. A one-time vocal student at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, he also took a course in theatre and lighting design, then spent the bulk of his career - some 35 years in all - in stage management.

More recently came a move into stage direction: in the last year or two, engagements have included working on shows for Dorset Opera *Don Giovanni*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, the Nederlandse Reisopera in Holland *Powder Her Face* and at the historic Teatru Manoel in Valletta Rossini's *Armida*. During much of this time, too, Carr has composed, prolifically and successfully: choral works especially, but also orchestral and chamber pieces.

This summer there's a new departure: his first opera will be staged (by him, of course) at Dorset Opera's annual festival held at Bryanston School: it was commissioned by the company's artistic director, former leading bass Roderick Kennedy, to celebrate the festival's 50th anniversary season. Appropriately, the subject Carr picked is a Dorset one, taken from one of Thomas Hardy's most popular Wessex novels, *Under the Greenwood Tree*.

Carr has been a regular member of the creative team at Dorset Opera since 2011. How did this relationship come about? Roderick Kennedy explains: 'Paul first came to Dorset Opera in 2011 as a stage manager. One of the 'first-time' directors was having difficulties with their production, so Paul simply took over and helped the person through the whole process. I was so impressed that the following year I invited him to direct his own double-bill of *Suor Angelica* and the British stage premiere of Lord Berners' *Le Carrosse du Saint-Sacrement*. The Puccini was so poignant that I sobbed my heart out at every performance. He knew exactly what to do and how to tug at an audience's heartstrings!'

After this initial success, Carr goes on, 'Rod just kept saying, "You've got to come back". Then Dorset's chorus master Nicholas Mansfield and I did a *Flying Dutchman* at Dorset, after which Nicholas said, "You've got to come to the Netherlands. I want you to do a new *Flying Dutchman*." So I did - and a new career was launched.

Carr comes from Cornwall, where he was born in 1961. His mother was the Australian soprano Una Hale, who enjoyed an appreciable career at Covent Garden, where his father worked as a stage manager.

As a child he learned the piano and the bassoon and at the age of 15 started composing. 'I just sat down at the piano and started writing this piece, and I thought, "This could be quite good," so I played it to my piano teacher, and he said, "I think you should play this at the school concert." So I did, and they liked it so much I had to play it again!' In the field of composition Carr is entirely self-taught.

Meanwhile, when singing didn't work out for him at the Guildhall, he tried to move to the acting course but was told he would have to wait a year to undertake it. 'I was too impatient. English National Opera were advertising for an assistant stage manager, so I went there in 1983'. He subsequently worked with Australian Opera, the Israeli Opera, Raymond Gubbay, Glyndebourne and Garsington. Six years ago - by which time directing had opened

up a new career for him - he finally gave up stage management. So in fact, there have been two sides to Paul Carr in recent years. One is his opera directing, and the other his composition. This year, for the first time, they come together.

Carr describes his own music as influenced by British and American composers, especially from the 20th century; but in recent years, he says, 'I've gone back to the Baroque. In fact there is a Bach jig in *Under the Greenwood Tree*.'

How did this first opera come about? 'The initial request for a new work for Dorset Opera came 10 years ago, when it was the festival's 40th anniversary. After looking at a subject and finding the rights too expensive to pursue, I turned it down.'

'But then last year, when Rod said, "It's our 50th, I'm going to ask you again," I went down and had meeting with him and I said, "Do you know what? I can do it now, because if I don't do it now, I'm never going to do it.'

Carr explained that he didn't want to do anything dramatic, heavy, or dark, 'because in this awful age that we are going through, I wanted something optimistic and passionate and enjoyable. And it sounds very flippant, but I've always thought that *Under The Greenwood Tree* would make a wonderful title for an opera.

So, he located the book and started to read it and also watched the film - 'In a way my opera is more closely linked to the film than the book'. Hardy's novel tells a characteristically rural tale about how the arrival of new schoolmistress Fancy Day throws the village of Mellstock into turmoil when no fewer than three men propose to her; moreover, her newly developed skills at the harmonium put the church's ancient instrumental band's future in doubt.

What about the libretto? 'It's a kind of collaboration with my friend the poet Euan Tait - whose texts I've set previously - so there's a little bit of me and quite a lot of Euan. I've also used some of Hardy's original text. There's a cast of nine, with just two female singers. 'All of them have been in other productions of mine at Dorset. There's a substantial role for the chorus, which is essential for the company, and I've used a full symphony orchestra.'

Over the course of two acts totalling just under two hours of music, the narrative travels through the four seasons. 'Funnily enough, this will be my third work in succession based on the four seasons: in fact, I quote from both Vivaldi and myself in a choral and orchestral piece of mine called Four New Seasons. I think that's important because we live by the seasons.'

What would he like audiences to know before they come to the show? 'Of course it's a period-piece, a kind of Victorian rom-com. I'd like audiences to come out and think, "Love is alive," or "I'm young and I'm in love," or "How wonderful it was to be young and in love!"'

***Under the Greenwood Tree* by Paul Carr is at the Dorset Opera Festival on 23, 25 and 27 July 2024 www.dorsetopera.com**

This article appeared in the spring edition of Opera Now and we thank them for their permission to reproduce it here.

5 | Greenwood Cast
Jamie Groote



Praised for her rich sound and captivating finesse, soprano Jamie Groote is immensely dedicated to her artistry and is creating a reputation for herself as a young singer to watch. Jamie's 2022/23 season comprised of her role and house debut of Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* with Manitoba Opera, a chamber collaboration with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, and a return to the Canadian Opera Company for cover assignments. Jamie was engaged by the Dorset Opera Festival in both summer 2022 and 2023 where she performed the roles of the Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* and the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Later this year, Jamie makes her Edmonton Opera and role debut as Micaëla in Bizet's *Carmen*.

5 | Greenwood Cast
Thomas Humphreys



Thomas Humphreys is fast establishing himself as one of the most versatile and in-demand baritones of his generation. In opera, his roles include the title role in *Don Giovanni*; Il Conte Almaviva, *Le nozze di Figaro*; Guglielmo *Così fan tutte*; Escamillo, *Carmen*; Marcello *La bohème*; Tomskey, *Pique Dame*; Jake Wallace, *La fanciulla del West*, among others for many of the major opera companies across the UK. Last summer, he was critically acclaimed for his role as Il Conte Almaviva in Dorset Opera Festival's production of *Le nozze di Figaro*, with *Opera* magazine stating 'Thomas Humphreys' finely-sung alpha-male Count mixed Marlon Brando-like virility with baffled authority'.

5 | Greenwood Cast
Felix Kemp



A finalist at the 2021 London Handel International Singing Competition and a Britten Pears Young Artist, Felix Kemp sang Adham in the world premiere of Will Todd's *Migrations* for Welsh National Opera, a role he repeated in the 2022/2023 season, during which he also made his pandemic-delayed debut with The Royal Opera, London, as a Flemish Deputy in *Don Carlo* and sang J. S. Bach's *B Minor Mass* with Opole Philharmonic and *St John Passion* with Bournemouth Symphony Chorus; Beethoven *Symphony No.9* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, *Messiah* for the London Handel Festival and Vaughan Williams *Dona nobis pacem* with the Britten Sinfonia at the Brighton Festival.

5 | Greenwood Cast
Ossian Huskinson



Winner of The Mozart Prize at Tenor Viñas 2024 and the Critics' Circle 2022 Young Talent (Voice) Award, he was a Harewood Artist at ENO. A finalist at the 2023 Paris Opéra Competition, recent engagements have included Speaker *The Magic Flute* for ENO, Seneca *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* for Opéra de Toulon, Jupiter *Platée* for Garsington and Pietro *Simon Boccanegra* for Deutsche Oper. Concerts include: Beethoven *Symphony No.9* (Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin), *Messiah* (Huddersfield Choral Society) and Verdi *Requiem* with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. His debut solo recital *The Roadside Fire* is available on Linn. 2024/25: he joins The Jette Parker Young Artists Programme at ROH.

5
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The social highlight of Dorset's summer...







5 Ensure your visit to the Festival goes smoothly

Bryanston: For SatNav purposes, the postcode is DT11 0PS or What3words is *tall.ever.glimmer*. The Bryanston campus is private, but it will be open to the public from 17:00 on performance days, 12:30 for the matinées. You and your guests are most welcome to wander around the glorious grounds.

Start & Running Times: Evening performances will start at 19:00, matinées start at 14:00. Performances will be approximately 185 minutes long. This includes the dinner interval of 45-50 minutes. After Thursday and Saturday's matinée performances, we would respectfully ask you to leave the campus shortly after the performance in order to make way for evening patrons.

The Marquee Bar: will be sited inside the marquee on the lawns not far from the car park and will be selling a range of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks including a range of award-winning sparkling wines from Dorset's Langham Wine Estate, Pimm's, wines, teas and coffee. The bar will be open from 17:00 for evening performances and from 12:30 for the matinées. If you have pre-ordered a picnic or afternoon tea, please collect these from the marquee bar. To avoid misunderstandings, you will need to present the appropriate catering ticket or email receipt.

Marquee Table and Chair Reservations: If you are bringing your own picnic or pre-ordering one of our hampers and want to eat in the marquee, you would be advised to reserve chairs or tables. Book online via the box office at dorsetopera.com

Picnicking: Most Dorset Opera-goers arrive early to enjoy a picnic before the performance, continuing during the interval. In the twilight, Bryanston's lawns look resplendent dotted with tables sporting glittering lights and, in some cases, candelabra! Tables and chairs are available for picnickers on the lawns and inside the marquee. For those who don't want to go to the trouble of preparing food, *Ogilvy & More* picnic hampers are available to order through dorsetopera.com. For those who prefer to take pot luck, a certain amount of food can be purchased on the day. Sparkling wines, wines, soft drinks and hot beverages are also available from the

marquee bar. In the unlikely event of rain, picnickers are welcome to take their food into the marquee or the Sanger Building which can be found immediately in front of the theatre.

Afternoon Tea: At the matinées, our hospitality partner *Ogilvy & More* offer a full afternoon tea with sandwiches, scones with clotted cream and preserves, cakes and a choice of tea or coffee. This has proved extremely popular, but you will need to pre-order.

Formal Dining: For those who prefer a more complete dining experience, the Dorset Opera Festival offers a full 4-course dinner at 17:45 at Thursday and Saturday evening performances. Take two courses before the opera and return to your tables for the rest of the meal during the interval. Wines included. To see the menu, go to the Your Visit tab at dorsetopera.com and book via the box office.

Car Parking: Please drive with care on the Bryanston campus and park as indicated by the marshals. Disabled persons' parking spaces are found near the entrance to the Coade Theatre. Please display your disabled permit and ask the marshals to guide you to designated parking. We would ask you to take extra care when driving on grass in the car park areas - especially if it has been raining.

Wheelchair Access: Limited facilities do exist for wheelchair users. Wheelchairs are not permitted into the auditorium without a pre-booked space.

Dress Code: Some of our audience do wear evening dress, but we most certainly do not insist upon it. You should be aware that the theatre does get very warm; please wear clothing in which you will be comfortable.

For other information please call 01258 840000.

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