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Inside your Christmas Newsletter...

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61% of participants under 25

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'The result is a production of national rather than merely local appeal...'

Dorset Opera News | Christmas 2014 | Issue 19

Please consider becoming a Patron

Did you have difficulty getting your preferred seats for this year's Festival performances? Are you missing out on functions and events organised especially for our Patrons? Are you a Friend of Dorset Opera who might like to become a Patron?

If you are already a Patron but would like to upgrade to a higher Circle please contact our Patrons' Secretary, Elspeth Brown on 01725 517581 or send an e-mail headed Patronage to info@dorsetopera.com or to Elspeth at elsp21@gmail.com

No increase in ticket prices for 2015

Dorset Opera supporters will no doubt be overjoyed to hear that ticket prices will not be increased for the 2015 season. Tickets for *Un ballo in maschera* and *L'elisir d'amore* will go on sale on 17 February (for Patrons); on 24 February (for Friends of Dorset Opera) and General Booking will open on 10 March.

Full priority booking details will be sent to you in plenty of time for you to make dining choices and to submit your ticket application.



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Join DO's music director for Mozart and Bach in Leipzig

Following a most successful visit to Amsterdam earlier this year, culture tour specialists, Travel for the Arts, will organise another trip for us in 2015! This time, we are off to Leipzig to support Dorset Opera's talented music director, Jeremy Carnall, who is Kapellmeister at the world-renowned Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra.

The dates of the trip are 26-30 March 2015 and it includes a visit to Weimar, performances of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and his *Requiem* (both conducted by Carnall), and we couldn't visit Leipzig without taking in a performance of Bach's *Mass in B minor*, under the baton of the Gewandhaus' Principal Conductor, Riccardo Chailly.

Flights: British Airways

26 March London Heathrow - Berlin dep: 10:10 arr: 13:00

30 March Berlin - London Heathrow dep: 14:30 arr: 15:30

(Flights from other airports can be arranged)

Accommodation: the 4-star Leipzig Radisson Blu Hotel

The cost per person is £1,295 of which a deposit of £350 per person is required at the time of booking. (Single room supplement £100; Club Europe flight upgrade from £250; land-only tour price £1,115)

We are already 18 in number, so if you would like to join us, kindly confirm your booking as soon as possible. Call Travel for the Arts direct on 0208 799 8350 or e-mail them on tfa@stlon.com quoting your connection to the Dorset Opera Festival and Tour Code: LE13

DOF choristers to appear in Billy Budd

One of the opportunities we give our Summer School singers each year is the possibility to undergo a solo audition - should they wish it. Many younger participants will never have put themselves through anything quite so nerve-wracking. The process certainly gives Music Director Jeremy Cranall, Chorus Director Nic Mansfield, and Artistic Director Roderick Kennedy, the chance to hear individual voices.

Dorset Opera prides itself in helping to develop the careers of fledgling singers, and as a direct result of those auditions, Nicolas Mansfield has offered professional contracts to at least twelve of our young gentleman choristers. They will be appearing in the Nederlandse Reisopera's new production of Britten's all-male opera, *Billy Budd* which takes to the stage in the autumn of 2015.

We can feel another Dorset Opera overseas trip coming on...



The Leipzig skyline at twilight

Opera choices for 2015

It's time to announce next year's Festival opera choices - although those of you who attended our 40th Anniversary Dinner at St Giles House, or keep an eye on our website, or indeed are Twitter or Facebook followers, will already have the news.

Our super-talented music director, Jeremy Carnall, is frantically busy next year and has very little time to learn a new work. To ensure that he is able to be with us next summer, we have selected an opera that is already in his repertoire, but at the same time, is a 'first' for Dorset Opera. It is a work that is factually based, that offers the usual love triangle (with dramatic turns), a touch of comedy and the opportunity to get dressed up to visit a fortune-teller. It is Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* (A Masked Ball). It tells the story of the assassination of the Swedish King Gustavus III - who was shot in 1792 while attending a masked ball at the opera! Initially, Verdi had problems with the censor and, to overcome these, the action was removed to colonial Boston in America, where Gustavus became Richard, Earl of Warwick. Which version should we select..?

With our second offering, we will present a light-hearted comedy that has become one of the most-performed operas in the repertoire, Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* (The Elixir of Love). Dorset Opera has performed this just once before - 18 years ago in 1997. The opera contains one of the best-loved tenor arias of all time - *Una furtiva lagrima*.

Next year there will be three performances of each opera with *Elisir* on July 21, 23 and 25 (matinee), and *Ballo* being on July 22, 24, and 25 (evening). These operas are bound to be extremely popular, so make sure of your tickets by becoming a Friend or Patron, to avail yourself of priority booking - which starts on 17 February for Patrons and 24 February for Friends.

61% of Participants Under 25

The ethos of Dorset Opera has always been to introduce the joys of all aspects of opera to the young. This year was no exception and, when the dust had settled and we had taken stock, we discovered that a phenomenal 61% of all Summer School participants were in the 16-25 age group.

Annual Report & Accounts

Electronic copies of the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 30 September 2014 are available from mail@alanfrost.co.uk

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REVIEWS:

Dorset Opera Festival

What the critics said about our production of:

Aida

Opera Magazine's George Hall wrote: 'Dorset Opera celebrated its 40th anniversary this year. It has been a valiant enterprise, mainly staffed by volunteers.

'Founded by the late Patrick Shelley back in 1974, the company has enjoyed something of a resurgence in recent years, due to the ambitious initiatives of the current artistic director, Roderick Kennedy.

'*Aida* is both a gift and a challenge to such an enterprise; if the opportunities are big, then so are the pitfalls. Paul Carr's production largely managed to maximize the former while avoiding the latter. Steve Howell's sets and Rebecca Hopkins's costumes offered an essentially traditional view of the work.'

Of the principal singers Hall wrote: '(As *Aida*) Suzanne Manuell...sang the role ably and with some imagination. As Radames, the American tenor Arnold Rawls often looked physically at a loss, but his voice encompassed his role's needs and more... Antonia Sotgiù's Amneris offered vocal potency and stage flair...'

'Easily leading the field was Mark S. Doss as Amonasro, who missed no opportunity, vocal or physical, to advance the interests of his characterisation in what was altogether an outstanding performance.

'Among the secondary roles, Jean-Loup Pagèsy's strong King and Charlotte Hewett's beautifully sung High Priestess both made an appreciable mark. So, too, did both the orchestra and the chorus (clearly well trained by Nicolas Mansfield and Kelvin Lim), the latter rising to each and every challenge that Verdi throws at them.

'The conductor Jeremy Carnall provided a consistently dramatic reading of the score, highlighting its detail while maintaining a steady impetus.'

In the Stage - George Hall writes: '...Dorset Opera Festival demonstrates impressive standards in this full-scale production of one of Verdi's grandest works. *Aida* is one of two major pieces the company - whose activities have expanded considerably under its artistic director, Roderick Kennedy - performs this season; *Fidelio* is also in the repertory.

'...there's grandeur and colour in the sets and considerable energy in the work of the substantial chorus...; their singing, under the direction of chorus director Nicholas Mansfield, is brave and bold - as it needs to be in this opera.

Strong work, too, from the principals...each with the potential to reach considerable heights in their respective roles. Antonia Sotgiù's Amneris manages the regal manner and sings with dignity and power. Leading the field among the four principals is Mark S Doss as Amonasro - a thrilling stage performer who wastes no opportunity to advance his character and sings with vehemence, he is the star of the show. Among the secondary roles...Charlotte Hewett sounds ideal as the Priestess.

'Maintaining high musical standards throughout is conductor Jeremy Carnall, who brings dynamism and insight to his task. The result is a production of national rather than merely local appeal.'

The Blackmore Vale Magazine: 'In its 40th year, the Dorset Opera Festival is more popular than ever with acres of excitable opera fans flocking to the balmy opening night of Verdi's *Aida*.

'In the heaving auditorium, the heat is almost visible and amongst the fluttering fans of overheating spectators, we are plunged most realistically back into Ancient Egypt.

'Designer Steve Howell has remained true to the concept of traditional ancient Egypt and the splendour of the pharaohs.

'In this colourful and powerful production, the principal performers all shine...Antonia Sotgiù's Amneris is flirtatious, regal and suitably vicious as she manipulates *Aida* into revealing her heart's secrets.

'But it is Mark S Doss as *Aida*'s father Amonasro who has our undivided attention. He attacks the role and places himself in the centre of the production. He is well matched with Suzanne Manuell as *Aida*.

'...Arnold Rawls' performance of Radamès delivers powerful and stirring vocals...the chorus's contribution in carrying out the many seamless set changes and filling the Egyptian royal courts with their collective energy, makes this a vibrant ensemble effort.

'Jeremy Carnall too, whose wiry and energetic conducting infuses the production with a fizzing energy, elevates *Aida* above the local stage on which it sits and raises it onto a stage of national operatic quality.

In the Fine Times Recorder, Gay Pirrie-Weir writes: 'In a year when the focus is on war, Dorset Opera has chosen a battle themed opera for the first production of its 40th anniversary season...Paul Carr's production played on a splendidly gilded but simple staging designed by Steve Howell, makes the very most of the Bryanston stage...

'One of the excellent Dorset Opera's distinguishing features is its work with a chorus of singers from around the world and chorus master Nicolas Mansfield's work has never been more impressive than in this grand opera.

'The fine orchestra was again conducted by Jeremy Carnall, now a firm fixture...

'Suzanne Manuell (Aïda) not only has a beautiful voice but captured the torment of the slave...Antonia Sotgiù was convincing as the manipulative and frantic Amneris, with Mark S Doss returning to Dorset Opera with a charismatic and powerful performance as Aïda's father, Amonasro.

'Local singer Charlotte Hewett had her first big role with the company as the High Priestess, and Jean-Loup Pagèsy was the impressive King of Egypt.'



Suzanne Manuell as Aïda



VRM in Vienna

One of the most successful 'extras' we have been able to offer our Summer School participants over the past few years has been Voice Release Massage - a technique specifically designed to relieve the stress and tension sometimes built-up in the muscles connected with singing, through the normal rehearsal and performance process.

More common in Europe, it was brought to us by Dorset Opera stalwart Luise Breyer-Aiton who first sang with us when she was a pupil at St Anthony's Leweston in 2003. Luise has been involved with our productions almost every year since then either by singing in the chorus and/or taking small roles, as well as latterly, offering VRM. This year, she was a very necessary German language coach for *Fidelio*.

With studios in London and Berlin, so successful has VRM become, that Luise is now regularly flown around the globe to carry out her profession by opera singers who are household names. The latest news is that she has been contracted to perform VRM for artistes at the Vienna State Opera - where she will have her own consulting room.

On top of all this, Luise supports a burgeoning singing career. Her voice is beginning to bloom, and thanks to her teacher Anne-Marie Owens, from being a mezzo soprano, she has discovered an exciting full lyric soprano voice. This last summer found her understudying the role of Ellen Orford in Britten's *Peter Grimes* at Grange Park Opera.

We certainly wish Luise well, but we know Dorset Opera occupies a special place in her heart, so we hope she will be back with us in 2015 (especially as her husband, Marcus Schmid is our Assistant Technical Director).



Arnold Rawls (Radamès) and Andràs Palerdi (Ramfis) in *Aida*

Air Cooling for 2015

For the last three years, we have had an extraordinarily warm July - with 2014 being the hottest yet. The heat in the theatre has always been a problem for the cast, orchestra and audience to deal with.

We do feel that until a full refurbishment of the Coade Theatre is carried out, some form of air-cooling must be provided. To that end, we have had discussions with our hosts, Bryanston, and we can report that it is their stated wish that some form of air cooling should be in place in time for next year's Dorset Opera Festival. The pessimists among us will no doubt be suggesting that this could presage a cold, wet summer for 2015!

Nederlandse Reisopera UK Tour 2015

Our sister company, De Nederlandse Reisopera - the Dutch Touring Opera - is hoping to bring their production of Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* to the UK as part of the Dorset Opera Festival next summer. Performed by members of their young artists' programme, this is the reduced-version that was originally scheduled for performances in 2013, but which was replaced by *La bohème*.

We are planning to take the production into several Dorset schools as part of an *Opera-in-Education* package at the beginning of July. Those schools will be in Blandford Forum, Bournemouth, Dorchester and Sherborne. In many cases, they will involve several schools getting together to enjoy the experience.

Our supporters and the general public can also catch a performance as the Reisopera will also be performing *Candide* at theatres across the county. You will be receiving further details in due course - why not keep an eye on our website or Twitter and Facebook for up-to-date information.

Likely venues are the Lighthouse in Poole, the Octagon in Yeovil, the Exchange in Sturminster Newton and possibly the Playhouse in Salisbury. Again, the dates will be in July with a matinee performance scheduled in the Concert Hall at Bryanston on Thursday 23 July.

Pre-performance talks are also on the cards.



40th anniversary limited edition prints, book & mugs

When artist Hannah Carding asked if she could commemorate Dorset Opera's 40 years with a set of limited edition prints, recording some humorous onstage moments from our history, we jumped at the idea.

Hannah, who hails from Dorset, was given several memorable tales to illustrate. She selected four operas and each print depicts an amusing moment or problem that had to be overcome to enable the 'show to go on'. Whether it was a broken ankle in *Carmen*, the last-minute replacement in *Don Carlos* who had her score secreted in various props, the director taking scissors to the carefully made costumes in *Manon Lescaut* or wheelbarrow jousting and onstage cricket in Verdi's *Un giorno di regno* with foam fruit being batted into the audience with a garden spade.

Numbered and signed by the artist, the prints are £25.00 each or £80.00 for the set of four. The mugs are priced at £7.50 each, inc p&p. They would make excellent Christmas presents. Order from Dorset Opera by e-mail info@dorsetopera.com, or call 01258 840000.



The 40th anniversary coffee table book is still being compiled: it looks as though it will be a weighty tome and will mention every single Dorset Opera participant from *The Bartered Bride* onwards... There's still time to submit anecdotes and photographs for inclusion. Don't be shy. You can elect anonymity if you prefer...but don't be left out!

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REVIEWS:

Dorset Opera Festival

What the critics said about our production of:

Fidelio

In Opera Magazine, Brian Robins noted that:

'Dorset Opera Festival's 40th-anniversary season, was blessed throughout with glorious weather that displayed the idyllic setting to full advantage...'

He went on to say that 'Lee Bisset was a convincing Leonore, full-bodied and redblooded in voice and character...Jonathan Stoughton, her Florestan...sang with great dramatic strength and assurance, and...Marzelline (Johane Ansell)...and Tyler Clarke (Jaquino) were both excellent...'

'The American bass Gary Jankowski's Rocco was a complete success, conveying the simple humanity of the man with beautifully warm, rounded tonal quality, while Mark S. Doss's powerful Pizarro suffered only from his being directed to emulate a pantomime villain, his success at which was rewarded at the curtain calls with boos..!'

'*Fidelio* remains a powerful cumulative experience in any half-decent performance, and musically this was much more than that. The generally accomplished playing of the Dorset Opera Festival Orchestra often attained an exciting frisson. In sum, this was a flawed performance of a flawed opera. It was nevertheless one that did great credit to the company.'

In the Blackmore Vale Magazine, M Blazeby noted:

'Steve Howell's design is verging on apocalyptic...with his design and Laurence Dale's commanding direction... *Fidelio* gains a new relevance and is fast-forwarded out of the 18th century. The orchestra is expertly marshalled by conductor Phillip Thomas; obligingly they spark into life delivering one explosive piece of music after another which has the audience whooping and cheering more than once.'

She continues: 'The principal parts are all strong - with comic performances shining in the naïve Marzelline (Johane Ansell) and angsty Jaquino (Tyler Clarke) who growls his way through the performance like a threatened Jack Russell terrier... Gary Jankowski's Rocco is a commanding presence whose reverberating bass envelops the auditorium, whilst Lee Bisset's *Fidelio/Leonore* is convincing and cleverly executed.'

'Once again however, it is the sheer power of Mark S Doss as Don Pizarro who triumphs, just as he did as Amonasro in *Aida*. Sweeping about the stage, he effortlessly commands the ensemble casts of prisoners and henchmen before blasting us once again with the grandeur of his vocal skill. Doss has been a driving force behind both *Aida* and *Fidelio* and the decision to cast him in integral roles in both productions has stoked the fires of the Festival's already stellar reputation.'



The Fine Times Recorder opined:

'Lee Bissett brought searing passion to Beethoven's beautiful music, giving a convincing performance both as Fidelio, the sensitive and kindly prison guard and as Leonore, the courageous wife. There was great work from the chorus, directed by Nicolas Mansfield, and the orchestra, conducted by Phillip Thomas thoroughly deserved the loud applause for its playing.

'...the prison governor (the charismatic Mark S Doss) exudes brutal power in black leather, and Rocco (a humane and even humorous performance) by Gary Jankowski... Excellent lighting, by Charlie Morgan Jones, created an intense and claustrophobic atmosphere.

'*Fidelio* may not be an easy opera...but the audience packed into a steaming hot Coade Theatre responded to this excellent production with enthusiasm and cheers. It is another triumph for the Dorset Opera Festival, in its 40th anniversary year.' FC

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The cost of posting out our newsletters amounts to several thousand pounds each year. As a great amount of our communicating is being done by e-mail nowadays, if we don't have your e-mail address, you might be missing out on important information, last-minute news and on-line ticket opportunities. If you would be happy to receive our newsletters electronically or for technical help please e-mail susannah@susannahhubert.com

Dates for your Diary

The 2015 Events' Diary will be issued shortly.

02 December | **Dorset Opera/FODO AGM** at Knighton House School, Durweston. 19:00 for 19:30

04 December | **Bluffers' Lunch No.9** *Love, Hate and Marriage* - Adrian Thorpe kicks off the season with his usual insight and humour. Slepe Green Barn. 11:45

18 December | **Patrons' Seasonal Celebration** at Middleton House, Milton Abbas. 18:30-20:30. Black Tie.

03 January | **Emerging Artists' New Year Concert**. Arundells, The Close, Salisbury. 19:00 for 19:30. 40 places only.

To book, or for further details:
info@dorsetopera.com | 01258 840000



Antonia Sotgiù as Amneris in *Aida*



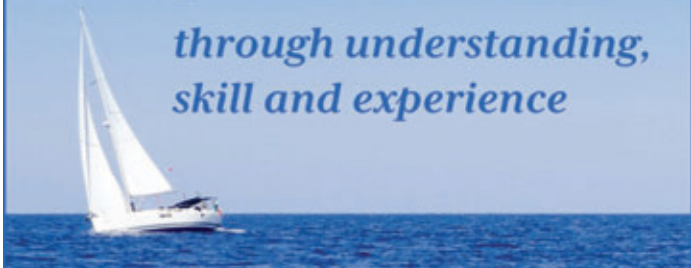
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Tickets: £23, Members £21, Concessions £22

Live events tend to start promptly at the time listed on the ticket and often have pre-show material.

We advise arriving 15 minutes early for live performances.

Saturday 17 January 5.55pm

THE MERRY WIDOW

Saturday 31 January 5.55pm

LES CONTES D'HOFFMANN

Saturday 14 February 5.30pm

IOLANATA

Saturday 14 March 4.55pm

LA DONNA DEL LAGO

Saturday 25 April 5.30pm

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA



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ENGLISH TOURING OPERA

Friday 20 March

LA BOHÈME, PUCCINI

New production, sung in Italian with English surtitles.

A story of young love, starting on Christmas Eve in a Parisian garret. On this festive, snowy night the lovers draw close, but poverty and ill-health force them apart. Their story is told in the most memorable music, from 'Che gelida manina' to the shattering brass chords announcing Mimi's death.

Pre show talk 6.30pm.

7.30pm. Tickets: £22

Discounts: Students, U18s, Seniors, Groups, ATL, Live for 5 THEATRE

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Saturday 21 March

**SIEGE OF CALAIS,
DONIZETTI**

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Pre show talk 6.30pm

7.30pm. Tickets: £22

Discounts: Students, U18s, Seniors, Groups, ATL, Live for 5 THEATRE



Friday 3 April

BSC Good Friday Concert / Johann Sebastian Bach

ST MATTHEW PASSION

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7pm. Tickets: £15, £20, £25, £30, £36

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Thursday 23 July

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7.30pm. Tickets: £15, £20, £25, £30, £36

CONCERT HALL

Booking fees: Prices quoted are for tickets booked in person at the ticket office.

Tickets booked via telephone or online are subject to a booking fee of up to £1.50 per ticket.