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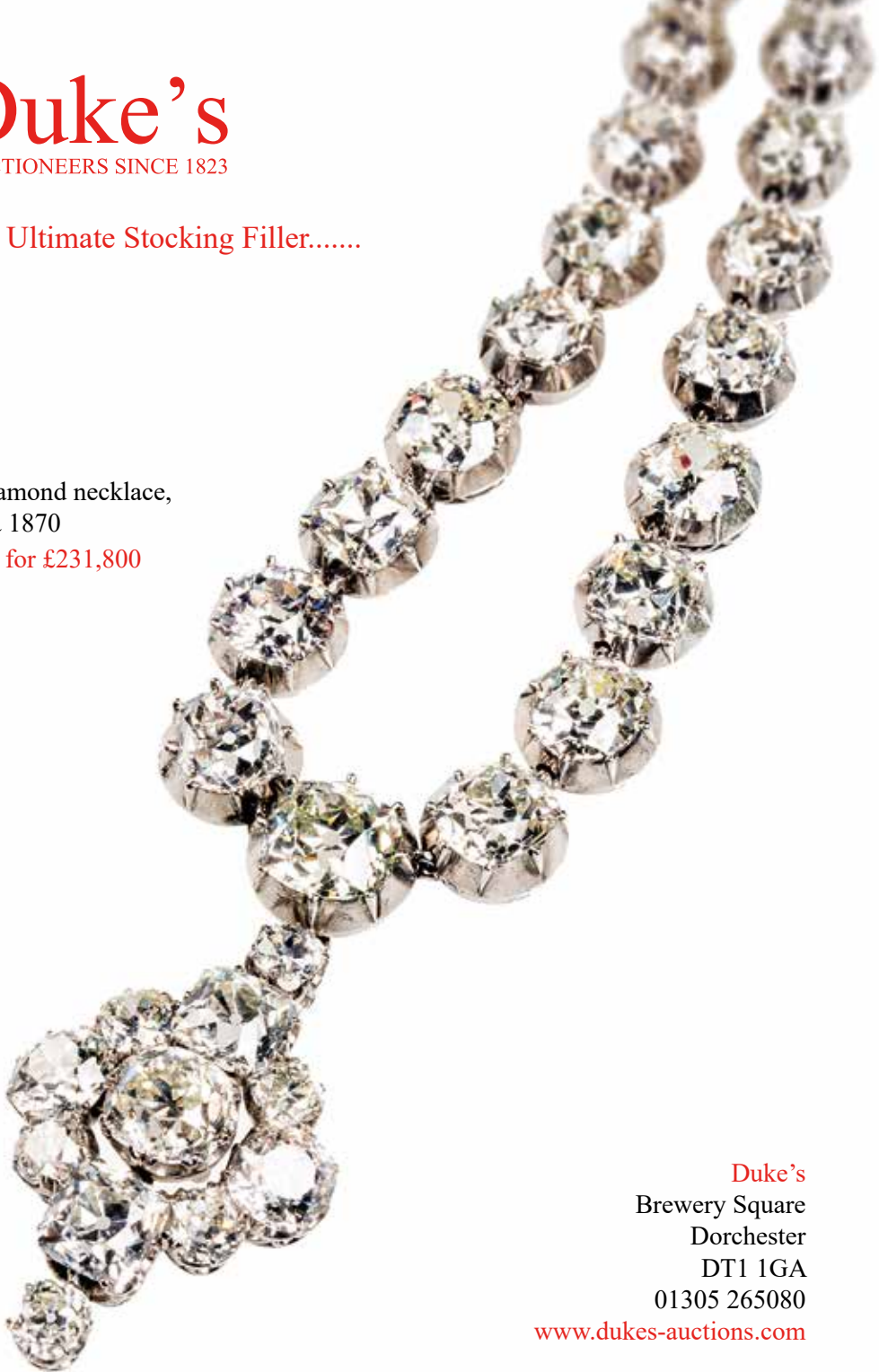
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DONews Christmas 2020... **From the Chairman's Desk**



Dear Patrons, Friends and Supporters,

It gives me great pleasure to wish you Greetings of the Season and Festive Felicitations. I do hope you have a very enjoyable Christmas and manage to see family and friends - being both 'jolly' and 'jolly careful' as our Prime Minister advises.

We are probably all rather fed up with being told this is a 'strange year', as Violetta inwardly muses '*E Strano...*', but,

of course, it has been thus with DO with no fantastic summer festival for us all to enjoy and no opportunity to immerse ourselves in the superb display of artistic talent it affords.

However, we are not downhearted. The Board - together with our wonderful Artistic Director, Rod Kennedy - are fully committed to putting on a festival next summer, recognising the need for flexibility and the possibility of a different type of event.

We are considering many exciting and interesting options, what about a "plein air" production with live elephants in the grounds of Bryanston?! Sadly we can't hold any of our social gatherings (for instance The Patrons' Party which normally takes place at this time of year), which have become such an intrinsic part of our calendar.

We do plan to keep in regular contact with you, our phenomenal supporters, who are the backbone and lifeblood of our existence.

Finally, may I thank my fellow Board members, our regular 'worker bee' volunteers: Susannah Selby Bennett who takes on so many roles - including that of Operations' Director; Caroline D'Cruz, our Company Manager who also looks after our day-to-day finances; Elspeth Brown who cares for our Patrons and, of course Dame Dione Digby and her splendid team who take care of our Friends... but, at the risk of sounding like the compère from the infamous City Varieties Music Hall in Leeds, "*Chiefly Yourselves!*", for your very necessary and much appreciated loyalty and support: Merry Christmas!

Garry Batt

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Dorset Opera Festival 2021

Firstly, let us declare here and now that we are utterly determined to bring you some form of accessible performance in 2021. We cannot go through another year like the last without an injection of musical culture!

Our initial hope is that we will mount last year's proposed operas, Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* and Puccini's *La rondine*. Should they not be possible, we do have other plans... We have ten fully-costed and exciting options at our fingertips and once we know what permutations the Government will and will not permit, the Board will make the most appropriate decision, bearing in mind the safety of the performers, the Bryanston staff, our supporters and the general public.

At the time of writing this article, it is rumoured that the county of Dorset will fall into Tier One before Christmas. That in itself will ease restrictions somewhat and will light our path going forward. So let's get those dates in

the diary now. The Dorset Opera Festival will take place over the week commencing 19 July 2021. (The Summer School element will begin on Thursday, 8 July 2021.)

Tickets...

Normally, as you will recall, we begin selling tickets at the end of January. This coming year we will not release any tickets until we are confident about what we will be allowed to do in terms of performance, accommodation, international travel and social distancing.

When the box office does open, however, it will be slightly different to previous years. Firstly, The Regent Centre can no longer continue as our box office provider. It is probable that we will operate our own box office, with the same booking options as previous years - apart from in-person ticket collection.

In other words, purchasers will be able to:

- Book online and receive tickets via email (our preferred option)

- Book and pay by telephone and receive tickets by email or elect to have them sent by post
- Book using the usual printed booking forms that you will receive through the post

Marquee seating, pavilions, picnic hampers and dinners, should also be bookable through the new box office. In other words, everything booking-wise will now be under one roof.

The same six tiers that we have always used, will apply: President's, Chairman's, Director's and Conductor's Circles, followed by FODO booking, then lastly, General Booking. As before, there will be a £1 charge for items being sent by post and charges for the use of credit or debit cards will be passed on.

Rest assured; we will keep in touch with you. Please don't unsubscribe or allow our communications to go into spam or junk, otherwise, you are likely to miss vital information.



Eugene Onegin 2016



Due to COVID-19 restrictions, it was not possible to take artists into schools this summer as we had intended. Board member Lynsey Docherty implemented an online vocal programme via Zoom, as way to keep connected to and inspire, young people, via music and song.

Utilising connections with Dorset schools who have taken part in previous Dorset Opera-in-Education programmes, we registered a group of 25 participants aged between 11 and 17 from six different schools.

The course ran each afternoon over five days, with Lynsey alongside leading vocal amateur Robert Gildon and featuring guest artists from the music industry. Each day the students learnt new repertoire, from Classical to Folk, Opera to Music Theatre and they were encouraged to ask questions of the visiting artists, who Zoomed in for 20 minutes of each session and performed for them. These singers included: Carl Sanderson, currently

performing in The Lion King; international tenor Nicky Spence; West End composer Richard Taylor; BBC Folk Singer of the Year, Sam Lee and set designer, Ruth Paton.

Towards the end of the week, several students had built up enough confidence to perform live during the session and many more sent recordings of themselves singing at home. Feedback was universally positive from students, parents and teachers and, we discovered one gifted student in particular, to whom we hope to offer a Chorus Bursary in 2021.

We also commissioned a short film of the week, which gives value to the students work, and serves as a historical reminder of artistic endeavours during Lockdown 2020. This is available to view on the Dorset Opera YouTube channel.

All this work was funded by our generous supporters through our Opera-in-Education fund.

Here is some feedback on the course:

**Tom Bruton - Teacher
Purbeck School**

We really are very fortunate to have your expertise and charisma to help inspire the students.

Claire Burns - Parent

I wanted to write to say thank you for the wonderful Zoom course that you presented

to my son Rowan recently. Opportunities like this very rarely occur for state educated children... one of the positive outcomes of lockdown!

Michelle Cheeseman - Parent

Just a final thank you very much to all involved this week. Ben has got so much from the week and it was amazing to walk into his room yesterday to see him making music instead of gaming!!! Hopefully your inspiration will stay with him.

Jasmine Joyce - Student

I want you to know that I have had the most amazing experience with you all because it is so nice to be with people who love theatre and music. Thank you so much for the course, it has really built my confidence.

Juliet Bayne - Student

I'd also like to thank you so much for giving us this opportunity to learn so much through the course! It's been so interesting and I'm glad to be a part of it.

Lily Barrett - Student

This is Lily Barrett and I just want to say thank you for all that you have done this week. It has been amazing! Attached are some recordings that I have done. I have learnt a lot during this week and I kept a diary/ notes on what I have learnt each day.





New Recording of **Schubert's Winterreise**



Recently, Dorset Opera Patron Hugh Watkins was invited to review a new recording of Schubert's *Winterreise* for the December 2020 edition of *The Sherborne Times*. The performers are not unknown to Dorset audiences, as you will read. The singer -

Sherborne native, Benjamin Hewat-Craw - has appeared with us as an emerging artist over several years. Now, even in these times of Covid, the young baritone's solo career has begun to take off...

Here, we reproduce Hugh's insightful review in full.

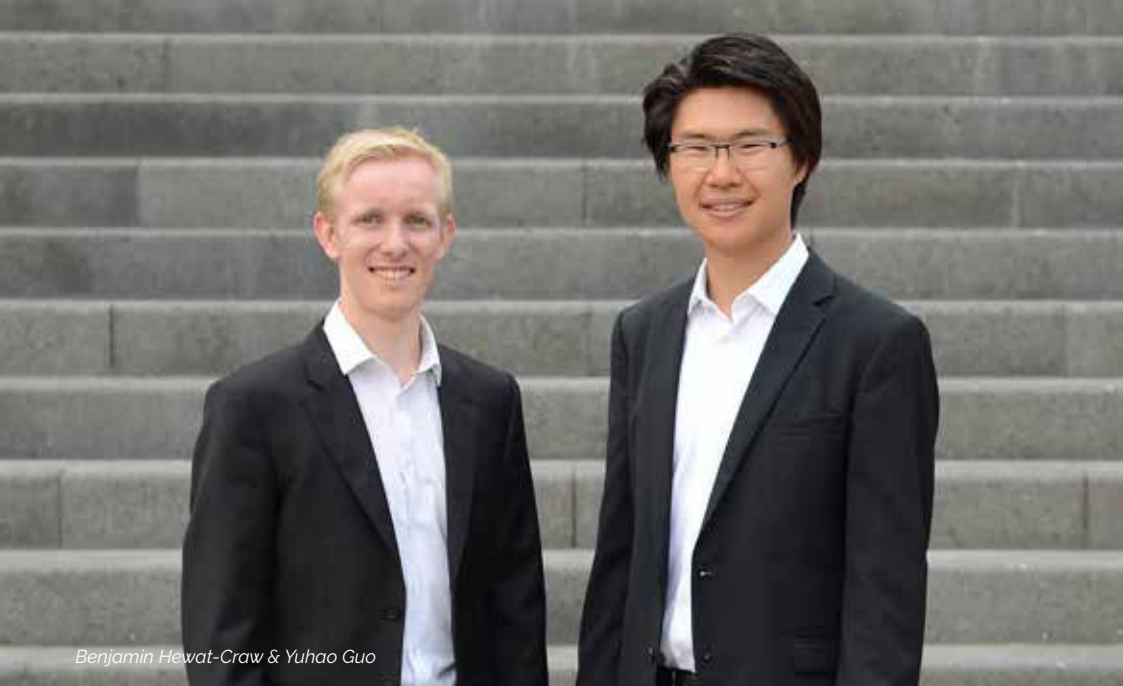
FRANZ SCHUBERT: WINTERREISE D911

Benjamin Hewat-Craw (Baritone), Yuhao Guo (Piano)

Benjamin Hewat-Craw was educated at Sherborne Preparatory School and Sherborne School (2006-2011) as well as being a chorister in the Sherborne Abbey Choir in which his father still sings!

After taking a first-class honours degree in Ancient History and Archaeology at Durham University, he moved to the Musikhochschule in Cologne, where he has studied for the last five years and is where he met his accompanist, Yuhao Guo.

At the Sherborne Abbey Festival in 2019, they gave a wonderful performance of *Winterreise* (Winter Journey), one of the very great works not only of classical music in particular but also of art in general. This song cycle is a setting of 24 poems by Wilhelm Müller about a jilted young male lover's journey in winter.



Benjamin Hewat-Craw & Yuhao Guo

This new recording on the German Ars Produktion CD label is an unqualified success. In Schubert Lieder the role of the pianist should be as prominent as that of the singer and, in Yuhao, Benjamin has found the ideal collaborator. Indeed, much enjoyment is to be had by listening to the piano part and realising how wonderfully Schubert captures the text in sound (musical onomatopoeia).

Meanwhile, in reflecting the changing and increasingly depressed mood of the jilted lover, Benjamin demonstrates what a fine singer he is. Furthermore, he is a fluent German speaker and his singing of that language has received much praise from reviewers in Germany. The inlay of the CD is very well produced and includes the German poems with English translations by Benjamin. The commentary by the two

musicians is very informative and amongst other things explains how the messages in *Winterreise* - e.g. loneliness (Einsamkeit) which many have been forced to suffer during the Coronavirus pandemic - are as relevant today as they were in Schubert's time, 200 years ago; but then, great works of art neither go out of fashion nor get out of date.

It seems that just about any male singer, who is or was anyone in German Art Song, has recorded this iconic work. I own two other versions by great artists of the post-1945 era - Hans Hotter/Gerald Moore and Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau/Alfred Brendel.

Still in their twenties, Hewat-Craw and Guo are nearly world class if they aren't already. After their concert in 2019, some people stayed behind to thank them. They included a lady and her 13-year-old

daughter. They had never been to this sort of concert before but had bought two tickets at the door on the spur of the moment. They had been deeply moved and wanted to say so.

This is what great music making is all about. As the careers of these very fine young artists continue to blossom as surely they should, maybe in 20 years' time some of us will be able to say, I was there.

The CD (£13.75) is on sale at the Abbey Shop in The Close, Sherborne, DT9 3LQ. Opening hours are 11am to 3pm, Monday to Friday. Alternatively, it can be bought online at benjaminhewatcraw.com - it might solve some last minute 'Christmas present' problems!

Hugh Watkins

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Unfinished business: **The 2021 Events' Diary**



Like everything else in this Christmas edition of DONews, all that we do is guided by the country's handling of the coronavirus situation.

We hope that 2021 allows us to hold a Ritzzy Tea Party, or the Evening with Lord & Lady Fellowes; our Floating Fireworks Fiesta, and our much-postponed Celebrity Lunch... as well as possibly two Opera Cinema evenings and at

least six of our much-missed Bluffers' lunches!

The very moment we are allowed to reinstate our fundraising events, you will be the first to hear. It is clear that one or two people may be wary about returning to their old habits, but we need those get-togethers to re-capture the pre-Covid spirit, to bring music, culture and excitement back into our lives.

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The River Seine, Paris

The DOF Online Auction

With restrictions in place and difficulties surrounding the acquisition and delivery of sold lots, we took the decision to postpone our online auction until the new year - possibly February.

We will be contacting those who have kindly agreed to donate auction lots in order to be assured that they are still available to us and if supporters would care to add new lots, there is still time to do this.

We are often asked what kind of items we require. The answer is simple: not jumble or junk from the attic (not that any of our supporters would suggest such things). To give you an idea, we have been offered some extremely desirable holiday homes, including a Paris apartment overlooking the Seine, and a clifftop house in Cornwall, riding and dressage lessons, fishing, sailing, cases of wine, meals at exclusive restaurants, portraits in oils and, especially useful in these times... life

coaching lessons!

Perhaps you might offer some gardening or lawn mowing (you don't need to do the work yourself, simply pay someone to do it for you)! What about a facilitating a pamper day?

Let's put our thinking caps on and make this auction a real success.

It's all a bit of fun aimed at raising some funds to help us provide you with future operatic enjoyment.



L'elisir d'amore 2015

News of our AGM and Annual Report & Accounts

With the government's coronavirus restrictions still in place, even if we in Dorset have migrated to Tier 1, it seems clear that we will not be permitted to gather for the joint Annual General Meetings of Dorset Opera and the Friends of Dorset Opera, on 25 January 2021, as planned.

After considerable thought, the Directors have decided to defer the AGMs until 12 April. In making their decision, they took account of the current

uncertainty surrounding the Covid restrictions we are likely to all be under at the end of January. In consultation with the trustees of FODO, the Directors decided that if at all possible it would be preferable to hold an AGM where we could meet in person.

The AGMs will therefore take place at Duke's Fine Arts Auctioneers, Copper Street, Brewery Square, Dorchester DT1 1GA - by kind invitation of our Chairman, Garry Batt, and

his fellow directors.

If it becomes apparent that even the April date is not viable, the Directors will take account of the guidance then in place from the Charity Commission and defer the AGM further.

The annual Report and Accounts were adopted by the Board at their last meeting on 9 December 2020 and copies can be forwarded by email. Please send a request email to info@dorsetopera.com

'Try This One!'



We know that many of you are really enjoying Adrian Thorpe's entertaining monthly musings about obscure or rarely performed operas that he considers to be 'worth an outing'. (Don't worry, there are more to come!)

Often, the history or background to these works is quite incredible and, in some instances, might have made

for a better opera plot than the resultant piece.

Should you have missed any of these gems or the music excerpts Adrian uses to illustrate his finds, we will happily let you have the links and access to Adrian's recommended CD purchases. Just send a note outlining your request to smh@dorsetopera.com

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