



The Hexham Orpheus Choir

Conductor Glenn Davis

A Night at The Opera

Hexham Orpheus Choir

Conductor Glenn Davis

Accompanist - Margaret Huntington
&

Ruth Armishaw

Guest Soloists

Rachel Orr Robert Seaton David Huntington

Soloists in Trial by Jury

The Judge	Robert Seaton
Plaintiff	Rachel Orr
Usher	Simon Partridge
Defendant	David Huntington
Counsel	Tim Grew
Foreman of the Jury	Richard Dixon

Our next performance

Saturday 22nd May 2004

Hexham Abbey

The Hexham Orpheus Choir

The Priory Singers Tynemouth

Brahms Deutsches Requiem

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Programme

(Translations are available on a separate sheet)

ITALIAN GRAND OPERA

1. Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves (Nabucco)
2. Chorus of Scottish Refugees (Macbeth)
3. Easter Hymn (Cavalleria Rusticana)

Verdi
Verdi
Mascagni

Nabucco, produced in 1842, was Verdi's first real success. In many ways the story of the Hebrews' captivity in Babylon was an apt motif for the "enslavement" of the Italians in the 1840's, still disunited and partly under Austrian rule. ("Va pensiero" is symbolically mainly in unison – almost community singing for the Italian people). During Act Three the Israelite captives "bound and in chains" dream nostalgically of their native homeland.

Macbeth may be regarded as "early middle-period" Verdi, first produced in 1847 but revised for a Paris production in 1865. By Act Four Macbeth is well on his road to bloody tragedy and the Scottish people, refugees in a deserted place somewhere on the Anglo-Scottish border, express their despair.

Most will know of Mascagni as a one-work composer. He never managed to recapture the huge success of this early opera whose direct realism vividly reflects the hot-blooded passion of the Sicilian peasant society (earlobe biting and all!) in which the story is set. The religiosity of the Easter Hymn, a set-piece chorus in the style of Gounod, is perhaps an apt contrast to everything that is about to develop.

BARITONE SOLOS

1. Prologue (Pagliacci)
2. When the air sings of summer (The Old Maid and the Thief)
3. Voilà donc la terrible cité (Thaïs)

Leoncavallo
Menotti
Massenet

MOZART

1. Priests' Chorus (Die Zauberflöte)

In order to win the hand of Pamina, (the daughter of the Queen of the Night, under the wise guardianship of the priest, Sarastro) the young prince, Tamino must go through trials to prove his fitness. The short chorus of Priests midway through Act Two expresses the confident hope that he will be soon fit to join their company.

2. Bei Männern (Die Zauberflöte)

Earlier in the opera Pamina has learnt of Tamino's love for her from the bird-catcher, Papageno. A simple but sublime duet, (sung in English) tells us of the supreme power of love to make us more than ordinary mortals.

3. Placido e il mar (Idomeneo)

The King of Crete, Idomeneo, at sea during a storm, has vowed to sacrifice the first person he meets on dry land in return for a safe homecoming. Tragically this is Idamante, his son. To cheat the gods he decides to send him to find safety at Argos and, urged on by Electra, the sailors and passengers decide to leave, (mistakenly) assured of a calm passage.

SOPRANO SOLOS

1. Una voce poco fa (The Barber of Seville)
2. O mio babbino caro (Gianni Schicci)
3. The waltz song (Romeo and Juliet)

Rossini
Puccini
Gounod

RUSSIAN OPERA

1. Chorus of Peasant Girls (Eugene Onegin)
2. Coronation Scene (Boris Godunov)

Tchaikowsky
Mussorgsky

The theme of Tchaikowsky's greatest opera is the clash between the simple world of rural society into which Tatyana is born, and the sophisticated but false atmosphere of St. Petersburg, represented by Onegin. This graceful chorus obviously represents the former.

The coronation of Boris follows a heart-rending prologue, conveying the sufferings of Russia and the mock-reluctance of the leading boyar (nobleman) Boris to take the throne. He is then crowned at the Cathedral of the Assumption, Moscow, in scenes of utmost splendour. In Pushkin's play (the basis for the opera) it is assumed, though never proved, that Boris has murdered Dmitri, the son of Ivan the Terrible, as a way to supreme power. This is reflected in Boris's expressive solo in the middle of the chorus.

Interval (during which a glass of wine or a soft drink will be served)

COPLAND

Two Choruses from The Tender Land

1. Stomp your foot
2. The Promise of living

Aaron Copland only produced one mature opera, this piece, set in a farm in America's mid-west. (The invitation to writes it came from Rodgers and Hammerstein in 1952). The first number is an exuberant square dance, out of the same stable as the Hoe-Down from Rodeo. The Promise of Living ends the work: a heart-felt prayer for the simple country virtues.

TRIAL BY JURY

Arthur Sullivan and W.S. Gilbert

A Dramatic Cantata in One Act

The production of this short one-act operetta in 1875, ("Dramatic Cantata" was the original title), established the partnership between these two quintessentially Victorian figures. (Trial by Jury quickly eclipsed the Offenbach piece with which it shared the original billing). Sullivan already shows his talent for writing good tunes and for apt parody of other composers. (The Judge enters to a Handelian chorus (All hail, great Judge...), then as the story reaches its climax of confusion, the entire cast express it in pure Bellini (A nice dilemma). Gilbert, with some years of professional experience at the Bar, already shows his talent for satirising contemporary institutions, in essentially gentle terms. A case of Breach of Promise of marriage, (which remained on the statute book until 1970) brings out the worst in all parties – a biased Usher, a Lothario of a Defendant, a Plaintiff in wedding dress with both eyes firmly fixed on heavy damages, and an emotional Jury. Only the Judge oversteps the bounds of taste a trifle. As with the First Lord in Pinafore he has made his way to the top by dubious means (When I, good friends, was called to the Bar), and certainly possesses a roving eye, shown as soon as the Bridesmaids and Plaintiff appear, but should be consent to a human experiment when the Defendant confesses to his wife-beating tendencies? Such considerations (which last for two bars of music) have never worried generations of G and S-lovers. His intervention saves the day and wins the lady, anyway, so that any unwelcome undercurrents are soon forgotten!

The Hexham Orpheus Choir

Sopranos:

Catherine Allen
Sarah Barker
Evelyn Blenkinsop
Dorothy Booker
Ruth Brownlee
Elspeth Christie
Janet Davies
Pip Emmer
Frances Hughes
Emily Rogerson
Carrie Winger

Altos:

Sheila Adams
Margaret Bainbridge
Janette Kirton-Darling
Elizabeth Dixon
Davina Dwyer
Mary Gibson
Anita Jefferies
Bernie Laws
Patricia Lewis
Dorothy Peters
Patricia Phillips
Janet Storrie
Catherine Stott
Rachel Ward
Jean Wilks

Tenors:

John Barker
Malcolm Chainey
Tom Frost
Tim Grew
Susan Kent

Basses:

Richard Dixon
Robert Firth
John Kent
Keith Mallinson
Tony May
Owen McArdle
Simon Partridge
Peter Stott
Larrie Winger
Paul Proctor