

Singers acting up



Photo: Sussie Ahlberg



Sir Thomas Allen, Barbara Leigh Hunt and Richard Pasco

With our forthcoming Masterclass featuring operas that have mined Shakespeare's rich themes such as Verdi's *Falstaff*, Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Berlioz' *Beatrice and Benedict*, the focus is very much on words and music.

The interpretation and expression of words – the text of a song or aria – is fundamental to a memorable performance. Surprisingly young singers have little interaction with professional stage actors. So we have invited two of Britain's leading classical actors, Barbara Leigh Hunt and Richard Pasco to work alongside our Masterclass team.

Sir Thomas Allen, who delighted the promenaders at the Last Night of the Proms with a programme which included five George Herbert poems set to music by Vaughan Williams, will be heading up the team supported by soprano Patricia MacMahon, vocal consultant Paul Farrington and pianists Simon Over and Malcolm Martineau.

Together they will be nurturing the acting and singing talents of six

specially chosen young singers – Katherine Manley, Simona Mihai, Madeleine Shaw, Ben Hulett, Marc Labonnette and Stefan Holmström - who are travelling to Cumbria to attend the week-long masterclass.

"To have actors such as Barbara Leigh Hunt and Richard Pasco on the team will bring another dimension to the masterclass experience for these young singers," said Sir Thomas Allen, Patron of the Samling Foundation. "It is also quite fitting that, with two classical actors on board, the repertoire we will be working on is so beautifully interwoven with Shakespearean themes."

All this adds up to a rare treat for concert-goers at The Samling Concert, the culmination of the Masterclass week, on Saturday November 6th at St Cuthbert's Church in Carlisle. Hosted by Sir Thomas Allen, who will also give special one-off performances alongside Patricia MacMahon, the evening will primarily feature the talents of the six young singers and will also include readings by the two actors.

A number of tickets for the concert are available, which include dinner with the artists in the Tithe Barn after the performance. These include a three course meal with wine and coffee and are priced at £60, available from The Samling Foundation on 01434 602885.

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Education is key to Samling Opera



Photography: Mark Pinder

Susannah Waters

Education is at the heart of every Samling Foundation project and the planned production of our first opera, *Così fan tutte*, is no exception to this ethos.

A far-reaching education programme involving forty two gifted and talented music and performing arts students from high schools across the region is a key element of the production.

The project will involve the commissioning of dramatic scenes, based on the themes of the opera, by Susannah Waters, which will explore the text of the opera through drama and music.

During a ten year career as a singer, Susannah Waters sang principal roles with many of the world's leading opera companies before giving it up to concentrate on writing and directing. Since then, through her company The Paddock, she has written and directed many new collaborative pieces of work involving established ensembles from the fields of classical music, dance, theatre and literature.

Her most well known piece of work – titled *the regina monologues* – was commissioned by the Covent Garden Festival and premiered in 2001 starring Penelope Keith as Elizabeth I. Since then, this production has toured to venues throughout the UK and abroad and has involved actresses Janet Suzman and Susannah York as well as the singer Felicity Palmer, who has led masterclasses for The Samling Foundation in the past.

"To have someone of this calibre to lead the education project is very exciting," said Karon Wright, Artistic Director

of the Samling Foundation. "Susannah brings a wealth of experience not only in singing and writing but also directing and staging theatre and opera productions."

Through workshops the students will look at the themes, characters and explore the text of the opera and will, through improvisation, creative writing and performance, produce their own piece of words and music in response. "They will explore this opera from all angles – musically and dramatically. This will involve drama workshops based on key scenes from the opera, written by Susannah and also vocal workshops with Paul Farrington as well as songwriting and composition," she continued.

The students will also be given unparalleled access to the processes involved in staging an opera at an international level. "They will visit the set, sit in on rehearsals and explore with the team – the director, conductor, vocal consultant, orchestra and singers – all aspects of this production. They really will experience opera from the inside out," added Karon.

There are also plans for this education project to roll out further and reach as wide a young audience as possible through the production of a CD-ROM, which can be used as a study aid in classrooms across the UK and there will be a special schools' performance at The Sage Gateshead.

Samling Opera, in partnership with The Sage Gateshead, July 4th - 9th 2005.

See for yourself

If you've ever wondered what it takes to become a world class opera singer then come and see for yourself when The Samling Foundation opens the door on one of its masterclasses on Wednesday, 3rd November 2004, 2-5pm at St Cuthbert's Church in Carlisle.

Led by Sir Thomas Allen with Patricia MacMahon and top vocal consultant Paul Farrington, the open session will give a rare chance to observe first hand the training, techniques and sheer hard work involved in becoming a professional singer.

"These sessions are fascinating, very exciting and a lot

of fun," said Karon Wright of The Samling Foundation.

"We've been running these open afternoons for eight years and from past experience the audience always becomes very involved. They are highly enjoyable for all concerned, plus we've got the bonus of having two classical actors on the team which will add another dimension to this particular Masterclass session."

Tickets for the Open Afternoon priced at £7.50 are available from The Samling Foundation Tel: 01434 602885 and Tullie House Museum and Bookends in Carlisle.

Creative partnership hits the right note



The first creative partnership between the Samling Foundation and Southbank Sinfonia has been a resounding success. The pioneering London-based orchestra, and opera singer and Samling Scholar Fiona Duncan, travelled to the North East to take part in three days of intensive workshops in schools.

Initiated and managed by The Samling Foundation the project was supported by the Gillian Dickinson Charitable Trust and involved children and students of all ages culminating in a sell-out concert on the opening night of the 52nd Annual Hexham Abbey Festival.

For children at Sele First School it kick-started a project based on Saint Saen's *Carnival of the Animals*, which included not only a study of the music and how the orchestra's instruments characterised the movements of the piece but involved dance and the visual arts too.

At St Joseph's R.C. Middle School it was the 63-strong choir that took centre stage in the project to work on three pieces with Fiona Duncan and the orchestra. 'For many it was the first time they had come up close to an opera singer and Fiona did a great job in showing the children in the schools how she could adapt her vocal technique to sing classical music and pop,' said Karon Wright.

For Queen Elizabeth High School's orchestra it was a chance to play with and observe how a professional orchestra interacts.

"There were a lot of workshops with the two orchestras playing side-by-side, chamber coaching and brass improvisation," said Simon Over, Founder and Director of Southbank Sinfonia. "There was also a full orchestra GCSE demo session entitled 'Music through the Ages' and an informal concert of chamber music."

"It has been really exciting and challenging and I've learnt so much," said 13 year old Bassoon player, Aiden. "I've always thought about a career in music and this experience has made me realise that playing professionally in an orchestra is what I want to do".

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Fiona Duncan



All photography: Mark Pinder



Simon Over



Photography: Mark Pinder

St Joseph's R.C. Middle School choir and members of Southbank Sinfonia in Hexham Abbey

Concert

Words and Music

With Sir Thomas Allen,
Patricia MacMahon, Richard Pasco
and Barbara Leigh Hunt.

Introducing six of the best young
singers – Katherine Manley,
Simona Mihai, Madeleine Shaw,
Stefan Holmström, Ben Hulett
and Marc Labonnette.

Accompanied by pianists
Malcolm Martineau and Simon Over

St Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle
7pm, Saturday, 6th November 2004

Tickets: £12 or £10 concessions are
available from:

The Samling Foundation
Tel: 01434 602885;

Tullie House Museum, Castle Street,
Carlisle Tel: 01228 534781;

Bookends, Castle Street, Carlisle
Tel: 01228 529067

Tickets including dinner with the artists
after the performance at The Tithe Barn,
Carlisle £60.

Creative Partnership (continued from page 3)

One of the young stars on the evening of the concert was undoubtedly 18-year-old Andrew Passmore. A talented organist he performed Poulenc's 'Organ Concerto' accompanied by Southbank Sinfonia.

"It was the first time I have ever played with a professional orchestra. It was a bit nerve-racking but what a fantastic experience," said Andrew. "The Samling Foundation should be applauded for providing this kind of opportunity for young people."

If further inspiration was needed for the young musicians, it was provided by Fiona Duncan and the orchestra, who rounded off the evening with a poised and enchanting performance of three songs by Richard Strauss – pure Samling magic!

Garden party makes a splash



Roger and Eileen McKechnie

The weather may have been a bit wet for this year's Garden Party but it certainly didn't dampen the spirits of all those who attended – marquees, gazebos and umbrellas aplenty ensured that no-one got wet!

Roger and Eileen McKechnie once again opened the doors of their beautiful house and garden to the party-goers who enjoyed plenty of good food and wine, fantastic live music from some of the region's up and coming young musicians and a stunning display of original art.

"I think we proved that whatever the weather we can still put on one hell of a party. There was plenty of cover provided so people did stick around and had a really enjoyable day, despite the occasional downpour," said Roger who is Chairman of The Samling Foundation. "We'd like to thank everyone who attended the party and helped to raise a significant amount of money which will enable The Samling Foundation to carry on creating and bringing world class art and musical performances to the North of England," added Roger.

Diary dates 2004

Thursday January 29th Gala Concert with Sir Thomas Allen and Samling Scholars Amy Black, Sophie Graf, Jared Holt and Thomas Walker with pianists Simon Over and Caroline Dowdle at St John's, Smith Square, London 7.30pm.

Sunday March 28th Gala Concert with Christopher Maltman and Leigh Woolf and pianist Simon Over at the Mansion House, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne 7pm.

Sunday April 18th – Sunday 25th April Masterclass Week led by Sir Thomas Allen, Patricia MacMahon, Paul Farrington with pianists Simon Over and Caroline Dowdle and this year's specially selected young singers – Wendy Dawn Thompson, Susan Atherton, Alexandra Rigazzi-Tarling, Jonas Dúran, Ed Lyon and Byron Watson.

Open afternoon, Wednesday 21st April, 2pm - 5pm
Gala concert, Saturday 24th April, 7pm
Choral Day, Monday 26th April, 10am - 2.30pm
St. Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle

Sunday 20th June The Samling Picnic – The annual party in the garden at Dilston House, Corbridge, with non-stop live music, exhibition of art, auction and fun for all the family.

Tuesday 14th September – Thursday 16th September Performance and Outreach Programmes with Southbank Sinfonia and Samling Scholar, Fiona Duncan with a Concert including local schools on Thursday 16th September in Hexham Abbey.

Sunday 31st October – Sunday 7th November Masterclass Week led by Sir Thomas Allen, Patricia MacMahon and Paul Farrington with pianists Simon Over and Malcolm Martineau and actors Richard Pasco and Barbara Leigh Hunt plus six outstanding young professional singers.

Open afternoon, Wednesday 3rd November, 2pm – 5pm
Gala Concert, Saturday, 6th November 7pm
Choral Day, Monday 8th November, 10am – 2.30pm
St. Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle.

The Samling Foundation

Community Centre, Gilesgate, Hexham, Northumberland NE46 3NP Tel / Fax 01434 602885

e-mail enquiries@samlingfoundation.org website: www.samlingfoundation.org

Patron: Sir Thomas Allen CBE Artistic Director: Karon Wright Charity No: 1058654