



Rising star

Five years ago soprano Sally Matthews jumped straight from a Samling Masterclass into the role of Nanetta in *Falstaff* at the Royal Opera House and since then her feet have hardly touched the ground.

"It was all rather immediate," said Sally. "I went from a magical week in Masterclass to understudy the role of Nanetta. The chosen singer was ill on and off throughout rehearsals but it wasn't until the general rehearsal, which I was actually late for, that I was told I would be singing in all the performances – it was an opportunity of a lifetime."

Now one of opera's rising stars, she's coming back to perform exclusively for The Samling Foundation at a fund-raising event at the Mansion House in Newcastle upon Tyne on Sunday March 6th at 7pm.

Performing with the acclaimed pianist Malcolm Martineau, with whom Sally has just recorded and released a recital disc on the EMI debut series, they will be delighting audiences with an evening of opera and songs from the CD and there may also be a surprise or two on the night!

2005 already looks set to be a busy year for Sally, playing the leading role in Cavalli's *La Calisto* in Munich, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* in Amsterdam and *Carmina Burana* with the Berlin Philharmonic conducted by Simon Rattle, which is being recorded by EMI.

"The confidence I gained during Masterclass helped me to produce a performance of critical acclaim in my first major role, as Nanetta in *Falstaff* – something I'll never forget," said Sally. "So I'm delighted to do this concert to support the valuable work The Samling Foundation does in music and the arts."

There are only 90 tickets available for the concert, which will include wine and canapés and a buffet supper. These are priced at £75 and are available from The Samling Foundation on 01434 602885.

We've also got 20 signed copies of Sally Matthews' much awaited EMI debut disc 'Songs' with Malcolm Martineau, to give away to the first 20 pairs of tickets sold – so book now and reserve your CD.

Coming up in 2005

Here's a quick run-down of the major events in 2005 – The Samling Foundation's ninth year!

The first big event is a fund-raising concert at the Mansion House in Newcastle upon Tyne in March starring Sally Matthews and Malcolm Martineau. This is swiftly followed in the same month by our masterclass week, led by Della Jones and Paul Farrington at Farlam Hall in Cumbria with the Gala Concert at St Cuthbert's Church in Carlisle. June sees the start of full rehearsals for the first Samling Opera – *Così fan tutte* – and the start of the associated education project headed up by Susannah Waters involving teenagers from the North East and Cumbria and finishing with opera performances at The Sage Gateshead in early July, including a special schools' performance.

In September we will be welcoming back Simon Over, The Southbank Sinfonia and

Samling Scholars to work with schools in an outreach programme and performance at Hexham Abbey.

And in November we're taking up an invitation from The Sage Gateshead to host our second public Masterclass and Gala Concert with Sir Thomas Allen, Felicity Palmer, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Richard Pasco and the specially selected six young singers.

We're finishing off the year as we began with another fund-raising concert but this time at the Wigmore Hall in London where Sir Thomas Allen will be joined by four Samling Scholars and pianists Malcolm Martineau and Simon Over.

As well as all this, there's the Samling Garden Party and we'll be unveiling plans for our next major visual arts project sometime during the year – so there's a lot to look forward to!

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Cumbria's one and only



Della Jones

Photo: Andrew Palmer

The Samling Foundation's one and only Masterclass Gala Concert in Cumbria this year will be led by one of Great Britain's leading mezzo-sopranos, Della Jones.

Della will be joined by vocal consultant Paul Farrington, pianists Malcolm Martineau and Caroline Dowdle to work with the specially selected six young singers – Gail Johnston, Shuna Sendall, Luciana Alves e Silva, John Llewelyn Evans, Adrian Ward and Javier Borda.

"As Della is one of the most versatile and busy singers internationally, we are very lucky to get her to lead this particular masterclass," said Karon Wright, Artistic Director of The Samling Foundation. "She hasn't led a masterclass for us before or performed in Carlisle so it really will be something for audiences to look forward to."

The Gala Concert on Saturday 19th March at St Cuthbert's Church in Carlisle, which marks the end of the Masterclass week, will feature the six young singers in an evening of song and opera with some special one-off performances from Della Jones.

Tickets for the Gala Concert at St Cuthbert's Church will be available from Tullie House Museum, Bookends in Carlisle and The Samling Foundation. As usual there will be a number of special tickets for the concert priced at £60, which include dinner with the artists in the Tithe Barn in Carlisle after the performance and reserved numbered seating for the concert. These tickets are available only from The Samling Foundation and reserved seating for the performance will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

There will be a change of venue for the Open Afternoon on Wednesday 16th March 2005, which will give classical music fans in Penrith a treat. "We're heading back to Penrith Methodist Church for the Open Afternoon partly because St Cuthbert's Church is booked for the Carlisle Music Festival but also because we spent so many happy years there and we do like to keep going back from time to time," said Karon Wright.

And finally, if you're wondering why it's Cumbria's one and only masterclass concert this year, here's the reason. For its second masterclass in November 2005, The Samling Foundation has been invited to The Sage Gateshead. "Cumbria is still very much at the heart of our Masterclass programme," explained Karon Wright, "but the offer to bring our open afternoon and the concert at the end of Masterclass week to this wonderful new music venue, was one we couldn't refuse."

Samling Friends reunited

With the renewal date for membership to our Friends' Scheme approaching we're hoping that we'll be reunited with old friends as well as making a few new ones along the way.

The Friends Scheme, which runs from April to April each year, is a great way to support The Samling Foundation's work. We do realise that, as with all great friendships, there needs to be some give and take, and with this in mind we recently gave the scheme a face-lift.

For a start we've made it a two-tier membership – silver and gold – and added more benefits to both. The silver membership, which costs £30 per annum, includes a quarterly newsletter, invitation to private views, invitation to special events, priority booking, 10% discount on standard tickets, one free ticket to all Masterclass open afternoons, one free regular ticket* per year to the concert of your choice.

The gold membership, which costs £125 per annum, includes all of the above plus acknowledgement in programmes, a ticket to our annual Garden Party and a ticket which includes dinner to the concert of your choice*.

We want to continue bringing excellence in music and the arts to the region but can't do it without the help of our Friends. To renew your membership or for more information call us on 01434 602885 or visit www.samlingfoundation.org

*Some venue restrictions apply



Samling Friends joined a specially invited audience at an historic tuning performance in The Sage Gateshead prior to the official opening in December.

Pictured above are Samling Scholars Elizabeth Atherton, Mark Chaundy and Marc Labonnette who performed as soloists with Northern Sinfonia and Northern Sinfonia Chorus.

With just six months before the curtain rises on the Samling's first opera we caught up with Sir Thomas Allen, to find out how he feels about directing this new production of *Così fan tutte* at the newly opened The Sage Gateshead.

"It's the first of three Mozart operas The Samling Foundation is planning to do over the next few years at this magnificent new music venue," said Tom. "And it's the first opera to be staged there which is very exciting and something of a challenge as it isn't a traditional opera space and we've only just been able to have a look inside the building."

This is one of the reasons why the team decided to produce this particular opera first as Tom explained. "We chose *Così* out of the three because it is perhaps the least complicated in terms of staging and it's also very neat and manageable with just six main parts."

Not to mention the fact that Tom Allen as a singer has a long association with Mozart operas. *Don Giovanni* is a role that he has made his own at opera houses around the world and he's played *Così*'s Don Alfonso numerous times at Covent Garden.

"*Così* was always seen as a bit frivolous and disregarded in this country for many years really until Jonathan Miller's production and I suppose I was guilty of this viewpoint too," he said. "From early days I thought *Così*, whilst beautiful in its structure and musical development, lacked credibility in its plot."

"But since playing the role of Alfonso certain aspects of the work have made a deeper impression on me and when you examine the text closely you can compare it with the best in a Shakespeare comedy. It's about hearts and minds and analyses truth in a way that is still very relevant today."

As well as being excited by the challenge of originating a new production of *Così* he's also delighted to be working with the six Samling Scholars – Henriikka Gröndahl, Carolyn Dobbin, Amy Freston, Mattijs van de Woerd, Rafael Vázquez and Richard Morrison.

"These singers may be relatively young but they are all experienced professionals and I get a real buzz working with such talent," he said. "It's my job to nurture and help them grow in their roles and draw out of them the performances I want – something I'm looking forward to tremendously."



The right direction

All six have, of course, been through the Samling's masterclass programme which Tom has been instrumental in setting up.

"When we started The Samling Foundation over eight years ago we planted a seed, so to speak, which has grown and blossomed over the years."

"These masterclasses have been a fantastic journey and they just seem to get better and better – the way the team and the young singers work with such passion and commitment is quite unique," he added.

The idea of staging operas is something that has grown out of the masterclass ethos. "It's a new branch of the same tree," said Tom. "A bit like our visual arts project 'arena' which was headed up by Antony Gormley. It's all part of the creative growth of The Samling Foundation and individual passions and the energy of the people involved always ensures that the work does not stagnate."

Così will be Tom Allen's second opera in the role of director, the first being his acclaimed *Albert Herring* for the Royal College. "My toe is hardly wet in this pool," he said. "But it does interest me – interpreting the meaning of an opera and bringing that to an audience is something I enjoy."

He's certainly acquired the expertise and honed an instinct for it over the years - something he'll be using in the coming months.

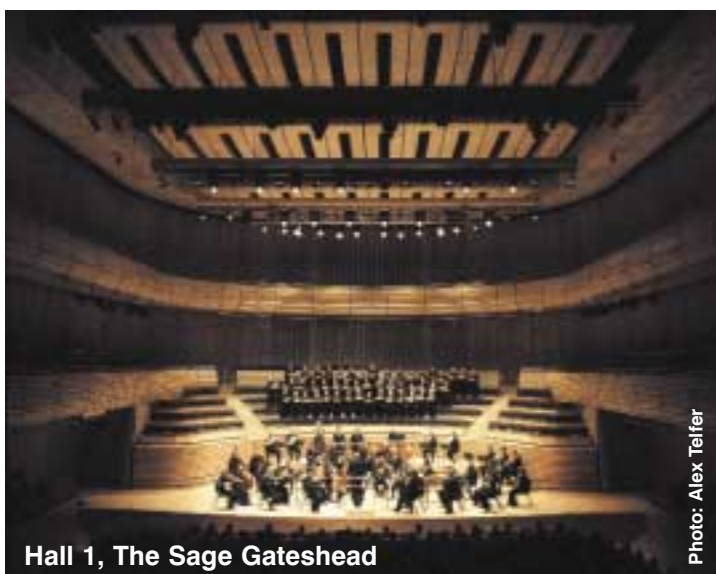
"We are working to a very tight deadline so I have to keep a clear head and provide the map for everyone to work from, so that when we come together for full rehearsals it will hopefully be a relatively seamless transition."

And is this dip in the directing pool something he wants to do more of in the future? "My diary is full with singing engagements for the next three years and basically I'll carry on performing whilst I still feel I have something to contribute," said Tom. "But I am committed to working with the Samling on its opera productions and in Masterclass".

One final word – what can we expect from this new production of *Così*? "I really don't want to give too much away but suffice to say it will be something special – we've got six of the most talented young singers in opera today, a highly respected orchestra - The Northern Sinfonia, conducted by the renowned Thomas Zehetmair - and the fact that it's in the main concert hall at The Sage Gateshead is really the icing on the cake," added Tom.

Tickets for *Così fan tutte* are on sale now. Contact The Sage Gateshead booking office on 0870 703 4555 or visit www.thesagegateshead.org to book online.

Samling Friends' Last Night Party; Saturday, July 9th, 2005. Please call 01434 602885 for details.



Hall 1, The Sage Gateshead

Year ends at Wigmore Hall

2005 is going to be quite a year for The Samling Foundation so it seems fitting to end it with a fund-raising concert at one of world's greatest venues - The Wigmore Hall - in London on Friday 9th December.

Sir Thomas Allen will host the evening and will perform himself alongside four wonderful young singers – all Samling Scholars – soprano, Katherine Manley; mezzo-soprano, Anna Stéphany; baritone, Marc Labonnette; tenor, Ed Lyon accompanied by pianists Malcolm Martineau and Simon Over.

"We've got a lot to celebrate this year with our first opera production, our Newcastle concert with Sally Matthews and masterclasses in Cumbria and at the North East," said Karon Wright. "So where better to end the year than at the newly refurbished Wigmore Hall, without doubt one of the world's finest concert venues.

"With all these high profile events in the North of England it's important that we keep a presence in the capital and continue to raise the profile of The Samling Foundation and the work it does nationally, so this concert is very important to us," she added. For ticket details and more information about this concert please contact The Samling Foundation on 01434 602885.



Photo: Nick Gutteridge

Samling Concert

with Della Jones and Paul Farrington

Introducing six outstanding new voices –

Gail Johnston, Shuna Sendall, Luciana Alves e Silva, John Llewelyn Evans, Adrian Ward and Javier Borda.

Accompanied by pianists Malcolm Martineau and Caroline Dowdle.

St Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle

7pm, Saturday, 19th March 2005

Tickets: £12 or £10

concessions available from:

The Samling Foundation

Tel: 01434 602 885;

Tullie House Museum, Castle Street, Carlisle

Tel: 01228 534781;

Bookends, Castle Street, Carlisle

Tel: 01228 529067

Diary dates 2005

Sunday 6th March - Sally Matthews and Malcolm Martineau,
The Mansion House, Newcastle upon Tyne 7 pm

Sunday 13th March - Sunday 20th March Masterclass Week led by Della Jones, Paul Farrington and Malcolm Martineau with pianist Caroline Dowdle and this year's specially selected young singers - Gail Johnston, Shuna Sendall Luciana Alves e Silva, John Llewelyn Evans, Adrian Ward and Javier Borda

Open Afternoon, Wednesday 16th March 2pm - 5pm
Penrith Methodist Church

Gala Concert, Saturday 19th March 7 pm

Choral Day, Monday 21st March 10am - 2.30pm
St Cuthbert's Church, Carlisle

Monday 20th June - Saturday 9th July Samling Opera (Mozart's Cosí fan tutte)

starring Henriikka Gröndahl, Fiordiligi; Carolyn Dobbin, Dorabella; Mattijs van de Woerd, Guglielmo; Rafael Vásquez, Ferrando; Amy Freston, Despina; Richard Morrison, Don Alfonso – with Northern Sinfonia conducted by Thomas Zehetmair; Sir Thomas Allen, Director. Four performances: Monday 4th July (schools only); Wednesday 6th July, Friday 8th July, Saturday 9th July at The Sage Gateshead

Sunday 26th June The Samling Picnic - the annual party in the garden at Dilston House, Corbridge with non-stop live music including Peter Tickell and friends, Steelquake and Jambone jazz ensemble, exhibition of art, auction and fun for all the family.

Wednesday 21st September – Friday 23rd September Performance and Outreach Programmes with Southbank Sinfonia with a Concert including local schools on Friday 23rd September in Hexham Abbey

Sunday 13th November - Sunday 20th November Masterclass Week led by Sir Thomas Allen, Felicity Palmer, Barbara Leigh-Hunt, Richard Pasco, Simon Over and Caroline Dowdle and this year's specially selected young singers - Martene Grimson, Anna Stéphany, Celeste Lazarenko, Flora McIntosh, Mark Chaundy and James Harrison

Open Afternoon, Wednesday 16th November 2pm - 5pm

Gala Concert, Saturday 19th November 7 pm

Choral Day, Monday 21st November 10am - 2.30pm
The Sage Gateshead

Friday 9th December, Samling Concert with Sir Thomas Allen, Samling Scholars; Katherine Manley, Anna Stéphany, Marc Labonnette, Ed Lyon with pianists Malcolm Martineau and Simon Over
Wigmore Hall

The Samling Foundation

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