

The Samling Foundation

NURTURING TOMORROW'S PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTISTS

news

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Photo: Mark Pinder

hot young things

Pictured together for the first time are six of the hottest young singers out there today – our cast for Samling Opera.

They met up in London recently with *Così fan tutte* Director, Sir Thomas Allen and pianist Caroline Dowdle, to begin rehearsals - so we sent Samling photographer Mark Pinder along to take the first publicity shots.

And a truly international cast they are - English soprano, Amy Freston who plays the maid Despina, Irish mezzo-soprano Carolyn Dobbin as Dorabella with Spanish tenor Rafael Vázquez who plays her love interest, Ferrando. The other pair of lovers - Dutch baritone, Mattijs van de Woerd who plays Guglielmo and Swedish soprano Henriikka Gröndahl as

Fiordiligi - are followed by Scottish baritone Richard Morrison as Don Alfonso.

With engagements here and in Europe life is busy for these young singers, but they are all looking forward to June when full rehearsals begin for *Così* at The Sage Gateshead.

“We’ve all got engagements to fulfil at present as well as fitting in our own individual practice for *Così* but it’s been great to get together over these past two days. Although we are all Samling Scholars it will be the first time we’ve all worked together and there is a real buzz about this new production. It’s a fantastic opportunity for us all and we are looking forward to starting full rehearsals with Tom Allen, Thomas Zehetmair and Northern Sinfonia,” said Richard Morrison.

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behind the scenes

With only a few months to go before the first historic performance of Samling Opera at The Sage Gateshead, we went behind the scenes to meet some of the key people working on this new production.

under wraps

There's much more to this costume design business than meets the eye as we found out when we talked to Samling Opera's costume designer, Sabine Lemaitre.

For Sabine, who has worked for a whole host of theatres and companies including The Royal Opera House, Royal Shakespeare Company, English National Opera and The Royal Ballet, working on a production of *Così* is always a pleasure.

"I've worked on two productions of *Così* at Covent Garden so it is an old favourite of mine. Packed with beautiful arias, delicious ensembles plus a wonderful injection of humour and musical fun which contrasts with cruel sensitivity and deception – there's certainly a lot to be inspired by when it comes to designing the costumes," she said.

But before she puts pen to paper Sabine has to look at the opera from the inside out with director Tom Allen and the rest of the team. "Tom has the overall vision for this production, so it's important that we explore together all the concepts - the characters, their relationships to each other, the period in which it's set as well as looking at the performance space and the set in terms of colours, size, style and lighting."

As well as all these considerations, Sabine also has to get to know the performers. "Meeting the cast early on in the design process can be incredibly helpful," said Sabine. "The way a person carries themselves and their personal character help you bring extra dimensions to the designs.

"You also need to look at the individual proportions of an artist so you can create a costume with a flattering line but which allows them physically to do what they need on stage," she added.

With the initial drawings, references and sketches complete, the final designs are definitely under wraps. "All will be revealed on the opening night - until then my lips are sealed," she said.



Carolyn Dobbin and Sabine Lemaitre

sitting pretty

Samling Opera has called on the talents of Northumbrian furniture designer Andrew Bottomley to create some stunning stage designs for this production of *Così*.



Andrew, who runs Hexham-based Hepple Furniture with his brother Mike, is in the process of designing and producing the set. "We met up with Tom Allen a few months ago to discuss his plans and how the furniture sets will work in this production," explained Andrew. "From this we're going to produce some quite unique pieces that we hope will blend in perfectly with his vision for *Così*."

all lit up

From Covent Garden and the RSC in Stratford to theatres and opera houses all over the world, lighting designer Bob Bryan will be adding the UK's newest international home for music, The Sage Gateshead, to his prestigious CV. He will be lighting up the stage for Samling Opera's brand new production of *Così fan tutte* in July this year.

"I visited The Sage Gateshead a few months ago with the Foundation's Artistic Director Karon Wright to have an initial look at the space," said Bob. "It certainly throws up some challenges but that's what makes it an interesting and exciting project for me.

"The absence of big traditional theatre sets means that the lighting is going to play a big role in this opera production – so Tom and I will be in deep discussion between now and June when rehearsals begin," he added.

Full rehearsals get underway for Samling Opera in June with public performances from 6th-9th July 2005. Contact The Sage Gateshead booking office on 0191 443 4661 or visit www.thesagegateshead.org to book online.

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

Samling Opera's *Così fan tutte* is part of the 2005 Alive Festival of Music. The £12m 2005 Alive programme runs throughout the year and features four major festivals - the Festival of Music, International Festival of Rivers and the Sea, Festival of Sport and Festival of Visual Arts. Go to www.2005alive.com for further details.



All photos: Mark Pinder

first impressions

'Creativity, energy and fun' summed up the atmosphere at The Sage Gateshead when forty-two gifted and talented teenagers from schools across the region gathered together for the launch of Samling Opera's groundbreaking education project.

The students spent four days in the Easter holidays getting to grips with Mozart's *Così fan tutte* – looking at how an opera works, the historical context and exploring the themes and characters. They also participated in Italian workshops, theatre games and bonding activities all under the watchful eye of writer, director and project leader, Susannah Waters, singer/songwriter and composer Karl Daymond and vocal consultant Paul Farrington.

So just what were the students' first impressions of this innovative education programme designed to open their eyes to the world of opera?

"Absolutely brilliant," said 15 year old Ella Whiteley. "It's far exceeded any expectations I had - it's been hard work and very fast moving but we've learnt so much over the past four days and it's been a lot of fun too."

All agreed that the highlight of the week was – without a doubt – singing and playing 'Soave sia il vento' from *Così*. "It was a big thrill to sing opera and in Italian too," said Ben Helm. "We worked with vocal consultant Paul Farrington and at the end of the session we performed the trio from the first act of *Così* – some of us sang and others played instruments - it was great."

With students representing seven schools – one school from each of the five LEAs of Tyne and Wear, one from Northumberland and one from Cumbria - how did they all get along?

"I devised a love quiz like the ones you find in teen magazines and their answers determined which character from *Così* they would be and this sorted them into groups,"

said Susannah Waters. "The biggest challenge from there was to honour their individual strengths and to keep each student continually involved, but they made it easy by mixing incredibly well and working brilliantly together."

The team and the students will come together again in May during half term to work on and develop their performance pieces for a special performance of their take on Mozart's masterpiece in July when their friends, family and of course Sir Thomas Allen, the Samling Opera cast and orchestra will be in the audience. And during the production period the group will also be given unparalleled access to the processes involved in staging opera at an international level. They will visit the set, sit in on rehearsals and explore with the team – the directors, conductor, vocal consultant, orchestra and singers – the opera from every perspective.



Paul Farrington



Karl Daymond and Susannah Waters

To say that Simon Over is a "superman" in the music world is an understatement.

As an acclaimed pianist he's in demand both in concert halls and recording studios. He is principal conductor and director of the London-based orchestra, Southbank Sinfonia and founder-conductor of the Parliament Choir, which comprises over one hundred MPs, Peers and staff of the Palace of Westminster. On top of all that he's been involved with The Samling Foundation's masterclass programme since its birth nine years ago. How does he do it all?

"Very little sleep," said Simon. "I often work through the night because I'm passionate about making music, encouraging others to do the same, and bringing music to a wider audience. I asked Samling Trustee Bob Bowman what inspires him to support young musicians. He told me that as a pharmacist he hears a lot about preventative medicine and he recognises that music is a preventative medicine; it makes people better. I see that very clearly with the Parliament Choir where a Labour MP, a Conservative Peer, a LibDem research assistant, a cleaner, clerk and policeman all might sing alongside each other, united by a love of music. It's so satisfying when they are then joined by the highly-skilled young musicians of the Samling Foundation and Southbank Sinfonia and produce good quality music enjoyed by enthusiastic audiences."

Last November, Samling Scholars Rafael Vázquez and Wendy Dawn Thompson joined the Parliament Choir and Southbank Sinfonia for a performance of the Verdi Requiem in Westminster Cathedral, attended by 2,000 people and more recently Lucy Crowe, Madeleine Shaw and Marc Labonnette sang the Nelson Mass in Cadogan Hall. Next November it will be Kate Manley



Simon Over pictured with Karon Wright and children from Sele First School.

and Flora McIntosh together with Samling Patron Sir Thomas Allen performing 'Elijah'

Southbank Sinfonia will be returning with Simon to Hexham this year, building on our highly successful community school project last year. In partnership with Southbank Sinfonia there will be three days of instrumental and choral workshops with Samling Scholars and dance, which will all reach a climax in a performance in Hexham Abbey as part of its annual music festival.

Tickets for The Samling Foundation Concert on Friday, September 23rd will be available in June from the Festival Box Office on 01434 652477.

make a date

It's time to make a date in your diary for The Samling Foundation's fifth annual Party in the Garden on Sunday 26th June from 12 noon at Dilston House, Corbridge.

We can guarantee an afternoon of non-stop live entertainment from Steelquake, Jambone jazz ensemble and Peter Tickell and friends. A display of original art to buy will be on show in the house featuring the work of Enrique Azocar, Malcolm Teasdale, Hazel Angus, Elizabeth Talbot, Emma Holliday, Louise Chavannes, Jo Burns and Nigel Noble-Nesbitt.

There'll also be lots of fun activities, including our popular auction, all washed down with a delicious

barbecue lunch, drinks from the bar and afternoon tea.

"The only thing we can't guarantee is the weather," said Samling Foundation chairman and host of the party, Roger McKechnie. "But we've got plenty of gazebos and marquees on hand in case of showers.

"This is a fun family day out that supports the valuable work The Samling Foundation does in the arts and music so we'd like as many people as possible to come and support us on the day – whatever the weather no-one will be disappointed," he added.

Tickets priced at £15 per person or £35 per family available now. Contact The Samling Foundation on 01434 602885.

dates for your diary

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

Starring Henriikka Gröndahl, Fiordiligi; Carolyn Dobbin, Dorabella; Mattijs van de Woerd, Guglielmo; Rafael Vázquez, 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 7.30pm 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 and Samling Scholars Madeleine Shaw, Simona Mihai,

Adrian Ward and John Llewelyn Evans with a Concert including local schools on Friday 23rd September in Hexham Abbey at 7.30pm.

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

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

Gala Concert, Saturday 19th November 7pm
The Sage Gateshead.

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

Friday 9th December, Samling Concert with Sir Thomas Allen, Samling Scholars; Katherine Manley, Anna Stéphanie, Marc Labonnette, Ed Lyon with pianists Malcolm Martineau and Simon Over 7.30pm at Wigmore Hall.

Tickets on sale from June 10th by calling Box Office 020 7935 2141.

The Samling Foundation

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