

KINGSTON
PARISH CHURCH
SAT. 12 JUNE 2004



Conductor

ROBIN PAGE

Soloist

ALISON PEARCE



BIZET
CARMEN
CONCERT VERSION

AND CHORUSES FROM OTHER OPERAS

THAMES SINFONIA



PROGRAMME £1.50

Since its formation in 1948, Kingston Choral Society has earned a reputation for concerts of a high standard and for performing a wide range of music. Under the guidance of Robin Page Kingston Choral Society is not afraid of tackling ambitious projects and has for example performed Prokofiev's Alexander Nevsky in Russian. The choir also enjoys singing the more familiar favourites of the choral repertoire.



Kingston Choral Society has around 100 members drawn from a wide area of southwest London and north Surrey.

New members are welcome. The choir performs four concerts a year, usually in Kingston Parish Church. Rehearsals are held on Thursday evenings (8pm – 10pm) at Hollyfield School, Surbiton, in term time. Kingston Choral Society also holds regular social and fund-raising events and occasional musical workshops.

If you are interested in joining, please talk to any member of the choir during the interval or at the end of the concert. You can also contact the membership secretary June Pearson on 020 8398 3545 for more information and arrange to come to a rehearsal.

ROBIN PAGE - Musical Director

Robin is based in London where he is the principal conductor and musical director of Thames Sinfonia, the Purcell Orchestra, Worthing Philharmonic Orchestra, and Kingston Choral Society. He has conducted the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra Chorus and has made many appearances at the Royal Academy of Music and the London College of Music as a conductor and lecturer specialising in contemporary repertoire and Scandinavian music.

Robin has given acclaimed performances of Sibelius and Nielsen symphonies and conducted the inaugural concert of the UK Sibelius Society in London. He has also given the first performance of many Swedish works, including such composers as Stenhammer, Rosenberg, Lidholm and Bortz. He is guest conductor to Sundsvalls Kammarorkester in Sweden and has broadcast on Swedish National Radio. Robin also has close links with the Baltic States. As guest conductor to the Estonian State Symphony Orchestra, he gave the first broadcast performance and broadcast in Estonian of Elgar's Enigma Variations. Elsewhere in Europe he recently recorded film scores with the Budapest Symphony Orchestra and the Bulgarian Symphony Orchestra. He has given broadcast performances with Polish Radio National Symphony Orchestra, the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra and the Silesian State Philharmonic Orchestra (Poland).

In Britain Robin travels widely. For many years he was the principal conductor of the Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra and also conducted the Hallé Choir, Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra, Worthing Symphony Orchestra and the West Sussex Philharmonic Choir where he was their musical director for many years.

He has given broadcasts on BBC Radio 3 with the BBC Ulster Orchestra.

As well as conducting, Robin is in great demand as an adjudicator, notably with regular appearances at the National Festival of Music for Youth at the Royal Festival Hall.

For many years he was a visiting lecturer at Kingston University and has given classes for the Bandmaster course at the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall.

Robin studied at Magdalen College School, Oxford, as a choral scholar, Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge as a choral exhibitioner and as a postgraduate at the Royal Academy of Music, London.

THE CHOIR

SOPRANOS

Anne Allen
Lynda Anderson
Carole Boothman
Bryony Bridges
Kate Cockle
Anna Cronin
Shirley Davenport
Catherine Edge
Wendy Faulkner
Vikki Field
Lucy Goodwin
Marigold Haworth
Gill Holdsworth
Margaret Jephcott
Prue Johnson
Pat Keep
Norah Lack
Tina Leach
Margie Lindsay
Debbie Lye
Pru McPherson
Val Moeri
Amy Morgan
Marian Morrison
Heather Naylor
Tricia Nicholls
Lizzie Rae
Ruth Rees
Mary Reid
Elizabeth Salzman
Julia Siberry
Magdalen Spooner
Sarah Stokes
Roshni Thoppil
Marion Thorpe
Jackie Thurston
Lynn Tweedale

ALTOS

Elisabeth Bawdon
Sue Brodie
Clare Clarke
Jane Clift
Margaret Crocker
Cathy Daldy
Antoinette De Souza
Pam Deacon
Madeline Dunington
Trish Guthrie
Daphne Hall
Sarah Hastings
Dee Hipwell
Christine Hogh
Donna Laidler
Halcyon Leonard
Julia Leunig
Jax Lewis
Carolyn Liefkes
Anneliese Mackenzie
Anne Miller
Alison Mitchell
Sarah Moreton
Anna Page
June Pearson
Pam Pocock
Jo Richardson
Heather Rooke
Mädi Schmidt
Liz Siberry
Jill Telfer
Lucy Thomas

TENORS

Jim Addington
Richard Clift
John Cracknell
Nick Harris
Wesley Johnson
Rod Pearson
Roger Price
Richard Siberry
Iain Smith
David Todd

BASSES

John Bassett
Alan Brough
Paul Chambers
Tony Cunningham
Dennis Down
Michael Hope
David Hudson
Graham Lavers
Tom Rees
Tim Scott
Roger Ward
David Wright
Ben Young

KINGSTON CHORAL SOCIETY WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

If you like choral singing, have a reasonably good singing voice and would like to join the Choir, please ask any member of the Choir for more information, or come to one of our weekly rehearsals at termtime. We meet every Thursday at Hollyfield School, Surbiton, from 8 – 10pm.

Alison Pearce

Alison Pearce has a distinguished international career as a soprano soloist in opera, oratorio, and recital. She appears with the world's leading conductors and orchestras at major venues and festivals as well as broadcasting for radio and television in many countries. She is also a professor in the vocal department of the Royal Academy of Music and the artistic director of a European Summer School for Singers.

Her major operatic prima donna roles include those in *Tosca*, *Nabucco*, *I Lombardi*, *Fidelio*, *Aida*, *Ariadne*, auf *Naxos*, as well as *Elsa* in *Lohengrin* and *Elizabeth* in *Tannhauser*. She has worked for the English National Opera and at the Royal Opera Covent Garden. For the Dublin International City of Culture celebrations she sang the title role in a production of *Manon Lescaut* by Puccini, which she repeated in Israel along with the role of *Amelia* in Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Her career in Italy culminated in a revival of Monteverdi's opera *Orpheo e Eurydice* in which she sang *Eurydice*.

Alison's career takes her all over the world, performing in top venues with other distinguished artists, giving master classes, and visiting conservatories worldwide.

Gilèa - 'Io son L'umile ancella' from *Adriana Lecouvreur*

Francesco Gilèa was born in 1866 in Naples where he studied at the conservatory. He produced his first opera, *Gina*, aged 23. It was well received, as was his next, *La Tilda*, however his greatest success came in 1902 with *Adriana Lecouvreur*, which was premiered in Milan in 1902. From 1896-1904 he taught in Florence, before becoming the director of the Conservatory in Naples. He also wrote orchestral and chamber music, and his style is characterised by its charm and ingenuity, rather than by its drama.

Adriana Lecouvreur tells of the famous actress of the same name from the Comédie Française who lived from 1692 to 1730. She revolutionised acting with her natural and unstilted delivery of lines. She was the rival of the Princess Bouillon for the love of Maurice de Saxe. Unfortunately she dies from inhaling the scent of a bunch of poisoned violets sent by the Princess.

Puccini - 'O mio babbino caro' from *Gianni Schicchi*

Gianni Schicchi is the third part of *Il Trittico*, a triptych of one-act operas, premiered together at the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, in 1918. The story is based on Canto XXX of Dante's *Inferno*.

It tells the story of the relatives of Buoso Donati, who are gathered around the dead man's bed, awaiting the reading of the will. Among them is the young Rinuccio, with his lover Lauretta Schicchi, who hopes to be able to make a good start in married life with his share of the inheritance. However, Buoso has left all his money to charity, and the relatives decide to call upon the services of the clever Gianni Schicchi to help them out. Gianni Schicchi at first refuses to help, only changing his mind after his daughter, Lauretta, pleads with him, in the famous aria *O mio babbino caro*.

Schicchi's plan is to get into the dead man's bed, pretend to be Buoso, and dictate a new will to the lawyer. Although Schicchi does leave some money to the relatives, he makes the will in favour of himself. When the relatives complain he threatens to expose them.

Puccini - 'Un bel dì' from *Madama Butterfly*

The aria 'Un bel dì' (One fine day) occurs at the start of Act II of *Madama Butterfly*. It is three years since Cho-Cho-San, known as *Madame Butterfly*, has seen her husband Lieutenant Pinkerton. She and her maid are desperately poor, but Butterfly believes that Pinkerton will return, and all will be well. She sings of the day when Pinkerton's ship will be sighted on the horizon.

Thames Sinfonia

Thames Sinfonia was formed in 1982, made up of the best musicians just entering the music profession. Its members are now found in all major London orchestras and play all over the world.

The orchestra plays regularly throughout the south of England and has appeared at the Bournemouth and Exeter International Festivals. In London it has performed at the Queen Elizabeth Hall and St. John Smith Square.

PROGRAMME

CARMEN

by Bizet

Concert version arranged by Maurice Besley

INTERVAL

Overture to Prince Igor - Borodin



Polovtsian Dances from Prince Igor - Borodin



Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves from Nabucco - Verdi



Solos - Alison Pearce



Easter Hymn from Cavalleria Rusticana - Mascagni



Triumphal Hymn from Aida - Verdi

CONCERT NOTES

Carmen – Bizet (Concert version by Maurice Besley)

Carmen was first produced in 1875 and caused something of a stir. The fashion at that time in France was for opera comique, which was characterised by simple, popular music, spoken dialogue, and lighter subjects. Carmen, on the other hand, was produced for a new opera house – the Théâtre-lyrique – and it treats a 'low' life story, set to music of a much higher standard than Bizet's contemporaries.

Carmen is based on a short novel by Prosper Mérimée. It is set in Seville in about 1820. Don José, a corporal in the dragoons, is in love with a nice pretty girl, Micaela, but their relationship is broken up by a wild gypsy beauty, Carmen, who entices him to run off with her and join the smugglers in the mountains. Carmen soon tires of him and her fancy then turns to the bullfighter Escamillo. Don José confronts Carmen outside the arena during a bullfight. Carmen exults when she hears the crowd acclaiming Escamillo's victory. Don José stabs her and gives himself up as the crowds pour out of the arena.

Tonight's sequence of numbers follows the gradual unfolding of the plot. We start with the Prelude to Act I, then move to the Opening Chorus and the Chorus of Street Boys. Then comes the Habanera, Carmen's first attempt to entice Don José, and the letter song, where Micaela brings a letter from José's mother. From Act II we have the Seguidilla, the Canzonetta, the Smugglers' Chorus, the Card Song and Micaela's prayer for courage in the mountains. Lastly from Act III we have the Entrance of the Banderilleros, Escamillo's Address to Carmen and her reply, and finally the Toreador Song which sets the scene for the bullfight at the end of the opera.

Overture and Polovtsian Dances from Prince Igor – Borodin

Borodin was a chemist by profession, and was only able to compose in his spare time. He began work on the opera Prince Igor in the summer of 1869, breaking off early in 1870. He resumed work on it in 1874, and it continued to employ the majority of his composing effort until his death on 27 February 1887, at which time it was still unfinished. It fell to Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov to collect, complete and orchestrate his sketches. The first performance of the opera was not given until 4th November 1890.

The libretto, also written by Borodin, is based on the epic tale of the 12th century war waged by Igor, prince of Seversk, against a nomadic Asian tribe of Tartars, the Polovtsi, led by the Khan Konchak. Igor is defeated and taken prisoner by the Khan, who treats Igor with great honour and respect.

Borodin did not write the overture, however he had frequently played it on the piano to his friends, and Glazunov felt he could orchestrate it from memory, assisted by Borodin's sketches. It is in sonata form and uses several themes from the opera. It starts very quietly with a falling string line, the stillness is broken by a brass fanfare. The ensuing main allegro introduces the two pairs of themes. Firstly a brisk Russian dance which is contrasted with a seductive clarinet melody. Secondly a theme of some nobility caps the ensuing climax, to be succeeded by a glowing tune on solo horn.

The Polovtsian Dances come at the end of Act II and are performed by the slave dancers of the Khan to entertain Prince Igor and his comrades. They were completed and orchestrated by Borodin himself. In the opera there are 5 dances, forming a continuous sequence, some with chorus, and some without. The version you will hear tonight starts at the second dance, which is a dreamlike dance for the slave-girls, who sing plaintively of their homeland. This is followed by more violent and barbaric dances for the warriors, accompanied by songs in praise of the mighty Khan.

We dedicate tonight's concert to the memory of Paul Bleasby who died recently. Paul sang with us for many years. We will miss him very much.



Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves from Nabucco – Verdi

Verdi's early career coincided with an upsurge in the nationalist movement in Italy. The nationalist movement started as a reaction to the invasions of Napoleon, reaching its climax in 1848, the 'Year of Revolutions', and ultimately leading to the unification of Italy in the 1870s. The work that more than any other became identified with the nationalist movement was Nabucco, premiered at La Scala, Milan on 9th March 1842. Verdi had had little success up to this point, but within two years Nabucco had been performed over fifty times, and as far afield as Lisbon.

In 1879 Verdi wrote that when he first looked at the libretto for Nabucco, it fell open at 'Va pensiero'. The opera's triumphant success was due in no small part to the melody to which he set this paraphrase of psalm 137. It is recounted that at the first run of performances all the stagehands would gather every night in the wings to hear the great chorus. The narrative, which derives from a French play produced in Paris in 1836, is set around the biblical story of the Jews in Babylonian exile in 56 BC. The chorus is sung by the Israelites as they lament the loss of their homeland, and was soon widely interpreted as a political gesture, becoming the anthem of Italian patriotism. At Verdi's funeral the crowd spontaneously sang it.

Easter Hymn from Cavalleria Rusticana – Mascagni

Mascagni's first career was as apprentice lawyer, and he studied music in his spare time. He attended the Milan Conservatory for a short period, but did not get on well with structured learning. He joined a travelling operatic company as a conductor, and soon married and settled down as a piano teacher in a small town. At twenty-six he became famous overnight with his one act opera Cavalleria Rusticana. Although this was followed by over 15 more operas, they never achieved the same success.

The term verismo (truth) was coined in the late 19th century to describe the style of literature by Giovanni Verga and Emile Zola. Their stories show a concern with what was considered to be a realistic portrayal of life. This became the preferred choice of subject for Italian opera of the late 19th century, and hence the term was also applied to the opera.

Cavalleria Rusticana is based on a short novel by Giovanni Verga. Its title, Rustic Chivalry, was meant sarcastically since the main characters behave appallingly to each other. The action takes place in a contemporary (1890) village in Sicily. The story is one of love, betrayal, and death, and the function of the Easter Hymn is to provide local colour and show the religious devotion which provides another side to the hot-blooded Sicilian character. It was first performed on 17th May 1890 at the Teatro Constanzi in Rome.

Triumphal Scene from Aida – Verdi

It is often stated that for the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Khedive of Egypt commissioned Verdi to write an opera, and the result was Aida. Unfortunately this is not true. Verdi was asked to contribute a work to the festivities for the opening of the canal, however he was asked for an ode, and he declined the invitation.

In the same year, an opera house was opened in Cairo, with a production of Rigoletto. The Khedive was keen to have a grand opera on an Egyptian subject. He was supported in his endeavour by the eminent Egyptologist, Auguste Mariette. At the time Verdi was busy with other things, and it was not until April 1870 that he was able to work on it. Verdi worked with Camile Du Locle, the co-author of the text for Don Carlos, to get the libretto into a workable form. It was then sent to Antonio Ghislanzoni, the foremost librettist in Northern Italy at the time, to put it into verse.

The triumphal scene is set at Thebes where the Egyptians have defeated the Ethiopians. The stage is crowded as the king, accompanied by his courtiers, priests and standard bearers, enters by a triumphal arch and ascends the throne. The people sing a song of victory to welcome the leader of the Egyptian Army. A triumphal march and a dance follow.

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Weekend in Venice

A group of singers from **Kingston Choral Society** were in Venice recently during the Whitsun Bank Holiday weekend to sing there on two occasions. The first was to celebrate the official birthday of HM the Queen in the presence of the Consul General and other dignitaries. Another performance was at the Anglican church of St. George. On both occasions the audience was highly appreciative.

KINGSTON CHORAL SOCIETY has an exciting programme planned for the coming season.

At the start of the new season, on 20th November we are performing Mendelssohn's Oratorio St. Paul at Kingston Parish Church..
Then on 11th December also at Kingston Parish Church we are performing Benjamin Britten's St. Nicholas.
On 12th March '05 we will sing a specially commissioned work by Maxwell Davies, together with John Rutter's Birthday Madrigals and George Shearing songs.
Then at the end of the season we will perform Bruckner's Te Deum and Mozart's Coronation Mass jointly with a US choir the Fairfield County Chorale. Conductors Robin Page and Johannes Somary.,

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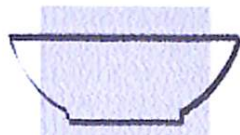
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Kingston Choral Society needs your support

It takes a lot of resources – talent, volunteers and financial support – to allow the Society to continue to perform and maintain high quality performances. Contributions are used to purchase and hire music, to rent performance facilities, and to pay the day-to-day operational expenses of the organisation.

Your gift entitles you to membership of the Friends of Kingston Choral Society.

By becoming a 'Friend' for a minimum yearly fee of £15 you will receive in return Priority booking facilities, advance notice of concerts, your name listed as a Friend in all concert programmes and a discount on the purchase of two tickets for each concert.

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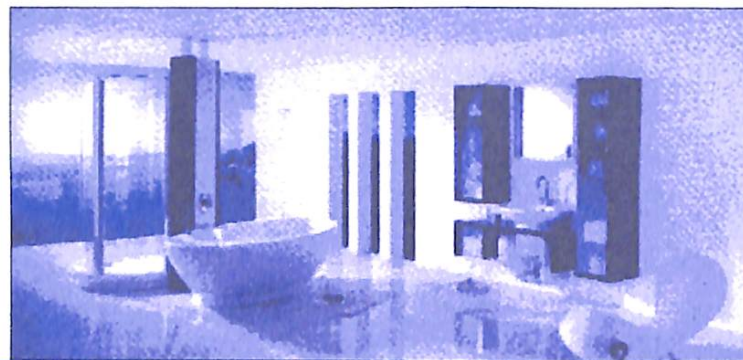
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