

# HARMONY

No 252

April - June 2016



# HARMONY

Quarterly Journal of the Music Club of London  
No 252 – April to June 2016

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**UK Events:**

**Ann Archbold/Frances Simpson**

**THE MUSIC CLUB OF LONDON**  
**NOTICE OF THE 48TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**Tuesday, 26 April 2016 at 6.30 for 7pm**  
**Swedenborg Hall, 20-21 Bloomsbury Way WC1A 2TH**

**Agenda**

**(NB: PLEASE SIGN THE ATTENDANCE REGISTER)**

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the 47th AGM
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Hon. Secretary's Report
6. Hon. Treasurer's Report
7. Motions
8. Election of Officers
9. Election of Council Members
10. Any Other Business

**(Please notify the Chairman at the start of business whether you wish to raise specific matters under item 10)**

**INTERVAL – REFRESHMENTS** (cheese, wine, soft drinks)  
(Please let Frances Simpson know if you are coming so that she can plan catering)

**GUEST SPEAKER: LUDMILLA ANDREW**  
**In conversation with Michael Bousfield**

Ludmilla Andrew grew up in Canada with Russian as her first language. She has followed her stage career as a soprano by becoming one of the most distinguished vocal and language coaches of our time.

\*\*\*\*\*

Documents relating to items 2, 4, 5 and 6 will be circulated prior to the meeting. Notices of motions (item 7) should reach me in writing before the meeting, together with names and signatures of proposer and seconder. Nominations for Officers and Council Members (items 8 and 9) should reach me before 31 March. **We are particularly keen to receive nominations for new Council Members.**

**Brian Dodsworth**  
**Hon. Secretary**  
**(Date as publication of *Harmony*)**

## MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

In our first edition of Harmony in 2016, I want to welcome back Ann Archbold as our Editor. She has very kindly agreed to take over from Roger Lee who has sadly had to resign his various editorships due to ill-health. We are deeply grateful to Ann for assisting in this way: it is on a temporary basis until we can find a new permanent editor. If any of our members would be interested in this role please contact me or our Club Secretary, Brian Dodsworth.

I know we would all want to express our thanks to Roger for his sterling work on behalf of the Club and to wish him a speedy recovery.

One of our major activities this year will be a return visit to Aldeburgh for another musical extravaganza organized by the Mastersingers. Featured guests will be Dame Josephine Barstow, Dame Anne Evans and John Copley CBE, along with several members of the Mastersingers Young Artists programme. Further details appear in this issue and you are urged to book quickly as there are only limited spaces.

On behalf of our Council may I wish all members a very pleasant and enjoyable Year 2016!

**Michael Bousfield**

## MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions became due for renewal on **1 February 2016**

Annual Subscription Rates:

Individual membership	£15
Joint Membership	£20
Student membership	£8

Cheques made payable to **The Music Club of London** should be sent to:  
Mrs Margaret Murphy, 16 Doran Drive, Redhill, Surrey RH1 6AX  
[mm@misterman.freemove.co.uk](mailto:mm@misterman.freemove.co.uk).

An early response would be much appreciated. Also, please advise of any change of address or email address. Thank you.

*Please ignore this request if your subscription is paid by Standing Order*

## LUDMILLA ANDREW: A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

During my performing career I have from time to time had the privilege of finding myself alongside Milla on the stage and I have always been in admiration of the beauty and power of her voice, tethered to an unerring insight into the character she was playing. The rest of us took a back seat when she was there! But this is only a part of what we all admire so much nowadays in the work of this icon of the opera world.

For the last 20 years or so she has been a pillar of strength in assisting young artists to develop their careers in opera. Russian coach, Italian coach, German coach, vocal coach, drama coach, mother, benefactor (for many years she has given generously of her time as well as financial support to Mastersingers): you name it, she has done it.

When I founded Mastersingers in 1996 to encourage the development of young artists into the Wagner repertoire (as I felt that we needed to continue the work created by Sir Reginald Goodall whilst so many of his ENO *Ring* performers were still active) I asked my colleague and friend Maestro Anthony Legge for advice on where I could unearth a supply of future talent to audition with a view to creating our pool of the “new generation”. He unhesitatingly suggested Milla and said, “This is who you need, go no further.”

Since then she has helped Mastersingers to open doors for so many artists now enjoying careers in all of the world’s major opera houses. You know some of them well: Amanda Echalaz, James Rutherford, Alwyn Mellor, Lee Bisset, Colin Lees, Miriam Murphy, Giselle Allen, Kelvin Lim, Rhonda Browne, Natalya Romaniw, Alison Roddy, Ivana Dominic ....

As a Russian coach she has worked with such luminaries as Gerald Findlay, Simon Keenlyside, Nina Stemme, Dame Felicity Palmer, Sir Mark Elder and Richard Bonyngé. She is a legend in her lifetime and many people have better lives because of her.

Malcolm Rivers

ALDEBURGH – 23-26 SEPTEMBER 2016  
MUSIC CLUB OF LONDON & MASTERSINGERS *present*  
**SOUNDS AND SWEET AIRS**

Shakespeare in music: a celebration of our greatest playwright and the music he has inspired.

Special guests: Dame Josephine Barstow, Dame Anne Evans and John Copley CBE

Enjoy the favourites and discover some novelties in music ranging from Purcell and Bellini via Brahms, Strauss and Berlioz through to Britten, Bernstein and Ades.

To include:

Dame Josephine talking about her career to Humphrey Burton, *with recorded illustrations*

*Shakespeare translated* - a talk by David Edwards looking at how Verdi, Gounod, Berlioz and other composers have either set or translated Shakespeare's words, with the *Mastersingers young artists*

A session on Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with John Copley, who was involved in the world premiere, in the Jubilee Hall. John will talk about his experience and work with young singers on scenes from the opera

A Masterclass with Dames Josephine and Anne, working with some of our talented young singers on their wide-ranging repertoire

Two recitals of music inspired by Shakespeare from the 17th to the 21st century and including hits from the classic musicals that set Shakespearean tales: *West Side Story*, *Kiss Me Kate* and *The Boys from Syracuse*

A panel discussion featuring our special guest artists talking to Humphrey Burton about their careers and many matters both musical and operatic. Certain to be entertaining!

“The isle is full of noises,  
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not ...”

*The Tempest Act 3 sc 2*

*Programme details and artists appearing are still to be confirmed.*

## CHRISTMAS AT THE MUSIC CLUB OF LONDON

Our seasonal celebrations have become as traditional as the Christmas tree: a delicious meal in an elegant Piccadilly town house opposite Green Park, now the Royal Air Force Club, all perfectly organised by Rosemary Frischer.

It has also become our habit to invite a senior member of the music profession to share memories of their working life, and this year the after-dinner speaker was John Copley CBE. His love of music was inspired by his mother at an early age, and this led to an amazingly varied life in which he has directed 98 operas, working in every major house. Living in Birmingham, his school was King Edward's, where Joan Cross was a visiting music teacher from whom he learnt a great deal. The younger masters were away at the war, and those who were left didn't want to teach, but were happy to put on theatrical productions such as Gilbert and Sullivan. John and the other small boys had to take the girls' parts, so he once suggested *Yeomen of the Guard* as it has only one female role. At the age of 16 he took up ballet and went to the Sadler's Wells ballet school, but Ninette de Valois soon sent for him, told him that he was absolutely hopeless, and was to be transferred to the Covent Garden Opera as a student. There he trained and performed under the finest operatic specialists in the world.

Later he returned to Sadler's Wells as a stage manager and director. They did 16-week tours with a different show each night, performed by the same principal artists. Once when doing *Tosca*, Madam Butterfly came into the wings, was shoed away frantically to change, but returned still with her Japanese face. He worked in a John Osborne musical in the West End, *The World of Paul Slickey*, where Adrienne Corri was in the cast, and on one occasion when on stage and about to be ravished, her own young son in the audience called out, 'But that's mummy,' which brought the house down and destroyed the momentum. It never was a good show. Far more rewarding were many seasons at the Aldeburgh Festival, where Britten knew him from his younger days when he had appeared as the boy in *Peter Grimes*. Now acting as a counter-tenor understudy, he was coached by Alfred Deller. One German lady said to him, 'You eunuch', to which he replied, 'No, madam, I am just unique.'

John was lured back to Covent Garden by David Webster as a full stage manager, and he was there in 1963 when Pavarotti was to appear. Unknown in London at that time, the Italian would come to John's house bringing pasta to cook and share, but later his attitude changed. Stories were also told of rehearsal tantrums at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, where for one production he was given an unexpectedly large fee because of the known temper of the American soprano!

However, in complete contrast, when Maria Callas starred in the new London production of *Tosca* in 1964 with Tito Gobbi, designed by Zeffirelli, which John was to direct, she taught him a great deal about the score that he had previously not noticed. He took her place at some rehearsals, singing her part counter-tenor, and was applauded by the orchestra. Further experiences with such artists as Carlos Kleiber, Birgit Nilsson and John Vickers were confided, but he reckoned Janet Baker to have been the easiest person that he had worked with, as she concentrated totally on achieving perfection in her own role as part of the group effort.

John said that he did not like modern productions, as singers had been his life and he thought that their artistry should be supported rather than made more difficult. In closing, he said that in his young days when everything was done in English, correct pronunciation of the final consonant was part of the contract, but it could produce some very strange sounds indeed from foreign singers.

### **Brian de Save**



Photograph by Iris Lando







Photographs by Michael Bousfield

## EVENTS – APRIL TO JUNE 2016

### April

8 Dvorak: Mass in D  
 10 Sleazy St Giles Walk  
 17 LSO/Sir Simon Rattle  
 30 *The Winter's Tale*

### May

14 Songs without Words  
 15 Modigliani Quartet

### May (contd)

19 Tour of Barbican Centre  
 25 Regent's Canal Dinner Cruise

### June

2 Tour of Lord's Cricket Ground  
 9 Winchester Cathedral  
 10 Leif Ove Andsnes in Recital  
 14 Dame Evelyn Glennie  
 30 *On the Twentieth Century*

## TRANSACTION CHARGE

*For tickets please apply on the appropriate form to the person named.  
 An administration charge of 50p per ticket (to a maximum of £2.50) should be added  
 to the ticket total. There is NO transaction charge for Events/Visits.  
 Please enclose an SAE with your application. Cheques should be made payable to **The  
 Music Club of London** with an upper limit in case of price change*

### 8 April, Friday at 7.30pm

St Sepulchre-without-Newgate

#### DVORAK: MASS IN D

and excerpts from **Vivaldi: Gloria**, **Handel: Messiah** and **Haydn: Paukenmesse**

The Billinghamurst Choral Society will be conducted by Cathal Garvey

St Sepulchre is the largest parish church in the City of London, with a history going back to 1137. It was rebuilt in 1450, only to suffer in the Great Fire of 1666. Its shell was then rebuilt by Wren's masons in 1670/71.

This concert is part of the Spring Series of the Seventh Brandenburg Choral Festival of London. The choirs have professional standards but amateur enthusiasm. The Artistic Director of the Brandenburg Festival is Robert Porter. The Choral Festival offers small- to medium-sized charitable organisations the opportunity to raise funds and awareness – with no financial commitment – by linking to one of the concerts.

**Tickets: £18.00** (unreserved).

Please apply to Marjorie Wilkins.

### 10 April, Sunday at 10.50 for 11am

meet at Charing Cross Railway Station by Information Desk

#### GUIDED WALK: SLEAZY ST GILES

Join Ann Archbold, a qualified London City guide, for a walk around St Giles, one of the most infamous "rookeries" in Victorian London, full of overcrowded tenements, home to the poorest people, criminals and prostitutes – not to mention "slum landlords".

*Please indicate if you would like to have a pub lunch after the walk.*

**Tickets: Members £8, Guests £10.**

Please apply to Ann Archbold.

**17 April, Sunday at 7pm**  
Barbican Hall, Silk Street  
**LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA** conducted by **SIR SIMON RATTLE**  
**Haydn: *The Seasons*** (sung in German)

The London Symphony Chorus (chorus director Simon Halsey) celebrates its 50th anniversary with Haydn's 'nature' oratorio *The Seasons*, joined by the LSO, a stellar cast of international singers and Sir Simon Rattle.

<b>Monika Eder</b>	soprano
<b>John Mark Ainsley</b>	tenor
<b>Florian Boesch</b>	baritone

**Tickets: £32.00.**

Please apply to Marjorie Wilkins.

**30 April, Saturday at 1.30pm**  
Royal Opera House, Covent Garden  
**THE WINTER'S TALE** - A ballet in three acts

Christopher Wheeldon's arresting ballet on Shakespeare's enigmatic late romance returns this spring for its first revival. The story follows the destruction of marriage through consuming jealousy, the abandonment of a child and a seemingly hopeless love. Yet through remorse and regret the ending is one of forgiveness and reconciliation. The character of the tortured King Leontes is already set to be one of ballet's great dramatic roles, while there is a wealth of wonderful solos and *pas de deux* for all the principal characters, as well as a beautiful central Bohemian act for the whole Company. With stunning designs by Bob Crowley and atmospheric music by Joby Talbot, this masterful production is unmissable.

The principals are Claire Calvert, Thiago Soares, Francesca Hayward, James Hay, Itziar Mendizabal and Ryoichi Hirano.

**Tickets: £21.00.**

Please apply to Marjorie Wilkins.

**14 May, Saturday at 4pm**  
St Peter's, Eaton Square, 119 Eaton Square  
(nearest underground station: *Victoria*)  
**SONGS WITHOUT WORDS**

<b>Bruce Dickey</b>	cornett
<b>Alberto Rasi</b>	viola da gamba
<b>Maria Christina Cleary</b>	harp
<b>Liuwe Tamminga</b>	organ

They will play 17th-century Italian instrumental pieces based on vocal models. The early decades of the Baroque era were when virtuoso instruments such as the cornett first came into their own, yet much of their music was based on existing vocal models. Bruce Dickey, widely recognised as the world's greatest exponent of the instrument thought to have the closest resemblance to the human voice, demonstrates how the cool sounds of the Renaissance were transformed into a sparky new species of instrumental eloquence, in works by Gabrieli, Palestrina, Luzzaschi, Bassano and others.

**Tickets: £15.00** (unreserved).

Please apply to Marjorie Wilkins.

**15 May, Sunday at 11.30am**  
Wigmore Hall, Wigmore Street  
**MODIGLIANI QUARTET**

**Schumann:** String Quartet in A minor Op. 41 No 1;  
String Quartet in F Op. 41 No.2

Please indicate on the booking form if you would like to have lunch at a nearby restaurant after the concert.

**Tickets: £13.00 (£11.00 concessions).**

Please apply to Marjorie Wilkins.

**19 May, Thursday at 10.45 for 11.00am**  
**TOUR OF THE BARBICAN CENTRE**

*(Meet at Silk Street entrance, nearest undergrounds: Moorgate and Barbican)*

This 90-minute guided tour will take us to the high walks of the Estate and Arts Centre and will include some hidden spaces. Optional lunch at the Terrace Restaurant (not included).

**Tickets: £11.50.**

Please apply to Frances Simpson.

**25 May, Wednesday boarding from 7.00pm**  
Walker's Quay, Camden Lock, 250 Camden High Street NW1  
*(5-minute walk from Camden Town underground station)*  
**REGENT'S CANAL DINNER CRUISE**

A private MCL cruise aboard *My Fair Lady* along the most picturesque stretch of the Regent's Canal. We start from Walker's Quay at 8pm, rise 2.5m in the lock at Camden, sail round Robert Browning's Island at Little Venice and return to Camden Lock at 10.30pm.

While cruising, an excellent 3-course dinner will be served, freshly cooked by the chef on board. The menu includes:

**Starters:** Carrot, ginger & coriander soup (V)/Diced gravad lax & smoked salmon bound in sour cream with sweet pickled cucumber/Slow baked beef tomato, layered with basil & mozzarella.

**Main Courses:** Fillet of cod topped with a spinach & Gruyere crust, served with a Pernod cream sauce/Confit of duck with an orange marmalade sauce/Noisettes of lamb glazed with honey & French mustard, served with a Madeira sauce/Vegetable terrine, served on a bed of jasmine rice (V & GF).

All served with fresh seasonal vegetables & roasted new potatoes.

**Desserts:** Cashel Blue cheese with grapes, celery & relish/Warm apple tart with Amarula cream/Strawberries & clotted cream.

Cafetiere coffee.

**Tickets: £49.00 members, £50.00 guests.**

Please apply to Ann Archbold.

*(Bring a party of friends as there are plenty of spaces available on board!)*

**2 June, Thursday at 11.30am**  
(meet at Grace Gate, St John's Wood Road)  
**LORD'S CRICKET GROUND – GUIDED TOUR**

The most famous cricket ground in the world, Lord's was founded by Thomas Lord in 1787 as the home of Marylebone Cricket Club, and is the ultimate destination for international players and cricket fans alike.

The tour will include the Grade II\* listed Pavilion with the Royal Charter, the legendary Long Room, the players' dressing rooms, complete with the Honours Boards, the award-winning J P Morgan Media Centre, and the MCC Museum, home to the iconic Ashes Urn. With extraordinary architecture, a fascinating collection of art and memorabilia, a Lord's Tour is not only a must for all cricket fans but for everyone looking for a quintessentially English experience.

*Please indicate if you would like to have lunch in the Lord's Tavern after the tour.*

**Tickets: £18.50, concessions £12.50.**

Please apply to Ann Archbold, who will accompany the group.

**9 June, Thursday**  
(St Margaret's Travel coach departs opposite Marylebone Station at **9.00am prompt**.)  
**WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL**

The Cathedral spans 15 centuries of English history, having been the seat of Anglo-Saxon and Norman royal power. Our guide will show us round this splendid Cathedral (Jane Austen is buried here).

There will be an informal musical recital between 1.00 and 1.30pm.

Lunch will be available (at own cost) in the refectory where tables will be reserved for us in the courtyard (weather permitting).

Afternoon free; there is a river walk nearby and the old town to explore.

Depart 4.30pm back to London.

**Tickets: Members £20.00, Guests £22.00.** Numbers limited to 30.

Please apply to Frances Simpson.

**10 June, Friday at 7.30pm**  
Barbican Hall, Silk Street  
**LEIF OVE ANDSNES IN RECITAL**

A recital with Norwegian pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, whose playing has been termed 'staggeringly beautiful', 'more than remarkable' and 'beyond pianistic'.

**Sibelius:** Three pieces (*Kyllikki*) and *The Birch; The Spruce; The Forest Lake; Song in the Forest; Spring Vision*

**Beethoven:** Piano Sonata No.18, *The Hunt*

**Debussy:** *La soirée dans Grenade* from *Estampes*; Three études: *Pour les arpèges composés, Pour les huit doigts, Pour les octaves*; Étude in A-flat major from *Trois nouvelles études*

**Chopin:** Impromptu in A-flat major; Nocturne in F major; Ballade No 4 in F minor

**Tickets: £23.20.**

Please apply to Marjorie Wilkins.

**14 June Tuesday at 7.30pm**  
Cadogan Hall, 5 Sloane Terrace  
**DAME EVELYN GLENNIE'S 50th BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

The groundbreaking solo percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie brings her electric magnetism to the stage for a mesmerising performance of a new percussion concerto from acclaimed American composer Michael Daugherty. This special concert will also include a performance of Sibelius' magnificent Symphony No. 5 featuring its elegant 'swan motif' in the final movement. Such sublime scoring will leave you feeling utterly uplifted. The concert will start with Fauré's *Pelléas et Mélisande Suite*.

**Tickets: £11.25** (including complimentary programme).

Please apply to Marjorie Wilkins.

**30 June, Thursday at 7.30pm**  
Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Silk Street  
***ON THE TWENTIETH CENTURY***

Guildhall actors take on the Broadway musical *On the Twentieth Century*, a classic 1930s-era screwball comedy set on a train travelling from Chicago to New York. The book and lyrics are by Betty Comden and Adolph Green and the music is by Cy Coleman.

**Tickets: £15.00 (£10.00 concessions).**

Please apply to Marjorie Wilkins.



**MAKE A NOTE IN YOUR DIARY**

***MCL CHRISTMAS DINNER***  
at the Royal Air Force Club, Piccadilly  
**WEDNESDAY 14 DECEMBER 2016**



**PLEASE NOTE – OVERSEAS TRAVEL**

Any members particularly interested in overseas travel to events should contact Bryan Suitters, who will keep them informed by means of an advance mailing list he maintains. In order to participate in domestic or overseas travel organised by The Music Club, applicants must be fully paid-up members of the Club.

**Robert Mansell** writes about his upcoming evening presentation entitled  
***'LOVE IN THE LIFE OF SHAKESPEARE'***

'A lavish musical about William Shakespeare' – that was my original concept when I started to write the book for a musical play over 20 years ago. It turned out to be much more difficult than I had imagined because so little is actually known about the man; thus very extensive research was required. The result of that research is what I will be talking about on 16 June. In order that the evening should not be too much like an academic lecture it will be lightened by illustrative projections and include many songs from the show which resulted from my research. The show, then entitled '*Willm-S*', was premiered in a fully-staged production in Florida in 2005.

Although the storyline of the play (and of the evening) is based upon as much fact as can be gleaned from extant documents, the music is not of the Elizabethan era but rather a typical mix of traditional styles found in mid-20th century stage music. The songs are not contemporary to the extent of modern rock pop music but are warm and romantic, including ballads, big company numbers, comic songs and even some semi-operatic arias. The original orchestration has had to be reduced for the Club evening in Pimlico to only a quartet of piano, violin, cello and trumpet accompanying a group of seven singers.

Shakespeare the man is a truly fascinating subject and the deeper one delves into his background the more fascinating and truly unexplainable his story becomes. It becomes even more fascinating when one acknowledges the extraordinary breadth of the story lines he pens and the wonderful poetical depth of his writing. The fact that he single-handedly enlarged the English dictionary by possibly as much as a quarter speaks volumes in itself. Words which today we regard as commonplace did not exist before he invented them. The list of these is far too long to quote in detail in this article, but to give just a few: 'assassination', 'courtship', 'discontent', 'gloomy', 'majestic', 'remorseless'; and phrases such as: 'bated breath', 'dead as a doornail', 'faint-hearted', 'too much of a good thing', 'what the dickens' (meaning 'the devil', not Charles!) - all amazing!

Shakespeare's love life is the focus of the evening, but many other issues will be addressed, such as: was Shakespeare really Shakespeare? - or was he somebody entirely other? I will conclude the evening with my definitive interpretation of that famous conundrum!



The immortal words of the Bard will feature in the evening, but there will not be any lengthy quotes from his plays - so even the non-Shakespearian need not feel daunted at the prospect of an evening devoted to the subject. My aim is to enlighten by entertaining. The accompanying photograph illustrates the conclusion to Act 1 of my show where Shakespeare was, quite extraordinarily, invited to attend the coronation of King James I at Westminster Abbey. Come along to the evening in June and you will find out more about all that and Shakespeare's connections to the court of Queen Elizabeth I!



***So, who do you think invented reality viewing?***

***Cav and Pag***, Royal Opera House, Thursday 3 December 2015

***Zazà - Opera Rara***, Barbican, Friday 27 November 2015

**Hilary Reid Evans**

You would be forgiven if you thought it was the Kardashians, but when Mascagni wrote *Cavalleria Rusticana* (1889) and Leoncavallo *Pagliacci* (1892) they were part of the 'verismo' movement which sought to depict, realistically, everyday life.

Despite enjoying great contemporary success, these pieces have in the more recent past been denigrated as Victorian melodrama. What could be more 21st century however than these two Sun-type scenarios – 'Jealous husband slays love rat' (*Cavalleria Rusticana*) and in the case of *Pagliacci* 'and wife'?

With the recent Royal Opera House modern dress productions of '*Cav and Pag*', as well as Opera Rara's concert revival of Leoncavallo's *Zazà*, we have had the opportunity to reassess these works.

Director Damiano Michieletto's staging of *Cavalleria Rusticana* begins where it ends, with a tableau of villagers mourning the death of a somewhat lumpen Turiddu (Aleksandrs Antonenko). Redolent with a sense of place, in this case a village in rural Sicily, the action cleverly unfolds around the local bakery. Eva-Maria Westbroek wrang every possible ounce of emotion – and then some more – from her role as the drab, seduced, abandoned and vengeful Santuzza. One wondered, however, what possible attraction Turiddu might have for the ultra-glamorous Lola (Martina Belli). Perhaps a case of over-casting?

Supporting the passion unfolding on stage, the Opera House orchestra certainly tugged at the heart strings, their interpretation drawing every nuance from this sparsely written score. Even Maestro Pappano admitted he was exhausted by the end of this short work, such are its demands, but he still found the energy to coax another superb performance from the ensemble for *Pagliacci*.

With some of the characters having been 'prequelled' in *Cavalleria Rusticana* - Silvio (Dionysios Sourbis) features as a baker, Nedda (Carmen Giannattasio) is seen fly-posting the play and Aleksandrs Antonenko (Turiddu) doubles as Canio/Pagliaccio – the two operas were melded together. Credibility did not have to be suspended.

For once, one felt the sadness and longing for a different life of the disappointed younger wife and the brutish despair of the drunken, failing actor, who knows it is just a matter of time before his beloved Nedda moves on to something better. I understand that on the opening night Carmen Giannattasio was suffering from both a cold and a knee injury. No-one in the audience could possibly have detected it, this production felt like life lived in the raw, with Nedda appearing at times raunchy, at times vulnerable, always believable and with the voice of an angel. The attraction between Silvio and Nedda felt credible, the two players well-matched in looks, temperament and vocal ability. Aleksandrs Antonenko, whose interpretation of Turiddu had been so leaden, produced a well-observed Canio/Pagliacci as a frustrated man whose last resort is violence.

How then did Opera Rara's concert performance of *Zazà* fare? For those unfamiliar with the plot, it could perhaps be summarised (Sun-arised?) as 'Secret family revealed – singing star renounces lover'.

The piece contains some splendid music, especially in Acts 3 and 4, and featured virtuoso performances by Ermonela Jaho as the eponymous *Zazà* and the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Perhaps due to the concert format the work did not, however, captivate. The melodrama was heightened or even forced by a scene involving the lover's young daughter, whose voice was heavily amplified. Will anyone be brave enough to take *Zazà* to the stage? Could Damiano Michieletto catapult this from verismo relic to viewable reality?

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**Cover photograph**

**John Copley CBE at the Christmas Dinner**

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