

Highgate Opera Circle

Autumn 2021 Review & 2021/22 Programme

The Spring of 2021 has been a very successful period for the Opera Circle

In March we had a fascinating evening on Grand Opera in Paris, which flourished there in the mid-19th century. The talk covered a 20 year period, including Rossini's wonderful last opera Guillaume Tell of 1829, and ending with Donizetti's La Favorite in 1840. This was presented by HGO Chairman David Conway. Geoff Hunt introduced David by way of Sherlock Holmes, who also enjoyed French Grand Opera and Meyerbeer's Les Huguenots, which premiered in 1836.

In May, opera singer Penny Chalmers presented an evening on Elektra, an opera she knows well. She provided an insight into the opera and the world of Richard Strauss and played extracts from some of her favourite colleagues, in particular the American soprano Deborah Polaski, who also explained how she interpreted the role, and a clip from the Proms with Felicity Palmer as Klytemnestra. There was also a discussion afterwards with composer and opera producer Chris de Souza, about approaching the role of Elektra when the Soprano is on stage all the time and competing against an orchestra of 111 going fortissimo most of the time! Isabel Raphael opened the evening by introducing Elektra from a classical perspective.

In June Brian Hargreaves took us into the world of Vivaldi and his baroque operas. Well, this was a revelation to all of us discovering world class music and young singers, most of us had never heard of. While Vivaldi was writing from 1700-1740, 430 operas were composed for performance in Venice's 7 opera houses. Extraordinary. Very few are heard of today and even Vivaldi's operas were amazingly only discovered in the last 20 years. The emotional intensity created by the interpreters of the some 20 clips played, included Lea Desandre, Sonia Prina, Jakub Orlinski, Philippe Jaroussky, Isabel Leonard and of course culminating with the great Cecilia Bartoli, was truly breathtaking.

A great end to the 2020/21 Opera Circle season and many thanks to all our contributors, including Monica Leighton who hosts all our Zoom evenings.

Looking ahead we have now have set up our Opera Circle programme for the new 2021/22 season from October to June. While we still have restricted audience numbers in the Victoria Hall under HLSI / Covid guidelines, I am afraid we will continue to be operating on Zoom. However, as conditions improve, we hope to be back in the Hall operating on perhaps a hybrid Zoom / live basis.

As always, we are profiling HGO's forthcoming performances. This year it will be The Marriage of Figaro in October, and a double bill of the earliest English operas Purcell's Dido & Aeneas and John Blow's Venus & Adonis in March.

We are very pleased to welcome back Brian Hargreaves to profile both Vivaldi and Handel operas being performed at Covent Garden in February. We will also be profiling Turandot and Samson & Delila.

Bill English will be talking about one of his enthusiasm's - Russian Opera.

We are also pleased and very privileged to welcome back soprano Penny Chalmers to talk about her favourite opera Janacek's *The Makropulos Case*.

Our Christmas event will be Geoff Hunt lifting up everyone's spirits with an evening on Donizetti's delightful opera L'Elisir d'Amore.

Full details are shown below, we hope you enjoy our programme of opera from all round the world!

2021/22 Programme

All evenings are currently on Zoom and commence at 7.30pm

		Opera	Presenter	Future Performances
6	October	The Marriage of Figaro	Bill English HGO	HGO November
3	November	Russian opera	Bill English	
1	December	L'Elisir d'Amore	Geoff Hunt	
12	January	Handel - Theodora Vivaldi - Bajazet	Brian Hargreaves	ROH February
9	February	The Makropulos Case	Penny Chalmers	Berlin February
9	March	Henry Purcell - Dido & Aeneas John Blow - Venus & Adonis	HGO	HGO May
4	May	Turandot	Barry Mellor	Met Live in HD 7 May
8	June	Samson & Dalila	Geoff Hunt	ROH 26 May-19 June

(Programme revised November 2021)

Geoff Hunt

Chairman