**Highgate Opera Circle 2022/23 Season Review**

Following the introduction of the Covid pandemic lockdown, the last Opera Circle evening that year in the Victoria Hall was a profile of Beethoven’s Fidelio in March 2020. The Opera Circle recommenced on Zoom almost a year later in February 2021 and continued until May 2022.

Since returning to the Victoria Hall in October 2022 for the 2022/23 season, there have been 6 Opera Circle events with average audiences of over 60 per evening.

Barry Mellor opened the season with Luciano Pavarotti from the 1990 Rome Three Tenors concert in *Turandot*, and then explored beyond Nessun Dorma in Puccini’s final operatic masterpiece with famous productions from both the Met and Covent Garden.

Bill English next introduced us to Janacek’s *Cunning Little Vixen*. Starting with a particularly delightful animated version conducted by Ronald Corp and the BBC singers, followed by Thomas Allen in a definitive version conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras. HGO went on to profile their new production at Jackson’s Lane, which **won the 2023 Off West End Opera Performance Award. Well done to HGO!**

Robert Lloyd’s pre-Christmas event with his wonderful anecdotes on the *Humours of Opera* was particularly enjoyable, and much appreciated by a large audience.

In January, Bill English took us through various productions of Wagner’s *Tannhauser* culminating with Sir Colin Davis’s very moving performance with Gwyneth Jones and Spas Wenkoff from Bayreuth in 1978. Another full house; the Opera Circle seem to be becoming Wagner enthusiasts!

In February we were very pleased to welcome the return of Penny Chalmers describing her experiences of singing alongside Renee Fleming and Susan Graham in Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* in San Francisco. A fascinating evening, with of course some sublime music.

In March we were treated to another evening of Baroque opera from Brian Hargreaves, this time from Naples. Again, he managed to show us some wonderful music, and singers we had never heard of. On this occasion the Russian soprano Julia Lezhneva was outstanding, particular at the end of the evening in her duet with counter tenor Franco Fagioli in Nicola Popora’s 1738 Opera, *Carlo II Calvo*. This was recorded at the Baroque Opera Festival in Bayreuth, with not a note of Wagner to be heard! This is down the road from the Festspielhaus, where the Ring premiered in 1876, and was from the beautiful baroque Margravial theatre built in 1748.

The last two operas of this season were on 3 May with Brian Hargreaves and HGO introducing their new production of Handel’s *Agrippina*. On 7 June Geoff Hunt profiled perhaps Verdi’s greatest opera *Don Carlos*, where the historical context and musical structure was examined through the many productions and famous artists. Music that is rarely heard, and performances both in French and Italian were included. The fliers for all the 2022/23 season are shown below.

Looking ahead to the 2023/24 season, this is yet to be finalised, but we are very pleased to welcome the return of Robert Lloyd on 4 October taking us into the world of Mozart’s *Don Giovanni*. Humperdinck’s Hansel and Gretel with the Opera Circle and HGO follow on 1 November, and Bill English will be presenting an evening on Verdi’s *Falstaff* for our pre-Christmas evening on 6 December.

Hope to see you all there!

*Geoff Hunt*

*June 2023*

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| ***Highgate Opera Circle***  pinkoperacircle***2022-23 Season*** |  | ***5 October 2022***  **Turandot**  ***Presented by Barry Mellor***    ***Exploring beyond Nessun Dorma in Puccini’s final operatic masterpiece*** |  | ***2 November 2022***  **The Cunning Little Vixen**  ***Presented by the Opera Circle and HGO’s artistic team***    **Introduction to the world’s most popular opera followed by the profiling of HGO’s new production** |
| ***7 December 2022***  **Humours of Opera**    ***An A-Z of Funny Happenings***  ***with* Robert Lloyd** |  | ***11 January 2023***  ***Tannhäuser***  ***Presented by Bill English***    **Some of Wagner’s**  **finest music in one of his most popular operas** |  | ***8 February 2023***  ***Singing in Rosenkavalier***  ***Presented by Penny Chalmers*** | |
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| ***8 March 2023***  ***Naples in the Baroque***  ***Presented by Brian Hargreaves***    ***Home to no less than 300 composers.* Enjoy some of the most beautiful operatic**  **music you have never ever heard before!** |  | ***3 May 2023***  ***Agrippina***  ***Presented by the Opera Circle and HGO***    **Profiling Handel’s first operatic masterpiece**  **and HGO’s forthcoming new production** |  | ***7 June 2023***    ***Presented by Geoff Hunt***  ***The historical context and musical structure will be examined through the many productions and famous artists. Music that is rarely heard, and performances both in French and Italian will be included.*** | |