



The scéance scene (Photo: Ivan Berg)

High Jinks in Highgate

STEVEN ROWE

There were roars of laughter and gasps aplenty – especially in the dramatic scéance scene – when Garden Suburb Theatre performed comedy-thriller ‘The Game’s Afoot’ to packed houses at Highgate’s Upstairs at the Gatehouse theatre in October.

GST’s production in February 2023, also at The Gatehouse, will be ‘The Ladykillers’, a very well received 2011 stage adaptation by Graham Linehan based on the classic 1955 Ealing Comedy film of the same name. Tickets from www.upstairsatthegatehouse.com, but please also consider becoming a Friend of GST because it’s an absolute bargain at £35 per annum and includes a ticket to see all of our superbly produced and directed shows. More information on this and on our other categories of membership including Active (for those wanting to perform), Family, Children’s Show Only and Concession, can be found at www.gardensuburbtheatre.org.uk, or by contacting our Membership Secretary at membership@gardensuburbtheatre.org.uk.

Mill Hill Music Club

DAVID BAKER

The Mill Hill Music Club holds monthly classical music concerts on Sunday evenings in the Hall of Henrietta Barnett School. Over the years, the Club was based at various venues across North London, and we have been based in the Suburb since 2007.

The Club was founded in 1955 by Mr Wilfred Ransom who at that time was deputy manager of Barclays Bank in Swiss Cottage. Ransom had interviewed a concert pianist who couldn’t quite manage to clear his overdraft. Through the auspices of the voluntary movement Toc H (of which he was a member), he arranged a piano recital featuring his impecunious client. Thanks to this inaugural recital, the pianist was able to pay off his overdraft and the Mill Hill Music Club was founded. Since then, we have become one of the most prestigious music clubs in London, if not the country.

The following years were exciting. Musicians such as the Amadeus Quartet, who were in the early days of their career, gave many concerts. The then young Vladimir Ashkenazi gave his first UK recital for the Club when he came to London. Rubenstein told his agent always to book him for ‘Hill Mill’.

Kiri Te Kanawa stepped in at short notice to replace another singer who was unwell, and Alfred Brendel, Radu Lupu, Jacqueline du Pré, Isaac Stern, Pinchas Zuckerman and Benno Moiseiwitsch have been among the many distinguished names who have performed for the Club’s knowledgeable and appreciative audience. More recent famous performers include the pianists Stephen Hough and Paul Lewis and the London Mozart Players. We strive to carry on the tradition of presenting musicians of the very highest calibre, whether they are established famous names or exciting new talents.

Although Mill Hill Music Club has kept its original name, we no longer have a club membership as such. Nevertheless, we do have a very loyal following and we offer a discount on tickets for the whole season, which runs from September to May. Through the generosity of the CAVATINA Trust, the Club is currently able to offer free tickets to concert goers from ages 8 to 25.

For details of the remaining five concerts in our current season and for more information about the Club, please visit www.millhillmusicclub.co.uk.

Mill Hill Music Club
 Sunday, 12th February 2023 @ 7:30 pm
 The Hall, The Henrietta Barnett School, Central Square, NW11

Tessera Piano Quartet
 Sini Simonen - violin, Hilarie Clement - viola
 Tim Pousner - cello, Gavin Dikens - piano

Programme
 Mahler - Quartet Movement for Piano Quartet
 Mendelssohn - Piano Quartet in B minor Op.3
 Brahms - Piano Quartet in C minor Op. 60

Ticket prices: £18.00
 Mill Hill Box Office: 020 8959 1047
 Box Office Address: Dollis, Hendon Wood Lane, Mill Hill, NW7 4HS
 Website: www.millhillmusicclub.co.uk - online booking available
 By arrangement with the CAVATINA Chamber Music Trust aged 8-25 are admitted free.

A Child in Striped Pyjamas

an opera by Noah Max

SHELLEY-ANNE SALISBURY

The prolific and multi-talented HGS resident, Noah Max, invited me to drop in on a rehearsal for his latest oeuvre, an opera based on John Boyne’s book *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. Noah had, like many of his generation, read the book at school and the chilling story stayed with him. However, it was only when Noah’s mentor, the late John Whitfield, asked Noah if he’s ever thought about setting the book to an opera score, that Noah began to explore the idea. John felt it was important for Noah to keep in touch with his family’s Jewish identity. Noah’s family had fled Vienna during the Holocaust so Boyne’s book obviously resonated. But alongside the personal connection for Noah, he feels this is a universal story of loss of innocence.

A Child in Striped Pyjamas is Noah’s first opera and he has taken to the process like a duck to water – he wrote the entire libretto during the first Lockdown in April 2020. Fast forward to October 2022, and Noah, who doesn’t do things in half measures, is in full rehearsal mode. He



Photo: Shelley-Anne Salisbury

greeted me at his parent’s home in Middleway with his usual warmth and boundless enthusiasm – always infectious. He has, he says, kept the opera contained and the cast small, allowing for the intimacy of the story. On cue, two of the cast arrive. Rachel Roper plays the Jewish Child, Susanna MacRae, the German Child. Shortly afterwards we are joined by the opera’s director, Guido Martin-Brandis. They are all equally enthusiastic about this venture. It is, they feel, bringing an important topic to life in a visceral way, where the music (inspired by Jewish cantorial music) will speak to the audience in same way as a film does – impactful, emotional, disturbing and above all beautiful. Noah hopes the opera will become an educational resource.

This morning they are rehearsing the scene where the two children are meeting up after some absence from the German Child who detects a change in his ‘friend’s’ emotional state. It’s a terribly poignant scene. This is a

very tight opera, stripped back and raw. The music is angular and sharp (painful to the touch as Noah says) with a constant tugging. This is a technically challenging opera – the sopranos are certainly put to the test. Some notes are eye wateringly high and Noah is exacting but always with an apology and bags of charm. And there are some humorous moments during the rehearsal providing some much needed light relief. When the repetiteur says ‘I’m feeling a little hassled by all the semi quavers,’ we all laugh.

They hardly notice me slipping out as they continue on with the detailed musical interpretation of the unrelenting story describing the very best and the very worst of humanity. The soaring notes following me out of the house and quite far down Middleway stayed with me for some time afterwards – just, I suspect, as Noah intended.

A Child in Striped Pyjamas premieres on 11th and 12th January 2023 at the Cockpit Theatre, Marylebone. Tickets are available online thecockpit.org.uk.

Forty fabulous years of choral singing

DIANE LANGLEBEN

Alyth Choral Society occupies a unique position in the Jewish musical scene, being the only Jewish choir that gives its members the opportunity to perform the great oratorios, many of which are based on biblical tradition, and other standard works. The choir also enjoys performing Jewish music, art song, works by prominent British composers and works from stage and screen.

This year, the Society gave two performances: one in spring to celebrate the late Queen’s Diamond Jubilee with songs from around the British Isles, and a summer concert featuring Handel’s *Jephtha*. The year will finish with Purcell’s *Dido and Aeneas*, and Whitacre’s *Five Hebrew Love Songs*. The performance takes place on 11 December at the North Western Reform Synagogue.

To celebrate the choir’s 40th anniversary, in July next year, there will be a performance of Haydn’s masterpiece, *The Creation*.

As well as performing on its home ground at North Western Reform Synagogue, the Society has sung in Germany, France, the Netherlands and the north of England. It has performed to great acclaim at venues including the Royal Festival Hall, Barbican, St John’s Smith Square, St Martin-in-the-Fields and St Paul’s Cathedral.

ACS was founded by Vivienne Bellos in 1982, for a performance of Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* to mark North Western Reform Synagogue’s 50th anniversary. Since then, it has had many works composed for it, including by its honorary composer, Julian Dawes, and ACS premiered Dawes’ *Death of Moses* and his oratorio *Ruth*. Alyth Choral Society is a mixed-ability

choir and it offers a warm welcome to new members. The choir meets at North Western Reform Synagogue to learn and rehearse for two hours each Tuesday evening in term time.

More about the choir and its future performances can be found at www.alythchoralsociety.org, or you can contact Gill Epstein at alythchoralsociety@gmail.com.

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