

Looking back on Proms 2015



Daisy Brown (Frasquita) Clare Presland (Carmen) & Katie Grosset (Mercedes)



Alan Johnson MP (right) with Simon Lewis



Paul Carey Jones



Clare Teal



David Littaur



LitFest Café



Children at BBC Elstree Concert Band Performance



Alex Belos



Last Night of the Proms audience

Among those of us who organise Proms at St Jude's, this will be the year that will be remembered for being the one when the orchestra didn't turn up until half-time. That's a whole story in itself, see opposite page. But for those who attended, every day had its own highlight.

There's no doubt that the opening night's *Carmen* was a fantastic hit. As with their *La Bohème* last year, the Nevill Holt Orchestra directed by Nicholas Chalmers excelled themselves with a captivating performance. Clare Presland was a stand-out in the title role, fully imparting the character's sultriness, while Paul Carey Jones was superb as the swashbuckling toreador. This was a production only made possible by the generosity of lead sponsors Investec to whom we are all grateful.

On the following day, there was a deserved full house to

hear former Home Secretary, Health Secretary and Education Secretary Alan Johnson at LitFest in conversation about his latest memoir, *Please Mr Postman*, with former No 10 Communications Director Simon Lewis. 'AJ', as Simon disclosed that he was known as in Downing Street, was down-to-earth, funny and engaging. Publicly thanking the audience member who had baked him a special cake to enjoy in the LitFest café just reinforced the humanity of the man and the unique community spirit that Proms brings about.

A treat on Day Three was the walk around Golders Green Crematorium, led by the irrepressible Eric Willis, who is in charge of its maintenance department. The plan was to see the beautiful gardens as well as learn about the buildings and their history, but with the English

weather doing its utmost to keep the lawns and flowers green, and the curiosity of the walkers being what it was, the visit instead concentrated on a subject none of us had really expected – seeing how a crematorium actually works. It was a full 'behind the scenes' tour. Not for the squeamish, but fantastically interesting.

Day Four produced an enchanting harp recital at lunchtime by the French Clara Garde and Portuguese Zita Silva. This is the second year that Proms has given a platform to winners of the annual Camac Harp Competition, and it looks set to become a tradition.

The energetic Charlie Siem appeared with pianist Walter Delahunt on Wednesday, half-way through the Festival. This was a return engagement for the virtuoso violinist, and it was great to see his fan club, the band of so-called Charlie's Angels, in the audience again alongside Proms regulars. His unprogrammed gypsy and folk music proved just as entertaining as the 'official' Beethoven Kreutzer Sonata.

Youth really came to the fore on Thursday when the excellent Oliver Zeffman, who is still a student at Durham University, directed the talented Melos Sinfonia, largely comprising recent

graduates and undergraduates. A particular high point was the performance of Poulenc's Concerto for two pianos, with Antoine Françoise and Robin Green as the duo on the keyboards. Their playful rendition of parts of Saint-Saens' Carnival of the Animals as an encore led to rousing applause.

Friday's concert brought a little magic to St Jude's as the Cardinal's Musick showed how good the acoustics of the church are for vocal performances – indeed, several albums have been recorded there for that reason. It was stirring to hear the 16th and 17th century music wafting up into the beautifully lit nave.

On the penultimate day of the nine-day festival, the BBC Elstree Concert Band demonstrated at lunchtime how to get children really enthused with live music. Conductor Marc Dooley and presenter Robert Benton had the audience enrapt and engaged as they performed a range of well-known film themes and musical numbers, at times giving the young people their own chance to play along.

Not to be outdone, conductor Howard Williams pulled off the same sort of stunt with an adult audience on the Last Night, turning round from the orchestra to direct the multitude

trying to sing along to Rule Britannia but not making a very good job of it! Luckily mezzo-soprano Victoria Williams was there to save the day.

As a surprise on the Last Night, the audience was also treated to an extra delight – to see Proms Committee veteran David Littaur taking up the baton to conduct the London International Orchestra for a few minutes in honour of his 90th birthday. As Proms founder, Susie Gregson, said, "He is the epitome of an English gentleman,

extraordinarily considerate and polite and we are fond of saying that when we grow up, we want to be just like David!"

It was a fitting way to end the Proms' 23rd season, one in which we will again have raised about £60,000 for Toynbee Hall and the North London Hospice. Many thanks to everyone who made this possible.

RON FINLAY

Ron Finlay is a trustee of Proms at St Jude's and responsible for marketing and publicity.



JOSHUA BERGER
CARPENTRY

For all your professional carpentry needs

I specialise in all domestic and commercial carpentry to the highest possible standards

Professional decorating services also managed with over 10 years of excellence

Call now for a free quotation
07811 911 389
joshuabergercarpentry.com



GOLDERS GREEN COLLEGE
Established in 1941

11 GOLDERS GREEN ROAD, LONDON NW11 8DY
TEL : 020 8905 5467 FAX : 020 8455 6528
www.englishlanguagecollege.co.uk
booking@englishlanguagecollege.co.uk

WHY PAY MORE?
THE BEST IN TOWN

Accredited by the
BRITISH COUNCIL
ENGLISH UK

English for Au Pairs!
New (extra) Classes... New Prices... New Times!

	2 weeks	4 weeks	6 Weeks	12 Weeks
6 hours (3hrs x 2 days)	£75	£140	£199	£345
9 hours (3hrs x 3 days)	£115	£212	£299	£475

Classes from
10.00am - 1.00pm or 6.00pm - 8.45pm
Monday / Wednesday / Friday OR Tuesday / Thursday
Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate,
IELTS and Cambridge Exam Classes

FREE TEST and FREE TRIAL LESSON!
Limited Places • Enrol Now!