

*l'amour est un oiseau rebelle
que nul ne peut apprivoiser,
et c'est bien en vain qu'on l'appelle,
si lui convient de refuser.
On n'y fait, menace ou priee,
rien qui parle bien, l'autre se tait;
c'est l'autre que je préfère
à rien dit; mais il me plaît.
L'amour! L'amour! L'amour!
L'amour est enfant de Bohème,
il n'a jamais, jamais connu de loi,
tu ne m'aimes pas, je t'aime,
tu ne m'aimes pas,
prend garde à toi!
Si j'aime,
je t'aime.*



CARMEN

November 4th - 8th 2008 - 7:15pm
Crescent Theatre
MD: Phil Ypres-Smith • Director: Elisa Amesbury • Queens Park Sinfonia • Cast, Chorus & guests of Midland Opera



Sponsored by Stoford Limited

midland
opera

Welcome to Midland Opera

A great little opera company in the city, run for and by non-pro singers.

Thank you sincerely for attending this performance of Carmen. We hope you enjoy it as much as we have enjoyed preparing it for you.

It's been an exciting year, and here's where we get the chance to bring you up to date...

In July we agreed to change our name from the rather cumbersome 'Midland Music Makers Grand Opera Society' (pew!) to the shorter 'Midland Opera'. We now have a new logo to update our publicity material and feel that this is a good reflection of the energy within.

Also in July, we elected a President, and are delighted to welcome Patricia Nixon into her latest role.

One of the most talented singers to have graced the stage for Midland Opera, Pat was a natural choice for the position which she has been excited to accept. Pat has sung with the society since a teenager. Her boyfriend (later her husband) nagged her to call the group after she had been heard singing locally. Finally she called, and when Arthur Street, founder and visionary of MMM, heard her he guided her upon a course which has spanned over 50 years. She has performed dozens of major roles, and shaped her life around music, opera and singing. Leading roles include those in Aida, Turandot, La Bohème, La Traviata, Zampa, Prince Igor, Moses, The Medium, Die Feen, Macbeth and many more. She is proud to have been a part of Midland Opera's history, and continues with as much energy as ever.

For the second year running, we have commissioned Eric Wetherell to produce a reduced score for us. Just like last year's 'A Masked Ball' reduction, this score suits the forces of a smaller company perfectly, and will be a welcome addition to the operatic repertoire for other small companies.

Once again we are very pleased to welcome the talented players of the Queen's Park Sinfonia.

We welcome Elisa Amesbury as a full Artistic Director this year, after she assisted last year. Elisa is a talented and dynamic young Director who is set for great things. Rachel's role this year has changed to Producer, which she has performed superbly well and, as well as singing Micaela this year, she will soon produce a little one of her own as she is due to have a baby in February.

We have struck up a good relationship with Edgbaston High School for Girls, whose young singers are appearing with us this week. Our rehearsals in their superb Octagon and music block have provided a fantastic working space.

From the chorus has emerged Jessica Mayhew, a trained costume and set designer, who has designed costumes for us this year as a complete role. This has been a feat of endurance and skill, as we committed to saving the planet by producing most of our costumes from charity shop 'finds'. What a task! And what dedication!

We hope that you enjoy the fruits of our labours this evening, and will consider becoming a Friend of Midland Opera to help support us in our challenging endeavours.

We look forward to seeing you again soon.

With all our very best wishes, from all at Midland Opera.

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2008 PRODUCTION TEAM

Musical Director	Phil Ypres-Smith
Artistic Director	Elisa Amesbury
Assistant Director	Clive Thursfield
Producer	Rachel Skinner
Stage Designer	Chloe Gamby
Costume Designer	Jessica Mayhew
Wardrobe Mistress	Pam Davies
Props	Sylvia Miller & Steve Miller
Stage Co-ordination	Malcolm Oakes
Technical Design	Trevor Woodford
Construction	Chloe Gamby, David Conway, Graham Leonard & Malcolm Oakes
Stage Manager	Martin Matthews & Robert Taylor
Lighting Co-ordination	Crescent Theatre
Stage Crew	Paul Taylor, Robert Taylor, David Conway & Graham Leonard

FRONT OF HOUSE

Ticket Manager	Norma Johnson
Front of House	Dave Bowdler, David Johnson, Norma Johnson & Tim Morris

OFFICERS OF MIDLAND OPERA

President	Patricia Nixon
Joint Chair.....	Malcolm Oakes and Lorraine Payne
Treasurer	Barry Matthews
Secretary	Patricia Bullock
Members' Representatives	Emma Skinner and Clive Thursfield
Press & Publicity design and co-odination	Lorraine Payne
<i>Press Relations headed by Simon Hale of Lois Burley PR. Courtesy of Stoford Developments Ltd.</i>	

Our sincere thanks to St. George's Church, Edgbaston
and Edgbaston High School for Girls, for their support with rehearsal space.

Our grateful thanks to everyone who has contributed to this production and to any who we may have inadvertently omitted.

Midland Opera is proud to support Marie Curie Cancer Care.

MMM members have raised money for Marie Curie during the last 12 months' events. You will see collection containers around the theatre this evening. Please give generously.



Devoted to Life

Stoford Developments Limited is proud to sponsor the Midland Opera production of 'Carmen'.

Stoford is a privately-owned commercial and residential property development company.

We are delighted that we have encouraged Midland Opera to develop organically by increasing publicity, and providing funding towards orchestra costs. We are proud to have secured the immediate future of this amazing company, and look forward to seeing them develop further.



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CARMEN

An opera in four acts

Music by Georges Bizet Libretto by H. Meilhac and L. Halévy

English Version by Herman Klein and Henry Hersee

With sections adapted by Director and Cast.

Reduced score by Eric Wetherell.

CHARACTERS

Carmen	<i>a gypsy and cigarette girl</i>	Lorraine Payne
Don José	<i>a corporal</i>	Mark Ellse
Micaela	<i>a peasant girl</i> (Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday)..	Rachel Skinner
	(Wednesday & Friday)	Anne Willetts
Frasquita	<i>a gypsy</i>	Kym Sheargold
Mercedes	<i>a gypsy</i>	Angela Pearson
Escamillo	<i>a matador</i>	John Kiefert
Dancairo	<i>a smuggler</i>	Joe Johnson
Remendado	<i>a smuggler</i>	Roger Hanke
Zuniga	<i>a captain</i>	Roger Mann
Morales	<i>an officer</i>	Clive Thursfield
Lilas Pastia	<i>a tavern owner</i>	Steve Miller

~ CHORUS LADIES ~

Gwyneth Bowdler, Laura Brodrick, Pat Bullock, Laura Cassidy,
Margaret Clewett, Carole Cummins, Pam Davies, Sarah Dyble,
Sophia Edwards-Bick, Sheila Giles, Rachel Hardy, Dee Hewings,
Deborah Johnson, Alison Marsh, Valerie Matthews,
Georgina Mayhew, Jessica Mayhew, Sylvia Miller, Emma Skinner,
Janet Stanley, India Perry, Katie Walker, Linda Williams,
Dee White, Marrian Yates, Hannah Jones.

With dancing from Georgina, India, and Katie.

~ CHORUS GENTLEMEN ~

David Gold, Roger Hanke, Joe Johnson,
Barry Matthews, David Mellor, Steve Miller,
Alan Morden, Malcolm Oakes, Mel Taylor.

With guest, Anthony Mayhew.

~ CHILDREN'S CHORUS ~

Kathryn Cattell, Abigail England Kerr, Grace Farrell,
Amber Glenn, Zoë Hayes, Sophie Hill, Georgia Khanna,
Lauren Mabley, Bethany Pedley-Smith, Rebecca Tozer,
Helena Venables, Lucy Visram-Cipolletta

Out thanks to headmistress, Dr. Ruth Weekes, and Head of Music, Miss Margaret Harper, for their assistance with rehearsal space. Also to Heather Howell for accompanying rehearsals and chaperoning the children.

~ ORCHESTRA ~

Leader/1st violin ~ Philippa Green

2nd violin	<i>Hannah Pritchard</i>	Clarinet	<i>Caroline Robinson</i>
Viola	<i>Bruce Wilson</i>	Bassoon	<i>Jo Coombes</i>
Cello	<i>Peter Wilson</i>	Trumpet	<i>Steve Lee</i>
Double Bass	<i>Bill Weston</i>	French Horn	<i>Claire Dawes</i>
Flute	<i>Jo Kirkwood</i>	Trombone	<i>Adrian Taylor</i>
Oboe	<i>Natasha Wilson</i>	Percussion	<i>Vicky Lee</i>

Our sincere thanks to the players of the Queens Park Sinfonia



CARMEN

SYNOPSIS

Act One: A typical day in Seville. Morales and his soldiers are on guard outside the tobacco factory in the town square. They look on as the people come and go about their daily business. The men are intrigued by the appearance of the young Micaela; she is looking for a soldier named Don José. Morales admits that he knows Don José well and that he will be arriving before long. Morales and the men try to persuade Micaela to stay with them while she awaits Don José, but she escapes their unwanted attentions by promising to return later. At the changing of the guard, Morales tells Don José that Micaela has been looking for him. Zuniga – Don José’s superior officer – is newly-arrived in Seville and eager to see the girls of the cigarette factory. He questions José about the women of the town and, right on cue, the factory bell sounds and the cigarette girls come streaming out of the factory, smoking and laughing in anticipation of the admiration they will receive from the men of the town.

The men demand to see Carmen, a young gypsy girl whose attitude and beauty has enchanted the whole town. Carmen appears and sings of love’s twisted logic. The men plead with her to choose a lover and in response she mischievously throws a flower to Don José, the only man who has shown no interest in her. The bell sounds again and the women disappear back to work.

Micaela reappears and gives José a letter from his mother; together they sing of happy memories from their village life. Micaela leaves Don José to read his letter in private and he discovers that his mother wishes him to return to the village and marry Micaela. Screams interrupt José’s thoughts, and Zuniga and his soldiers are soon surrounded by the cigarette-girls shouting for help to stop a vicious fight that has broken out between Carmen and one of the other girls. Jose is sent to investigate. Zuniga interrogates Carmen but she refuses to answer his questions. He leaves her to be guarded by Don José while he goes to make out the order for her imprisonment. The pair are left alone and Carmen uses her seductive powers to persuade Don José to let her escape. As Carmen disappears into the distance, Don José is left to face his punishment.

Act Two: At Lilas Pastia’s tavern, Carmen and her friends, Frasquita and Mercedes are entertaining the crowds with their song and dance. Zuniga is desperate to be taken as Carmen’s lover, but although a month has passed since their meeting, Carmen’s thoughts are still only of José and their anticipated reunion. To gain favour, Zuniga reveals that José has been released from prison, but Carmen annoys him with her obvious attachment to Don José. So he leaves, promising to return later. Although Lilas Pastia is eager to close the tavern for the night, a procession hailing the popular Torero, Escamillo, sweeps in. Escamillo entertains the crowds with tales of his bravery. Despite the fact that he could have his pick of any of the women in the room, Escamillo finds he is attracted to Carmen. And, though Carmen is honoured and amused by his attentions, she rejects him. When the procession leaves, Carmen, Mercedes and Frasquita are joined by their friends, the smugglers - Dancairo and Remendado. They ask the girls to help them smuggle contraband into the city. While Mercedes and Frasquita agree to the plan, Carmen replies that she cannot come with them, because she is in love. Carmen gets rid of her friends when Jose is heard approaching, so that she can be alone with him. Carmen reveals that she has been dancing for his officers, which makes him jealous. So she placates him by singing and dancing for him. Carmen’s song

is interrupted by the sound of bugles summoning the soldiers back to camp. José says he has to leave. Carmen is enraged that he has chosen his soldier's honour over spending the night with her. Don José tries to prove his love for her by showing how he has cherished the flower she threw at him at their first meeting. Carmen is unmoved and tries to persuade José to desert the army and join her in a life of liberty, but he refuses. As he is about to leave, Zuniga returns to claim Carmen. José is filled with jealousy and attacks Zuniga, but before they can fight, the smugglers burst in and separate them. Carmen tells José that he now has no choice but to join with them; together they leave for the mountains.

There will be an interval of 20 minutes after the second Act

Act Three: *Several days pass as José and Carmen travel with the band of smugglers. Carmen soon grows tired of José's possessiveness and she taunts him to go back to his mother. When the smugglers stop to rest, Frasquita and Mercedes read their cards and see signs of love and wealth but when Carmen reads her cards, they foretell only her death. The smugglers summon Carmen, Frasquita, and Mercedes to come and distract the customs officers whilst they bring the contraband into the city. Carmen puts aside her worries, and faces this new task with relish. José is left alone in the camp to guard the goods. Micaela arrives in search of José, but when another stranger arrives in the camp, José pulls out his gun and Micaela hides before he has the chance to see her. The stranger is Escamillo. At first, José welcomes him but when he realizes that Escamillo plans to take Carmen away from him, a fight breaks out. Escamillo's life is saved when Carmen and the smugglers return and separate them. Before Escamillo leaves, he invites Carmen to join him for his next bullfight in Seville. Remendado discovers Micaela hiding, as the smugglers prepare to leave. Micaela pleads with José to return to his mother, but he is consumed with jealousy and refuses to leave Carmen. When Micaela reveals that his mother is dying, José agrees to depart with her, but vows that he will return to claim Carmen. As José is leaving, Escamillo's song is heard in the distance.*

Act Four: *It is the day of Escamillo's bullfight. Vendors peddle their wares outside the bullring street. Zuniga, Morales, Frasquita, and Mercedes, are in the crowd when the procession of bullfighters arrive. When Escamillo arrives with Carmen, he is hailed as the pride of Granada. Carmen and Escamillo sing of their love for each other and Carmen exclaims that she has never loved anyone so much. As the crowds follow Escamillo into the arena Frasquita and Mercedes warn Carmen that Don José has been seen nearby. Carmen replies that she is too brave to run from José and she stays outside alone to confront him. Don José begs Carmen to come back to him, so that they may start a new life together, but Carmen rejects him. When cheers are heard, Carmen tries to enter the bullring, but José bars her way. José attempts to plead with Carmen one last time, but she scornfully throws back a ring he had given her. As the crowd cheers Escamillo's triumph, Carmen and Don José's fated romance reaches its tragic conclusion.*

CURTAIN

MAIN INTERVAL: Refreshments will be served in the foyer during the main interval. The Promenade Bar will be open before and after the performance and during the interval. Patrons requiring drinks during the interval and particularly at the end of the performance are urged to order them in advance. Smoking is not permitted in the auditorium. Neither is the use of cameras and tape recorders. First aid facilities are provided by St John's Ambulance which gives its services voluntarily. In accordance with the requirement of the licensing justices: a) The public may leave at the end of the performance by all exits and entrances other than those used as queue waiting rooms and the doors of all such exits and entrances shall at all times be open. b) All gangways, passages, and staircases shall be kept entirely free from chairs or other obstruction. c) Persons shall not be permitted to stand or sit in any of the intersecting gangways. If standing be permitted at the rear of the seating, sufficient space shall be left for persons to pass easily to and fro.

THE CRESCENT THEATRE Licensee and Manager Ian Thompson

Director's Notes *Elisa Amesbury*

The first performance of *Carmen* on 3rd March 1875 came as quite a shock to the cultured and polite audience of the Opera-Comique in Paris. Undoubtedly influenced by the tide of Naturalism that was sweeping through European theatre in the second half of the 19th Century, *Carmen* was one of the first operas to bring the darker elements of real life to the stage. The aim of naturalism was to counter the artifice of conventional drama with a deeper psychological realism, to undermine facile moral judgment. In other words, to show that 'vice has a reverse side very much like virtue'. This kind of moral complexity is the driving force of *Carmen*. The challenge then is how to make this psychological realism work in a narrative that is otherwise built on outrageous actions and twists of fate. Something I found particularly difficult was rationalizing *Carmen's* resignation to her death. It is, after all, her choice to stay and face a situation, which she knows will be dangerous. After much thought it now seems to me that the answer to *Carmen's* attitude lies in the imagery of the bullfight.

As disturbing as the practice of bullfighting may seem to our modern sensibilities, aficionados across the globe still maintain and advocate the aesthetic beauty of this 'sport'. Its status as a sport is certainly contentious, especially when you consider that the eventual result of the encounter is already known at the outset – the bull will always die. Even if the bull is strong enough or lucky enough to kill the matador, death – either at the hands of other toreadors or by injuries suffered in the ring – is inevitable. The foregone conclusion that undermines bullfighting's status as a sport also elevates its status as a performance. The massive crowds do not turn out in the heat of the afternoon sun to see if the bull will die but how it will face its death. A truly heroic performance by a bull is rewarded by a 'vuelta'; the bull's carcass is dragged around the arena by a team of horses to receive the applause of the crowd. If the bull performs with bravery and spirit it is victorious, even in death.

The bull's fate echoes our own human condition. Like the bull, our ultimate end is already decided; the challenge, the interesting bit, is having the courage, like *Carmen*, to face our fate with spirit. In this sense, *Carmen's* death is both tragedy and victory.

* August Strindberg (1888) *Naturalism in the Theatre*

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We are extremely grateful to our Friends for their loyal support, which helps us to thrive in competitive times.

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(Correct at time of print.)

Apologies to those whose membership just missed the press. Be assured that your membership is of great value to us. Thank you.

Become a 'Friend' tonight. Fill in this form and hand it to one of our front of house staff, or send to the address above.

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Biographies

MARK ELLSE (Don Jose)

Mark Ellse held a choral scholarship at Jesus College, Cambridge at the same time as reading for his physics degree. Moving to London broadened his experience as an oratorio tenor, with a repertoire ranging from Beethoven 9 and Verdi's Requiem to smaller scale works such as Britten's St Nicholas. He has made radio and television broadcasts, including a Christmas Day special with Kiri te Kanawa. More recently turning to opera, his repertoire includes the title roles in 'Idomeneo', 'Peter Grimes', 'Tales of Hoffmann', Percy in Donizetti's 'Anna Bolena', Don Jose in 'Carmen', Ferrando in 'Cosi fan tutte', the Witch in 'Hansel & Gretel'. For MO he has sung Lensky in 'Eugene Onegin', Turridu in 'Cavalleria Rusticana' and Riccardo in 'A Masked Ball'. As a physics teacher he is author and editor of numerous text books. Mark is also Principal of Chase Academy in Cannock.



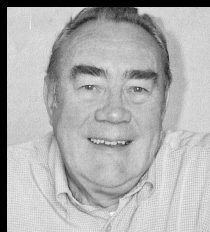
ROGER HANKE (Remendado)

Roger's first stage role was Luiz, at the age of 16, in Gilbert & Sullivan's 'Gondoliers'. He still maintains a strong interest in the Savoy Operas and has performed most of the major tenor roles and 'patter' parts. Whilst at University he sang in a motet choir and developed a keen interest in early music. Later he studied singing at the Birmingham Conservatoire. He has undertaken many principal parts in oratorio. He has also sung Acis in Handel's 'Acis and Galatea', and the title role in Carissimi's 'Jephte'. His most recent roles include the Pirate King in 'Pirates of Penzance', Nicely-Nicely Johnson in 'Guys & Dolls', Koko in 'Mikado', Alfred in 'Die Fledermaus', Monsieur Triquet in 'Eugene Onegin' and Canio in 'I Pagliacci'.



JOE JOHNSON (Dancairo)

Joe began his professional career as a drummer and vocalist in dance bands of the 1960s. By the 80s he was singing in cabaret around the country. After a period of retraining he turned to stage musicals and opera, performing many principal roles, including Annas in 'Jesus Christ Super Star', Ravenall in 'Showboat', Camille in the 'Merry Widow', Alfred in 'Die Fledermaus', Orpheus in 'Orpheus in the Underworld', Don Jose and Remendado in 'Carmen', Canio in 'I Pagliacci'. During the 1990s he toured the country as a member of the "3 British Tenors". Currently Joe performs regularly in concerts and cabaret throughout the Midlands and is a member of Midland Opera.



JOHN KIEFERT (Escamillo)

John studied at The Birmingham School of Music & in its Opera School with Joanna Peters of Covent Garden, also taking part in a Tito Gobbi master class while there. After college he sang professionally for about two years & has since sung in oratorio, recital & opera throughout the UK & in France as an amateur & semi-professional while continuing his studies with his long standing coach Stuart Smith & Victor Morris, formerly Head of Music at ENO. He now has over thirty operatic roles in his repertoire from Monteverdi through to Britten, including Iago, Eugene Onegin, Noye (Britten), Count Almaviva, Ottone, Belcore & Dulcamara, Figaro (Mozart's & Rossini's), Marcello in 'La Bohème', Germont & Escamillo. Most recently he sang Renato in Verdi's 'A Masked Ball' for M.O. & in a 'classical pops' concert in Kenilworth's Festival in the castle grounds. His future plans include a lunchtime recital of Brahms, Mahler & Ravel with Stuart Smith (piano) in Leamington Spa & Faure's 'Requiem' for the Warwickshire Singers in Kenilworth.



ROGER MANN (Zuniga)

Roger began singing on stage at the age of 16, in a production of 'The Gondoliers', although his first role was as a bag of sweets on a Christmas tree at the age of six! Since then he has appeared in many productions from pantomime to opera both in the chorus and as a principal. His favourite roles are Jack Point in 'Yeoman of the Guard' and the Lord Chancellor in 'Iolanthe'. Roles in opera include Bartolo in 'The Marriage of Figaro', Don Alfonso in 'Cosi fan tutte', and Benoit in 'La Bohème'. Zuniga is his second role with Midland Opera; last year he played the part of Tom in Midland Opera's acclaimed production of 'A Masked Ball'.



LORRAINE PAYNE (Carmen)



Lorraine began vocal training in 1991 with Sarah Wright, being introduced to opera in 1992. Since then she has appeared for Midland Opera as Marguerite in 'Faust', twice as Nedda in 'I Pagliacci', as Marenka in 'The Bartered Bride', Adina in 'L'Elisir d'Amore', Monica in 'The Medium' and Servilia in 'La Clemenza di Tito'. For Consensus Opera Lorraine was Cherubino in 'The Marriage of Figaro'. Lorraine returned to 'trouser roles' last year for Oscar in Midland Opera's 'A Masked Ball'. She is also a regular concert soloist. Lorraine has been privately coached by international vocal coach, Margaret Field, and has been coached by Phil Ypres-Smith both for last year's Oscar and for Carmen, this year. Lorraine has been a member of Midland Opera since 1993 and Co-Chair for the last three years.

ANGELA PEARSON (Mercedes)

Angela did her first degree in Philosophy/Theology at Oxford University and taught for a number of years before taking up her interest in singing. She did postgraduate studies in Voice and Opera at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester and now studies with Phil Ypres-Smith. Roles to date include Marcellina in 'Marriage of Figaro', First Witch in 'Dido and Aeneas', Miss Jessel in 'Turn of the Screw', Hansel in 'Hansel and Gretel', Ulrica in 'A Masked Ball' and the title role in 'Carmen'. This is Angela's second production with Midland Opera.



KYM SHEARGOLD (Frasquita)



Kym Sheargold was born in Birmingham and studied at Birmingham Conservatoire, gaining a Masters Degree in Music Performance. She has appeared in many operas as a professional and semi-professional singer, including 'Don Giovanni', 'Macbeth', 'Tales of Hoffmann' and 'Carmen'. Kym is also a recital singer, specialising in twentieth-century music, and has premiered a number of contemporary works, including one under the baton of the late Sir Charles Groves. Her oratorio repertoire includes the Rossini 'Stabat Mater', Beethoven 9 and Verdi's 'Requiem'. She has sung on radio and TV and is a principal singer for Mercian Opera and the VoiceBox Theatre Company. For Midland Opera she has performed principal roles in 'Trial by Jury', 'The Medium', 'La Clemenza Di Tito', 'Eugene Onegin', 'Cavalleria Rusticana' and Amelia in 'A Masked Ball' last year. Kym studies with international performer Nicholas Clapton and forthcoming performances include a March 2009 recital in Gloucester Cathedral.

RACHEL SKINNER (Micaela ~ Tuesday, Thursday & Saturday. Producer)

Rachel was born in Cheshire and read music at Bristol University. She combines work as a professional singer and flautist with teaching, directing and conducting. Rachel has directed productions of 'Dido and Aeneas', 'The Magic Flute' and 'Carmen' with young singers at Clifton College and was Musical Director of Music Box, a children's opera group based in Bristol. Since 2006 she has produced 'Cavalleria Rusticana', 'I Pagliacci' and 'A Masked Ball' for Midland Opera. As a singer she regularly appears as a guest artist with orchestras and chamber ensembles, most recently performing Canteloube's 'Songs of the Auvergne', Mozart's 'Exsultate Jubilate' and Finzi's 'Dies Natalis'. She also performs widely with choral societies and chamber choirs. Highlights include the soprano solo in a live broadcast of Duke Ellington's 'Sacred Concert' on BBC Radio 4, a performance of Durufle's 'Requiem' in St Martin-in-the-Fields and performances of Handel's 'Acis and Galatea' and Brahms's 'Requiem' at St. George's, Bristol. In 2005 she travelled to Italy, giving recitals of French song and German lieder and in 2007 toured Northern France with an orchestra giving concerts in various music festivals. Her operatic roles include Liu 'Turandot', Nanetta 'Falstaff', Susanna and Barbarina 'The Marriage of Figaro', Zerlina 'Don Giovanni', Pamina 'The Magic Flute' and Belinda 'Dido and Aeneas'. Rachel has also performed in a number of musical theatre productions taking the part of Eliza in 'My Fair Lady' and the role of Aldonza in 'Man of La Mancha'.



CLIVE THURSFIELD (Morales and Assistant Director)

Clive began singing with Forward Operatic Company, playing a number of roles including Prince Orlofsky in 'Die Fledermaus' and Bartolomeo Dellacqua in Strauss's 'A Night in Venice'. He sang Escamillo in 'Carmen' with Kennet Opera, and for RSO sang many major roles including Wagner in 'Faust' and Don Carlo in 'Force of Destiny'. For Consensus he was the Count in 'The Marriage of Figaro' and M. Aristide de Chateau-Yquem in 'Not in Front of the Waiter'. With Midland Opera he sang Marco in 'Gianni Schicchi', Iago in 'Otello', Prince Galitsky in 'Prince Igor', Valentin in 'Faust', Dr. Dulcamara in 'L'elisir D'Amore' and Tonio in 'I Pagliacci'. Last year Clive sang Samuel in M.O.'s 'A Masked Ball', and has also been singing with the Birmingham Bach Choir.



ANNE WILLETTS (Micaela ~ Wednesday & Friday)

For many years Anne sang most of the Gilbert and Sullivan soprano roles with Quinton Operatic Society, as well as taking part in Music Festivals. She has been a member of Midland Opera for 20 years and during this time she has sung as concert soloist and has performed principal roles in many of its operas, including 'La Gioconda', 'Sister Angelica', 'Cavalleria Rusticana', 'Faust', 'Bartered Bride' and 'Carmen'.

ELISA AMESBURY (Artistic Director)

Elisa graduated this summer with a First class degree in Theatre, Film, and Television from the University of Bristol. A keen performer herself, she trained at the Oxford School of Drama before beginning her academic studies. She has a wide variety of interests from performance art to European cinema, and a special fondness for opera, which she owes in part to her mother, who brainwashed her at a young age.



CHLOE GAMBY (Set Designer)

Originating from Enfield, Chloe studied Theatre Design at Birmingham City University and emerged with an Honours Degree in 2007. Since then she has designed costumes for 'Dynamic Dance' in a collaboration with a choreographer of the Birmingham Royal Ballet and designed both the set and costumes for a revival of 'Meadows of Proverbs' by the Director of BRB. Last year she designed the set for Midland Opera's production of 'A Masked Ball'.

JESSICA MAYHEW (Costume Designer)

Jessica studied at Wimbledon School of Art and Design obtaining a BA (Hons) Degree in Theatrical Design. She subsequently worked in London Theatre until her move to Germany and, later, America. Returning to England with a young family, she took up beaded jewellery, and has taught this for many years within Adult Education. Jessica is also a singer and pianist, working with children in this capacity.



PHIL YPRES-SMITH (Musical Director)



Phil studied singing and organ at the Birmingham School of Music. During this time he worked closely with the Opera School, returning later as a visiting lecturer. His Musical Direction for the Opera School included 'Don Giovanni', 'Albert Herring', 'Alicina' (directed from the harpsichord at the Bath Georgian Festival), and the world premier of Giles Swayne's 'Le Nozze de Cherubino'. He was also involved in preparations for the first performances of Derek Bourgeois' 'Kubla Khan' under the late Sir Charles Groves. Phil currently lives and works in Birmingham and is an experienced singing teacher and vocal coach, possessing a fine Counter Tenor voice. He has sung and accompanied for radio and has led many musical and choral groups throughout the country. He has presented numerous lecture-recitals on subjects ranging from the history of Anglican church music to Italian opera. He wrote and presented a programme for the BBC World Service taking a lighthearted look at the mysterious world of liturgical organ improvisation. Alongside an extensive teaching practice, Phil is currently artistic director of Mercian Opera, Musical Director of Midland Opera and Director of Music at St George's Church Edgbaston. He has also composed a number of song cycles and choral works, as well as instrumental pieces and incidental music.



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