

MACBETH

November 3rd 4th 6th & 7th 2009

THE CRESCENT THEATRE SHEEPCOTE ST. BIRMINGHAM



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Something wicked this way comes...

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2009 Sponsor

Welcome to Midland Opera

www.midlandopera.com

Sincere thanks for attending this performance of Macbeth. We hope you enjoy the evening as much as we have enjoyed preparing it for you. Here's the news...

Farewell to Elisa and Rachel for now...

Midland Opera Producer and Director, Rachel Skinner's eagerly awaited production was a success – Mia Maconnachie was born in the Spring and we believe is already hitting top notes! Elisa Amesbury, last year's youthful Director, applied for and won one of only ten places at Birkbeck College, where she will develop her studies in Theatre Direction.

We were privileged to interview many talented replacements for Producer/Director.

Hello Andrew



Following a tip-off from MO stalwart, Emma Skinner, Malcolm and Lorraine met Andrew Potter; a stage director, actor and tutor who came highly recommended from Birmingham School of Acting, and who was keen to extend his skills into opera direction.

From first meeting, we were won over by the wealth of energy, talent, experience and vision he showed. To add to this Andrew has played Macbeth six times, and directed it a further three. So approached the task with a passion and unrivalled knowledge. In partnership with Phil, this creative team has proved to be inventive, fun and sometimes a little bit crazy! Read the Director's notes about his vision of Macbeth.

Recruitment

*We are delighted that our new name - **Midland Opera**, the web site midlandopera.com, and **Artsfest** has recruited well. We have attracted ten new members this year. And you will see **THREE** of those in principal roles this evening!*

Music and Sponsorship

Following the end of our 2008 sponsorship; Cogent Elliott, the region's premier advertising agency have stepped in and sponsored the score reduction, for which we are enormously grateful.

For the third year running, Eric Wetherell has produced the reduced score. Just like the Midland Opera's 'A Masked Ball' and 'Carmen'; this score suits the forces of a smaller company, and will be a welcome addition to our bank of reductions.

And, once again, we are delighted to welcome back the talented players of the Queen's Park Sinfonia who have worked to ensure that we are well-supported.

Friends, one and all

*We hope that you enjoy this evening, and will consider becoming a '**Friend of Midland Opera**' to help support us in our challenging endeavours. Fill in the form in the programme to become a Friend.*

We look forward to seeing you again soon.

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

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Cogent Elliott is a full-service agency, long-associated with the arts,
and is proud to support Midland Opera in its 2009 production of Macbeth.



Director's Notes *Andrew Potter*

*Wherever you find jealousy and ambition, you find disharmony,
and wicked things of every kind being done.*

James 3:16

Some starting points:

Macbeth, as Shakespeare conceived it, is about testosterone poisoning. The female protagonists are honorary men. Lady Macbeth famously asks to be 'unsexed' and prompts her husband to observe that she should 'Bring forth men-children only for thy undaunted mettle should compose nothing but males.' The witches 'should be women' but in Banquo's eyes 'your beards forbid me to interpret that you are so'. Macbeth is the golden boy of an almost exclusively machismo-centric society, the best and worst of the Y chromosome's handiwork...

~

*The evil side of my nature, to which I had now transferred the stamping efficacy
was less robust and less developed than the good which I had just deposed.
Again, in the course of my life, which had been, after all, nine tenths a life of effort,
virtue and control, it had been much less exercised and much less exhausted... And yet
when I looked upon that ugly idol in the glass, I was conscious of no repugnance,
rather of a leap of welcome. This, too, was myself.*

'The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde'

~

Macbeth acts. Not for him the labyrinthine 'what ifs' and 'then agains' that so befuddle the more sympathetic Hamlet. He does the deed. And once he steps through the looking-glass dividing heroism from tyranny, he enters a sleepless nightmare state where nothing is quite what it seems: dead men turn up at parties, shadows and forests display a will of their own, and everything goes to hell. Never mind the witches' cauldron, the real melting pot is the fallen hero's tortured imagination as he realises that there are some things that all the king's horses and all the king's men can never put back together again...



And a conclusion

*Only two ways
You can justify
Killing a critter:*

*If you're aiming to eat it,
Or it's fixin' to eat you.*

'Killing' by Jim Dodge

MACBETH

An opera in four acts

Music by Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by Francesco Maria Piave & Andrea Maffei

English version by Walter Ducloux Reduced score by Eric Wetherell

CHARACTERS

Macbeth	<i>general in Duncan's army</i>	John Kiefert
Lady Macbeth	<i>as a young Lady</i>	Sophie Levi
Lady Macbeth	<i>as Queen</i>	Lorraine Payne
Lady Macbeth	<i>as older Queen</i>	Kym Sheargold
Banquo	<i>a general in Duncan's army</i>	Devon Harrison
Lady-in-Waiting		Jacqueline White
Macduff	<i>Thane of Fife</i>	Roger Hanke
Malcolm	<i>Duncan's Son</i>	Barry Matthews
Doctor		David Mellor
Witches		Pat Bullock, Sheila Giles, Valerie Matthews
Cut-throats		Roger Hanke, Roger Mann, Clive Thursfield
Messenger		Mel Taylor
Apparition		Roger Mann, Katie Walker, Phil Ypres-Smith
Harpist		Sarah Dyble
Fleance	<i>son of Banquo</i>	Cameron Harrison

~ **CHORUS LADIES** ~

Grace Barata, Sue Blackwell, Gwyneth Bowdler, Pat Bullock,
Laura Cassidy, Margaret Clewett, Carole Cummins,
Pam Davies, Gillian Donoghue, Sarah Dyble,
Sophia Edwards-Bick, Sheila Giles, Rachel Hardy,
Dee Hewings, Deborah Johnson, Valerie Matthews,
Karen Perrey, Emma Skinner, Janet Stanley, Rebecca Tiffin,
Dee White, Katie Walker, Nuala Walters, Marrian Yates.

~ **CHORUS GENTLEMEN** ~

Andrew Cooley, David Gold, Roger Mann, Barry Matthews,
David Mellor, Willem Meijs, Steve Miller, Andrew Nicklin,
Malcolm Oakes, Mel Taylor.

~ **ORCHESTRA** ~

Leader/1st violin ~ *Philippa Green*

2nd violin	<i>Hannah Pritchard</i>	Clarinet	<i>Joy Johnson</i>
Viola	<i>Junghee Keum</i>	Bassoon	<i>Alison Brierley</i>
Cello	<i>Peter Wilson</i>	Trumpet	<i>Steve Lee</i>
Double-Bass	<i>Bill Weston</i>	French Horn	<i>Cath Cordey</i>
Flute	<i>Clare-Louise Appleby</i>	Trombone	<i>Chris Hickman</i>
Oboe	<i>Anne Hagyard</i>	Percussion	<i>Tom Peverelle</i>



Our sincere thanks to the players of the Queens Park Sinfonia

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE:

The opera opens with a chorus of witches celebrating their influence throughout the world. A drum sounds announcing the arrival of Macbeth and Banquo from the battlefield where they have successfully crushed a rebellion by the treacherous Thane of Cawdor. The witches predict that Macbeth will inherit Cawdor's title and become king, whereas Banquo will be the father of a line of kings. A messenger arrives to tell Macbeth that King Duncan has made him Thane of Cawdor. As the men grapple with their separate feelings about these events, the witches depart.

Lady Macbeth appears reading a letter from Macbeth, and indulges her ambition that the prophecy should be realised. Macbeth arrives with the news that King Duncan will sleep at their castle that night. They determine to assassinate the king.

On his way to commit the murder, Macbeth is confronted by the vision of a phantom dagger. A bell sounds and he enters the king's bedroom to do the deed. Lady Macbeth is waiting for him when he emerges, and together they wrestle with the immediate after-shock of the murder. Hearing someone knocking, they withdraw to their room.

Macduff and Banquo arrive to wake the sleeping Duncan. Macduff goes into the king's bedchamber, leaving Banquo to contemplate what an awful night it's been. Macduff returns with the terrible news of the king's death and they spread the news to the rest of the household, who appeal to Heaven for help in this hour of need.

ACT TWO:

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth agree that Banquo must be killed to consolidate their position. Lady Macbeth is left to deal with the realisation that murder begets more murder.

A group of cut-throats gather to despatch Banquo and his son, Fleance. Sensing what is coming, Banquo contrives to take the brunt of the attack and is struck down while Fleance escapes.

At a banquet hosted by the Macbeths, the court enthusiastically acknowledges the new king and queen. Lady Macbeth responds with a joyful toast to "happiness, love and laughter!" A cut-throat informs Macbeth of Banquo's death (and Fleance's escape) and, returning to his guests, Macbeth is plagued by visions of Banquo's ghost. As the party descends into chaos, Macbeth resolves to revisit the witches.

THERE WILL BE AN INTERVAL OF 20 MINUTES BETWEEN ACTS 2 AND 3

ACT THREE:

On a stormy night the witches brew their potions and invoke the spirits.

Macbeth is granted three further prophecies: that he should beware Macduff; that no man born of woman shall harm him; and that he shall never be defeated until the Forest of Birnam marches against him. Buoyed by these predictions, Macbeth insists on knowing whether Banquo's descendants will inherit his crown. Confronted with a parade of kings culminating in Banquo holding a mirror, Macbeth collapses.

As he recovers Lady Macbeth joins him to hear of the predictions. Together they unleash a "vendetta" of tyranny and slaughter upon Macduff's family and across the land.

ACT FOUR:

A group of refugees sing a lament for their beloved country. Macduff enters, lamenting the death of his family. He is joined by Duncan's son Malcolm, with an army of English soldiers. They dedicate themselves to fight for freedom and justice. The troops tear branches from a nearby forest and use them to shield their numbers as they march to confront Macbeth.

Attended by her Doctor and Lady-in-Waiting, Lady Macbeth sleepwalks about the castle, reliving the murders. She dies and Macbeth contemplates the hollowness of life: "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury...signifying nothing!"

Malcolm's army approaches and Macbeth sets off into battle. There he confronts Macduff, who reveals that he was not "born of woman" but "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb. Macbeth is killed and the opera ends amidst general rejoicing as Malcolm is proclaimed king.

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*



2009 PRODUCTION TEAM

Musical Direction Phil Ypres-Smith
Artistic Direction Andrew Potter
Production Co-ordination Malcolm Oakes
Stage Design Chloe Gamby
Costumes Pam Davies
Assisted by A team of company ladies
Props Steve Miller
Set realisation Trevor Woodford
Set construction Trevor Woodford, Jemima Bruntlett,
David Conway, Graham Leonard & Malcolm Oakes
Stage Manager Robert Taylor
Lighting Co-ordination Crescent Theatre & Edward Alford
Stage Crew A team of friends of the company

FRONT OF HOUSE

Ticket Manager Norma Johnson
Front of House Dave Bowdler, David Johnson,
Norma Johnson, Anne Willetts, Hilda Daya

OFFICERS OF MIDLAND OPERA

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Secretary Patricia Bullock
Members' Representatives Emma Skinner and Clive Thursfield
Press & Publicity design and co-ordination Lorraine Payne

Our sincere thanks to St. George's Church, Edgbaston for their rehearsal space.

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

Biographies



ROGER HANKE Macduff

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', Canio in 'I Pagliacci' and Remandado in Carmen.

DEVON HARRISON Banquo

Born in Kingston Jamaica, Devon studied voice and performance at Trinity College of Music London where he gained his Dip TCL and was Highly Commended in the Elisabeth Schumann prize for Lieder. Devon has performed extensively in opera and music theatre with companies such as; Opera North, Birmingham Opera, Kent Opera, Surrey Opera, Pavilion Opera, The Opera Group, Pegasus Opera and Tete- a-Tete & Almeida Opera. Roles have included; Frank in 'Die Fledermaus', Frazier in 'Porgy & Bess', Betto in 'Gianni Schicci', Talpa in 'Il Tabarro', Lindorf & Dapertutto in 'Tales of Hoffman', Sweeney Todd (title role), Tonio in 'I Pagliacci', Cacambo & Hermann Augustus in 'Candide', Don Alfonso in 'Cosi fan Tutti', Osmin in 'Die Entfuhrung', Don Giovanni (title role), Ferrando in 'Il Trovatore', Zuniga & Morales in 'Carmen', Apollo in 'Orfeo', Monteverdi Joe in 'Showboat' at the Royal Albert Hall, the Compere in the british premier of 'Four Saints in Three Acts'. World Premieres include; Chaka (title role) for CBTO, The Father in 'Cry of Innocence' by Gyname and Mark in 'The Silent Twins' by Almeida. Devon has toured extensively as a lead vocalist and soloist with show bands and opera companies to Australia, The Caribbean, India, Europe and Japan.



JOHN KIEFERT Macbeth

John comes from a musical family, his great grandfather having been the composer & arranger Carl Kiefert who was Musical Director at The London Hippodrome around 1900. John studied at The Birmingham School of Music & in its Opera School with Johanna Peters of Covent Garden later Head of Opera at Guildhall & while there he took part in a Tito Gobbi master class. He sang professionally for about two years & has since sung in oratorio, recital & opera throughout the UK & in France while continuing his studies with his long standing coach Stuart Smith & Victor Morris of ENO. He now has over thirty roles in his repertoire from Monteverdi to Britten & for MO has sung Alfio in Cav, Renato in A Masked Ball & Escamillo in Carmen. Most recently he sang the baritone solos in the Faure Requiem for Warwickshire Singers & in Carmina Burana in the Rugby Festival. Future plans include the role of the mad king in a new children's opera by Paul Sudlow in Rugby.

SOPHIE LEVI Lady Macbeth 1

Sophie Levi, from Leeds, is 20 years old and is in her second year of studying Music at the University of Birmingham. This is her first production with Midland Opera. She has been singing from around the age of 10 and begun singing opera at the age of 16. In December of 2006 she played the part of Eponine in LGHS's production of Les Miserables. Since then she has performed with Leeds Youth Opera in the choruses of Massenet's 'Cendrillon', Sondheim's 'Sweeney Todd', Prokofiev's 'The Love of Three Oranges', Carl Orff's 'Carmina Burana', and has performed as chorus with minor parts in Weber's 'Der Freischutz' as a Bridesmaid and Mozart's 'Idomeneo' as a Cretan woman. Her first operatic lead role was in July of 2008 with Leeds Youth Opera as 'The Nightingale' in a World Premier of 'The Nightingale and the Rose', an opera by young composer, Oliver Rudland, based on Oscar Wilde's short story. She then played the part of 'Giselda' in Verdi's 'I Lombardi alla Prima Crociata' in February 2009 and in July 2009 played the part of 'Mary Lincoln' in a European Premier of Philip Glass' 'Appomattox'. She has also just recently finished a touring production of the Gilbert and Sullivan opera 'Patience' with Halifax SAS, playing the title role. In 2007 Sophie received the Robert Tebb Trophy for outstanding performance in Music from Leeds Girl's High School and the Scala singer of the year trophy from Scala stage school in Leeds, of which she was a member and performed in many concerts with from the ages of 15 to 19. Sophie sings with the Birmingham University Singers and has been a member of various choirs over the years, including the National Youth Training Choir from the ages of 15 to 18. Sophie will also play Euridice in 'Orpheus in the Underworld' with Leeds Youth Opera in 2010.



LORRAINE PAYNE Lady Macbeth 2



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', and returned to 'trouser roles' as Oscar in Midland Opera's 'A Masked Ball'. Lorraine took the title role of Carmen last year. She is also a regular concert soloist. Lorraine has been privately coached by international vocal coach, Margaret Field and Phil Ypres-Smith. Lorraine has been a member of Midland Opera since 1993 and Co-Chair for the last four years.

KYM SHEARGOLD Lady Macbeth 3

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 Hoffman' and 'Cosi fan Tutte'. Kym is also a recitalist, 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's 9th Symphony and Verdi's 'Requiem'. She has sung on radio and TV and is also 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', 'Ballo in Maschera' and 'Carmen'. She is a commuting member of this year's cast and lives in a Gloucestershire village. She currently studies with international performer and writer Nicholas Clapton, who is a specialist in the history of the castrato voice.



JACQUELINE WHITE Lady in Waiting to Lady Macbeth



Jacqueline was born in Chesterfield where, from an early age, she developed a keen interest in the performing arts. As well as singing, Jacqueline has studied drama and has had extensive tuition in dance. She began dance lessons at the age of three and made her first stage appearance just a year later. Studying Music and French at Hull University Jacqueline's love of opera and early music was developed and she appeared as the 'Sorceress' and 'Spring' in Dido and Aeneas in 2003. After graduating with honours she moved to Birmingham to study for a Masters in Musical Performance at Birmingham Conservatoire, under the tutelage of Rita Cullis. During her studies Jacqueline has had the privilege of working with some of the UK's leading coaches and conductors including: Stephen Barlow, Jane Robinson, Jeffrey Skidmore, Robin Bowman, Susan McCulloch, Adrian Thompson and Richard Jackson. Jacqueline is now kept very busy singing for companies such as Operamus and Birmingham Opera Company, as well as performing throughout the Midlands as both soloist and chorister.

PAT BULLOCK

Witch

Pat has been a regular principal soloist with MO and other regional groups for some years. She is also the MO Secretary.

SHEILA GILES

Witch

Sheila has a history of major operatic roles and concert solos with MO and other established companies.

VALERIE MATTHEWS

Witch

Valerie is also a founder member of the CBSO chorus, and has been a principal for MO since joining in the 70's.

BARRY MATTHEWS

Malcolm

Barry is also the treasurer and has sung a range of interesting roles and solos over the years.

DAVID MELLOR

Doctor

David has a long and impressive history of performing with MO. His principal roles are many and varied.

MEL TAYLOR

Messenger

This is Mel's first solo with MO, though he has also sung with RSO. Mel joined us as a chorus member two years ago.

CLIVE THURSFIELD

Aide to Macbeth

Clive has been a principal singer with MO for many years, notching up some impressive principal roles.

ROGER MANN

Cut-throat

Roger's first role with MO was as Zuniga last year. He has also sung with a number of other regional societies.

KATIE WALKER

Apparition

Katie studies Singing and Music at Birmingham University. Though she is a regular soloist this is her first role with MO.

CAMERON HARRISON

Banquo's son

Cameron is Devon's son and is at school in Stourbridge. This is his first appearance with MO.

**ANDREW POTTER** Artistic Director

Andrew studied drama at Bristol University at some point in the Middle Ages, before tackling acting at Mountview Theatre School and drama teaching at Bretton Hall. He is a long-term associate of the award-winning Box Clever Theatre Company, for whom he has directed several 'Boxed Shakespeares' (including the Boxed Macbeth) and their acclaimed anti-bullying piece: 'Mark & The Marked'. His acting credits for the company include creating the roles of the Storyteller/Shylock in the 'Boxed Merchant Of Venice' and the Christ-like 'H' in 'A Very Private Passion'. In 2000 he established Wildcard, a company specialising in innovative storytelling theatre, for whom he directed 'Hiawatha', 'Gawain & The Green Knight', 'Richard III', 'The Odyssey', 'Hassan : An Arabian Adventure', 'The Tragical Life & Times Of Macbeth', 'In The Beginning' (based on the Book of Genesis) and Terry Johnson's 'Insignificance'. He also created and performed 'Iliad', a one-man 'telling' of the Trojan War in the spirit of Homer. In 2004

Andrew left Wildcard to concentrate his energies in and around Birmingham where his first child, Gabriel, was born on Christmas Day, followed by a baby sister, Moriah, in August 2006. Since moving to Birmingham he has directed 'Iphigenia At Aulis', 'The Storm', 'Fair Ladies at a Game of Poem Cards' and 'The Arabian Nights' at Birmingham School of Acting and 'Riddigore', 'The Mikado' and 'Merrie England' for Great Witley Operatic Society.

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', 'Alicia' (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 Opera Midland 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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Midland Opera provides operatunities for people of all ages and means, to develop their skills in theatre, music and opera in a fun environment.

Singers, Set-designers, Photographers, Video producers and musicians have all benefited from thrilling, moving and often hilarious experiences at Midland Opera.

We are rightly proud of that which we achieve as a group of individuals working together, and believe that we have much to offer the cultural tapestry of Birmingham.

And, as yet, we receive no government assistance.

Thankfully, the 'Friends of Midland Opera' offer a regular support, which helps us to thrive in these most difficult times.

If you are not already a Friend of Midland Opera, please become one tonight.

A 'Friend of Midland Opera' will promise to donate £10 per year.

As a small group, we cannot offer much in return except prior notice of performances, priority booking, wine at concerts and your name in print! However, you can be satisfied that your donation will support a passionate arts charity. Thank you.



THANK YOU *to the Friends of Midland Opera*

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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.*

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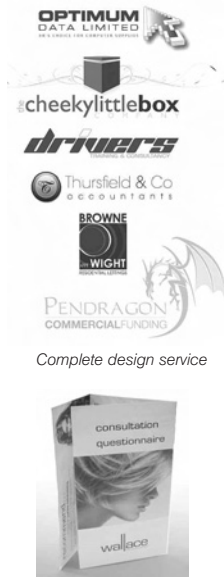
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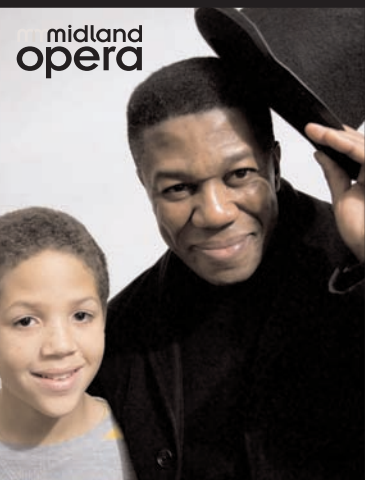
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