

East Surrey Operatic Society & The Opera Club of Reigate and Redhill

Chairmen's Message

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen

A very warm welcome to all of you this evening to "Musical Twist"- a Concert being performed by the East Surrey Operatic Society and the Opera Club of Reigate and Redhill. ESOS and the Opera club have worked together in the past, putting on joint charitable events, but this is the first time that the two Societies have worked together for a full season in this way.

This evening's Concert is a small selection of music from the shows that both groups have performed over the years as well as some songs which can only be performed in isolation, as the shows themselves are not available to perform. We see this as a brief historical meander through the years from Victorian Gilbert and Sullivan through to 20th Century *Les Misérables*. This journey from the past to the future is represented perfectly by the performers that you will see on stage this evening, who range in age from nine to eighty years old. Both groups are delighted that so many talented young people want to perform on the stage and, as has happened in the past, you might well be seeing some West End stars of the future tonight!

There are many people to thank but in particular Angela Barker (Musical Director), Paul Longhurst and Vanessa Chambers (Directors) have ensured that this Concert will be a success. Thanks also must go to all of the unseen help that we get when putting on any performance and Sue Bracher, Elizabeth Elliot and Alison Bond have done an enormous amount of work behind the scenes. We must not forget Tom Kealey and his staff here at the Harlequin for all their help and for the way that they always make us feel so welcome – they do a marvellous job and we are all so pleased that the future of this wonderful Theatre seems to be more secure now. Plans for the theatre's future are by no means finalised yet but the signs are good and your support has been, and remains, hugely important to that future.

We do hope that you enjoy your evening and we look forward to seeing you again in November when our societies will be working together again to bring you *Scrooge*.

Thank you as always for your support – we enjoy what we do but we couldn't do it without you!

Chris Wait & Kevin Stuart
The Chairmen, ESOS & the Opera Club

Cast List

Female voices

Nicky Allen, Liz Barnett, Elizabeth Bennett, Helen Buckland, Carol Cockbain, Alys Dreux, Sally Durrant, Barbara Garton, June Gautrey, Sally Hatton, Jane Hogg, Beth Johnson, Bryony Johnson, Jane Johnson, Brenda Judd, Kath Lovell, Debbie Marsh, Hannah Miles, Sue Nelson, Claire Padbury, Claire Powell, Elizabeth Powell, Julia Rogers, Sue Rogerson, Marie Singleton, Fiona Thompson, Christina Usher, Kathy Wilman, Louise Wright.

Male voices

Stephen Bonnett, Colin Bousfield, David Brown, Andrew BurrIDGE, Helier Dreux, Jon Ford, Adrian Martin, Roger Nelson, Mark Nicholson, John Rapley, Ian Stone, Kevin Stuart, Malcolm Toye, Chris Whitebread, Roger Wilman, Kevin Wood.

Junior voices

Toby Abraham, Jess Allen, Martha Barnett, Elanor Bond, Rebecca Bond, Lucca Ewbank, Charlotte Fagan, Philippa Hogg, Rebecca Miles, Eli Morris, Charlotte Page, Jonathan Pollard, Joe Shippam, Daniel Singleton, Laura Wijsmuller, Lynsey Wright, Wakana Yasuda, Cristian Zaccarini.

Musicians

Angela Barker (Musical Director) - Keyboard
Debbie Warren - Keyboard
Susan Denyer - Bass
Matthew Hobson – Percussion

Concert Programme

Musical Twist

a tale of two companies

Act One

A Selection. from *The Mikado* by Gilbert & Sullivan

Soloists - Ian Stone, Kathy Wilman, Brenda Judd, Claire Padbury,
Malcolm Toye with adult chorus

Make Believe & Why Do I Love You? from *Show Boat* by Jerome Kern

Soloists – Jane Hogg and Kevin Stuart

When the Foeman Bares His Steel from *The Pirates of Penzance* by Gilbert & Sullivan

Soloists - Stephen Bonnett, Malcolm Toye,
Sally Hatton, Claire Padbury with adult chorus

Laughing Song from *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss

Soloist - Elizabeth Powell

You're Back where you First Began from *The Merry Widow* by Franz Lehar

Male ensemble - Chris Whitebread, Kevin Wood, Mark Nicholson,

Roger Nelson, Colin Bousfield, Roger Wilman, Jon Ford

I'm Gonna Wash That Man Right Out-A My Hair from *South Pacific* by Rodgers & Hammerstein

Soloist - Liz Barnett

Ladies' ensemble - Christina Usher, Nicky Allen, Claire Powell,

Sue Nelson, Louise Wright, Sally Durrant, Jane Johnson,

Bryony Johnson, Carol Cockbain, June Gautrey,

Marie Singleton, Helen Buckland

It's Almost like Being in Love from *Brigadoon* by Lerner & Loewe

Soloists - Elizabeth Powell and David Brown

Baubles, Bangles and Beads & Take My Hand from *Kismet* by Wright & Forrest

Soloists - Claire Padbury and David Brown

An Excerpt from *My Fair Lady* by Rodgers & Hammerstein

Adult chorus

Do-Re-Mi... from *The Sound of Music* by Rodgers & Hammerstein

Soloist - Alys Dreux with junior chorus

Finale from *Oklahoma* by Rodgers & Hammerstein

Soloist - Kevin Stuart with full chorus

Act Two

Anything Goes from *Anything Goes* by Cole Porter

Soloist - Fiona Thompson with adult chorus

I've Never Been in Love Before & Guys and Dolls from *Guys & Dolls* by Frank

Loesser

Soloists - Jane Hogg, Chris Whitebread

Stephen Bonnett, Andrew Burrige

Half a Sixpence from *Half a Sixpence* by David Heneker

Soloists - Alys Dreux and Kevin Wood

The Lambeth Walk from *Me & My Girl* by Noel Gay

Soloist - Jon Ford with full chorus

Bad Guys from *Bugsy Malone* by Paul Williams

Junior chorus

A Medley from *Les Misérables* by Boublil, Schönberg & Kretzmer

Soloists: Sally Hatton,

Wakana Yasuda (Fri), Elanor Bond (Sat),

Fiona Thompson, Mark Nicholson,

John Rapley,

Adrian Martin, Roger Nelson, Colin Bousfield,

Kevin Stuart,

Chris Whitebread,

Elizabeth Powell, Jane Hogg,

Kevin Wood, Malcolm Toye with full chorus.

Thank You Very Much from *Scrooge* by Leslie Bricusse

Soloist - Mark Nicholson with full chorus

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A History of ESOS

The East Surrey Operatic Society was founded in 1907 and, true to its “Operatic” title, performed the light operatic repertoire of the day – Gilbert and Sullivan; L  har, Strauss, German, Offenbach and the like. With a virtually unbroken run (save for the war years), ESOS has continued to entertain Redhill and Reigate audiences since its inception; first at the old Redhill Market Hall, Redhill and since 1986 at the Harlequin Theatre.

For a brief period (in the early 1980s) we were kindly “hosted” by Dorking Dramatic and Operatic Society at the Dorking Halls following the demolition of the Market Hall and before the opening of the Harlequin Theatre.

ESOS was quick to embrace the new “book-musicals” that were being created from the 1940s. These shows (where songs became an integral feature of plot development rather than merely songs-within-a-show) reached their maturity in Rodgers & Hammerstein with their groundbreaking *Oklahoma!* With this new departure, from the late 1950s ESOS’s staple fare now became the “American Musical”.

This wasn’t always popular with all of the membership at the time as some members preferred the traditional “Operatic” repertoire (which, admittedly, afforded better opportunity for serious singing) and therefore formed the Opera Club of Reigate and Redhill. Since then the two societies have performed side-by-side in the Redhill and Reigate areas engaged in largely friendly rivalry.

ESOS has an envied reputation for staging high-quality productions. We currently perform at the Harlequin Theatre, Redhill and have also performed regularly at Polesden Lacey’s Open-Air Theatre in the summer. In recent years we have begun to tackle more adventurous repertoire and many of our more recent productions have never been staged by the Society before in its more than 100 year history.

A History of The Opera Club

In 1952, the Opera Club was born from the imagination and enthusiasm of Joyce Hooper and her many friends. The show chosen to be the first for the newly formed Opera Club was to be *The Pirates of Penzance*, with Elsie Short as Producer. It was to be performed in the Market Hall, Redhill, on the site of which now stands the Harlequin Theatre. Ron Potter was in the cast of that first show and recalled: “An audition date was set and you could sing whatever you chose. Rather recklessly, I picked ‘A wandering minstrel’ and, amazingly, was accepted for the chorus. I was slightly less amazed when I discovered that the only other tenor in the chorus was a gentleman some 40 years older than I was. And so, I found I was the youngest man in the show, the rest being middle-aged local shopkeepers and professional men. Still it was GILBERT and SULLIVAN and that’s what really mattered.”

Elsie Short and Joyce Hooper provided a formidable team until 1958, when C. William (Billy) Morgan took over the production. He had been with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company and sadly died just after the 1962 production of "The Yeomen of the Guard", after which Leonard Osborn took over production in 1963. He had been principal tenor with the D'Oyly Carte for fifteen years, and commanded loyalty, respect and affection from Opera Club performers with his ability to act any part better than any of us were able to do. To watch him directing a scene was a Master Class in itself, and those of us fortunate enough to be in one of his productions, however traditional, counted it as a true experience to learn stagecraft from him.

Joyce decided to retire as Opera Club musical director after she formed Surrey Opera, and in 1972 her place was taken by Chris Pratt who stayed with us for six years. Rosemary Pidgeon directed several productions after Leonard Osborn returned to the D'Oyly Carte as Principal Director, and we welcomed Angela Barker as our Musical Director in 1978. An innovative director, Peter Hahlo, took over production in 1980 with a lively version of *The Pirates of Penzance* and, as copyright on the Savoy Operas was now lifted, this was the preview of many shows to come.

1981 was our last show at the Market Hall, and we took the decision to move to Warwick School while the Harlequin Theatre was being built, during which time Leighton Camden and Doris Rolph directed shows for us. In 1983, the Opera Club was invited to bring Peter Hahlo's production of *The Pirates of Penzance* to Polesden Lacey Open Air Theatre for the National Trust, which was the first of many occasions we have performed there.

Our last show at Warwick School in 1985 was *Iolanthe* with our new director, Alison Cooper, who had performed as a principal with the Opera Club since 1973, having become a member whilst still at school. January 1987 took us to the new Harlequin Theatre and, for the first time, our show *The Mikado* was sponsored by Toyota (GB) Ltd, and we have since also received sponsorship from Das Air Cargo and insurance company St Paul. We owe a great debt of gratitude to our joint Presidents, Eddie and Mary Waller, who fought so hard to improve the theatrical life of the Borough, and to Brian Cooper who was instrumental in ensuring the new theatre had additional facilities not included in the original plans.

Since that time, we have enjoyed the combined talents of Alison Cooper and Angela Barker at Redhill and Polesden Lacey, and have added shows other than those of Gilbert and Sullivan to our repertoire, such as *The Beggars Opera*, *Brigadoon* (with Clive Bowden as Director), *Orpheus in the Underworld* directed by Nigel Wood and more recently *Chess*, directed by Gillian Jarvis.

We have drawn in new members from across Surrey and beyond who admire the standard we aim to achieve – amateurs with a very professional approach. We have taken part in Mayors' charity concerts at Donyngs with the East Surrey Operatic Society, and have performed our own set of *Sounds Familiar* concerts, singing all styles of music. *Sounds Familiar Gold* in 2002 marked our 50th Anniversary and involved founder member Ron Potter as a sprightly "Sir Joseph Porter".

The Importance of Youth

Tonight you will see a group of young people performing not only in their own right but with the main chorus as well. Over recent years, both ESOS and the Opera Club have produced shows where children could play a part and ESOS in particular have performed *Honk* and *Oklahoma* which were youth shows.

Local Societies such as ours have been going for many years but we want them to continue on for many more as Music, Drama and the Arts in general are so important to all of our lives. We want the young people that are with us now to stay with us and become our future. They are doing something which they are passionate about and which they throw themselves into without hesitation and as you will see they are all very talented.

Over the years a number of members have gone on to perform on the professional stage and that is something that these youngsters can aspire to. If there are any youngsters out there watching tonight please do contact us, join up, and then take part in the next show yourself!

Scrooge

Great Expectations...

...is what ESOS and The Opera Club have for this year of working together on two major productions, collectively called The Dickens Project. The first of them, *A Musical Twist*, I hope you're enjoying now: the second will be late November when the two societies work together to stage *Scrooge – the Musical*.

It all began about eight years ago when, having agreed to do ESOS's bi-annual Christmas concert, I searched around for something "different"...a change to the usual carols and Rutter (much as I love both). Fortunately at that time, the Leslie Bricusse show *Scrooge – the Musical* became available for amateur performance. Having long been a fan of the film on which it's based (Albert Finney, 1970...you know the one) and, more particularly, a fan of Bricusse (who I still think is one of our most underrated writers) I thought "wouldn't it be nice if...". And that's where it started. I envisioned a rendering of Dickens' fabulous "A Christmas Carol" (no copyright or performance rights payments to worry about!) with a few of the show's songs.

Gill Jarvis abridged the story beautifully, the show's score was made available and the whole provided us with a second half to our concert; a second half with exactly the "difference" that I wanted. The choir we had gathered entered into the spirit of things with gusto and many members commented how much they had enjoyed singing this not entirely familiar music. That is the point at which I started nagging the ESOS committee to consider staging the show in its entirety. We asked if The Opera Club would be interested in a joint venture mostly because the timing of the production would otherwise be a serious impediment to their usual timetable (they traditionally stage their main show in October). We were delighted when they agreed and, for the last three-to-four years, we have had a joint Opera Club/ESOS team working on

producing *Scrooge*. It's been a "start-stop" collaboration: no sooner did we start work on it than the show was withdrawn from amateur use (a bane of the lives of amateur societies). So we mothballed the minutes of our few early meetings and lay in wait...

And we waited.

Scrooge's eventual availability again has given the societies the opportunity to work together under the banner of what we have called "The Dickens Project". Enjoy today's concert. We do hope to see you again in November.

Terry Foster – the "Scrooge Team"