

LUTON CHORAL SOCIETY

SEVENTY-SIXTH SEASON

Conductor : *ARTHUR E. DAVIES*

Programme of

Elena Danieli
Francis Russell
Scenes from the Operas
and Ballet Music

at the

TOWN HALL, WATFORD

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20th, 1946

at 7.0 p.m., finish 9.0 p.m.

ARTISTES :

ELENA DANIELI *Soprano*

FRANCIS RUSSELL *Tenor*

OF THE ROYAL OPERA, COVENT GARDEN

with

LUTON CHORAL SOCIETY

LUTON GIRLS' CHOIR

and the

NATIONAL SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Leader : LOUIS STEVENS

Orchestra Manager : GERAINT WILLIAMS

ARTHUR E. DAVIES

Conductor

PROGRAMME SIXPENCE

Programme

(Programme Notes by R. R. Hopkins)

THE KING

Arr. Elgar

GRAND CHORUS, GRAND MARCH AND BALLET MUSIC AIDA (Finale, Act II)

Verdi
(1813-1901)

Aida was perhaps Verdi's grandest Opera. It was written for the Khedive of Egypt in 1871. The Second Act concludes in a scene outside the walls of ancient Thebes. Rhadames, Egypt's general, has conquered her enemies and is received in triumph by people, priests and King. The whole vast pageant—setting, singing and dancing—is on an overwhelmingly impressive scale, with hardly a parallel in all Italian opera.

Orchestra (a) OVERTURE—BARTERED BRIDE Smetana

(b) DANCE OF THE COMEDIANS— BARTERED BRIDE Smetana (1824-1884)

This Overture, like the Opera itself, is full of typically Czech rhythm and cheerfulness. The tunes come from the action which follows and deals with the wildly improbable story of a marriage broker in a Bohemian village.

The third act is enlivened by some travelling comedians. As a foretaste of the entertainment they will provide, the director calls upon the members of the troupe to engage in a typically Czech dance—flowing with native melody.

Chorus (Unaccompanied)

LOOK DOWN AND HEARKEN—RINALDO Handel

(Lascia Ch'io Pianga) (1685-1759)

(Arranged by R. Walker Robson)

"Rinaldo" was presented in 1711, Handel's first opera after arriving in this country from Hanover. It was mounted with spectacular realism, including living birds flying about the stage. This air is a contralto solo in the opera—there were no choruses in the early Handel operas—concerted numbers were provided by the principals all singing together. Handel had already used the same tune twice before, once as a song and once as an instrumental sarabande. This was not an unusual thing in the eighteenth century.

ELENA DANIELI, FRANCIS RUSSELL, CHORUS and ORCHESTRA

MISERERE—IL TROVATORE Verdi

(1813-1901)

The Troubadour is in prison; his lover, Leonora, hovers without. The mournful ecclesiastical chorus, and the tolling knell sounding from the tower in the blackness of the night, fill her with terror. The orchestra accompanies with shuddering chords. "What voices? What omens? What horrors?" she asks. The voice of her lover is heard sighing for an early death and bidding farewell to Leonora, who gasps that she can never forget him. She is his for ever. Manrico resumes his song against the chanting background of the funeral priests.

Luton Girls' Choir

(a) BACAROLLE — TALES OF HOFFMAN Offenbach (1819-1880)

Offenbach wrote over 90 operettas, but this was his only operatic masterpiece. He died a few months before it was produced. Hoffman, a poet, has a series of bizarre and unfortunate love affairs. In the first he loves—a doll. In the second—a shallow courtesan, Giulietta. The scene is in Venice and this is the song she sings with Hoffman's friend, Niklaus. She is under the sway of an evil magician and cannot be true to any man.

(b) BELL CHORUS — PAGLIACCI Leoncavallo (1858-1919)

The circus has arrived and we have sensed that Nedda, the Columbine, is faithless to her husband Canio (Pagliaccio). A troupe of bagpipe players passes and church bells are heard ringing in the village. Towards it the people turn, slowly in couples. As they go they sing this charming melody, imitating the sound of the bells in the spirit of Italian folk-song. The voices fade away in the distance and Nedda is left to brood over her husband's suspicions.

Aria (a) WHERE'ER YOU WALK—SEMELE Handel (1685-1759)

Handel wrote, mainly in England, 32 operas and 21 oratorios. "Semele" has been styled both opera and oratorio, also a "dramatic performance." It was first performed in the Spring of 1744. Little remains of the work in the repertoire to-day save this aria which to us is merely a beautiful tune. In his operas, however, Handel used airs to build up character and situation, which to us are lost.

Aria (b) FLOWER SONG—CARMEN Bizet (La Fleur Que Tu M'avais Jetee) (1838-1875)

Carmen is furious with Don José because he feels bound to return to barracks. He seeks to re-awaken her love by telling of the flower she gave him—which he kept, tho' faded, all the time he was in prison. It has retained its fragrance and ever fanned his desire to see Carmen again. He is her slave; his love binds him eternally to her.

FRANCIS RUSSELL

ELENA DANIELI, CHORUS and ORCHESTRA

EASTER HYMN (O Rejoice that the Lord has arisen)

— CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA Mascagni

(Concert arrangement by Purcell J. Mansfield) (Born 1863)

This opera, produced in 1890, made its composer famous in a night. But, despite many attempts, he has never repeated the success. The story is lurid and violent; it takes place in a Sicilian village on Easter Day.

From the Church the voices of the Choir are heard singing the "Regina Coeli." The crowd in the Square join in the "Alleluias," then, kneeling and led by the voice of Santuzza, sing the Resurrection hymn, "Let us sing our Lord's wondrous story." The Easter Hymn has a bright, joyful and typically operatic melody that vividly pictures the importance of religion in the lives of these pastoral people. From inside the Church the worshippers strike in occasionally with cries of "Alleluia."

INTERVAL—10 MINUTES

Orchestra BALLET SUITE. LAC DES CYGNES

—SWAN LAKE

Tschaikowsky

(1840-1893)

1. Scene
2. Waltz
3. Dance of the little Swans
4. Scene
5. Hungarian Dance (Czardas)

"Swan Lake" was composed in 1876 and was the first of Tschaikowsky's three great ballet suites. It was an attempt on the part of the composer to create a really symphonic score to take the place of the pieces of hack music which did duty for ballet previously. But the luxurious orchestration was initially unpopular; folk said it was too "Wagnerian"; too cohesive and serious for a pretty ballet. But Tschaikowsky was unsurpassed in relating spectacle, dance and music in this style. There are five sections as above.

Chorus and Orchestra

Gounod

SOLDIERS' CHORUS — FAUST

(1818-1893)

Marguerite has been betrayed and is sick with shame. She prays in the Cathedral—but gains no solace. The scene changes to the Square in front of the Cathedral, and martial music is heard. The troops (which will include her brother, Valentine) are coming home victorious; they express their happiness in this famous chorus—Glory to stout warriors, now for rest and fair maidens.

Duet LOVE DUET—ACT I—MADAM BUTTERFLY

Puccini

(*Voglia Temi Bene*)

(1858-1924)

Butterfly has married Lt. Pinkerton of the U.S. Navy and her people have deserted her in horror. She weeps and her lover consoles her. Night falls over the scene and they sing of their mutual love, of their happiness together, of the glory of the heavens, and of their need for one another. She is caught just like a butterfly, her heart is pierced. She flutters as he leads her to the marriage chamber.

ELENA DANIELI and FRANCIS RUSSELL

Luton Girls' Choir — REQUEST ITEMS FROM THEIR REPERTOIRE

Aria ONE FINE DAY—MADAM BUTTERFLY

Puccini

(1858-1924)

Butterfly awaits the return of her American husband with complete trust. One day, she says, a great ship will appear far on the horizon—the boom of cannon will announce its arrival in the harbour—they will see him coming from a distance, climbing the hill. Butterfly will hide for a moment, just to tease him; he will call for her by old pet names. We need not fear, she cries, she knows he will return.

ELENA DANIELI

Chorus and Orchestra

DANSE POLOVTSIENNE—PRINCE IGOR

Borodin

CHORAL DANCE No. 17

(1833-1887)

(Concert version — English Translation — Rosa Newmarch)

The sequence of Polovtsian Dances is provided by the Khan Kontchak to entertain his noble captive, Prince Igor, who has refused his liberty because it is offered on conditions he cannot accept. The dances are a riot of colour and passion. The stage is full of slaves, male and female, singers, dancers, and players of instruments. The maidens begin to dance to a languorous choral song. Warriors march in with prisoners and booty and are greeted by the crowd. Kontchak exults in Tartar fashion; the chorus acclaim him "Glory to Czak! Glory to Kontchak!"