

Opoms at St Jude's

LAUNCH OF THE 23RD SEASON RECEPTION AND ENTERTAINMENT

7.00 pm Sunday 22 March 2015

The Henrietta Barnett School Hall, Central Square,
Hampstead Garden Suburb, NW11 7BN

Drinks and Canapés

WELCOME

Niamh O'Donnell-Keenan, Chairman

A DINNER ENGAGEMENT

An opera in one act by Lennox Berkeley

Performed by members of Opera Dinamica
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

The performance will last about 1 hour

CLOSING REMARKS

Susie Gregson MBE, Chief Executive

CAST & CREATIVE TEAM

Lord Dunmow – Caspar James

Lady Dunmow – Colleen Nicoll

Susan (their daughter) – Hilary Cronin

Mrs Kneebone – Emma Lewis

HRH The Grand Duchess of Montebianco – Beth Archer

HRH Prince Philippe (her son) – William Glendinning

An Errand Boy – Tom Holland

Director – Zara Fyfe

Assistant Director – Tom Holland

Movement Assistant – Caitlin Fretwell Walsh

Musical Director – Sam Jewison

Repetiteur – Nicole Johnson

Hair & Makeup Artist – Claire Nicoll

SIR LENNOX BERKELEY (1903–1989) was born in Oxford and educated at Gresham's School and Merton College, Oxford. His father, a naval captain, was the illegitimate son of the 7th Earl of Berkeley. In 1927 he went to Paris to study music with Nadia Boulanger; he also studied with Ravel and got to know most of the leading composers active in Paris – Poulenc, Stravinsky, Milhaud, Honegger and Roussel. French influence pervades his music. In 1936 he met and was captivated by Benjamin Britten (another old boy of Gresham's School). The two composers shared a house for a year, living in the Old Mill at Snape, Suffolk, which Britten bought in 1938. They subsequently enjoyed a long friendship and artistic association, collaborating on a number of works.

Berkeley worked for the BBC during the Second World War, where he met his future wife, Freda Bernstein, whom he married in 1946. From that year until 1968 he was Professor of Composition at the Royal Academy of Music, where his pupils included Richard Rodney Bennett, David Bedford and John Tavener. His grand opera *Nelson* and one-act comic opera *A Dinner Engagement* were both premièred in 1954 – the former at Sadler's Wells, the latter (a work much admired by Britten) at the Aldeburgh Festival. Berkeley was knighted in 1974 and from 1977 to 1983 was President of the Cheltenham Festival.

The libretto of *A Dinner Engagement* is by Paul Dehn (1912–1976), an extremely successful screenwriter who was also responsible for the texts of Berkeley's later *Castaway* and William Walton's one-act opera *The Bear*. Berkeley's music (tuneful and deliberately backward-looking to suit the light comedy) has its roots in Bizet and Chabrier, with touches of Sullivan.

SYNOPSIS

Taking you on a journey through the glamorous 1920s, this two-scene comic opera depicts a battle between culture and class alongside a nonsensical romantic storyline. Lord and Lady Dunmow are desperately attempting to keep up appearances and, having fallen on hard times, are scheming to marry off their daughter Susan. No longer able to afford regular servants, they employ the curious yet well-intentioned Mrs Kneebone to help with preparations for their grand dinner party. Guests of honour the Grand Duchess of Montebianco and her son Prince Philippe arrive, with Susan determined not to fall for his charms. After feasting on pickled walnuts and cold cherry soup, Susan and Philippe surprisingly fall in love instantly and declare their engagement to their delighted parents, as Mrs Kneebone triumphantly announces 'Dinner is served'.

OPERA DINAMICA

This recently formed company is based at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (TL). Zara Fyfe founded it with the vision of crafting something new and exciting from a creative point of view. Students looking to gain experience in both production and performance are involved in performing interesting works that can be enjoyed by an audience in a unique chamber setting.

CASPAR JAMES (Lord Dunmow) has over 10 years of eclectic performing experience – from European to Latin American folk traditions including a year of studying and performing in the Caribbean. With the group *Orkestra del sol* he has performed to large crowds at Glastonbury. Since 2007 he has focused on classical singing with teachers David Lowe and Omar Ebrahim.

COLLEEN NICOLL (Lady Dunmow) is currently studying at TL under the tuition of Laureen Livingstone and Jean Paul Pruna. She is generously supported by The Hope Scott Trust and The Kathleen Trust. Colleen has performed in numerous operatic productions; recent roles include Titania (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) Yum Yum (*The Mikado*) and Giannetta (*L'elisir d'amore*) Future engagements include Daphne in *Acteon* (Charpentier), and Eurydice in *Orphée et Eurydice* (Gluck).

HILARY CRONIN (Susan) studies with Teresa Cahill at TL having received scholarships from Dame Susan Morden and TL and the Dame Felicity Lott Bursary. Recent engagements include Pitti-Sing in *The Mikado* and Tavener's *Song of the Angel*. Hilary is thrilled to be playing the role of Susan and has loved working with the cast and crew.

EMMA LEWIS (Mrs Kneebone) is the Robinson Hearn scholar at TL. Recent roles include Sesto (*La Clemenza di Tito*), Meg (*Falstaff*), Daniel (*Belshazzar*), Mother (*Hansel & Gretel*) and Sorceress (*Dido & Aeneas*). Emma has also sung chorus with Opera Holland Park, Hampstead Garden Opera and Eboracum Baroque. Recital and oratorio performances include Brandenburg Choral Festival, St Martin-in-the-Fields, Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, Blackheath Halls, Grimeborn Opera Festival and the Edinburgh Fringe. Choral experience includes Genesis 16, scholarships at the ORNC Chapel and St Martin-in-the-Fields and a Monteverdi Choir apprenticeship.

BETH ARCHER (The Grand Duchess of Montebianco) is in her final year of undergraduate study at TL. She made her operatic debut as Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* with West Riding Opera. Beth spent an Erasmus year in Italy at the Conservatorio di Musica di Perugia. Performances in Italy included solo roles in the Festival di Musica da Camera (Emilia-Romagna) and alongside Coro Voci dal Mondo. Beth has participated in Master classes with Ron Morris and Louise Winter.

WILLIAM GLENDINNING (Prince Philippe) is a Leverhulme arts scholar at TL, where he is currently studying as a postgraduate under Sophie Grimmer. This is William's third foray into more contemporary opera following successful performances in Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and Spagnolo's *It Makes No Difference*, both at TL.

TOM HOLLAND (Errand Boy and Assistant Director) is a third year undergraduate student of John Wakefield. This will be the fourth opera he has been involved in at TL, having been in productions of Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Handel's *Belshazzar*. He was Assistant Director of a performance of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* last year.

ZARA FYFE (Director) is a soprano in her final year of undergraduate study. Her career features extensive choral experience as a member of the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain, along with being selected to represent TL at the Kathleen Ferrier Society Bursary for Young Singers. She made her operatic debut as Cupid in TL'S production of *Orpheus in the Underworld*. She has worked professionally as Assistant Director on two TL productions, with upcoming engagements including 2015 postgraduate Opera Scenes. This is her full directing debut.

CAITLIN FRETWELL WALSH (Movement Assistant) is a professional contemporary dancer, having graduated from TL in 2012. She turned her focus to movement direction earlier this year while working at Glyndebourne Opera in *Der Rosenkavalier*. As well as collaborating with Zara in *A Dinner Engagement* at TL, Caitlin also assisted at the Royal Academy of Music last October.

SAM JEWISON (Musical Director), a 2013/14 TL Scholar, has been described as an 'MD professional beyond his years', with 'a rare attack and precision' (National Operatic and Dramatic Association). Although singing has been his principal study, Sam draws upon years of conducting experience that began with semi-professional seasons at the age of fourteen. Besides this, he delights in work as a pianist and arranger for many UK production companies.

NICOLE JOHNSON (Repetiteur) is an accomplished pianist and accompanist. She currently studies under Sergio de Simone and Lynton Atkinson. Pursuing a passion for vocal repertoire as well as solo piano, she is delighted to have acted as repetiteur for this production – the joy of exploring fabulous, lesser-known music made all the better for working with such wonderfully talented and gregarious musicians.

Please take some copies of the Proms at St Jude's leaflet to give to your friends and help to spread the word about the Festival. Tell them to check our website for full details of the programme (www.promsatstjudes.org.uk).

We should like to take the opportunity of thanking, most warmly, all our Patrons, Sponsors, Benefactors, Friends and numerous others who help to make this annual festival possible by supporting and helping us in so many different ways.

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