

# Proms at St Jude's

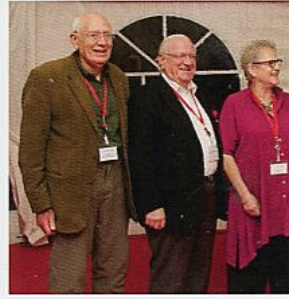
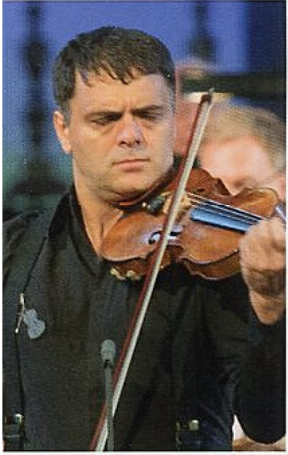


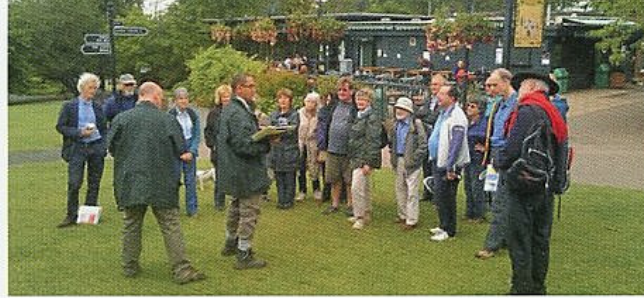
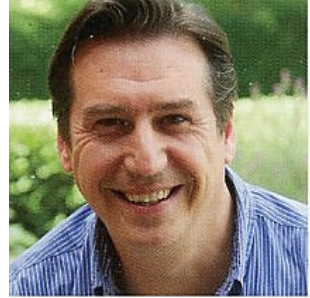
Celebrating a triumphant

# 2014 Festival



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# Festival is off to flying start with top talks

Writers are interviewed about work

by Tim Lamden

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This year's Proms at St Jude's festival kicked off with an exciting line-up of talks featuring famous faces from across the literary world.

The LitFest Weekend, now in its third year on the festival schedule, took place over Saturday and Sunday at Henrietta Barnett School in Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb.

Actress and author Phyllida Law was the first writer to take to the stage on Saturday, speaking to broadcaster Piers Plowright about her new book *Three Mothers (and a camel)*, exploring her mother's battle with dementia.

Ms Law was followed by BBC News health editor Hugh Pym who spoke about his new book *Inside the Banking Crisis* with fellow financial writer Nick Kochan.

Rev Alan Walker, festival president and vicar of St Jude-on-the-Hill, then spoke to historian Richard van Emden about his extensive



Little Wolf Gang

work on the First World War. *Sunday Times* journalist Lynn Barber concluded Saturday's programme with an insight into her career as a celebrity interviewer, stretching back almost half a century.

On Sunday there were further talks from a host of high-profile figures including journalist Bridgid Keenan and writer Edna O'Brien, who was in conversation with



Children watch Little Wolf Gang perform Peter and

broadcaster Sue MacGregor. There was also a handful of concerts over the weekend with musicians Little Wolf Gang drawing a large crowd of young and old into St Jude-on-the-Hill Church in Central Square for a free lunch-time performance of the classic children's symphony *Peter and*

the Wolf on St Jude-on-the-Hill Church in Central Square for a free lunch-time performance of the classic children's symphony *Peter and*



Actress and author Phyllida Law was interviewed by Piers Plowright



Writer Edna O'Brien (left) in conversation with Sue MacGregor



Cameron Arnold, four, poses with a zebra

4 H&H Series, Thursday June 12, 2014

## Proms at St Jude's Michael White

# An imaginative pianist

Llyr Williams conjures up images of Russian art through music

Pianists are generally reckoned the quiet thinkers of the music world, with just a few Flash Harrys like Lang Lang as exceptions to the rule. And no pianist I know could be less like Lang Lang than the quietly thoughtful Llyr Williams, who brings to St Jude's a programme of Haydn, Schubert, Chopin and Mussorgsky on Tuesday, June 24.

"People say I'm an intellectual player," he says, "though maybe that's just because they know I read music at Oxford before I went to the Royal Academy. But having an academic background has certainly coloured my approach to playing. I'm analytical - although I hope that doesn't diminish the excitement."

It certainly hasn't diminished his career, which took off meteorically after selection as a Radio 3 New Generation artist and adoption as one of the elite newcomers promoted by the Borletti-Buitoni Trust. Above all, he's acknowledged as a serious Beethoven interpreter, winning a South Bank Show



Llyr Williams

© Benjamin Edelovega

Award for an intensive two-week exploration of the sonatas at the Edinburgh Festival. He's just been doing something similar at Kalamazoo, the biggest keyboard festival in the United States, and there will be more Beethoven at Marylebone's Wigmore Hall this

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## Young conductor braves it with a Handel double

By tradition, St Jude's usually has a large-scale choral concert and, this year, it's a complete Handel oratorio which happens not be *Messiah* - nothing so standard - but the piece that arguably invented English oratorio 10 years before it. If only by accident.

The piece is *Esther*, originally written as a private entertainment for the Duke of Chandos, Handel's patron and perhaps more (some historians speculate that they were lovers) through his early years in London.

Not much is known about the first performance in 1718, beyond the likelihood that it took place at the Duke's estate in Edgware. But we do know that it was revised in 1720 and again in 1732, when Handel planned to stage it in a London theatre but was stopped by the Bishop of London - who objected to the secular dramatisation of Biblical stories. And *Esther* is certainly Biblical.

A liberation narrative, it features a Persian queen who saves the Jews from the



At just 22, Theo Bamber is already managing his own baroque group

to set up his own group, The Elia Ensemble, for a Christmas performance of *Messiah* and



Maria Friedman was in New York with the 84-year-old Sondheim just a few weeks ago

But just now it's not singing that tops her agenda. She hasn't appeared in a big West End or Broadway musical for years and says she won't "until the right one comes along. Committing to eight shows a week for six months or more is hard work and to do it."

Meanwhile, if she isn't actually appearing onstage, she's still involved in making success. The shower of awards heaped on her 2012 production of *Merrily We Roll Along*, which opened at the Menier Chocolate Factory and transferred to the Harold Pinter Theatre and was the first time she'd done anything on that scale.

summed it up. For myself, in all the years I've been a music critic with a special love for Sondheim, I have never seen a more alive, dynamic, vital or engaging show.

Directing She talks about it in a curiously apologetic way, saying: "I wasn't exactly up to my neck in directing experience and know that people spend years training to do this, whereas I just seemed to pop along and there it was. But I've spent 30 years in rooms with directors, figuring out what works and what doesn't, and directing *Merrily* came very naturally to me. It was an extraordinary time I'd love to

bottle and keep in terms of the concentration, the joy, the challenge of those weeks of rehearsal." The only surprise is that she has no big show on the cards to follow it up. But she's reading scripts, developing ideas, and when I suggested she might think about directing Sondheim's *Fussell* - a piece whose UK premieres failed to hit the target and deserves her appraisal - she admitted that it's on her mind. So maybe... In the meantime, there's *Leslie & Steve*, and I suspect it will bring the house down - if that's the right thing to say about a show in a church.

To win tickets for the Proms at St Jude's, see page 14 of *Elcetera*.

...s first ever opera is a dry run for stately home



■ Violinist Vasko Vassilev      ■ Soprano Lesley Garrett      Picture



## A drum roll for the Proms

Big-name stars line up for St Jude's arts extravaganza

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## Lesley brings festival to rousing patriotic finale

Soprano dons Union Jack costume for climax of Proms

by Tim Larden  
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Soprano Lesley Garrett brought a close to this year's Proms at St Jude's festival with a rousing performance alongside the London International Orchestra.  
More than 500 people packed into St Jude-on-the-Hill, in Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb, for a sold-out performance of the annual Last Night of the Proms concert on Sunday.  
The orchestra was conducted by Paul Bateman and joined by internationally-renowned violinist Vasko Vassilev during the two-and-a-half hour performance.  
Ms Garrett performed a number of pieces before changing into a Union

Jack skirt and red top to conclude the concert in patriotic fashion, with renditions of *Jerusalem, Land of Hope and Glory* and *Rule, Britannia!*

The concert marked the end of this year's eight-day festival, which began with a two-day literary event on June 21 and continued throughout last week with musical performances and themed walks in the Suburb.

**Lively**  
Among the highlights of the week's performances was the *Schools Concert* last Thursday starring the Nonetich Orchestra and attended by 200 pupils from Garden Suburb Infant School, Annemount Nursery and Pre-preparatory School and Brookland Junior School.

On Saturday, fam *Musical Mystery To* performance by BBC *Lucie Skeaping* and *Lucie Skeaping* and *Lucie Skeaping* at St J.

This year's fest for chosen chair and North London £50,000 last year.

Festival trustee Ron Finlay said: "It was nice to have much better weather this year and we were very pleased to have some new sponsors, such as Barclays, Investec and the Saracens. "When you get to the patriotic numbers at the end everyone waves their flags and people stand up to sing and clap. It was very lively. "We got lots of positive feedback from the audience."



## Partners despite being at each end of the globe

Brit violinist and Oz pianist have somehow co-ordinated diaries to go on tour together

**A**s they run into the last days of their 2014 season, the St Jude's Proms can boast a big name violinist and a big-name pianist: same night, same bill. And though it would be nice to think that the artistic partnership Piers Lane and Tasmin Little has been engineered for this event, they've actually been playing together for what Piers tells me is an astonishing 28 years. To which I, of course, reply that neither of them look old enough.  
According to Tasmin, Hampstead played a part in their first meeting which, she says, "was on my 21st birthday when I went to hear Piers play a concert at the very end of Hampstead Theatre. I felt like we'd been following each other round the country without making contact. Wherever I turned up to perform, people would tell me they'd had him there the week before. So I thought, this is absurd.

it's time we met. And having done so, we thought it would be nice to work together."

In terms of background, they didn't have much in common. Tasmin had been brought up in north London, shone as a string prodigy at the Menuhin School and went on to create things, like having the music centre at Bradford University named after her.

**Radio host**  
Piers, by contrast, was brought up in Australia and went to the Queensland Conservatorium. And London since 1979, with regular appearances at the Albert Hall Proms, at Wigmore Hall and on Radio 3 (where he presented an especially long running series about piano repertoire). he still travels back and forth to Oz like a commuter - not least because he has his own music festival there which he calls his 'Aussex' fix. Somehow though, they manage



■ Piers Lane and Tasmin Little will be performing together at St Jude's on Friday  
to co-ordinate their diaries. This summer, apart from St Jude's, they tour Australia and South Africa and every concert will be a friend and every concert will be a collaborative exercise because, with artists of this calibre, there's no question of one being the solo star and the other the accompanist.  
For the piano, often forced into the guise of a subservient negotiator, that can be a tricky role to negotiate. But as Piers says: "It's all a matter of empathising with the other player, listening to them attentively, as one would to a friend in conversation, and responding appropriately. And it is a conversation, not an accompanied monologue."  
**Joint creation**  
"Tasmin knows the piano parts as well as she does her own and listens in a detailed way to everything I do - so there's a real sense of us creating something together, not one player blindly following the other."  
For St Jude's, they are collaborating on some moody Stravinsky's *Violin Sonata*, which Tasmin describes as "off the scale difficulty in the piano part but the sort of thing that Piers eats for breakfast". Or in this case, supper. Share the feast tomorrow (June 27) at 7.45pm.  
■ Full details: proms@stjude.org.uk

## Youngsters captivated by a timeless classic

What was grabbing the attention of these young tots as they sat transfixed this weekend?  
A performance of classic symphony Peter and the Wolf especially for children proved a hit during the opening weekend of the Proms at St Jude's festival.  
Young and old packed into St Jude-on-the-Hill church, in Central Square, Hampstead Garden Suburb, for the free lunchtime performance by

musicians Little Wolf Gang on Saturday.  
The annual festival kicked off with the LitFest weekend which took place over Saturday and Sunday at Henrietta Barnett School in Central Square.  
For more pictures from the opening weekend see page 17, and turn to page 5 of Etcetera for an interview with soprano Lesley Garrett ahead of her Last Night of the Proms performance on Sunday.



■ Children watch Little Wolf Gang perform Peter and The Wolf      Picture: Nigel Sutton

'Proms at St Jude's...is an unignorably big deal in North London, with big audiences... Go to one of these concerts and you'd instantly dismiss the lore about classical events failing to get bums on seats... It is the best example I know of a real community venture, entirely run by volunteers, with the proceeds going to charity. It's also seriously hospitable: marquees and things...Google it and go.'

Michael White, Music Critic  
telegraph.co.uk





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