

Proms comes of age

Our local Proms Festival celebrated its 21st year in style with another glorious range of music, talks, walks and fun for everyone over nine days at the end of June.

It's always hard to pick highlights, but Harry Christopher's The Sixteen so filled the church of St Jude-on-the-Hill with their resonant voices that this must be one contender.

Lucie Skeaping and the Burning Bush, presenting an esoteric and eclectic mix of music inspired by Jewish and Ladino culture, was certainly another. Both were original and complemented by the excellent acoustics.

WOWED

For traditionalists, it was hard to beat the first and last nights. On the first, we were treated to a vivacious medley of music from the London International

Orchestra, making the most of Viennese output from Mozart to Lehar; and on the last, as well as enjoying the traditional flag-waving and horn-honking pieces at the end, the audience was wowed by a superb performance by Charlie Siem as soloist for the Sibelius Violin Concerto in D minor.

At the LitFest, there were great moments too. Everyone seems to have been stirred by Tim Smit's rousing call to arms to mavericks and optimists. Sir Michael Holroyd and Sue MacGregor in conversation had the audience rapt, as did Ed Stourton and Rabbi Laura Janner-Klausner discussing France's chequered wartime past and the memories of survivors.

TEMPTING FATE

The free lunchtime concerts continued to delight. On the



Antonio Carluccio, Henry Kelly and Giles Coren at the LitFest

first day, as the heavens opened just as the eponymous drummers, Vision and Games Maker Choir began their open-air entertainment, one wondered if calling this event 'Pandemonium on the Square' was not tempting fate. But a quick relocation to the shelter of St Jude's produced a magical performance.

RAVE REVIEWS

It's not often that a guided walk leads to rave reviews, but special mention must be made of the one led by Heath Superintendent Simon Lee with colleagues from the Corporation of London. On the journey from Golders Hill Park and across the Heath Extension

to the Suburb, they captivated their audience with their knowledge and enthusiasm, making it a memorable and enjoyable experience – despite the rain.

As always, the army of volunteers that makes Proms so special did sterling work – from baking for the delicious LitFest café and pouring Pimms in the refreshments marquee to shifting furniture, stewarding and general organisation.

DONATION

It was not the warmest of years in either meteorological or financial terms, but thanks to fantastic support by sponsors,



Above, Lucy Skeaping and The Burning Bush; below, Proms volunteers



advertisers, Friends and generous attendees, Proms will surpass its fund-raising target this year and expects to be able to donate

£50,000 to Toynbee Hall's ASPIRE programme and to the North London Hospice.

RON FINLAY

Murder in Lyttelton Playground

Lyttelton playground was the scene of gang fighting and serious violence at the end of June. The usually tranquil setting in the woods was ablaze with knife attacks, multiple deaths and poison between two rival gangs. Suburb residents were shocked by the gravity of the drama and overcome by the spectacle of youths screaming across the new amphitheatre as they set the night on fire with loud rock music and lewd behaviour.

The launch of the new amphitheatre in the playground was a roaring success with the three night run of Romeo & Juliet performed by the Rosemary Branch Theatre Company.

The professional company were welcomed into the Suburb by the Lyttelton Playground Redevelopment Committee. The play was performed in glorious sunshine for three nights to a packed audience of all ages

from children as young as 7 to ticket holders in their late 70's. The opening night had sold out a month before the event and the theatre welcomed both residents and visitors from outside of the area.

Committee founder and Chairman, Adam Bass said, "The production was outstanding; the calibre of the actors and director was as good as any West End production. We staged the event as a showcase for how the amphitheatre can add value to the community for people of all backgrounds. We hope it will be an asset to the Suburb, just like the playground, for many years to come."

VICTORIA GORDON

For more information on the redevelopment of the playground and for future use of the amphitheatre please visit www.lytteltonplayingfields.co.uk

A satisfying Seagull

Two of the four acts of Anton Chekov's 'The Seagull' are not very suitable for open air theatre. However the director, John Colmans, managed to overcome this difficulty. He also assembled a very strong cast of actors and it proved to be a very satisfactory rendering of a wonderful play. The set, designed by David Lane, was imaginative; the stage and painted backdrop of the lake in Act 1 was atmospheric. A number of the cast had quite a lot of experience, and it showed.

Gabi Maddocks made a fascinating Irina, a self absorbed, temperamental and miserly actress who keeps her son, Konstantin, trapped on the estate in poverty. The strength of John Colman's production was that he clearly showed the various strains in the play; unrequited love, success, failure and self doubt. The writer, Trigorin, has a marvellous speech about the life of a writer and fame which was splendidly handled by Michael Refford. Irina's son, Konstantin, was finely portrayed by Royce Sparks. No longer young and frustrated, not only in love but also a writer. The object of his love, Nina, was well acted by Tempeste Hepenstall-Brown as a young provincial girl who does not understand

Konstantin's play and falls for Trigorin.

There were other fine performances from Fred Griessen as Irina's brother; Danielle Stagg as Masha, hopelessly in love with Konstantin, who eventually marries the helpless teacher, Semyon (Geoff Prutton) and makes his life miserable. The doctor, Dorn, was extremely well played by Amos Witztum, with humour and wisdom.

Altogether a most satisfying effort by the Garden Suburb Theatre.

LEONIE STEPHEN

Leonie writes, "This is my last review for Suburb News. After more than 30 interesting years, I am retiring." We will miss Leonie's contributions which must number over 100 since 1983.

Her connection with theatre on the Suburb go much further back, a professional actress – as they were known then – Leonie graced the Institute stage in many productions acting with, among others, David McCullum in the fifties. Much later who could forget her performance in the Omnibus film on the Suburb which happened during her watch as RA chairman. Thank you Leonie.

RICHARD WAKEFIELD

WORDSEARCH

In the box below are concealed 20 names of Currencies of FOUR or more letters; and an extra one highlighted to start you off (don't include it in your total!) Names may be read in all directions, straight or diagonally. Entries should be listed on paper or a postcard and sent to Diana Woodfield, 5 Erskine Hill, NW11 6HA with your name, address and phone number. The closing date is September 16. All correct entries go into a draw to win a £20 voucher from Joseph's Bookstore.

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DIANA WOODFIELD

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SPRING WORDSEARCH ANSWERS

The TV programmes were: Coast, Dad's Army, Dallas, Dispatches, Doctor Who, Downton Abbey, East-enders, Frasier, Horizon, Lewis, Mastermind, Merlin, Minder, Miranda, Panorama, Pointless, Poirot, Time Team, Top Gear and X Factor.

Spring Wordsearch winner

The winner this time is the Rev Dr Ian Tutton, minister of the Free Church since 2006. In his very busy, and committed life, and with two children at local schools, it is good to know that Ian still has time for some TV!

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