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# A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

**SUNDAY 18 JUNE 2023**

Public Hall, Liskeard, 5.30pm

**WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE 2023**

The Minster Church of St Andrew  
Plymouth, 7.30pm

Conductor - Anne Kimber  
Leader - Catherine Smith

Soloists:

Elin Pritchard - Soprano  
Peter Van Hulle - Tenor

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# A NIGHT AT THE OPERA

**Carmen - Bizet**

Overture Les Toréadors  
La fleur que tu m'avais jetée (Flower Song)  
Habanera

**Gianni Schicchi - Puccini**

O mio babbino caro

**La Traviata - Verdi**

Overture - Prelude to Act 1  
Libiamo ne'lieti calici  
Parigi, o cara

**Tosca - Puccini**

E lucevan le stelle  
Vissi d'arte

**La Bohème - Puccini**

O soave fanciulla

----- Interval -----

**Aida - Verdi**

Grand March

**La Bohème - Puccini**

Sì, mi chiamano Mimi

**Cavalleria Rusticana - Mascagni**

Intermezzo

**La Traviata - Verdi**

Ah! Fors'è lui...Sempre libera

**Neopolitan Song - Di Capua**

O Sole Mio

**Die Fledermaus - Johann Strauss II**

Overture

**The Merry Widow - Lehár**

Vilja

**Turandot - Puccini**

Nessun dorma

Conductor  
Anne Kimber

Leader  
Catherine Smith

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Conductor  
Anne Kimber



Anne has been connected with the PSO for many years, first as a player and subsequently as conductor (only the sixth in over 145 years of the orchestra's existence).

As a flautist her musical activities have ranged widely in the South West, performing with groups such as the Bournemouth Sinfonietta, the Birmingham Royal Ballet, Opera South West, New Devon Opera, the South West Sinfonietta and many others.

She also manages the Dartington Festival Orchestra as part of the Dartington International Summer School and has been a mentor for the renowned South West Music School.

As conductor of the PSO she has helped to draw performances of real power and vibrancy from the players, enabling it to become the most accomplished group of its kind in the South West.

In June 2022, Anne was awarded an Honorary Master of Arts Degree, by Plymouth Marjon University, to recognise her dedication to both the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra and Dartington Festival Orchestra and also for her outstanding contribution to classical music within the region.

Leader  
Catherine Smith



Cath was born and brought up in Havant, near Portsmouth. Her father Tony is a keen amateur cellist, so she grew up surrounded by music. Cath took up the violin at the age of 9, starting initially with weekly lessons at school in a group of four. She 'got the bug', largely due to the enthusiasm of her teacher Graham Frewer who introduced her to the joys of ensemble playing.

Cath was fortunate to benefit from many other musical opportunities including membership of the Hampshire County Youth Orchestra, and chamber music coaching whilst she was still at school, which have provided a great foundation for her ongoing musical exploits.

At 18, Cath left home for Birmingham to study Medicine, and managed to keep up her playing by joining the Birmingham Philharmonic orchestra. Qualifying as a doctor in 1995, after junior doctor jobs in Birmingham and Nottingham, Cath moved to Plymouth in 1997 and soon managed to track down the PSO. After playing for a couple of seasons, unfortunately on calls and medical exams meant that she was unable to keep up her PSO commitment. For the next decade her only sorties into classical music were to lead the annual Peninsula Doctors' Orchestra concerts.

Having settled into her post as a consultant radiologist, and started a family, Cath was able to rejoin the PSO in 2013. 'I missed playing with the PSO – our programmes are varied, interesting and there is usually something to challenge and stretch us. The players are friendly and support each other. It's also a great way to unwind from my day job.'





Soprano  
Elin Pritchard



Praised for her ravishing, passionate lyricism, impressive range and effortless technique, Elin is a force to be reckoned with on the operatic stage. Graduating with distinction from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and London's National Opera studios Elin has gone on to win admiration for both her vocal and dramatic ability; crafting fully rounded characters fit for a 21st century operatic audience.

Her acclaimed roles include Manon Lescaut and Alice / Falstaff at The Grange Festival. Tatyana / Eugene Onegin, Violetta and Fiordiligi for Den Jyske Opera, Kupava / The Snow Maiden and Nedda / I Pagliacci for Opera North, Donna Elvira / Don Giovanni for Finnish National Opera, Lucia di Lammermoor and Marie / The Daughter of the Regiment for Buxton Festival Opera, Tosca English Touring Opera & Mid Wales Opera, Musetta / La Bohème, Miss Jessel / The Turn of the Screw, Giorgetta Il tabarro for Opera Holland Park, For Scottish Opera, she has sung Donna Elvira, Anne Trulove / The Rake's Progress, Violetta La Traviata and First Dryad, Rusalka. Adalgisa / Norma Chelsea Opera Group.

Elin Pritchard sings regularly in concert, her repertoire including Beethoven Symphony No. 9 with the Dresden Philharmonic Orchestra, Bruckner Mass in F Minor, Brahms Requiem, Dvorak Te Deum, Fauré Requiem, Gounod Messe Solennelle, Haydn St Nicholas with English Chamber Orchestra, Mahler Symphony No4, Mendelssohn Elijah, Mozart Coronation Mass, Mass in C Minor and Requiem, Poulenc Gloria with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Vaughan Williams Sea Symphony and Verdi Requiem.

Recent performances including Musetta and Ofglen / The Handmaid's Tale for English National Opera. Flowermaiden / Parsifal conducted by Richard Farnes and a last minute jump in to the title role of Rusalka at Garsington Opera and Edinburgh International Festival to great critical acclaim.

Next season, after a wonderful debut as Micaela in Carmen, Elin is thrilled to be returning to her national company WNO, as Mimi in La Bohème.

Tenor  
Peter Van Hulle



Born in Cumbria and growing up in Blackpool, Peter studied at Leeds University, the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama and the National Opera Studio in London.

As a principal artist, Peter has sung for many of the major opera companies in the UK including: the Royal Opera, English National Opera, Scottish Opera, Welsh National Opera and Glyndebourne; whilst abroad engagements include: Teatro alla Scala, Milan, La Monnaie, Brussels, De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam, Grand Theatre, Luxembourg, Irish National Opera, Dublin and in Paris, Nice and Budapest.

His operatic repertoire ranges from Handel and Mozart, through Verdi, Puccini and Wagner to Britten and Janacek. He is particularly sought after as an interpreter of new operas. Peter has also sung at many major festivals including: Edinburgh International Festival, Buxton Festival and the Longborough, Holland Park, West Green House and Almeida opera festivals.

On the concert platform he has sung with a variety of orchestras including: City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Deutsches Symphonie Orchester and Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Again in a diverse array of repertoire including Bach and Handel, Mozart and Haydn, Beethoven and Mendelssohn, Verdi and Puccini and especially Britten.

As a recitalist Peter has sung at the Buxton and Edinburgh Festivals and the International Britten Symposium in Szeged, Hungary. Peter has also sung for the Birmingham Royal Ballet, Rambert Dance Company and Viviana Durante Company.

He has a recital CD of Swiss Romantic Song available on Guild and can also be seen on DVD in Death in Venice and Cunning Little Vixen, both on the Opus Arte label.

**First Violins**

Catherine Smith  
Nathan Broomhead  
Heather Sadler  
Sandra Sutton  
Stephen Turner  
Ciaran Ricketts  
John Ollier  
Margaret Sampson  
Jonathan Stromberg  
Paul Stephenson  
Alan Thomas  
Jo Sells  
Catherine Simpson

**Second Violins**

Dave Adams  
Maggie Willmott  
Rebecca Hewlins  
Lorna Groves  
Kate Wheeler  
Joan Thompson  
Lyndsey Pengelly  
Pam Pinder  
Stephen Macro  
Vanessa Tyler  
Marion Hinks

**Violas**

Petra Stephenson  
Rob Kellagher  
Cathy Smart  
Rosalind Turner  
Roger Waterfield  
Colin McKay  
Joan Thomas  
Dawn Adams  
Jess Welbourne

**Cellos**

Debbie McMurrin  
Alicia Stolliday  
Andrew Palmer  
Celina Cox  
Robert Tayler  
Jane Spence  
Denise Hasshill  
Ian Tunbridge

**Double Basses**

Judy Whitlock  
Andy Tunbridge

**Flutes**

Michael Wood  
Lucy Annetts

**Piccolo**

Cathy Quinlan

**Oboes**

Carolyn Haynes  
Tracy Senior

**Clarinets**

Patrick Saunders  
Hannah Epps

**Bass Clarinet**

Barry Parsons

**Bassoons**

Helen Simmonds  
Gemma Hayes

**Horns**

Gemma Peasgood  
Simon Keates  
Debby Cotton  
Catherine Garland

**Trumpets**

Ben Dawson  
Bruce Fox

**Trombones**

Andrew Oldfield  
Colin Hudson  
Frank Robinson

**Tuba**

Matthew Watkinson

**Timpani**

Michelle Hiley

**Percussion**

Rachel Colville  
Claire Brock

**Harp**

Gary Hawkins



Players interested in joining the PSO should contact the  
Musical Director, Anne Kimber on 01803 732550



## A Night at the Opera

'A Night at the Opera' is probably best known as a 1935 American comedy film starring the Marx Brothers, and was the first of five films they made for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer after their departure from Paramount Pictures, and the first after Zeppo had left the act; it was one of MGM's biggest box-office hits of the year.

'A Night at the Opera' also happens to be the title of the fourth studio album by British rock band, Queen, which was released some forty years later, and actually named after the film. It proved equally as successful, and topped the UK Album Chart for four non-consecutive weeks, and also produced the band's most successful single in the UK, 'Bohemian Rhapsody', which became their first UK number-one and, despite it being twice as long as the average length of a single in the 1970s, it became immensely popular throughout the world.

However, today's 'Night at the Opera' won't be featuring the odd number from the late Freddie Mercury, or perhaps any slapstick comedy during the interval, but will simply offer the audience a one-off break from the regular diet of 'Overture, Concerto, and Symphony', replacing this instead with a splendid mix of music specially curated from some of the best-loved, and most unashamedly tuneful operas and operettas of the Romantic period – some for orchestra alone, and others for the most exciting combination of soprano and tenor voices – both in solos and duets.

**Carmen**  
**BIZET (1838-1875)**

### Overture 'Les Toréadors' (Introduction to Act 1)

'La fleur que tu m'avais jetée' (Flower Song) – [Don José]

### Habanera

With its arias famous all over the globe, Carmen is arguably one of the most best-loved operas ever written, even though its Paris premiere in 1875 might have said otherwise. Bizet's music appears to be imbued with a unique charm, and the elaborately-

detailed charisma of its eponymous main character undoubtedly enhances the overall experience. It's the tragic story of an attractive and rebellious gypsy and of her impossible love toward a soldier. With its very forward-looking style of writing, it has profoundly changed the history of music for the opera, and the 'opéra comique' genre in particular.

The action takes place in nineteenth-century Seville and sees the somewhat naïve soldier, Don José, seduced by the wiles of the hot-blooded gypsy, Carmen, who makes a living out of selling cigars in the main square. Blinded by passion, José forsakes his family and gives up all obligations, only later to find himself miserable, powerless and without Carmen's love, who has since transferred her affections to the dashing-ebullient bullfighter, Escamillo. But José's passion only increases, and ultimately leads him to stab Carmen to death – to which he owns up straightaway.

**Gianni Schicchi**  
**PUCCINI (1858-1924)**

### 'O mio babbino caro' – [Lauretta]

Gianni Schicchi is a comic opera in one act to a libretto by Forzano, composed in 1917–18. The story is based on an incident mentioned in Dante's Divine Comedy, and is the third and final part of Puccini's 'Trittico' – three contrasting one-act operas beginning with Il tabarro, and Suor Angelica, which were originally intended to be presented together. Although it continues to be performed with one or both of the other two operas, Gianni Schicchi is now more frequently staged either alone or with short operas by other composers. Lauretta's aria 'O mio babbino caro' is one of Puccini's best-known, and one of the most popular arias in the world of opera, and 'verismo' in particular.

The story takes place in Florence, where Buoso had wished to make a will, but was put off doing so by his son, Simone. However, once it was too late, the son fears that his father might have had a will prepared before his fatal illness, that wasn't overly favourable to the son. Simone therefore calls on Gianni Schicchi – a self-made man from the lower-classes – to help them re-write any such will. Schicchi comes up with



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the idea of impersonating Buoso and making a new will. Simone promises Schicchi he will be well rewarded, but Schicchi takes no chances, 'leaving' a considerable sum – and Buoso's mule to himself. While he ensures that most of the proceeds still go to Simone, Schicchi makes the bequests conditional on the son distributing his father's estate within fifteen days – or everything will go to charity.

### La Traviata VERDI (1830-1901)

#### Overture (Prelude to Act 1)

'Libiamo ne'lieti calici' (Brindisi) – [Alfredo and Violetta]

'Parigi, o cara' (Scena e Duetto) – [Violetta and Alfredo]

Where does the huge popularity of this masterpiece come from? One might argue it is due to the gutting plot telling the story of an inappropriate and undignified love, or more likely the extreme complexity of the vocal score and the strength of the images – perhaps it's the pure majesty of most of its arias, or simply down to the genius of its creators, Giuseppe Verdi (music), Francesco Maria Piave (libretto), or finally the original work on which it is based – *La Dame aux camélias*, a play by Alexandre Dumas fils, adapted from his own 1848 novel. Most likely, however, it's simply a hugely-powerful combination of all these elements above.

The opera is set in Paris during the 1850s, and tells the love story between courtesan Violetta Valéry and young bourgeois Alfredo Germont. Violetta picks Alfredo over her high-society lifestyle. However, Alfredo's father is worried that his son's choice to marry a former courtesan could throw shame on his family, which leads him to ask her to reconsider and give up on Alfredo. Torn by her ever-increasing signs of tuberculosis, and generally feeling unable to react, Violetta is just not able to survive this incident, and all its associated trials and tribulations.

### Tosca PUCCINI (1858-1924)

'E lucevan le stelle' – [Cavaradossi]

'Vissi d'arte' – [Tosca]

Alongside *La Bohème* and *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca* is undoubtedly Puccini's most famous opera. Most likely due to its heroic tone and the exuberance of its musical score, the opera has been successful ever since it first premiered in Rome in 1900. Its musical structure, using leitmotifs to typify characters and situations, is constructed in such a way that all musical parts are interlaced together, thus creating a continuous music fabric, somewhat à la Wagner – but there any further similarity abruptly ends.

*Tosca* is a roller-coaster story of love, lust, murder and political intrigue. With Puccini's richly romantic score, it is one of the world's best-loved operas. A tragic story of passion and jealousy, it tells the story of the tempestuous opera-singer Floria Tosca, as she fights to save her painter-lover Mario Cavaradossi from the sadistic police chief Scarpia. The action unfolds in 1800 in a Rome ruled by the regime of secret police. A group of rebels tries to restore the Republic, instated by the French in 1798, but, in spite of their actions, both Cavaradossi and Tosca will fall prey to a fatal combination of events, that ultimately leads them to their respective demise.

### La Bohème PUCCINI (1858-1924)

'O soave fanciulla' – [Rodolfo and Mimi]

One can hardly remain untouched as the dramatic story of *Mimi* unfolds. This is, by far, one of Puccini's most heart-rending operas, with such pathos-rich music making it a masterpiece that can still appeal as much to an operatic neophyte, as to any died-in-the-wood opera buff who might have sat through it numerous times already. Heartened by the reception of his previous opera, *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini continues his partnership with librettist Giuseppe Giacosa with whom he worked on this adaptation of

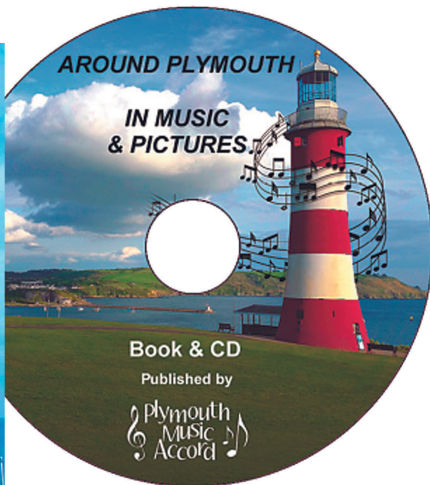
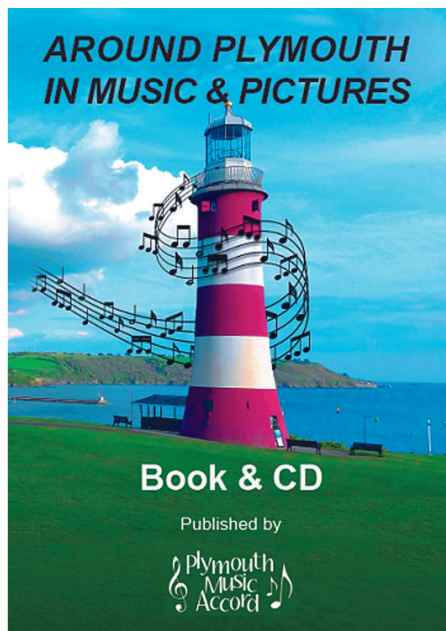


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Your help in supporting and enhancing what PMA can offer will ensure the development and continuation of a vibrant musical culture in our city. If you would like to become a member, please visit the PMA website ([www.plymouthmusicaccord.co.uk](http://www.plymouthmusicaccord.co.uk)) for further details.



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Plymouth Music Accord has published this most attractive collection of photographs about places round Plymouth to accompany recordings made by PMA member organisations playing music by local composers about local places.

**Plymouth Symphony Orchestra** appears on five of the fourteen tracks with music by Paul Foster (The Torpoint Ferry), Clive Jenkins (Royal Parade, Tamarside) and Judy Whitlock (Fur Tor, Cuckoo Rock). Other items are by City of Plymouth Concert Band, the Plymouth Area Police Choir, pianist Marsha de Thornley Head and John Gibson at the organ of St Andrew's Minster.

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Scènes de la vie de bohème (1851) by Henri Murger, which, while commonly called a novel, is more a collection of loosely-related stories, all set in the Paris's Latin Quarter in the 1840s, and centred on the evergreen topic of impossible, or unattainable love. Like Carmen, it originally had some mixed reviews, but also like Bizet's creation, it has remained one of the best-loved romantic operas ever written.

When young seamstress Mimi meets poet Rodolfo in the squalid attic where he lives with some students and colleagues, it's clearly love at first sight. Mimi's delicate and sickly physical condition and Rodolfo's poverty hinder their love and eventually force them into abandoning their bohemian lifestyle and parting company. The two lovers will only then get back together, when Rodolfo hears the tragic news that Mimi's health is rapidly deteriorating back in the attic.

The duet, 'O soave fanciulla', actually forms part of the closing moments of Act 1, just as Rodolfo and Mimi, realize they have fallen in love with each other. As the curtain falls, they leave Rodolfo's garret, to step out onto the bustling moonlit Parisian streets below.

### Aida VERDI (1830-1901)

#### Grand March (Act 2)

The grand set design very often used to stage this opera, which can even involve the appearance of large animals in the Act 2 Grand March, especially when performed al fresco, must however, not distract the audience from the intimate feelings of the characters and the subtle way in which they interact on stage as the plot unfolds, essentially the main thrusts of the drama. Aida is an infinitely emotional and appealing love story, implanted in a political plot, and something that would sit comfortably with the composer's interest in politics. Indeed, after Italy was unified in 1861, many of his early operas were re-interpreted as works with hidden Revolutionary messages, even if that had probably not been Verdi's original intention. Spreading throughout Italy in the 1860s, the slogan Viva VERDI! was used as an acronym for 'Viva Vittorio Emanuele Re D'Italia' – 'Long Live Victor Emmanuel King of Italy', who was actually King of Sardinia at the time.

Set in Ancient Egypt, Aida is a timeless story of love and betrayal against the backdrop of war. The story is a roller-coaster of emotions which are told through Verdi's powerful music, of which the Grand March, with its prominent trumpet line, is a perfect example, as well as being eminently patriotic in spirit. Aida is an Ethiopian princess held captive in Egypt, in love with an army General, Radames, who is also in love with her. When he is chosen to lead a war with Ethiopia, the subsequent conflict between Aida's love for both Radames and for her country is the principal driving force in the action.

### La Bohème PUCCINI (1858-1924)

#### 'Si, mi chiamano Mimi' – [Mimi]

The second offering from La Bohème, actually precedes the love-duet, which concluded Act 1 – 'O soave fanciulla', heard before the interval. Rodolfo is the only one who stayed back at the garret, as he still had to finish an article. Suddenly there is a knock at the door; it is Mimi, the seamstress from the neighbouring apartment, who, in this most beloved of arias, asks for a light for her extinguished candle. Mimi feels weak and Rodolfo tries his best to take care of her, while she introduces herself as a seamstress and whose real name is Lucia.

According to Harvard opera-authority and teacher, Carolyn Abbate, Mimi's aria is what the composer would have described as a 'Pezzo forte' – a number he knew would have a strong effect, every time it was heard.

### Cavalleria Rusticana MASCAGNI (1863-1945)

#### Intermezzo

It was one of the tragedies of Mascagni's career that although he wrote and produced fifteen other operas, none came close to matching the spectacular success of Cavalleria Rusticana, or Rustic Chivalry. Livorno-born, Pietro Mascagni, had composed two operas prior to Cavalleria Rusticana – Pinotta in 1880 and Guglielmo Ratcliff in 1885. After his dismissal from the



The Plymouth Symphony Orchestra has been central to the musical life of the city for over 145 years and we were thrilled to be back playing live classical music, after such a long break due to the pandemic. During this time our members, who travel far and wide from Devon and Cornwall to attend rehearsals, continued to support the orchestra, and this has allowed us to come back and continue to perform fabulous live classical music concerts in the region. This includes performances from international artists Joanna MacGregor CBE and Maria Wloszczowska, together with a great range of orchestral favourites from Bernstein's Symphonic Dances from West Side Story, to Sibelius's Violin Concerto and Tchaikovsky's 5th Symphony.

In 1875 a local teacher of music, Dr Samuel Weekes, brought together a group of musician friends and founded what was then known as an Orchestral Society: their first concert was presented in the graceful Tea Rooms of Plymouth's old Royal Hotel. The renamed Plymouth Symphony Orchestra can claim to be one of the longest-established orchestras in the country, with an amazing record of continuity:

the founding conductor was succeeded by his son; his grandson, John Weekes, was a vice-president until recently! The present conductor, Anne Kimber, is only the sixth in over 145 years.

As well as well-known works, amongst the contemporary pieces performed in recent years have been several specially commissioned from local composers, including Judy Whitlock, who leads the double bass section.

Many distinguished soloists have performed with the orchestra, including Nigel Kennedy, Peter Donohoe, Julian Lloyd Webber OBE, Anna Markland, Ralph Kirshbaum, Noriko Ogawa, Craig Ogden, Tasmin Little, Thomas Gould, Joanna MacGregor CBE, Jennifer Pike and Guy Johnston.

Importantly, the purpose of Samuel Weekes in founding the orchestra has remained central to all its activities: to bring friends together once a week to make music.

Please visit our website for more information about forthcoming concerts, as well as for ways that you can help to support us in providing live classical music to the region.



Milan Conservatory in 1884 for his lack of application, he endured six years of poverty and obscurity touring as a conductor, then teaching and conducting, in Italy's southern peninsula region of Puglia.

Here, in 1889, he heard of a competition sponsored by the music publisher Sonzogno offering a prize for the best one-act opera submitted. Mascagni took a story – a passionate love tragedy that takes place on Easter morning – by the Sicilian writer Giovanni Verga. The composer asked for a libretto to be written, that was very close to Verga's original conception, simply adding occasional lyrical pieces to envelop the plot's naked drama, taking him some two months to compose. But then, when the time came for him to submit the score, his courage deserted him. Fearing failure he put the music in a drawer, where it might have remained – had it not been for his wife who sent it off herself. While on the strength of just one masterpiece, the hitherto-struggling composer became famous and wealthy overnight, towards the end of his life, he did bemoan the fact that he'd written *Cavalleria* first, feeling that he was, in fact crowned – before he became king.

The action takes place in the main square of a nineteenth-century Sicilian village on Easter morning, and the ever-popular *Intermezzo* is played by the orchestra to an empty stage, while the villagers are still all in church.

### La Traviata VERDI (1830-1901)

**'Ah! Fors'è lui... Sempre libera' – [Violetta and Alfredo]**

The second offering from *La Traviata* features the beautiful and wealthy Violetta Valéry, cast as a dramatic coloratura, in the salon of her Parisian abode, following a big party. In the first part of her aria, she muses over the offer of Alfredo's love, wondering if he is to be her true love, after a number of unproductive romantic flings. However, in the second part, she decides not to worry about her problems and, instead, live only for pleasure, and the freedom of the moment.

### Neapolitan Song DI CAPUA (1865-1917)

**'O Sole Mio'**

Strictly-speaking, of course, arguably the most famous of Neapolitan tenor arias – *O Sole Mio* – is not an operatic aria in the truest sense of the word, even if it does deserve to be granted 'honorary operatic status' on this occasion. Appearing first in 1898, its Neapolitan-language lyrics were written by Giovanni Capurro, and the music composed by Eduardo di Capua and Alfredo Mazzucchi. The title translates literally as 'my sun', or 'my sunshine'.

### Die Fledermaus JOHANN STRAUSS II (1825-1899)

**Overture**

This operetta was composed in just forty-two days by Johann Strauss II. Once again, initially unsuccessful, it started being appreciated by audiences around the year 1904. On New Year's Eve, Eisenstein is being forced to go to jail for punching a police officer, but decides to avoid jail for just one night so that he can go to Prince Orlofsky's lavish party. Eisenstein wants to go with his friend Falke, so he tells his wife, Rosalinde, that he is heading off to jail. Meanwhile, Rosalinde knows that Eisenstein is lying, and follows him to the ball, disguised as a Hungarian countess. Adele, their maid, also feigns an excuse to be released from work that night so that she can also go to the ball, disguised as a Russian actress named Olga. After many mistaken identities, Eisenstein attempts to seduce his own wife without knowing. Much frivolity, and many festivities behind them, the great farce ends up with a happy ending for all, all of which is encapsulated in the operetta's sparkling overture.





### The Merry Widow LEHÁR (1870-1948)

#### ‘Vilja’ – [Hanna]

The Merry Widow was written by Austro-Hungarian composer Franz Lehár, and premiered in Vienna in 1905, immediately following this with a successful run of some 483 performances. The plot features Hanna Glawari, a vastly wealthy young widow from the small and poverty-stricken Balkan province of Pontevedro. Ambassador Baron Zeta is anxious that when Hanna re-marries, it is to a Pontevedrian and not a Frenchman, to keep her money in the country and save them all from ruin. The obvious choice is Count Danilo, but there is a problem. They are exes, and he is too proud to marry her for her money. Numerous misunderstandings and comic situations abound, as the story unfolds, but the dénouement sees Hanna and Danilo back together, leaving everyone – and the eponymous widow – happy ever after.

### Turandot PUCCINI (1858-1924)

#### ‘Nessun dorma’ – [Prince Calaf]

Turandot was completed posthumously by fellow-composer, Franco Alfano in 1926. It is set in China

and follows Prince Calaf, who falls in love with the chillingly cold ‘ice-maiden’ Princess Turandot. In order to win her hand in marriage, a suitor must solve three riddles, with a wrong answer resulting in their immediate execution. Calaf passes the test, but Turandot still refuses to marry him. He offers her a way out: if she is able to guess his name before dawn the next day, he will accept his fate.

Of course, *Nessun dorma*, attained far greater global success than the whole of Puccini’s final opera put together, achieving pop status after Luciano Pavarotti’s 1972 recording of it was used as the theme song of BBC television’s coverage of the 1990 FIFA World Cup in Italy, and subsequently reached no 2 on the UK Singles Chart.

Although Pavarotti rarely sang the role of Calaf on stage, *Nessun dorma* became his signature aria and a sporting anthem in its own right, especially for football. He notably sang the aria during the first Three Tenors concert on the eve of the 1990 FIFA World Cup Final in Rome, and the album received triple platinum-record status in the States alone, going on to outsell all other classical recordings worldwide. It also became a regular feature of subsequent Three Tenors’ concerts, and they performed it at three subsequent Finals – in Los Angeles, Paris, and Yokohama.

Programme Notes by Philip R Buttall

[www.philiprbuttall.co.uk](http://www.philiprbuttall.co.uk)







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## Thank you!

The PSO owes a great debt of gratitude to two members who are retiring from their committee posts after a long and distinguished contribution to the smooth management and well-being of the orchestra.

Ivan Sidgreaves joined as a trumpet player in 1982, subsequently becoming Treasurer in 1987. He has also held the post of Vice Chairman since 2013.

Denise Hasshill joined as a cellist in 1970, taking over as Secretary in 1994.

We would all like to offer them our heartfelt thanks for the wonderful job they have done – always calm, always wonderfully efficient, the absolute backbone of PSO!

We hope that although retiring from their committee posts, they will continue to enjoy playing with the orchestra for many more years to come.

Denise Hasshill



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