

Reviews, endorsements, and the release of *Raymond and Agnes!*

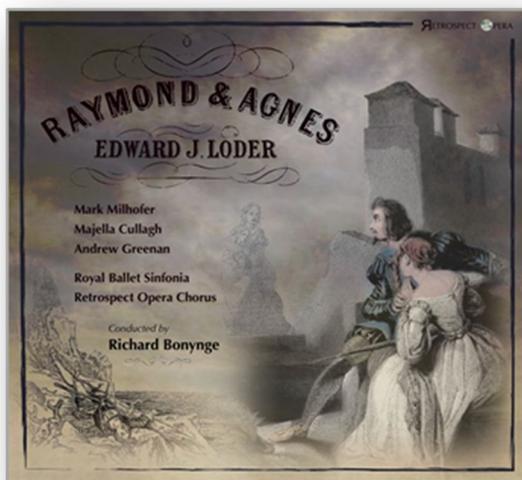
In this Newsletter:

- *The release of Loder's Raymond and Agnes*
- *Recent reviews of The Wreckers*
- *Shakespeare's Garland: updates and endorsements*
- *Exciting upcoming Smyth events*

Our latest release: Loder's *Raymond and Agnes*

We are delighted to announce that our latest disc, the 2-CD recording of Edward Loder's *Raymond and Agnes*, will be released on **Friday 3 August 2018**. However, we'll be sending copies out to our subscribers a few days before that, so you should receive yours early!

To whet your appetite for Loder's gloriously Gothic opera, we are pleased to give you an advance look at the album cover art.



We have spent a long time getting to this, but it has definitely been worth it and the result looks – and sounds – fantastic! We're immensely proud of it.

Raymond and Agnes is priced at £17.95 if purchased on our website – but don't forget that subscribers benefit from the discounted price of **£14.95!** To obtain the discount, please either e-mail us direct or pay through the **Shop** page on our website, putting in the discount price.

A reminder of our subscriber rates:

£14.95 for 2-CD sets
(*The Boatswain's Mate, The Wreckers, NEW Raymond and Agnes*)

£8.95 for single CDs
(*Pickwick, Christmas Gambols*)

Reviews of *The Wreckers*

In our last Newsletter, we reported on the re-issue on the Retrospect Opera label of the live recording of the 1994 performance of *The Wreckers* at The BBC Proms, originally released by Conifer Classics.

Although a re-release, it has nonetheless come to the attention of several reviewers, and it has received some fantastic write-ups:

"This Proms performance of Ethel Smyth's three-act magnum opus was among the most hotly anticipated operatic events of 1994, not least given the ardent enthusiasm of its conductor, Odaline de la Martinez. [...]"

Retrospect Opera [has] reissued Conifer's 1994 CD set in a chic slimline package, with Ronald Crichton's splendid original notes, the full libretto – and a useful 2017 retrospective by Christopher Wiley [...] This issue bridges the gap nicely between Retrospect's revelatory complete recording of The Boatswain's Mate and their eagerly-awaited revival of Smyth's slice of neoclassical Grand Guignol, Fête Galante [...] I was especially impressed by Smyth's choral and orchestral imagination, convincingly retailed by the zesty Huddersfield Choral Society and Martinez's buoyant direction, which shines through undimmed. The villagers, rapacious wreckers to a man (and woman) yet imbued with fiery, self-righteous Cornish Chapel piety, are at the heart of Henry Brewster's thought-provoking libretto and have much of the most inventive music. Of the principals, the two main women – Anne-Marie Owens as the self-sacrificing heroine and Judith Howarth as a vengeful, predatory adolescent [...] – stand out, with Peter Sidhom's steely, religio-maniacal pastor close behind. [...] The Wreckers remains required listening. It is good to welcome it back."

– Christopher Webber, *Opera*, June 2018

"This historic first recording of Ethel Smyth's masterpiece The Wreckers derives from a meticulously prepared 1994 Henry Wood Promenade Concert [...] in studio-quality BBC sound, it returns in this finely annotated reissue [...] [Thomas] Beecham thought so highly of the piece he feared that 'no Anglo-Saxon singer' could rise to the challenge of the 'splendid and original' role of Thirza or catch 'a tithe of the intensity and spiritual exaltation' which Mark exudes. Well, Anne-Marie Owens and Justin Lavender come close in this 1994 performance, with powerful support from Peter Sidhorn as Pascoe [...] [Smyth's] orchestral writing is especially fine, as the present performance eloquently confirms."

– Richard Osborne, *Gramophone*, July 2018

"the piece comes over impressively in this live performance recorded at the Proms in 1994 and first issued that year [...] Smyth shows a keen instinct for musical drama,

while her score [...] exudes energy and momentum [...] The cast here give a good account of their roles, with Justin Lavender and Anne-Marie Owens impassioned as adulterous lovers Mark and Thirza, Peter Sidhom striking as Thirza's husband, the local preacher Pascoe, and Judith Howarth thrillingly malicious as Mark's cast-off girlfriend, Avis. The Huddersfield Choral Society [...] hurl themselves into the fray as the crazed villagers, while Odaline de la Martinez brings flair and commitment to realising the regularly memorable score. Good sound."

– George Hall, *BBC Music Magazine*, July 2018

Shakespeare's Garland

Finalising the plans for our new Charles Dibdin-David Garrick project, which we're now calling *Shakespeare's Garland*, has taken a little longer than we'd hoped. We're delighted to announce that the recording will take place from 17–19 July, at the Richard Burnett Heritage Collection in Tunbridge Wells: <http://www.finchcocks.co.uk/collection.html>

The Burnett collection includes a beautiful Broadwood grand piano dated 1801, which we believe is as close as we can possibly get to the original sound of Dibdin's famous Sans Souci Theatre performances. Two of the works, *Datchet Mead* and *The Jubilee*, exist only in vocal score but since *Queen Mab* has survived in full score (most unusually for theatre music of this period), we have engaged a small group of period instrument specialists to help us accurately realise this charming music. We're trying as hard as we can to capture the actual sound of the late eighteenth century, when Dibdin and Garrick were truly household names.

As we progress into the recording studio, this project is still in need of funding, and if there are people you know, who are interested in Shakespeare and/or the music of the eighteenth century, do please recommend it to them. As always, if anyone you introduce to us donates £50 or more, you can claim a free copy of any of our single CD releases.

Endorsement of *Shakespeare's Garland*

Following on from the endorsement of our *Shakespeare's Garland* project by the author Flora Fraser in our last Newsletter, we have received further kind endorsements.

Professor Stephen Greenblatt, one of the world's leading Shakespeare scholars, the author of such acclaimed studies as *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), *Hamlet in Purgatory* (2002), and *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare* (2005), has endorsed *Shakespeare's Garland* as follows:

"To paraphrase Falstaff, Shakespeare is not only a creative genius in himself but the cause that creative genius is in others. The exploration of that genius in the sister arts – in painting, dance, and above all the music inspired by Shakespeare – has been one of the great enterprises of our times. Thanks to the initiative of Retrospect Opera, we now have a chance to recover a key part of the eighteenth-century response and thus enhance our own imaginative reception of Shakespeare's enduring achievement. I do hope people will support them."

And Professor Ewan Fernie of The Shakespeare Institute, Stratford-upon-Avon, author of *Shakespeare for Freedom: Why The Plays Matter*, has said the following:

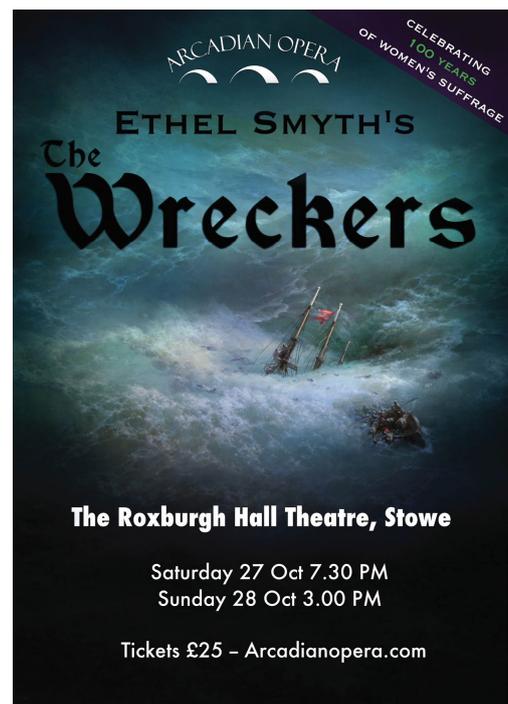
"This important initiative will allow us to hear Shakespeare's first-ever jubilee as if for the first time. Other than the plays and poems themselves, nothing made Shakespeare the world-historical figure we honour today more than David Garrick's all-singing, all-dancing 1769 tribute in Stratford. This is an opportunity to tune in again to the processes by which the very idea of genius came into being."

Upcoming productions of Smyth's operas

We have received further details of productions and performances of Smyth's works, on which we reported in the last Newsletter.

From 30 July to 1 August 2018, Spectra Ensemble will be performing *The Boatswain's Mate* at the Arcola Theatre in London, as part of the 'Grimeborn' Opera Festival (each performance starts at 8pm). Directed by Cecilia Stinton, the production is set in June 1953 against the backdrop of the Queen's Coronation. Further information is available here: <https://www.arcolatheatre.com/event/the-boatswains-mate-grimeborn/>

Arcadian Opera has recently announced a full stage production of Smyth's *The Wreckers* to be performed at The Roxburgh Theatre, Stowe, Buckinghamshire on 27–28 October 2018. Justin Lavender, who sang the role of Mark in the 1994 recording reissued by Retrospect Opera in April, is serving as musical director and conductor for this production. Further information is available at <http://www.arcadianopera.com>.



Finally, you may already have heard that the BBC National Orchestra of Wales will be performing Smyth's 'On the Cliffs of Cornwall' (the Prelude to Act II of *The Wreckers*) at The BBC Proms in the Royal Albert Hall at 7:30pm on 1 August 2018, in Prom 24, 'A Hero's Life', alongside Dvořák's Cello Concerto in B minor and Richard Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben*. For further information, please see: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/events/ebxn5v>.

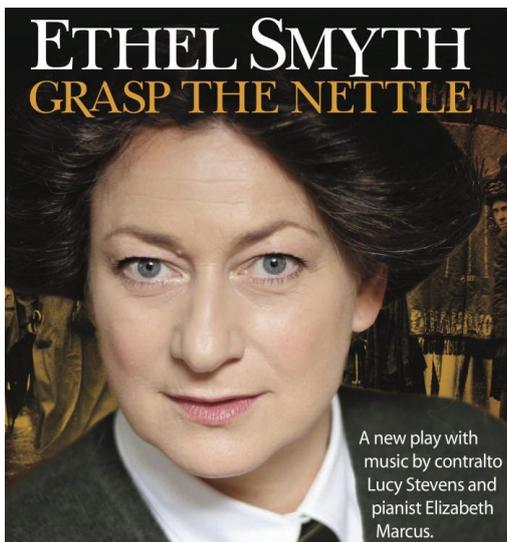
The BBC Concert Orchestra are performing the Overture to *The Boatswain's Mate* at another Prom, on 1 September, at Alexandra Palace, London, one of the 'Proms at...' concerts.

We do hope that some of you might manage to catch one or more of these performances, or others of Smyth's music that are being presented this year to coincide with the centenary of many women in Britain receiving the parliamentary vote for the first time.

Ethel Smyth: Grasp the Nettle

Performed by Lucy Stevens (contralto) and Elizabeth Marcus (piano), *Ethel Smyth: Grasp the Nettle* is a show that tells Smyth's story through her own words and music, focussing on her opera *The Wreckers* and her suffragette activity.

This engaging and entertaining performance has already been presented at some 20 venues across the country, and continues to tour to 2019. For details of upcoming performances, as well as extracts from the reviews, please see the following webpage: <https://ethelsmyth.com/performance-dates/>



This is a truly excellent show (our own Chris Wiley has seen it three times!), and has received consistently fantastic reviews. We hope that UK-based subscribers will be able to see a performance if it is coming to a theatre near you.

Stevens and Marcus have also recorded and released a superb CD of songs included in their show, very reasonably priced at £12 including UK postage. You may place an order, view the contents of the CD and listen to extracts here: <https://ethelsmyth.com/the-march-of-the-women-cd/>

The Wreckers on BBC Radio 4

Some of you may have heard a recent 'Tales From the Stave' programme on Smyth's *The Wreckers*, broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on 23 June.

The programme featured Odaline de la Martinez, the conductor for the recordings of *The Wreckers* and *The Boatswain's Mate* (re-released on the Retrospect Opera label), as well as for our upcoming recording of *Fête Galante* this November. Justin Lavender is another of the several spokespeople who appear on the radio programme.

The 28-minute programme is well worth listening to and may be streamed from the BBC website here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b6m9jm>

Do you know somebody who you think might be interested in receiving this Newsletter?

Feel free to pass it on to them on our behalf!

If you introduce a new supporter who donates £50 or more to Retrospect Opera, you can claim a free copy of any of our single-CD releases.



With thanks, as always, from the team at Retrospect Opera:

David, Valerie, Andy and Chris