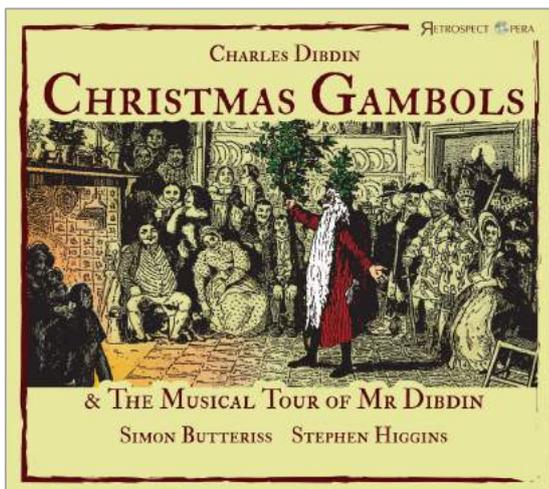


Release of *Christmas Gambols* – the perfect stocking-filler!

In this issue, we are thrilled to report the imminent release (13 November) of Dibdin's *Christmas Gambols* and *The Musical Tour of Mr Dibdin*, our successful recording sessions of Loder's *Raymond and Agnes*, and the extensive coverage we received in *Cheshire Life*!

Release of *Christmas Gambols* and *The Musical Tour of Mr Dibdin*

We're excited to announce that our disc featuring the first recordings of Charles Dibdin's *Christmas Gambols* and *The Musical Tour of Mr Dibdin* will be released on Monday, 13 November – the perfect prelude for the festive season!



As we wrote in the last Newsletter, *Christmas Gambols* is the most comprehensive picture of an eighteenth-century English Christmas available in any form, and on this point alone makes a valuable contribution to understanding,

exploring, and enjoying historical British musical culture.

Christmas Gambols is a unique and ideal gift for any Christmas enthusiast!

We've introduced a new benefit for subscribers!

We've increased the prices of our CDs – so we can build up a buffer to cover the costs of further print runs – **but we're keeping the old prices for subscribers.** *The Boatswain's Mate* remains at £14.95 and *Pickwick* at £8.95. *Christmas Gambols* will retail at £11.95 but for subscribers, it'll be £8.95.

Christmas Gambols Christmas offer – 3 for the price of 2

For £17.90, you can purchase 3 copies for the price of 2 – all the more to treat your friends!

Recording *Raymond and Agnes*

Valerie reports on the recording of *Raymond and Agnes* on 16–19 October:

We are thrilled to announce that our recording of Edward Loder's *Raymond and Agnes* last month was an excellent success. St Jude-on-the-Hill showed itself to be a remarkably suitable venue in recreating the halls of the Castle of Lindenberg.

What an amazing four days it was. We had seven sessions, starting on Monday afternoon. The morning had been spent

setting everything up – the orchestra seating, the extra heating and lighting, and of course all the recording equipment.



Inside St Jude-on-the-Hill

The church is a large one, designed by the great architect Edwin Lutyens, with a peaceful Lady Chapel for Richard Bonyngé to relax in, and plenty of corners to sit and enjoy the frescoes.



Some of the frescoes



The Lady Chapel...



...with Richard Bonyngé

The sessions were 'rehearse/record' which means a section is rehearsed, then recorded, and then re-recorded to cover the bits that weren't perfect first time. Most of the time I had my nose in the scores, but sometimes I walked a few yards away to get a better sense of the overall sound. It had been wonderful to hear the Bath Philharmonia at the concert in 2015, but they were only performing excerpts – it was hard to take in that finally we were recording the whole thing!

Each day we had about 70 people in the building, with an extra 25 on the Wednesday when the chorus arrived. We recorded everything involving the chorus on the one day, with the rest of the schedule built around singers' availability: Andrew Greenan, for example, was dividing his time between us and rehearsals at Glyndebourne.



On the right, Andrew Greenan (the Baron), with Quentin Hayes (Antoni, chief of the bandits)

The hard work is largely in the planning, of course, and we benefited greatly from the experienced Royal Ballet Sinfonia and their orchestral manager Andrew Bentley. Two of their players – Dave Gordon and Gwilym Hooson – were the orchestral stage managers. They knew how everything should be set out and had brought all they needed, from chairs and music stands, to the percussion, and the special conductor's stand. The people from the church were incredibly helpful too: we were able to use their 'risers', little platforms, for the horn players, and perhaps most importantly, we had the use of the kitchen for refreshments. At the breaks, it was a race to see who could get to the chocolate biscuits first!



Tea time!



Mark, Alessandro and Andrew

We placed the soloists between the strings and the wind players, which made them feel very much part of the sound – but we had to be careful that the singers didn't then block the players' view of Richard. One magical time was on the Wednesday morning, when, after a loud and exciting section, everything quietened down for Madelina (Carolyn

Dobbin) to sing a prayer, accompanied by the harp – that was spine-tingling.



The harpist, Angela Moore

Later that same day – ending the afternoon session in fact – was the nuns' chorus. This begins with tremolo strings, then a passage for organ and women's chorus, then back to tremolo strings. So peaceful, atmospheric and utterly beautiful. It was the one and only time the organ (a 'Father Willis' organ) was needed, and it was tuned especially for the occasion. John Longstaff, the recording producer, is an organist, and very early on, insisted on playing for that item!



John Longstaff at the organ

I managed to procure myself a tiny rôle too – there is a non-singing part for Ravella, who is Raymond's mother. She just has a few words to say (five, to be precise!), so I declaimed those.



Jeremy Silver (assistant conductor, on the left) and Matthew Morley in discussion

Valerie (on Andrew Greenan's right) in her starring rôle...

The 24-strong chorus sounded more like double that number. Beautiful voices, all young singers, fresh from conservatoire training and beginning to make careers for themselves.



Retrospect Opera chorus



The chorus. Rosanna Harris, who fixed all the singers, is nearest the camera

We were exceptionally fortunate that Matthew Morley, one of the country's leading chorusmasters, was available – and willing – to train them. Matthew had been busy at this year's Proms, having trained a number of choirs who appeared there.



Members of the chorus at lunchtime. Timothy Langston, who sang the Landlord, is second on the left

Tuesday was probably the toughest day, as that was when we recorded most of the big arias, so that the soloists could feel that the major work was done and in the can. The latter part of Thursday afternoon was spent

re-doing a few minor things from earlier in the week.

It's impossible to single out any one singer or song, though Mark Milhofer singing 'Angels Roam' was simply exquisite and couldn't have been bettered – the voice, the sense of line, instinctively full of style.



Richard with Majella and Mark

Andrew, as the Baron, had the huge aria 'Madrid' and was magnificent; Majella's rich voice was consistently glorious in everything she sang. Quentin and Andrew, in their Verdian plotting duet – it was hard to believe what nice people they are in reality! The high point was the quintet – Majella, Mark, Andrew, Alessandro (fresh from Glyndebourne), and Carolyn – which is an extraordinary piece of writing and a real climax.



Alessandro Fisher (Theodore), Alexander Robin Baker (Francesco) and Carolyn Dobbin (Madelina), in rehearsal

But although everyone took everything very seriously and worked extremely hard, there was some light relief from time to time, and

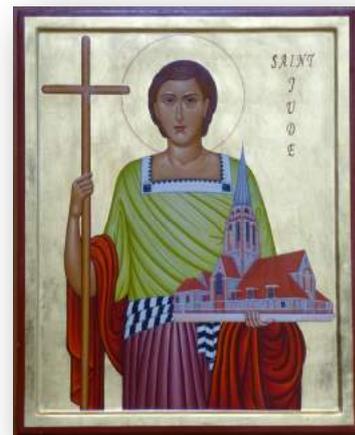
the mood throughout the week was a very happy one.



Antoni's sons!
Phil Wilcox (Roberto) and David Horton (Martini)

We were very pleased to be able to give small rôles to up-and-coming singers. We think it's important to give such opportunities and experience, and I was very, very impressed with Timothy, Phil and David. Tim's recently joined the chorus of the Royal Opera, Covent Garden and had to fit this around his commitments there.

I wonder what the church itself made of it. The frescoes, the icon of St Jude – all have been there for many decades and they've heard plenty of other music of course, since the church is a favourite recording venue.



The icon of St Jude

At the end, the orchestra disappeared, as orchestras do, but the guest leader, Gina McCormack, stayed on while we drank toasts to Edward Loder; to Sally Silver, who

was to have sung Agnes, but was too ill, but who nevertheless had contributed so much to the project; and of course to Richard Bonyng, who showed more stamina I think than any of us.



Gina McCormack (leader) on the left; at the back, John Longstaff, Jeremy Silver, Richard Bonyng, Valerie Langfield, Nicholas Temperley, Andrew Greenan, Scott Leang (one of our stage managers); leaning, Andy King and Majella Cullagh, and kneeling, Quentin Hayes and Carolyn Dobbin. Mark had had to leave, to fly back to Germany, and Alessandro was rehearsing with English Touring Opera

We certainly reaped the benefits of Richard's considerable experience and he said afterwards how pleased he was with how everything had gone, how exceptionally musical and responsive the orchestra was, and he made clear how highly he regards Loder's music. It was lovely too that several subscribers were able to come and sit in on the sessions – some had never been to anything like this before, and it was a real pleasure to meet them. Andrew Clarke sponsored the major event in Bath in 2015, on the Loder family, and came to several of the sessions this time.



Valerie with one of our major donors Andrew Clarke, who presented us with a very generous cheque

It was also very, very special that Professor Nicholas Temperley was able to come – he flew in from the US especially for the recording, and flew back directly afterwards.



Nicholas Temperley and Richard Bonyng

Nicholas was responsible for the production of *Raymond and Agnes* in Cambridge back in 1966, and without that, we simply wouldn't have learned what a magnificent work it is. We owe him a great debt. He spoke afterwards and said it had been a lifetime's dream to have this glorious work recorded. He never thought it could or would happen – but thanks to all of you, it has been.

It took two hours to clear everything away, and our recording engineer Dave Rowell and his assistant Katie Earl (and on one day, Richard Sutcliffe) were as efficient in clearing up as they had been in recording.



Katie Earl (recording assistant),
John Longstaff (recording producer) and
Dave Rowell (recording engineer)

Now to the editing – we'll let you know how that's going in the next Newsletter.



Carolyn Dobbin and Majella Cullagh

Feature on Retrospect Opera in *Cheshire Life*

The October edition of the well-respected magazine *Cheshire Life* includes a fantastic three-page feature on Retrospect Opera and *Raymond and Agnes* – and what's more, it's freely available to read online!

To take a look, point your browser to the following link (you may need to cut and paste it into your browser bar line by line) and scroll to page 316:

<http://edition.pagesuite-professional.co.uk/html5/reader/production/default.aspx?pubname=&edid=a073a419-bd87-47f9-bd0a-88568cfebb8b>

At Andy's request, here's a picture of the Theatre Royal in Peter Street, for our supporters in Manchester. The theatre is still there, next door to the old Free Trade Hall, though it's closed. If you stand on the opposite side of the street and look up, you can see the lettering 'THEATRE ROYAL', very high up. Just looking at that evokes a real sense of the history of the place.



The Theatre Royal, where *Raymond Agnes* was first performed, in 1855

OTHER NEWS –

Opera magazine review of *Pickwick and Cups & Saucers*

Our release of F.C. Burnand and Edward Solomon's *Pickwick* and George Grossmith's *Cups & Saucers* was reviewed very positively by *Opera* magazine earlier in November.

Christopher Webber writes:

'well done by the cast of four, led by Simon Butteriss's smiling, finely-enunciated lead'

'With Butteriss uncannily channelling Grossmith as the General, and Gaynor Keeble equally at home as the pretentious Mrs Worcester'

'there's no doubting the value of Retrospect's work in bringing these Victorian rarities back to life, or the appetizing quality of their artwork, texts and accompanying essays.'

And the re-release of Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* is making progress. We're now just working on the artwork and packaging.

Advance notice

New regulations are being introduced in Spring 2018, called GDPR, General Data Protection Regulations. We'll be contacting everyone about this in a while – it's broadly to do with ensuring we have your permission for us to contact you, and for us to keep your contact details on file. It's opt-in, so opt-out will be the default.

In the meantime: in case you've ever wondered, we never pass on your details to anyone else, and if you receive our newsletters by email, you can be sure that they are always sent Bcc so that your email addresses are kept private.

Donations to Retrospect Opera may be made through this link:
<http://www.retrospectopera.org.uk/Donate.html>

Our CDs may be purchased here (you may have to copy and paste the URL in two parts):

http://www.retrospectopera.org.uk/CD_Sales.html

Or contact us directly – details at the foot of the page



With renewed thanks from the team at Retrospect Opera:

David, Valerie, Andy and Chris