

RETROSPECT OPERA

www.retrospectopera.org.uk

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Newsletter #8, 16 February 2018

Updates on current recordings and announcing our latest project!

In this Newsletter, we report on our upcoming reissue of the 1994 recording of The Wreckers, reviews of Christmas Gambols, and progress on Raymond and Agnes and Fête Galante, as well as announcing our latest project!

Release date for Smyth's *The Wreckers*

The release date for our re-issue of the 1994 Conifer Classics recording of Ethel Smyth's *The Wreckers* will be Thursday 1 March.

This is the recording of the live performance at The Proms in 1994 with the Huddersfield Choral Society and the BBC Philharmonic, conducted by Odaline de la Martinez.



Album cover of our re-issue of *The Wreckers*

Our release incorporates the original design into our house style (see image of the album's front cover), with new artwork inside as well as an original Foreword written by Chris. We wanted to retain the link with the original recording, but also put our stamp on it.

It will be priced at £17.95 if purchased on our website or through Amazon. But remember that we offer special prices to you, our subscribers!

So to you it will be £14.95.

New Distributor for Retrospect Opera

We're really pleased to announce that we've teamed up with the distributor Discovery. A distributor enables customers to buy our CDs from shops, as well as direct and on Amazon. We do already sell through Foyle's in London, Forsyth's in Manchester, and Blackwell's in Oxford, but this broadens our reach and means more people can buy our CDs, more easily. Discovery distribute a number of labels, including Odaline de la Martinez's own record label Lorelt, as well as EM Records (the English Music Festival label), Nimbus and Lyrita. Discovery are very keen on what we're doing, and very enthusiastic. We will continue to sell as now, but this gives us new opportunities.

Don't forget that 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!

Reviews of *Christmas Gambols*

Our latest release, Charles Dibdin's *Christmas Gambols* and *The Musical Tour of Mr Dibdin*, has received some fantastic reviews:

"This is a splendid CD of little-known music extremely well performed. [...] The liveliness and wit of the writing is evident enough on paper but Simon Butteriss's rendition of the songs adds another dimension. I cannot imagine a better performance, perhaps not surprisingly coming from a foremost interpreter of comic roles in Gilbert and Sullivan [...] His sparkling delivery and articulation add another layer of humour altogether. Stephen Higgins at a splendid copy of a fortepiano of 1785 proves to be an ideal partner [...]

with their wealth of historical detail, wide-ranging stories of the cultural life of the period – not to mention the very necessary glossary – [the liner notes] are themselves a splendid production and one which complements ideally the impressive performances. All in all, this is a very agreeable CD which deserves many listens for pure enjoyment, over and above its value in filling a gap in our knowledge of a distinctive corner of British musical history."

– Roger Blackburn, *MusicWeb International*
http://www.musicweb-international.com/classrev/2017/Dec/Christmas_gambols_RO003.htm

"a Christmas CD that is slightly off the beaten track [...] provided by the wonderful Retrospect Opera. [...] Baritone Simon Butteriss relishes the over-the-top language of the text providing excellent characterisation of the spoken and sung texts in a variety of vocal styles and accents from the toffish well-spokenness of the upper class characters to the brilliantly affected Mummerset of some of the comic figures. The concept of the piece is as simple as it is clever: a group of people gather to celebrate Christmas and comic misunderstandings ensue demonstrating that it doesn't matter how old a piece is for it to be possible to laugh out loud. ... It is credit to the insight of

the performers and producers of the recording that we are afforded a very clear impression of what it might have been like to see the composer himself perform the pieces. It is genuinely hard to imagine anyone better inhabiting these characters than Simon Butteriss and it has left me wishing to see a live performance as it might have been seen in the 18th century."

– Dan Adams,
The Light Music Society Magazine

"Mr Butteriss is well suited to this type of work having in his vocal armoury a seemingly inexhaustible range of voices and characters [...]

Mr Butteriss is well capable of wringing every bit of theatre from this type of work and in doing so is ably assisted by Mr Higgins"

– Paul R.W. Jackson,
British Music Society Newsletter

"Singing as if he were packing the entire British Empire into one voice, the hugely accomplished British baritone Simon Butteriss re-creates the sounds and styles of an original comic Christmas holiday performance circa 1788. In that period, no performer outshined the inimitable Charles Dibdin, who wrote, sang, and accompanied himself on fortepiano in his one-man shows. Along with Irish and Cockney-accented banter, the bright chords and tempos in this uniquely British concoction of patriotic, sentimental, and humorous songs suggest it to be the ancestor of a cross between vaudeville and the light opera of Gilbert and Sullivan. With mentions of holly and mistletoe, it's an educational treat to hear what Christmas sounded like before Tiny Tim and Rudolph came on the scene."

– AudioFile magazine
<https://www.audiofilemagazine.com/reviews/read/135785/christmas-gambols--the-musical-tour-of-mr-dibdin-by-charles-dibdin/>

Update on Raymond and Agnes and Fête Galante

Our next release, Edward Loder's *Raymond and Agnes*, is currently in edit and we are

pleased to report that the recording is sounding great! When you record something, you necessarily do so out of order – we didn't want the chorus sitting around for all 4 days of recording, for example, so we did everything involving them on one day. But it means that you don't get the sense of the sweep of the music until you hear it complete and in order. Our recording producer John Longstaff and editor Richard Sutcliffe have done a superb job of bringing it together, and Richard Bonyngé is delighted with the result.

In the interim, we are also assembling the CD booklet. This will be a substantial one, with full libretto of course, essays, synopsis, plus all the various other details that you'd expect.

Our recording of Ethel Smyth's *Fête Galante* has been rescheduled for Autumn 2018. This is partly because we have been putting so much effort into everything else, we have not had time to fundraise fully for this project, but mostly to accommodate the availability of our wonderful (and very much in demand!) conductor, Odaline de la Martinez.

Join us in celebrating the Royal Wedding (and Shakespeare)!

We didn't intend to go straight back to Charles Dibdin, the writer-composer of *Christmas Gambols*, but then Prince Harry got engaged! In 1797 Dibdin composed a Shakespearean serenata to celebrate the marriage of Princess Charlotte, George III's eldest daughter, to a German prince. This attractive piece, called *Datchet Mead, or The Fairy Court*, draws on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and was presented in Dibdin's own Sans Souci theatre, like *Christmas Gambols*. It's a perfect way to celebrate the present royal wedding, and we'll be dedicating the recording to Prince Harry and Meghan Markle.

Given the Shakespearean theme, we'll accompany *Datchet Mead* with Dibdin's collaborative triumph with David Garrick, *The Jubilee, or Shakespeare's Garland* of 1769. One of the greatest theatrical successes of the

eighteenth century, this is a celebration of Shakespeare's place in popular culture in the context of the great Shakespeare festival, or 'jubilee', that Garrick organised in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1769. Both pieces will be performed by a group of four singers, led by Simon Butteriss, and the disc will be titled *Charles Dibdin's Shakespeare*.

If you are a royalist or a Shakespearean, or an enthusiast for eighteenth-century music, and would like to be a supporter of this project, please do get in touch.

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

Volunteer opportunities

Following the success of our first three releases, we could do with some extra help! As you know, we engage no full-time employees and rely solely on the good will of our four-strong team and cheerful volunteers to realise our projects. In particular we would love to hear from people willing to share their experience and lend a hand in the following areas:

- **Fundraising** – helping us to achieve the necessary financial targets to realise our projects via grant applications and imaginative thinking. The ideal person would have fundraising experience, resulting in successful projects.
- **Marketing and Communications** – a creative role helping our Publicity Officer to spread the word about Retrospect Opera's mission and work to the public

and the press. We are looking for an enthusiastic creative thinker who is confident in designing engaging marketing and promotional materials, and who is also confident in approaching the critical musical press. An affinity with Social Media and websites is also an advantage.

- **GDPR** (General Data Protection Regulation) – helping us make sure that Retrospect Opera complies with all legal requirements regarding our customer base and retention of information.
- **Distribution of New Releases to Patrons** – a seasonal activity which occurs when we have a new release and involves getting the initial large bulk of discs out to subscribers. This is best suited to someone within the North West who can travel to Cheadle Hulme and help us prepare packages for posting.

Additionally, if you've an eye for detail, proof-readers for our booklets are always welcome!

Volunteers for any of the above will also be welcome to attend and help us at recording sessions.

For more information, please e-mail Andy at andrewhowardking@gmail.com.

Smyth and the Centenary of Women's Enfranchisement

UK-based subscribers may know that last week marked the milestone centenary of over 8 million women nationally receiving the vote for the first time.

You will probably also be aware that Ethel Smyth was active as a leading suffragette for a couple of years in the early 1910s, developing a close relationship with Emmeline Pankhurst and composing *The March of the Women*, which was soon adopted as the suffragette anthem.



Artwork for Smyth's *The March of the Women*, 1911

It's an anniversary of particular significance to Retrospect Opera, given that Smyth subsequently quoted *The March of the Women* in her Overture to *The Boatswain's Mate*, the opera that was our debut recording.

Chris has been busy this past week giving comment to local media about Ethel Smyth. If you watch closely in the video shot by *Get Surrey*, you may even spot our CD of *The Boatswain's Mate* atop the piano, around 20 seconds in! It's available at the following link:

<https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/whats-on/whats-on-news/suffragette-vote-100-anniversary-university-14249832>



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

David, Valerie, Andy and Chris