

## Retrospect Opera

### Ethel Smyth *The Boatswain's Mate*

Newsletter 6 July 2015

Dear Friends, Bosun's Mates, Sponsors and Supporters,

We are delighted to report that funding is in place for our recording, which we've managed through a mixture of grants and of course donations from you. We were especially pleased to receive a grant from Woking Borough Council – Dame Ethel lived in Hook Heath, Woking, for half her adult life. The Mariann Steegmann Foundation, the Ambache Charitable Trust and the Ralph Vaughan Williams Trust have all awarded us grants, too.

Recording takes place on the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> September, with the main stint of rehearsals starting on the 8<sup>th</sup> September. The recording will take place at St Mary's, Walthamstow, London E17, and rehearsals, at King's College, London, with – as you know – Odaline de la Martinez conducting.

We're also delighted to announce our soloists: Nadine Benjamin is Mrs Waters (soprano), Edward Lee is Harry Benn (tenor) and Jeremy Huw Williams is Ned Travers (baritone). They are very special singers who are all very excited about being part of this historic recording.

Nadine has sung at the Edinburgh International Festival, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Royal Festival Hall, the Royal Opera House (Clare and Linbury Studios) and with Opéra National de Lyon. She recently performed the principal role of Imoinda in the UK premiere of *The Crossing* (de la Martinez) and Nadia in Tippett's *The Ice Break* with Birmingham Opera Company, both to critical acclaim. She is scheduled to sing Desdemona (*Otello*) with Everybody Can! Opera in October at St. James's Church Piccadilly. She's currently at the National Opera Studio, and in 2014 was appointed an Ambassador for London Music Masters, a charity that encourages opportunity, diversity and excellence in classical music. <http://nadineopera.com/>

Edd Lee trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and is developing his operatic career with roles including Spoletta (*Tosca*) and Dritte Diener (*Capriccio*) for Grange Park Opera and Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Count Almaviva (*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*) and Beppe (*I Pagliacci*) for the award winning Opera Up Close. He has worked with British Youth Opera, Aldeburgh Festival, English Touring Opera and Buxton Festival and has also sung in China, Bangkok, Hong Kong, France and Germany. <http://edwardleetenor.co.uk/>

The Welsh baritone Jeremy Huw Williams studied at St John's College, Cambridge, at the National Opera Studio, and with April Cantelo. He made his debut with Welsh National Opera as Guglielmo (Così fan tutte) and has since appeared in more than sixty operatic roles. He has given performances at major venues in North and South America, Australia, Hong Kong, and most European countries. He is renowned as a fine exponent of contemporary music, frequently records for BBC Radio 3, and has made many commercial recordings, including eight solo discs of songs. He was awarded an Honorary Fellowship by Glyndwr University in 2009 for services to music in Wales, and received the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Music from the University of Aberdeen in 2011. <http://www.jeremyhuwilliams.com/>

And in case you aren't already aware, here's a little background about Odaline de la Martinez: she is Cuban-born, and studied at Tulane University, New Orleans, where she read both music and mathematics. She also studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London, and became the first

woman to conduct a BBC Promenade concert at the Royal Albert Hall, in 1984. Since then she has been invited to the Proms regularly, including a special performance in 1994 of Dame Ethel Smyth's opera *The Wreckers*. She has an exceptionally busy career as both conductor and composer. She is the founder of the ensemble Lontano, and of the recording label Lorelt. She's won many prestigious awards for composition and for her work in promoting Latin-American music, music by women, and neglected music. She's recorded for most of the major recording labels, and we couldn't hope for a better champion of Ethel Smyth's music. You can find out more at <http://www.lorelt.co.uk/lontano/odaline>

Selecting the orchestral players and the men's chorus (from whom the minor rôles will be selected) is also in hand.

Remember that everyone who donates at the Bosun's Mate level (£150) or above is most welcome to attend a recording session. Please let us know if you'd like to attend, and we'll send full details later. Anyone who would like to upgrade their level of support is of course very welcome to do so!

Our second project is also well underway: Edward J. Loder's *Raymond and Agnes* of 1855, regarded by many critics as the greatest opera early Victorian Britain produced. Please consider supporting that one too (some of you already have!), and if you have friends who would be interested, please tell them about us. We are still accepting donations for *The Boatswain's Mate* as well: at the moment we have some "neutral" funding allocated to Smyth's opera, which will be transferred to *Raymond and Agnes* in the event of *The Boatswain's Mate* being covered by further project-specific donations and grants.

With thanks from the team at Retrospect Opera – we're very grateful to you all for making it possible.

Valerie Langfield, David Chandler and Andrew H. King

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