

The Royal Tunbridge Wells
Choral Society presents an



OPERA
GALA
CONCERT

SUNDAY 14th APRIL 2002
at 3 pm

Programme 50p

Derek Watmough - Conductor

Derek is a Yorkshireman who studied Classical Languages and, later, Music at the University of Durham. As a teenager he played the violin in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and a European tour with them in 1955 inspired him to travel as often as possible (a passion he still pursues) and to learn to speak a few European languages. He reads German, French, Spanish, some Dutch and Italian. His fluency in German has been invaluable since the Choral Society developed a close relationship with the Lutherkirche Bach Choir in Wiesbaden. Derek held teaching posts at the Royal Grammar School in High Wycombe, at the Skinners' School in Tunbridge Wells and finally at Beacon Community College in Crowborough, since when he has devoted his time to a large number of musical activities in the area and elsewhere. He enjoys playing the piano as much as conducting and has played with the Sussex Camerata and directed the Mid-Sussex Sinfonia and the Tunbridge Wells Sinfonietta from the keyboard. He will invariably be found singing in the Chorus at concerts by local groups where his tenor voice is much valued. He is also one of four regular conductors of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra. His first concert as Conductor of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Choral Society in 1973 included Walton's *Belshazzar's Feast*, which is one of the works to be performed at the Centenary Concert of the Society in 2004. His series of lectures on music of all kinds are popular and he contributes concert reviews to the Kent & Sussex Courier. He was awarded the MBE in 1992 for his services to music.

Robert Hardcastle - Presenter

This is the second Opera Gala Concert which Robert has presented for us and we are delighted to have him here this afternoon. His association with the Choral Society goes back a long way and he was for some time its Chairman. In the early 1960s he founded Discourses Ltd, to publish educational and classical language recordings and an 'All about Music' series in which Julian Lloyd Webber made his debut. He also worked at that time with Jack Brymer, Peter Katin, James Blades and Denis Matthews and other leading musicians. His involvement in the musical life of Tunbridge Wells is extensive - he is

Chairman of the Friends of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Symphony Orchestra and edits its monthly newsletter as well as that of the Green Room Music Club with which he is also closely associated. Author of several articles and books about music he has, with the help of his grandson, Lawrence, recently established a website (www.twclassical.co.uk) to disseminate news and information about classical music in and around Tunbridge Wells. Earlier this year he appeared with the RTWSO as narrator in a performance of Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, and on Sunday, 7th July he will introduce, also in the Assembly Hall, the finals concert in this year's Tunbridge Wells International Young Concert Artists Competition.

Linda Gerrard - Soprano

A former prize-winning student of the Royal Northern College of Music, Linda Gerrard has built up a career that has spanned much of Europe and the USA. Performances have taken her to Belgium, Holland, France and Germany; and to New York, Boston and Washington in the USA. She made her international operatic début as Bellante (*Almira*) at the Bremen Opera House in a production which was repeated at the Handel Festival in Halle. Her recording of this performance with the Fiori Musicali of Bremen is now available on the CPO label. She has also sung the rôle of Konstanze (*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*) with the Orchestre National d'Ile de France in Paris under the direction of Marc Minkowski. She has also sung with Marc Minkowski and Les Musiciens du Louvre during a European tour which took her to Paris, Antwerp, the Baroque Music Festival of Aix-les-Bains and the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam, which was broadcast on Radio France. Recent highlights of Linda Gerrard's concert diary have included her Canadian début singing *Messiah* (Handel) for the New Hamilton Orchestra, the *Nelson Mass* (Haydn) at the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Lloyd Webber *Requiem* with the Scottish Opera Orchestra, *Elijah* (Mendelssohn) with Willard White in Southwell Minster and the *Stabat Mater* (Rossini) at Westminster Abbey. Future engagements include *Messiah* (Handel) for Magdeburg Cathedral Choir,

Germany and at the Brangwyn Hall, Swansea; *The Creation* (Haydn) at the Dorking Halls; *Mass in C Minor* (Mozart) in Ripon Cathedral and *Gloria* (Poulenc) for Barnet Choral Society.

Richard Coxon - Tenor

Born in Nottingham, Richard Coxon studied at the Royal Northern College of Music, where he won a number of prizes, including the Clonter Opera Prize, the Ricordi Opera Prize and the Webster Booth/Esso Award. He made his professional operatic début as Flavio (*Norma*) for Scottish Opera, subsequently spending three years with the company as Principal Tenor, his roles including Jacquino (*Fidelio*), Nemorino (*L'Elisir d'Amore*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Alfredo (*La Traviata*) and Sailor (*Tristan und Isolde*). He has undertaken other operatic roles for Opera Northern Ireland, Opera Zuid, Maastricht, English National Opera and the Royal Opera. Recent engagements are Bill in Jonathan Dove's *Flight* at the Glyndebourne Festival, Vanya Kudrjáš (*Katya Kabanova*) and Narraboth (*Salome*) for Scottish Opera, Tom Rakewell (*The Rake's Progress*) for New Israeli Opera, Lieutenant Bonnet (*War and Peace*) and the Italian Tenor (*Der Rosenkavalier*) at the Spoleto Festival and the Steersman (*Der fliegende Holländer*) for Opera Ireland. He recently returned to the Royal Opera as Squeak (*Billy Budd*) and sang Vanya Kudrjáš (*Katya Kabanova*) for both Florida Grand Opera and the Opéra de Montréal. His future engagements include The Painter (*Lulu*) for English National Opera, Bill (*Flight*) for Nationale Reisopera, Edoardo (*Un giorno di regno*) at the Buxton Festival, *A Child of our Time* in Chester Cathedral, the Verdi *Requiem* at the Dorking Halls and his first appearance on 'Friday Night is Music Night'. Richard Coxon's recordings include Squeak (*Billy Budd*), Lieutenant Bonnet (*War and Peace*) and Mr By-Ends (*The Pilgrim's Progress*) for Chandos and Lucifer/Satan (*The Flood*) by Stravinsky for 20th Century Classics. He also took the role of Sam in Don Boyd's film *Lucia*.

Riccardo Simonetti - Baritone

Riccardo Simonetti was born in Lancashire and studied at the Royal Northern College of Music where he won the Anne Ziegler/Esso Award. His operatic roles include Albert (*Werther*) and Count

