

RELEASE OF CHARPENTIER CD

New Chamber Opera Ensemble

Rachel Elliot, Christoph Wittman,
Nicholas Hurdall Smith, John Bernays

The Band of Instruments

Leader: Lucy Russell
Conductor: Gary Cooper

CD: GAU167

New Chamber Opera's CD of stage music by the French baroque master, Marc-Antoine Charpentier, the great rival to Lully, will be released from ASV during November. The music consists of two sets of incidental music with songs and choruses to two plays by great French dramatists.

The first set will be that to Raymond Poisson's play, *Les Fous divertissants* (usually translated as *The Amusing Crazyies*) premiered in 1680. The music includes a variety of amusing pieces including a laughing trio, and a scene in which the musicians of the *intermedies* become entangled with the characters in the comedy.

The second set is the music to *Le Mariage Forcé*, composed for Molière's 1672 performances at the Palais-Royal. Molière was prevented by Lully's *privilege* from using any of the original music, commissioned a new score from Charpentier. No edition of the 1672 play exists, and the music has to be interpreted using the 1664 text.



NEW CHAMBER OPERA CELEBRATES HOGARTH

Samuel Arnold

The Enrag'd Musician

and other music from Hogarth's London

Castruccio: Daniel Norman

Castrucciana: Mary Nelson

Piccolina: Jeanette Agar

Quaver: Emily Van Evera

Milkmaid: Rachel Shannon

Knife-grinder: Giles Underwood

Speaker: Suzanne Aspden

New Chamber Opera Ensemble

Conductor: Lawrence Cummings

Director: Michael Burden

The Band of Instruments

Wednesday 22 October

6.30pm

National Gallery

Thursday 23 October

8.30pm

New College Chapel

One of England's greatest artists, William Hogarth, was born three hundred years ago this year. Well known for his satirical engravings, his work - which includes many of the stage and playhouse - recorded scenes of eighteenth-century London with a sharp and critical eye.

Samuel Arnold's small afterpiece of 1789 attempts to bring to life the events illustrated in Hogarth's famous print 'The Enrag'd

Musician'. The violinist of the picture - thought to be Pietro Castrucci, a violinist in Handel's opera orchestra - has come to the window in despair at the noise from the street traders and other occupants of a busy London street. In the hands of the librettist George Coleman the elder, the violinist has become a singing teacher who cannot tell the difference between a Welsh folk tune and an Italian aria! The final scene - which is labelled in the score 'to be as in Mr Hogarth's print' - consists of a lively trio in which the street cries 'Knives to grind', 'Milk below', etc. - interrupt the musical flow. The opera ends in confusion. The libretto was by the well known comic playwright, George Colman the elder, and set by Samuel Arnold, whose works, which include *The Agreeable Surprise*, *The Castle of Andalusia*, and *The Battle of Hexham*, became part of the staple diet of London theatre audiences at the end of the 18th century. It was first performed at the Little Theatre in Haymarket in May 1789.

The other major work in the programme is the *Roast Beef Cantata*, which opens with the line 'At the gate of Calais, as Mr Hogarth tells'. It is a long ballad like cantata dealing with contemporary political issue in the Hogarthian manner. The source referred to in the text is Hogarth's print 'The Roast Beef of Old England', which shows a fat Frenchman, a leg of beef, and starving citizens outside the gate of Calais. Hogarth includes himself painting on an easel in one corner of the print.



Philip Glass

The Fall of the House of Usher

New Chamber Opera -
University Production

Musical Director: Jason Lai
Director: Michael Burden

14 and 15 November 1997

8.30pm

Holywell Music Room

Philip Glass's 1988 chamber opera *The Fall of the House of Usher* is a setting of a libretto by Arthur Yorinks for the American Repertory Theatre. Based on the tale by Edgar Allan Poe, it tells the story of William, a childhood friend of Roderick Usher and his sister Madeline, visiting the decaying Usher house. Both Madeline and Roderick are decaying with the mansion, unable to stand either light nor noise. William's visit brings the decay to a dramatic conclusion; as the Physician says 'stay a night and begone; I brought Roderick into this world, see you that you don't deliver him to a far darker one.' The world does indeed become darker as the terrible events which lead to the destruction of the two central characters unfold.

Philip Glass is one of the great operatic movers of the century, primarily because the immediate attraction of his minimalist music has made scenes and numbers from the operas popular. His music has attracted an almost cult following in the United States and in Europe. He is fascinated by opera of ideas rather than opera of emotion; his earlier opera trilogy of *Einstein on the Beach*, *Satyagraha* and *Akhmaten* attempted to present three characters who changed the course of history. His theatrical output includes *100 Airplanes on the Roof*, *Hydrogen Jukebox*, and *The Photographer*.

The cast includes Kate Semmens as Madeline Usher and Benjamin Hulett as the Physician.

NEW CHAMBER OPERA SEASON 1997-8

New Chamber Opera announces the 1997-98 season. A season of unusual works, it opens with the little-known *Enrag'd Musician*, as the Company celebrates Hogarth's tercentenary. The Company continues its season of oratorios with Handel's *Parnasso in Festa*, Bach's *Easter Oratorio*, and a semi-staged version of Arne's *Masque of Alfred*, the original setting for 'Rule Britannia!'. The season ends with the summer opera, Handel's *Xerxes*, which will be given in the Nicholas Hytner translation, prepared for English National Opera.

October 22, 23

Samuel Arnold *The Enrag'd Musician* and other music for the Hogarth Tercentenary.

22 October: Sainsbury Theatre, National Gallery, Trafalgar Square

23 October: New College Chapel, New College, Oxford.

November 14, 15

Philip Glass *The Fall of the House of Usher*,* Holywell Music Room

November 26

Handel *Parnasso in Festa*,*
New College Chapel

February 18, 19, 20, 21

Purcell *King Arthur*,*
New College Chapel

March 4

Bach *Easter Oratorio*,*
New College Chapel

June 10, 11

Arne *The Masque of Alfred*,*
New College Cloisters

July 15 (Preview) 17, 18, 19, 22, 24, 25, and 26

Handel *Xerxes*,
The Warden's Garden, New College

Other events to watch for

Concert and Recording of Music for Ceremonial Oxford

Recording Sessions 2 and 3 for collected Rameau cantatas.

* Marks those productions which are undertaken with members of the University.

Handel *Parnasso in Festa*

New Chamber Opera-
University Production

Musical Director: Matthew Halls

Wednesday 26 November 1997

8.30pm

New College Chapel

New Chamber Opera will be performing Handel's great serenata *Parnasso in Festa* written to mark the marriage of Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, to the Prince of Orange. To say that farce attended this royal event is to understate the case. For a start, the Princess was no beauty, but she was determined to marry into a position of dynastic influence. So desperate to marry was she, that when told of the prince's deformed stature, she is supposed to have replied that she would marry him if he were a baboon.

The ceremony, having been scheduled for 23 November 1733, was postponed when the Prince promptly fell ill almost as soon as he arrived in Britain. By that stage events at the London theatres were well under way performing masques and festali to celebrate the event - one commentator wrote of the theatrical activity which attended the wedding: 'it was typical of the age that all this adulatory fuss was about a plump, pock-marked princess who, in order to get away from home, was prepared to marry a singularly ugly prince she did not love at all.'

When the wedding actually took place - in 1734 - another round of entertainments was staged, this time including Handel's *Parnasso in Festa*. By far the most sophisticated musically entertainment of all those presented, Handel's piece was premiered on 13 March. Not suprisingly, given the time and Handel's compositional methods, the work contains some borrowings, this time from the chronologically adjacent *Athalia*; the resultant serenata (a work 'performed in someone else's honour'), staged in costume but without action, is, sadly, rarely performed today. New Chamber Opera's performance will be conducted by Matthew Halls.



REPORTS

Summer Opera 1997

W. A. Mozart

Così fan tutte

Dorabella: *Alison Kettlewell*
 Fiordiligi: *Clara Martin*
 Despina: *Rachel Shannon*
 Ferrando: *Matthew Beale*
 Guglielmo: *Leigh Melrose*
 Don Alfonso: *John Bernays*

New Chamber Opera Ensemble

Producer: *Michael Burden*
 Conductor: *Gary Cooper*
 Designer: *Jack Edwards*

The Band of Instruments

Conductor: *Gary Cooper*
 Leader: *Caroline Balding*

Preview: 9 July 1997

Performances 11, 12, 13, 18, 19 July 1997
 7.30pm (with dinner interval)
The Warden's Garden
 New College

The summer performances of *Così* were, as usual, packed out, and despite the continual threat of rain, managed to play all the Oxford performances in the Warden's Garden as planned. It is difficult to know what will be remembered the most - Ferrando and Guglielmo's hamming it up, Despina's appearance in Jack Edwards' splendid doctor's disguise in Act I, John Bernays's truly suave Don Alfonso, or Dorabella's and Fiordiligi's Merchant Ivory movements with their parasols - but the cast worked well together, the Warden and Mrs Ryan coping nobly with their first year of having an opera playing in their backyard.

The decision to use a translation contemporary with the date of the production caused not a few problems. Some of the words proved unsingable, at least one aria was entirely re-translated and much jargon had to be expunged, but once the performances were underway, the text was enjoyed by the audience. Caroline Balding led The Band of Instruments through a heavy and demanding schedule, with Matthew Halls keeping the recitatives under control.

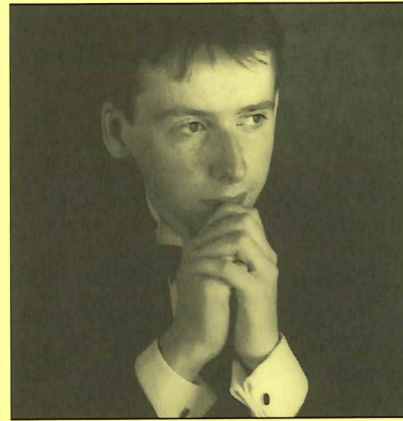
NCO ended the summer season with two performances at the Tudeley Festival down at Tonbridge in Kent. Hosted as usual by Stephen Coles, the Company had an enjoyable few days, playing one performance in the garden of the Postern, the home of David and Jane Tennant, and the second in the Chapel of Tonbridge School.

COMPANY PROFILE

Gary Cooper

Ever present at New Chamber Opera events is the Company's founding conductor, Gary Cooper. In fact, the Company owes its existence to a request put to the now Director of Productions 'If I conduct *Dido and Aeneas*, will you direct it?' He was then Organ Scholar of New College, Oxford. On graduating (a first-class degree without a Bodleian Library ticket) he spent a year with the European Community Baroque Orchestra, and then returned to London to become harpsichordist with the Trio Sonnerie, and freelance player, appearing with the New London Consort and the King's Consort.

After *Dido*, he then took the Company on a tour through Benjamin Britten's Church parables - *Curlew River*, *The Burning Fiery Furnace*, and *The Prodigal Son* - followed by some of the middle scale 18th-century comedies - Cimarosa's *The Secret Marriage*, Pergolesi's *Lo frate 'nnamorato*, Handel's *Orlando*, and Mozart's *Così fan tutte* - and ended up by recording theatre music of Charpentier and Rameau. He will conduct the new production of Handel's *Xerxes* in 1998. One of his achievements was his own translation of Pergolesi's *Lo frate 'nnamorato*, a text which revelled in the puns in which he excels. (What would a rehearsal be without the Cooper puns? For those long involved with NCO they are



ignored and wash over one in a gentle passing stream; it is always with surprise that one catches sight of the bemused face of a new Company member). The Pergolesi translation was difficult to learn and it was with surprise and delight that that year's preview audience were almost hysterical with laughter; one front row guest was nearly sick before the interval.

One of many initiatives put forward by Gary was the founding of The Band of Instruments in 1995. The possibility of having a permanent orchestra had been discussed on and off for many years, partly to clarify the whole operation. It was particularly galling both for Gary and the Company to be asked 'Is the orchestra made up from students?', when not only was it made up of professional instrumentalists costing the Company a large sum of money, but when the band had had a relatively stable line-up, and had done so for some years. A request from Michelle McLusky at the Southwark Festival to consider starting an orchestra for a concert there in 1995 spurred the Company on, and the orchestra made its debut there in October 1995, accompanying Monica Huggett. Their first recording was accompanying the Choir of New College on an disc of Purcell anthems for CRD; look out for this release in the coming year.

ROUND AND ABOUT THE COMPANY

Lindsay Bramley has been singing and recording two new operas in Banff, and Kurtag's Songs of Sorrow and Despair at the Salzburg and Edinburgh Festivals; she will be back with us singing from the end of September.

Gary Cooper and **Kate Lathom** have now (finally) married. Congratulations from all the New Chamber Opera Trustees, Directors and office staff and volunteers.

Ivan Rockey (Comptroller) has moved jobs again, this time to the English Chamber Orchestra.

Julian Ovenden will make his directing debut with New Chamber Opera in the University production of *King Arthur* in February 1998. Jules has a number of ideas about this piece, including how *short* it will now be.

Rachel Shannon (Despina) - who seems never to be off the television screen - will sing *Atalanta* in NCO's 1998 production Handel's *Xerxes*.

Suzanne Aspden (Administrator) has moved from St. Hilda's College, Oxford to Pembroke College as Junior Dean; new telephone number 01865 793975.

Jon Bausor, a design guru in the making, will be shaping the *Ovenden King Arthur*; watch out for the maquette in the summer opera exhibition.

Alison Prain will be recording all the production meetings for *Xerxes*; if all goes well, you may hear some of the results.

Keep us informed -
 the more eccentric the better

NCO
New Chamber Opera

Forthcoming Dates

FORTHCOMING DATES FOR 1997/8

October

- 17 Friday lunchtime recital – Michael Speight *
- 22, 23 **Samuel Arnold *The Enrag'd Musician* and other music for the Hogarth Tercentenary.**
22nd: Sainsbury Wing Theatre, National Gallery, Trafalgar Square, London
23rd: New College Chapel, Oxford
- 24 Friday lunchtime recital – Alexander Learmonth *
- 31 Friday lunchtime recital – Duncan Saunderson *

November

- 7 Friday lunchtime recital – Julian Ovenden *
- 14 Friday lunchtime recital – Agnes Hope *
- 14, 15 Philip Glass *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *
Holywell Music Room
- 21 Friday lunchtime recital – Thomas Kennedy *
- 26 G. F. Handel *Il Parnasso in Festa**, New College Chapel
- 28 Friday lunchtime recital – Mark Chaundy *

December

- 5 Friday lunchtime recital – Kate Semmens *

FUTURE EVENTS (SEE INSIDE FOR OTHER FORTHCOMING EVENTS)

CD release The Band of Instruments accompanying New from CRD College Choir on Purcell Anthems disc

CD release Incidental music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier to *Les Fous* from ASV *Divertissants* and *Le Mariage Forcé*. CD GAU167

* Denotes University Events.

Bold Denotes New Chamber Opera Ensemble and The Band of Instruments events

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Information about New Chamber Opera can also be found on our web page:
<http://www.new.ox.ac.uk/nco/>

TICKET DETAILS

Tickets for Lunch Hour Concerts (£2/£1 concessions) are available on the door only.

Tickets for the events below are available from the Playhouse Ticket Shop at Blackwell's Music (01865-261384); they may also be available on the door.

The Enrag'd Musician
Music for Hogarth's London

23 October 1997
New College Chapel, 8.30pm
£6/£4 concessions

Philip Glass*

The Fall of the House of Usher

14 & 15 November 1997
Holywell Music Room
£10/£5 concessions

G. F. Handel*

Il Parnasso in Festa

26 November 1997
New College Chapel
£6/£4 concessions

Henry Purcell*

King Arthur February 1998

New College Chapel £10/£5 concessions

J. S. Bach*

The Easter Oratorio February 1998

New College Chapel £6/£4 concessions

Thomas Arne*

The Masque of Alfred June 1998

New College Cloisters £6/£4 concessions

New Chamber Opera
New Chamber Opera Ensemble
The Band of Instruments
Phoenix · Cutting Edge

Patron Harvey McGregor
Singing Patron James Bowman
Director of Productions Michael Burden
Musical Director Gary Cooper
Assistant Musical Director Matthew Halls
Administrator Suzanne Aspden
Comptroller Ian MacMullen
Technical Director Victoria Hamilton
Wardrobe Diana Lintott, Sheila Poole
Sponsorship Philip Viveash
Recitals Administrator Natalie Bleicher
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