



Aylesbury Opera

Registered Charity Number 1192416

GF Handel

SAUL



Saturday 13th November 2021

Holy Trinity Church, Bledlow

David Hayes 1931-2021

We dedicate tonight's performance to David Hayes, who lived in this parish and recently passed away. David formed Aylesbury Opera Group in 1979 as an evening class at Aylesbury College of Further Education. He conducted and ran the group for thirty years, as well as teaching and pursuing many other musical activities in the area. We are grateful for all he gave.

SAUL – Synopsis

The libretto was written by Charles Jennens, who collaborated with Handel on several oratorios, including *Messiah*. It is freely adapted from the First Book of Samuel, Chapters 16-31, with additional material from the epic poem, the *Davidides* by the Abraham Cowley (1618-67).

Part 1

The Israelites raise their voices in magnificent thanksgiving to God, for the young warrior David has slain the Philistine giant Goliath. At the court of King Saul, once a mighty warrior himself, all the people celebrate the hero David. Saul's son, Jonathan swears eternal devotion to David, but Saul's two daughters experience contrasting emotions – Michal is in love with David, but Merab feels contempt for him as a social inferior, a feeling that only increases when Saul offers her in marriage to David. A group of Israelite young women offer further tributes to David. Saul is enraged how David is praised. Unable to restrain his anger, he orders Jonathan to kill David.

INTERVAL

Part 2

The people of Israel reflect on the destructive power of envy. Jonathan pleads David's case to Saul, who appears to relent. Saul asks Jonathan to bring David back to court and promises Michal as David's bride, though Saul anticipates David's death in battle. David and Michal express their mutual love, but David reports that Saul's rage has not diminished and that Saul threw a javelin close past his head in frustration. Saul summons David to court again as Michal and Merab expresses her faith that God will protect David. Jonathan tries to explain to Saul why David has not responded to his summons. Saul rages against both David and Jonathan.

Part 3

In despair, and though aware it is unlawful, Saul asks the Witch of Endor to raise the ghost of Samuel the prophet. Asked for advice, the ghost of Samuel reminds Saul that he had once predicted his downfall for sparing the king of the Amalekites whom Samuel had ordered killed. He predicts that David will inherit the kingdom of Israel when Saul and his sons die in the next day's battle. David learns from an Amalekite soldier of the deaths of Saul and Jonathan at the hands of the Amalekites, and David orders the Amalekite killed. After a funeral march for the Israelite dead, David and Michal express their sorrow, particularly for the loss of Jonathan. A priest predicts David will win future victories and the Israelites urge him to restore their land.



Patron: Nelly Miricioiu

Saul

Dramatic oratorio (1738) by George Frederic Handel

Musical Director and Conductor – Kelvin Lim

Cast

Saul, King of Israel	Tobias Odenwald
Merab, his daughter	Jessica Hopkins
Michal, his other daughter	Olivia Bell
Jonathan, his son	Jeff Stewart
David	Dominic Mattos
Witch of Endor	Alison Thorman
Ghost of Samuel	Colin Arney
Doeg, a messenger	Lawrence Gillians
An Amalekite	Philip Hayes

Chorus

Susie Bojarski, Jennie Bruce, Lynn Callaghan, Chiara Carbone, Claire Cockcroft, Maxine Gardner, Celeste Handford, John Harrad, Emma Harrington, Neil Henderson, Agnes Herczeg, Nick Heritage, Harriet Lawson, Anna Phillips (soprano solo), Penny Pomroy, Eileen Robinson, Séverine Robitaille, Kevin Scott, Fenella Vieceli

Orchestra

Violins	Margot Rusmanis (Leader), Jane Large, Naomi Jacob, Debbie Archer, Frances Bigg
Violas	Katie Hayes, John Fryer
'Cellos	Caroline Ridout, Chris Doggett
Double Bass	Richard Hodby
Oboes/Recorders	Maike Hayes, Liz Walker
Bassoon	Jeremy Holmes
Trumpet	Ian Lynch
Trombone	Andy Crompton
Timpani	Herrick Hayes
Continuo	Micheila Brigginsshaw

List of arias and musical numbers

Part One

Scene I. The Israelite Camp by the Valley of Elah

1. Chorus of Israelites "How excellent thy name, O Lord"
2. Air (soprano) "An infant rais'd by Thy command"
3. Trio "Along the monster atheist strode"
4. Quartet "The youth inspir'd by Thee, O Lord"
5. Chorus of Israelites "How excellent Thy name, O Lord"

Scene II. Saul's Tent

6. Recitative (Abner, Saul, David) "Behold, O King"
7. Air (David) "O King, your favours with delight"
8. Recitative (Jonathan) "Oh, early piety!"
9. Recitative (Saul, Merab) "Thou, Merab, first in birth"
10. Air (Merab) "My soul rejects the thought with scorn"
11. Air (Michal) "See, with what a scornful air"

Scene III. Before an Israelite City

12. Sinfonia
13. Recitative (Michal) "Already see the daughters of the land"
14. Chorus of Israelites "Welcome, welcome, mighty king!"
15. Accompagnato (Saul) "What do I hear? Am I then sunk so low?"
16. Chorus of Israelites "David his ten thousands slew"
17. Accompagnato (Saul) "To him ten thousands, and to me but thousands!"

18. Air (Saul) "With rage I shall burst his praises to hear!"
19. Recitative (Jonathan, Michal) "Imprudent women!"
20. Air (Michal) "Fell rage and black despair possess'd"

Scene IV. The King's House

21. Recitative (Abner) "Racked with infernal pains"
22. Air (David) "O Lord, whose mercies numberless"
23. Recitative (Jonathan) "'Tis all in vain"
24. Air (Saul) "A serpent, in my bosom warm'd"
25. Recitative (Saul) "Has he escap'd my rage?"
26. Accompagnato (Jonathan) "O filial piety!"
27. Air (Jonathan) "No, cruel father, no!"
28. Chorus "Preserve him for the glory of Thy name"

INTERVAL

Part Two

Scene I. The Palace

29. Chorus "Envy, eldest born of hell"
30. Recitative (Saul) "Hast thou obey'd my orders?"
31. Duet (Jonathan, Saul) "Sin not, O King"
32. Air (Jonathan) "Wisest and greatest of his kind"
33. Recitative (Jonathan, Saul) "Appear, my friend"

Scene II. Another part of the Palace

34. Recitative (Michal) "A father's will has authorised my love"
35. Duet (Michal and David) "O fairest of ten thousand fair"
36. Chorus "Is there a man, who all his ways?"

Scene III. David's House

37. Recitative (David) "Thy father is as cruel and as false"
38. Duet (David and Michal) "At persecution I can laugh"
39. Recitative (Michal, Doeg) "Whom dost thou seek?"
40. Air (Michal) "No, no, let the guilty tremble"

Scene IV. The Palace

41. Sinfonia
42. Accompagnato (Saul) "The time at length is come"
43. Recitative (Saul, Jonathan) "Where is the son of Jesse?"
44. Chorus "O fatal consequence of rage"

Part Three

Scene I. Endor

45. Accompagnato (Saul) "Wretch that I am"

Scene II. The Witch's Abode

46. Accompagnato (Saul) "'Tis said, here lives a woman"
47. Recitative (The Witch of Endor, Saul) "With me what would'st thou?"
48. Air (Witch) "Infernal spirits"
49. Accompagnato (Ghost of Samuel, Saul) "Why hast thou forc'd me from the realms of peace"

Scene III. Ziklag

50. Sinfonia
51. Recitative (David, an Amalekite) "Whence com'st thou?"
52. Air (David) "Impious wretch, of race accurst!"
53. Dead March *

An Elegy on the Death of Saul and Jonathan

54. Chorus "Mourn, Israel, mourn"
55. Air (High Priest) "Oh, let it not in Gath be heard"
56. Air (David) "Brave Jonathan his bow never drew"
57. Chorus of Israelites "Eagles were not so swift as they"
58. Air (Michal) "In sweetest harmony they lived"
59. Solo and Chorus (David and Israelites) "O fatal day! How low the mighty lie!"
60. Recitative (Abiathar) "Ye men of Judah, weep no more!"
61. Chorus of Israelites "Gird on thy sword, thou man of might"

* The famous "Dead March", introducing the obsequies for the deaths of Saul and Jonathan, has been played at state funerals including that of Winston Churchill. It is the standard funeral march of the armed forces of Germany. It was also performed at the funeral of George Washington, as well as being played many times during the journey of the body of Abraham Lincoln, after his assassination, to Springfield, Illinois.

Tobias Odenwald - Saul



Tobias initially trained at the opera class of the Conservatory of Music in Würzburg, Germany, and more recently at the Morley Opera School in London. He also

participated in master classes with Ian Page, Jonathan Miller, Judith Weir, Mark Shanahan and Della Jones, amongst others.

In the last years, he has sung with a variety of opera groups in the UK and in Germany. His roles include Bartolo and Antonio *The Marriage of Figaro*, Sarastro and Speaker *The Magic Flute*, Commendatore *Don Giovanni*, Kecal *The Bartered Bride*, Friar Laurence *Romeo and Juliet*, Luther and Crespel *The Tales of Hoffmann*, Banquo *Macbeth*, Colline *La bohème* and Dulcamara *The Elixir of Love*.

Tobias will be performing the role of the Mayor in Aylesbury Opera's production of *Jenůfa* in March 2022. Previously with AO he has sung the roles of Caspar *Der Freischütz*, Lodovico *Otello*, Oroveso *Norma*, Old Priest *Samson et Dalila* and Don Pedro *Béatrice et Bénédicte*.

Dominic Mattos - David



Dominic began singing on the cabaret scene, with his critically acclaimed recreation of Broadway legend Ethel Merman's nightclub act, which he performed in two sell-out

seasons at London's Jermyn Street Theatre. The show was featured on BBC Radio 4 and Dominic also appeared as Merman to large audiences at the Blackpool Grand, Oxford Playhouse and Yvonne Arnaud Theatre. Dominic was invited to bring the show to the

Aldeburgh Music Festival (at the Pump House) and the Metropolitan Room in New York, USA, and also took it to the Edinburgh Fringe.

Classically speaking, Dominic has a clear and high countertenor voice (from low g to soprano top Bb) suited to the castrati repertoire. He has an ATCL diploma, with distinction, from Trinity College London. Dominic is a private student of Tim Travers Brown, working mostly on the baroque repertoire. He has also attended three terms with the Morley College Opera school, and has participated in masterclasses with David Gowland, Elaine Kidd, Yvonne Howard, Mary Plazas, Andrew Radley, Jenny Miller and Penelope Randall-Davies.

Olivia Bell - Michal



Olivia has recently graduated as Kathleen Roberts scholar from Trinity Laban Conservatoire

of Music and Dance, gaining a distinction in her MMus under Tessa Cahill and winning the Director's Prize for Excellence. She has been chosen to represent the vocal faculty in the Gold Medal competition, to be held at King's Place in January.

She previously read English as senior choral scholar at Queens' College Cambridge, where she won the Beaumont Award for musical excellence and the Gilbert Ryle Reading Prize. She was a member of the Trinity's chamber choir and this year won the inaugural Carne Competition at Trinity with Ledyed, a harp and voice group she co-founded.

Recent opera credits include: First Witch *Dido and Aeneas*, Hurn Court Opera; Susanna *Le nozze di Figaro*, Puzzlepiece Opera; Annina *La traviata*,

New Sussex Opera; Yum-Yum *The Mikado*, *The Witch Hansel and Gretel*, First Lady *The Magic Flute*, The Monitor *Suor Angelica* with Opera Anywhere; Second Woman *Dido and Aeneas*, Helios Collective; Lucy *Cheryomushki*, Nancy *Albert Herring*, Hermia *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Cambridge University Opera Society.

Jeff Stewart – Jonathan



Jeff Stewart trained as a singer at the Guildhall School of Music & Drama, winning the Harold Rosenthal award for outstanding achievement, and then at the National

Opera Studio. He has appeared in concert and recital all over the world, highlights have including Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* in Tampere under the baton of Andrew Manze, *Carmina Burana* in the Forbidden City in Beijing, Haydn's *Nelson Mass* and Mozart's *Dominicus Messe* in Escondido, Florida, to celebrate 200 years of the Mission St. Louis Rey, and Weil's *The Seven Deadly Sins* with Susan Graham, under Sir John Elliot Gardiner.

He has appeared in opera houses throughout Europe, including ROH, Opera North, ENO, Deutsche Oper am Rhein Düsseldorf, Komische Oper Berlin, Schwerin, Bremen and Skopje, in a wide variety of repertoire that includes *Edgardo Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Nemorino L'elisir d'amore*, *Ernesto Don Pasquale*, *Števa Jenůfa*, *Rodolfo La bohème*, *The Duke of Mantua Rigoletto*, *Male Chorus The Rape of Lucretia*, *Pinkerton Madame Butterfly*, *Tamino The Magic Flute*, *Ferrando Così fan tutte*, *Walther Tannhäuser*, *Andres Wozzek*, *Alfred Die Fledermaus*, *Gounod's Romeo* and *Gustavus Un ballo in maschera*.

Jeff began conducting when he took

over the choir of Holy Trinity Church, Bledlow in 2003. At that time there were just eight members. Since then the choir has gone from strength to strength, singing services at cathedrals around the country and with membership often up to forty. In 2015 he became the conductor of Aylesbury Choral Society. Jeff also conducted Aylesbury Opera's 2016 production of Britten's children's opera *Noye's Fludde*.

Kelvin Lim – Conductor



Kelvin trained at the RCM and has worked for companies including: ROH, ENO, Glyndebourne, Opera Holland Park, Grange Park, ETO, Longborough. He is

Musical Director of Opera

Scenes and Vocal Coach at Trinity Laban and has coached for Jette Parker Young Artists.

Kelvin received the Bayreuth Bursary, and has accompanied John Tomlinson, Thomas Allen and Stuart Skelton, worked with Aida Garifullina, Christopher Ventris and Nelly Miricioiu, and played in masterclass with Sir Antonio Pappano. His company Opera Forge performed for the Wagner 200 celebrations at the Royal Festival Hall.

As conductor he has conducted *Carmen* (for ROH education/EPOC at Olympic Arena) and assisted Anthony Negus, Steuart Bedford at Longborough and Trinity Laban. Kelvin became Musical Director of Aylesbury Opera in 2016, since when he has directed productions of *Otello*, *Norma*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Samson et Dalila* and *Cavalleria rusticana/Pagliacci*, as well as concert performances of *The Daughter of the Regiment*, *Acis and Galatea* and *Béatrice et Bénédicte*. He will conduct our performances of *Jenůfa* next March.



Aylesbury Opera was formed in 1979. We mount one staged production each year, usually at the Court Theatre in Tring. On 4th and 5th March 2022 we are producing the Czech composer Janáček's stunning opera, *Jenůfa*, also recently performed by the Royal Opera in London. This is a fully staged production with orchestra, sung in English. We also put on concerts of opera highlights and whole works.

We perform with professional soloists and orchestra. Our chorus is made up of local singers who enjoy the challenge of performing on stage, often in a foreign language! All are welcome. We rehearse on Monday evenings in the Parish Hall at Holy Trinity Church, Aylesbury.

Acknowledgements

We wish to thank Revd Norbert Mutuku, the Churchwardens and the PCC at Holy Trinity, Bledlow for all their help in bringing tonight's performance to fruition. And to Jeff Stewart for suggesting the idea, early in 2020, before world events forced all plans to be postponed!

We are grateful to both Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council and Arts Council England for their financial assistance in defraying the considerable costs of mounting this concert.

***Jenůfa* Chorus Workshop**

Sunday 21st November
2.30 - 5.30pm

Holy Trinity Church, Aylesbury

Come and spend an afternoon immersed in Janáček's opera, set in a Moravian village. We will learn one of the exciting chorus numbers (in English), then set it dramatically. Led by professionals Musical Director Kelvin Lim and Stage Director Louise Bakker.

Jenůfa tells the gritty story of a woman in a rural village who falls pregnant and her stepmother's actions to protect her. We have a wonderful cast of professional singers in the principal roles and this workshop is designed as a taster for people who might like to join the chorus, or just interested to learn more about it.

Opera Masterclass with Nelly Miricioiu

Saturday 29th January
2.30 - 5.30pm

Aylesbury Music Centre

Aylesbury Opera is delighted to again host a masterclass led by our patron and internationally renowned soprano Nelly Miricioiu. For the masterclass, four of AO's professional principal singers will work on arias with Nelly, accompanied at the piano by Kelvin Lim. Nelly brings a lifetime of insight and experience from her career to the art of nurturing the next generation.

For details about our events,
please visit our website:
<https://aylesburyopera.org.uk/>