

Così Fan Tutte

Mozart's comic opera 'Così Fan Tutte' was first performed in 1790 in Vienna. Mozart was 34 years old. Within two years he would be dead. 'Così' was the last of his three comic operas with plot and words by Da Ponte, a partnership some have called the most creative artistic collaboration the world has known.

The opera was popular and frequently performed for the next twenty or so years and then sank into oblivion for the rest of the nineteenth century, a victim of the distaste of the Victorians for its 'modern' attitude to sex. Now it is among the most performed of all operas and widely regarded as an outstanding masterpiece.

Later this month it is being performed at the Barn by Starlight Opera, in English, fully staged and costumed with orchestra and fine singers. The ticket price is less than the price of a pizza - don't miss the chance to see it. You can introduce your kids to the world of opera at the matinee for 5 pounds per child.

Oxted Players

Twenty three of our Young Players participated in our Summer Workshop in August overseen by David Rowan culminating in their performance on Saturday 24th August, of Robin Hood of the Children of Sherwood. They all appeared on stage in a variety of roles in a lively adaptation by David of the legendary tale. The play included the usual characters of Robin Hood, Little John, Friar Tuck, Sheriff of Nottingham, Maid Marian, etc. but there was the clever addition of the children of Robin Hood's Merry Men who set about rescuing Maid Marian when she was seized by the wicked Sheriff. Our youngsters thoroughly enjoyed the experience of the workshop and presentation of their play to a very appreciative audience with some outstanding performances. This was our fifth Summer Workshop which has now become a regular annual event.

As we go to press our "Older" Players (together with one Young Player) have just completed their production of Michael Palin's The Weekend directed by Guy Hudson. The play was very well received by the audiences. Tony Flook reviewed the play for Surrey Mirror and extracts from his review are as follows:

"Michael Palin's play adds a new dimension to the well-worn scenario in which welcomed and less welcomed guests cause chaos when they descend on hosts for the weekend. The writer gives the story a twist because, in this case, the key problem turns out to be the householder himself, not the visitors who, despite their own idiosyncrasies, are mainly catalysts. There's a fair degree of humour, some gratuitous near farce and, ultimately, pathos. However, not all strands are pulled together, leaving questions posed but, in some cases, unanswered. Guy Hudson directed a thoughtful production of this intriguing if not totally satisfying play, which was performed at Oxted's Barn Theatre, last week.

The central character is Stephen, a middle-aged curmudgeon who fears and resents the arrival of his daughter and her family, complete with incontinent dog. It's a huge, demanding role - the actor is on stage almost throughout and initiates many of the sharp exchanges that characterise the play. Chris Hephner seemed to relish the challenge and, in particular, coped well with Stephen's numerous, unpredictable mood-swings - whether ranting at and about all around him or breaking down and revealing his own failings..... June Brown, as Virginia, his long-suffering wife soaked up his outpourings most of the time until she showed that she, too, had feelings. It was a touching portrait of a loving partner who had been pushed to her limits.

David Fanthorpe portrayed their nerdish son-in-law, an Olympic-standard bore, plausibly and the revelation that he was a serial adulterer came as a surprise. I liked Lynne Lloyd's bright interpretation of the neighbour suspected of having an affair with her chiropodist and 14 year old Abigail Thomas-Verweij as the precocious grand-daughter, not afraid to berate the adults over any issue....."

Remaining characters were Duff, played by Mike Rourke, who falls out of favour when Stephen learns that his best friend has kept from him the fact that a six lane access road was likely to be built around his home, Ash Thakar making his debut at The Barn as the pot smoking, philandering chiropodist Hugh Bedales and Jackie Barrett as the housekeeper, all of whom gave admirable performances and contributed to the success of the play. We were very pleased at the appreciation and support given for this play by audiences, many of whom were new to The Barn. We also greatly appreciate Ash's enthusiastic ticket promotion which greatly enhanced tickets sales and

resulted in a full house on the last night in addition to one uninvited moth which insisted on sharing Chris's chair with him during the play and was in danger of being sat upon on several occasions!

We are now into rehearsals for our January Pantomime which this year is Jack and the Beanstalk written by Norman Robbins and directed by Ken Nicholson. We welcome Kevin Joint as Musical Director and Denise Gillman as Choreographer. Vicki Stanbury returns as principal boy in the role of Jack and is joined by Jo Emery as Princess Melissa. We are pleased to have been able to persuade Barrie Ward to return as Dame Trot and also to enlist the talents of John Speller as King Hubert and James Gautrey as Simple Simon. To add to our very experienced principal cast we have Mike Rourke as our 'baddie', and Julia Dallosso as the Fairy and, putting aside any sibling rivalry, Freya and Simon Finch will be unrecognisable as Daisy the Cow. In addition we have a strong adult chorus and 'babes' chorus. This promises to be a lively, fun-filled production with popular songs. Our Giant will be just that! Tickets for Panto sell quickly, particularly the matinees, and we would advise you to book early. Tickets are from £5.00 and are obtainable from the Ticket Secretary on 01883 724852 until 8th December and thereafter from Ibbett Mosely on 01883 712241. Please refer to the handbill for further information.

Pepper Band Back at The Barn – LIVE and Nearly Naked !

Fab 5, Sgt Pepper's Only Dart Board Band will return to The Barn on Saturday 6th December to give a no-strings attached, no-holds barred live performance.

Musically speaking the band will perform 'nearly naked'. By way of explanation and before streakers run amok in The Barn, 'naked' is the word used to describe the music performed on the Beatles new release album 'Let It Be' without the use of strings. The original 1970 album was well documented at the time because of Phil Spector's 'intervention' in adding 'orchestration' to some of the classic songs on the album, much to the annoyance of Paul McCartney. The revamped version of Let It Be, due out soon, will be 'naked', i.e. devoid of string arrangements. The Pepper band will also perform 'string-less' but they will have the man who orchestrates from the rear of the stage, Sgt Pepper himself, on electric keyboard/piano. Hence their 'nearly naked' performance of the material.

Reviewed as "possibly the best Beatles tribute band in the country" following their Salisbury Festival appearance earlier this year, the band will perform in their usual humorous vein. Those of you who saw their 2001 sell-out show will know they are capable of the utmost nonsense and tongue in cheek humour imaginable! So if you like the music of the Fab 4 (including some of the early rock songs to get you groovin' in the aisles and (I'm giving away secrets now) a chunk of Abbey Road in their set list as well, this is for you. Tickets, from Churchill Gallery, by post or by telephone now.

Once Upon a Mattress

So you think you know the true story of The Princess and the Pea? Think again! Once Upon a Mattress is a deliciously quirky re-working of this classic fable, complete with minstrels, knights, damsels in distress, wizards, a dysfunctional royal family and of course, the princess herself.

With music written by Mary Rodgers, daughter of the famous Richard Rodgers of Rodgers and Hammerstein fame, Once Upon a Mattress was originally created as a one-off performance for a theatre festival, but proved to be so popular that the authors expanded the piece and it premiered on Broadway in 1959 where the part of the princess was played by newcomer Carol Burnett. The production launched Carol's career and she became one of America's most successful comedienne. The show enjoyed a Broadway revival in 1998 when the part of the princess was played by Sarah Jessica Parker.

This will be Phoenix Theatre Company's second production at The Barn, following the success of Red Hot and Cole in 2002 which received much acclaim. Phoenix aims to present lesser known and smaller-scale productions to the public, and Once Upon a Mattress has rarely been seen in this country, though it is a great favourite in the USA.

The script is a hilarious mixture of traditional story and unexpected twists and similarly, the music is a clever blend of period-style and up-beat melodies. Musical numbers include "Shy", "Normandy" and "Happily Ever After". All-in-all an entertaining evening for the whole family.

Tickets are available now from the Phoenix Box Office on 020 8405 9946.