

The Clapham Society

Newsletter



Issue 418

June 2019

Opera Goes Back To School

One of the forces that drives Clapham's St Paul's Opera (SPO) is its sense of community – as was established last year in the Skipton Grassroots Giving Awards. St Paul's Opera (SPO) was one of the organisations recognised in Skipton's nationwide campaign.

Rehearsals are now in full swing for this year's opera festival – Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* – and, once again, the Clapham community will be deeply involved.

SPO continues its connection with Morley College, in neighbouring Lambeth North. Founder and producer (and this year, singing the role of Marcellina), Clapham's Tricia Ninian is an alumna; musical director Panaretos Kyriatzidis (known as Pan) leads Morley's *Introduction to Opera Performance* course; 'almost' local resident, Stockwell's Alexandra Dinwiddie (understudy for Cherubino) is also an Opera Performance alumna; and Owain Evans, (singing the role of Antonio), proprietor chiropractor at BackSpace in Clapham Park Road, is currently one of Pan's people at Morley.

The chorus includes no fewer than three Clapham residents (and Clapham Society members) – Sue Roberts, Juliet Poyser and Tony Bell – while the 'backroom' team includes two more members: in charge of wardrobe, Karen Elliott, and Suzanne Gordon-Brown, adding invaluable help to marketing.

But perhaps the most significant community-based aspect of this year's performance is an outreach programme designed to introduce opera to primary school children in Clapham.

Inspired by opera lover and SPO stalwart Judith Strong, the programme is being run by a regular SPO performer, Sophie Horrocks.

If you think school kids and opera go together as well as fish fingers in a Michelin-starred restaurant, think again. Judith Strong said: 'It's regrettable in this country that the media always portrays opera as an elite art form. I can vouch for its accessibility. Back

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Le Nozze de Figaro full cast at the first rehearsal



Our meetings are held at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW. The talk will commence promptly at 8 pm and the bar will open prior to the talk at 7 pm. Our guest will normally speak for about 45 minutes, followed by around 15 minutes for questions and discussion, and the bar will remain open after the talk. Meetings are free and open to non-members, who are invited to make a donation.

Please arrive in good time to ensure entry. There is a limit on the number the room can accommodate, and you will not be admitted when that number is reached.

There are no meetings in July and August.

Monday 17 June

Brewing along the Wandle Valley.

Alison Cousins, a volunteer at the Wandle Industrial Museum based in Mitcham, has a keen interest in our local heritage and will talk about brewing along the Wandle Valley. While Young's is the best-known name associated with brewing in south London, there were many other brewers along the Wandle and now a local revival is taking place.

Summer Party

This year's Summer party will be held in the grounds of St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove. SW4 0DX on **Wednesday 10 July**. The ticket application form is on the back page of this newsletter. Please apply for your ticket as soon as possible enclosing your cheque and giving an email address or telephone number. Your place will then be confirmed to you but tickets will **not** be issued.

Opera Goes Back To School

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in the 1970s and 1980s, I took dozens of children from a state primary school in Tooting to schools' matinees at the Royal Opera House. For the price of £4, a charity subsidised ticket, they were able to see stars such as Placido Domingo in *Tosca* from the front of the stalls.

They took to even the most difficult operas like ducks to water and couldn't wait to make a return visit. I still treasure the moment on the rush hour tube when a city gent, seeing the familiar red programme, asked somewhat incredulously what they thought of it and a lively discussion ensued on the merits of *The Magic Flute* versus *Medea*.

'The local community is at the heart of everything we do at SPO,' said Tricia Ninian. 'Our outreach programme in schools is a really exciting development which, we hope, will create a new generation of opera lovers. Who knows, it might even inspire a future diva or two...'

Le Nozze di Figaro (*The Marriage of Figaro*) will be held at St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX on **Friday 5 July** and **Saturday 6 July**, with picnic facilities before the performance and during the interval (cover performance on **Thursday 4 July**).

Tickets can be bought online now via the website, www.stpaulsopera.org, or at St Paul's parish office from **Monday 3 June**. Enquiries by email on info@stpaulsopera.org or by phone on 07774 689709

Matthew Carter

There is a change of programme for September, when the talk previously scheduled has been moved to October and replaced by the talk detailed below – one of our contributions to the Lambeth Heritage Festival which runs for the whole of September.

Monday 16 September

The Heathwall: South London's least-known stream

There has been a growing interest over the last ten years in the underground rivers of London. In this talk, writer and archivist, Jon Newman uncovers the history and course of what is arguably the least-understood of them, the Heathwall. For centuries it has defined the parish and borough boundaries between Battersea, Clapham, Lambeth and Wandsworth while its tributaries, the Holburne and the Heathwall Brook both flow through Clapham. Consigned underground by Bazalgette in 1865 as part of his London Main Drainage scheme, it has largely been forgotten.

Jon has just published a book on the river's history and this will be on sale.

On **Monday 3 June** Timothy Walker will lead a walk entitled **Growth of a Victorian Suburb**, in the area south and west of Clapham Common. Departure is at 6.30 pm from Clapham South Underground Station. This is a Clapham Society event for Wandsworth Heritage Festival.

Shakespeare's greatest hits!

Punctuating the plays of the Bard are some beautiful songs. On **Thursday 27 June** at 7.30 pm Whitehall Choir will perform some of his best-loved ones set centuries later by Shearing, Rutter, Mathias and Diemer. All have a light, jazzy feel and are the perfect choice for a summer concert at St Peter's Eaton Square, SW1W 9AL. Afterwards, enjoy a relaxed drink on the portico of St Peter's – a popular summer concert tradition for the choir! Tickets at whitehallchoir.org. or on the door.

Summer Concerts On The Bandstand

Clapham Common Management Advisory Committee (CCMAC) is pleased to announce the programme of summer concerts on the Clapham Common Bandstand.

Building on the success and popularity of previous years, the series of concerts offers a diverse mix of musical styles reflecting the community in which we live. There's something for everyone, ranging from beatbox and urban to jazz, Afro-Cuban, classical and opera, with performances from traditional brass bands to up-and-coming singer-songwriters. **All concerts are free for all.**

The programme kicks off with the ever-popular Common People at 1 pm on **Saturday 25 May** organised by Bandstand Beds. The music continues with concerts every weekend throughout June and July.

Common People and Oxjam Clapham, the local chapter of Oxfam's musical fundraiser, on **Saturday 13 July**, are multi-act concerts and run from 1 pm to 4 pm. There's a double bill on **Saturday 6 July** with Junction Jazz, a Clapham-based group, and Beatbox Academy sharing the day from 12 noon until 4 pm. All other concerts start at 2 pm and end at 4 pm.

Real Voices on **Saturday 15 June** comprises of local choirs from Battersea, Brixton, Clapham, Tooting and Vauxhall. The programme is supported by Lambeth Council. Technical support is supplied by Clapham-based Omnibus Theatre.

The 2019 summer concerts line up is as follows:

- **Sat 25 May** Common People – range of live music – 1 pm to 4 pm
- **Sat 1 June** South London Symphonic Winds – wind band – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sun 9 June** KIX Jazz Orchestra – jazz, swing and Latin – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sat 15 June** Real Voices – local choirs – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sat 22 June** South London Concert Band – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sat 29 June** Los Domingos – Latin – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sat 6 July** Junction Jazz – 12 noon to 2 pm
- **Sat 6 July** Beatbox Academy – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sun 7 July** Fuzion Four – Latin, jazz and classical influences – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sat 13 July** Oxjam Clapham – urban, pop and rock – 1 pm to 4 pm
- **Sun 14 July** Crystal Palace Band – traditional brass band – classic to pop – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sat 20 July** Here to Havana – Afro-Cuban – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sun 21st July** The Crooks Saxophone Quartet – 2 pm to 4 pm
- **Sun 28 July** London Consorts of Winds – Handel's Fireworks and Water Music – 2 pm to 4 pm

Final Notice

Have you renewed your subscription for 2019-20? Payment was due on 1 April and you have until 30 June to ensure that you remain a member of the Society.

As announced at the AGM in October last year and subsequently in the newsletter it has been necessary to increase the rates. The current annual fees are: Individual £10, Household (up to three) £15, Business £25. Postage (if required) is an additional £10 per annum.

You may not have amended your standing order to reflect the new levels. Please check with your bank to bring it up-to-date and send a top-up payment to the Society to cover the gap. This can be a cheque made payable to *The Clapham Society* or bank transfer. Details of the Society's bank details are on the website; if you pay this way please use your surname, initial and postcode as the reference.

If you have a query please contact the Membership Secretary (details on back page).



Maddie Wilson speaking about the fire at BAC

Photo by Dana Kubick

Battersea Arts Centre

Many of those who came to hear Maddie Wilson's talk about Battersea Arts Centre had clear recollections of the fateful Friday the 13th – of March 2013 – when, midway through refurbishment of the whole building, fire broke out in the Grand Hall. Some had seen the fire, which was clearly visible from trains to and from Clapham Junction; others were diverted as the area was sealed off. By uncomfortable coincidence, the audience was also well aware of the vulnerability of old buildings under repair: the fire at Notre Dame headed all news reports on the day of our meeting.

Maddie Wilson's starting point was the fire, but she first took us backwards to the BAC's origins. In 1891 the Battersea Vestry's Parochial Offices Committee launched an architectural competition for a new Town Hall. This was won by E W Mountford, a local architect with a national reputation: his library in Lavender Hill had opened in 1890, and he was at the time working on a large municipal project in Sheffield. The Town Hall, officially opened in 1893, exhibited a strong sense of civic purpose and pride, embodying Battersea's motto of '*non mihi non tibi sed nobis*' (not for me, not for you, but for us). In addition to a council chamber and offices, the building incorporated areas for public use, the most significant of which was the Grand Hall. This elegant space was used for many purposes – as a very early cinema, and for concerts, other entertainments, civic events and political meetings: among those who spoke there were Charlotte Despard, Emmeline Pankhurst and Bertrand Russell.

Uncertainty about the building's future followed the 1965 local government reorganisation, in which Battersea became part of the borough of Wandsworth. A campaign involving, inter alia, Nikolaus Pevsner and John Betjeman successfully fought off threats of demolition and the building was listed in 1970. Thereafter it slowly but surely developed its arts and community focus, first under the aegis of Wandsworth Council and later as an independent Arts Centre. In the mid-2000s a major project was launched with the aim of expanding its activities while maintaining its function as an important cultural and community hub.

So it was that in 2015 the gradual re-development of much of the building was well under way. But at 4.20 pm the fire alarm sounded and it soon became clear that this was not one of the many false alarms staff had become used to. Thanks to the fire service, damage was confined to the Grand Hall – but that damage was devastating.

In the immediate aftermath, local businesses provided invaluable help, both moral and financial. Offers of support then came from far and wide: a 'Phoenix Office' was set up to categorise and organise these. Straight away the architects Haworth Tompkins started work on how to rebuild, and the solution adopted was to retain the walls that survived the fire, conserving them in their scorched state, and to install a new lattice ceiling inspired by the original. Other areas have been redeveloped to provide a home for creative and social entrepreneurs. The effects of the fire were vividly recorded in photographs by Jake Tilson (published as *The Lavender Hill Phoenix*), some of which illustrated Maddie's talk.

Following several re-opening 'Phoenix' events, BAC is now returning to its previous patterns of use – though with new twists: the BBC Proms have recently announced a concert there this summer. Having heard Maddie, a lot of Clapham Society members will be heading there too.

Jill Cramphorn

The Other Lavender Hill Mob

On **Tuesday 4 June** at 6.30 pm Dr Sue Demont will tell how hard-working women between the wars had limited scope for leisure. You can hear how future Labour MP Caroline Ganley and the Lavender Hill Women's Co-operative Guild kept the women of Battersea and beyond entertained when time and money were scarce. Battersea Library 265 Lavender Hill SW11 1JB. FREE but booking required via

https://whf_lavenderhill.eventbrite.com

This event is part of Wandsworth Heritage festival, which continues until Sunday 9 June. Full details are on line at http://www.wandsworth.gov.uk/news/article/15051/wandsworth_heritage_festival_2019 or you can pick up a brochure at any Wandsworth library.

Update on Works to Larkhall Rise Railway Bridge

Doug Black (Lambeth Delivery Lead Conservation and Urban Design) has replied to the Planning Sub-committee's letter concerning the erection of unsightly metal steel barriers to the bridge. He has confirmed to us that the works were carried out by Network Rail under permitted development rights. Lambeth, he says, are not in a position to advise on the matter. We will therefore be taking the matter further, writing to Network Rail to express our dislike of these insensitive works and disappointment that there has been no consultation process involving Lambeth, local residents or amenity groups such as ourselves.

Do you remember Clapham in 1980?

We have had an enquiry from a member whose daughter, an academic at Trinity College Dublin, is researching an event which took place in February/March 1980: *A Sense of Ireland - The London Festival of the Irish Arts*. Some related performances and workshops took place in Battersea and Clapham. If you remember or attended any of them your memories would be very welcome. Please send them to Rosie Lavan at lavanro@tcd.ie.

June at Omnibus Theatre

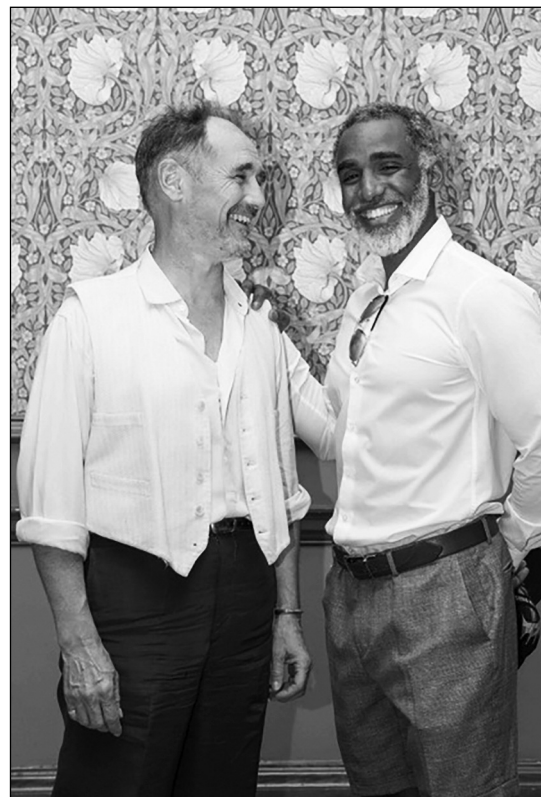
Sir Mark Rylance is lending his support to an imaginative adaptation of Shakespeare's *Othello* at Omnibus Theatre in June.

Shakespeare's gripping tragedy, a tale of manipulation, division and revenge, adapted and directed by Darren Raymond (*Shakespeare's Globe – Shakespeare's Walks* and *Sonnet Sunday*) runs from **Tuesday 25 June to Sunday 14 July**. Expect an unconventional fusion of language, modern-day references and fresh casting, giving a new voice and relevance to this powerful classic.

Othello: Remixed transports Othello's story to London, 2019. Set in a boxing ring, championship boxer Othello has chosen Michael Cassio to be his corner man. Rejected, Iago consumed with jealousy, plots Othello's downfall. Desdemona finds herself in the centre of their conflict which may (or may not) lead to a calamitous end.

Sir Mark Rylance, said: 'Darren's vision and the work of Intermission has become synonymous with using Shakespeare to reveal the culture of youth growing up in London today. I am really excited by this restaging and hope that it will introduce new audiences to Shakespeare and the transformative power that his words still hold to this day.'

For more details and to book tickets go to omnibus-clapham.org, call the Box Office or drop in at Omnibus Theatre, 1 Clapham Common North Side, SW4 0QW.



Mark Rylance and Darren Raymond

Photo by Richard Jinman

Social Media

Now that The Clapham Society is extending its social media reach, we need support from members – you! – to help spread our message by retweeting or replying. If you're not on Twitter or Facebook and would like to be, it couldn't be easier. Just enter <https://help.twitter.com/en/create-twitter-account> or 'How do I create a Facebook account' in your search engine and follow the prompts.

If you have any queries about **The Clapham Society** or have news of local events, please contact the appropriate person below:

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Details of meetings, activities and a full list of our publications are on our website at claphamsociety.com



TICKET APPLICATION FORM

Summer Party in the grounds of St Paul's Church, Rectory Grove, SW4 0DX on Wednesday 10 July from 6.30 pm to 8.30 pm. Drinks and canapés. (In the event of rain the party will be in St Paul's Church Hall)

I would like tickets @ £15 each and enclose a cheque, payable to the Clapham Society, for £.....

Name/s.....Telephone number.....

Email address.....

Your cheque will be acknowledged by email or telephone. Tickets will NOT be sent out, but your name will be on a list at the entry gate.

Please return this form with your cheque before **Wednesday 26 June** to:
Christine Armstrong, 4 Leppoc Road, SW4 9LT.