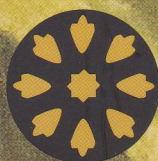


St Davids Cathedral Festival Gŵyl Eglwys Gadeiriol Tyddewi

27 May – 05 June 2016
27 Mai – 05 Mehefin 2016



Royal Patron: Her Majesty The Queen
Noddwr Brenhinol: Ei Mawrhydi y Frenhines



7.00PM

A CONCERT PERFORMANCE OF THE OPERA – A VILLAGE AT WAR

Louise Hales *Mary*

Nick Allen *Tom*

Marcus Lewis *The Sergeant*

The Synergy Chorus

The Menevia Orchestra - Barry Haskey *leader*

Samuel Howley *Composer and Musical Director*

Peter George *Librettist*

Carol Mackintosh *Director*

This concert is produced by Llangwm Local History Society
with Llangwm Community Centre and is supported
by the Armed Forces Covenant

Act 1

- Scene 1. The time is now. A sergeant in First World War uniform stands statue-still, awakening to *The Storm Overture*. Chorus and soloists describe the political events which lead to war.

Act 2

- Scene 1. 1914 – a Welsh village. Tom and Mary plan their future together - *Dreaming Under a Star-filled Sky*.
- Scene 2. A recruiting officer calls on the young men to enlist – *It Will All Be Over By Christmas* – and Tom has no choice but to sign up.

INTERVAL

- Scene 3. 1914 -The Angel of Mons appears on the battlefield - *Agnus Dei*. The Christmas Truce sees German and British soldiers meeting in no man's land – *We Are Wading In Mud - What Is The Point Of This War?*
- Scene 4. In the village, the men are at war and the women folk – *The Women Who Live By The Water* - struggle to keep going. Tom, home on leave, becomes engaged to Mary and they imagine their lives together - *When This War Is Over*.
- Scene 5. 1916 – The horrors of the war are ever more apparent as British politicians and military commanders plan for the Big Push.

Act 3

- Scene 1.** 1916 – The Battle of the Somme. Tom and his young brother Will prepare to go over the top. *Libera Me; Dies Irae; Requiem.*
- Scene 2.** In the village Mary remembers - *In The Stillness Of A Changing World.* The widows and orphans lament the loss of generations - *Song Of The Unborn.*
- Scene 3.** The present. The sergeant speaks of the futility of the war to end all wars – *In Paradisum.*

A Village at War – *Concert Version* started life as *WW1: a Village Opera*, which itself began as a gleam in the eyes of members of the Local History Society in the Pembrokeshire village of Llangwm who wanted to mark the centenary of the outbreak of World War I. A local composer, Samuel Howley, was approached and Peter George, an award-winning poet from Newport, came on board as librettist. Together they hatched an ambitious plan: to write and produce an opera telling the story of two young lovers set against a background of events on the Western Front.

And perhaps against the odds – how can a village of 800 people produce a full-scale opera after all – it was a success: five performances in November 2014, most of them sold out.

And then it was over, leaving an opera-sized gap in the life of the village. But with the approach of another anniversary, of the Battle of the Somme, the Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Covenant came to the rescue with a grant to rewrite the work as a concert. Much of Sam's music remains as does Peter's story line based on local history: the two young brothers who lost their lives on the Somme, and the butter war, when Llangwm women boycotted merchants who raised their prices.

It's hoped that *A Village at War* will be seen as a fitting tribute to those who fought and those who waited at home.



Louise Hales plays the part of Mary, one of the young lovers whose life is torn apart by the war. We see her first as a young girl falling in love for the first time, and then later, memorably as an older woman reflecting on her loss. Louise is currently hoping to go to university and is having singing lessons with Buddug Verona James, the Welsh mezzo-soprano, and piano lessons with Samuel Howley. Recent performances include as Philia in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* with Haverfordwest Operatics, and as Jackie in *Hay Fever* with Artistic Licence. This year

she performed in *The Fire of London* in Cardigan and *Follies* with Haverfordwest Operatics. She's also a member of the folk rock band Amazonne.

Louise says: I am very excited about performing the music from the opera again and was delighted to be asked to take part. It will be wonderful to sing in such a prestigious venue, and to tackle the music in concert form.

Nick Allen plays the part of Tom, a young man who becomes engaged to the love of his life just as war is declared. Nick is 18 and has been studying performing arts for the past 18 months. At the end of the academic year, he's hoping to continue his education at university with a view to making performing his profession – and with his eyes set firmly on London's West End. Recent performances include as Prez in *The Pajama Game* at the Torch Theatre in Milford Haven earlier this year, Javert in

Les Miserables and the Pharaoh in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat* both in 2015, and Danny Zuko in *Grease* in 2014.

Nick says: I'm honoured and privileged to be playing the part of Tom and am excited to perform the show.



Samuel Howley was born in the Rhondda Valley and studied at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. He is well known as a singer, pianist and composer, and works include *Three Shakespeare Sonnets*, premiered in 2013, *Four Byron Songs* for Sir Thomas Allen, and *Sonata for Recorder and Piano*.

Samuel says: when I was initially asked to compose the music for this project, I knew that I didn't want to create a 'musical' that might devalue the subject matter. When I saw the initial draft of Peter's libretto, I knew instinctively the style that would work. Although there are obvious influences of composers who lived through the Great War, Vaughan Williams and George Butterworth, I've interwoven a style that I think enhances the beauty of Peter's words. I also decided to compose a mini Requiem to underscore the battle scene and the aftermath with its desolation and grief. The orchestration includes four bell chimes, representing the four year duration of the war which appear at different points in the opera. I hope that the music gives a different dimension to the words, and that it will help to fix in the memory the sacrifice that was given at that dark time in our history.



Carol Mackintosh is a recently-retired GP who has worked in her home town of Milford Haven for over 30 years. She is passionate about theatre in all its forms and is a founder member of Touch and Go and Artistic Licence theatre companies.

Carol says: It is a real privilege to be involved with such an enthusiastic community group in developing this fascinating and poignant new work.



Peter George is a poet, librettist and novelist based in Newport, Pembrokeshire. He was awarded a Hawthornden Fellowship in 2010 and the R.S.Thomas Festival Poetry Prize in 2015. He is a member of the Society of Authors, the Performing Rights Society and an associate member of Literature Wales. His poetry includes *Ceredigion Cycle and other Poems* (1997); his published novels are *Undreamed Shores* (2007) and *Mr Tim* (2012). He is the author of *Antiphony of a Grief Rewarded*, a poem in memory of Suzy Lamplugh, set to music by Seimon Morris.

Peter says: the challenge for me, as librettist, has been to convert the text of a full opera into a 'Concert Opera' in which the story is told by soloists, chorus and a narrator whose identity will be revealed as the story unfolds. Access to village history enabled me to weave local colour into the tapestry of the whole without, I hope, losing sight of the universal experience of rural communities everywhere in the turbulence of 1914-1918. There is, inevitably, a juxtaposition of darkness and light in the piece. The village depicted here could be any village and the message to present and future generations is, I hope, made clear.