

THE ALDEBURGH CONNECTION



A CHRISTMAS PARTY

WALTER HALL

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 30th, 1986, 2:30 p.m.

We present this afternoon's concert
in celebration of the life and work of
BENJAMIN BRITTEN, born St Cecilia's Day,
22 November, 1913, died 4 December, 1976
and in loving memory of our founding patron,
PETER PEARS, who died 3 April this year.

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At the same time as our concert, a special
performance of Britten's War Requiem is being
presented in the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden,
as A tribute to Sir Peter Pears, 'a tribute to this
remarkable man whose musical genius has so enriched
the lives of music lovers throughout the world.'

Paul Bunyan was the composer's first operatic work;
Johnny Inkslinger was the last new rôle sung
by Peter Pears (in the revival of 1976).

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PART ONE - A CHRISTMAS ANTHOLOGY

MONICA ZERBE mezzo

PETER BARNES baritone

STEPHEN RALLS & BRUCE UBUKATA pianos

Offstage voices: Kathy Domoney (soprano), Suzanne Vanstone (mezzo), Jay Lambie (tenor), Mark Wilson (baritone)

Es ist ein' Ros' entsprungen (*trad. German*)

Michael Praetorius (1571-1621)

A rose is sprung from the stem of Jesse.

Der heilige Joseph singt: Nun wandre, Maria (*Spanish, trans. Heyse*)

Hugo Wolf (1860-1903)

St Joseph sings: Onward, Mary, onward. Soon we shall be in Bethlehem - we shall surely find lodging there.

Die ihr schwebet (*Lope de Vega, trans. Geibel*) Wolf

You holy angels, who hover around in the windy night, hush the tree-tops, my child is asleep. How shall I shield him from the fierce cold blast?

Joseph, lieber Joseph mein

trad. German

Joseph, dear Joseph, help me rock my darling child; God will reward you in heaven.

This well-known carol was originally sung at the crib in a miracle play of 1500.

Geistliches Wiegenlied (Op.91/2) Johannes Brahms (1833-97)

Geoffrey Nuttall: viola

Brahms uses the same text as Wolf in Dir ihr schwebet (above); this time, the Virgin's prayer is accompanied by the melody of Joseph, lieber Joseph.

Weihnachtsmusik (Christmas music)

Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951)

Geoffrey Nuttall & Krista Buckland: violins; Peggy Lee: cello; Bruce Ubukata: organ; Stephen Ralls: piano

As Schoenberg said in another context, there is still plenty of good music to be written in C major. This piece, dated 23 December 1921, begins as a fantasia on Es ist ein' Ros' and finally combines this tune with another, very well-known, carol.

Blow, blow, thou winter wind (*Shakespeare*)

Roger Quilter (1877-1953)

A song sung in the second act of As you like it.

Noël

Balfour Gardiner (1877-1950)

Balfour Gardiner's little jeu d'esprit was first of all composed in 1906, then worked up for two pianos in 1935.

Come sing and dance (*anon.*) Herbert Howells (1892-1983)

Howells' setting of an old carol was written in 1927 for the English soprano Dorothy Silk.

The Oxen

a poem by Thomas Hardy (1840-1928)

There is an old tradition that, at midnight each Christmas Eve, oxen kneel in adoration of the Christ-child.

A Christmas Carol

Charles Ives (1874-1954)

Ives' setting of his own words, dated December 1894, brings us to the New World in preparation for the second half of our programme.

INTERMISSION

during which tea will be served in the lobby

PART TWO - PAUL BUNYAN

Excerpts from the operetta
by Benjamin Britten and W. H. Auden

In the pre-war turmoil of 1939, both Britten and Auden decided to emigrate to the USA. Auden was to stay, while Britten returned home to England within three years. Meanwhile, a rather surprising idea, that of an English poet and an English composer collaborating in a work based on the most famous American folk-legend, came from Britten's publishers. 'The choice of subject', wrote Auden, 'was dictated by the demands of Boosey & Hawkes for something suitable for high schools. The sources were the New York Public Library.' Paul Bunyan was first performed at Columbia University in May 1941 and then, apparently, vanished without trace. Far from being lost, however, the score was kept by the composer in a bottom drawer, and right at the end of his life he was persuaded to let it see the light of day once more.

Stephen Ralls was closely concerned with this revival of Paul Bunyan in 1976, and in fact was on tour with the English Music Theatre's production when the news was received of the composer's death on December 4th.

The performance in Brighton that night was dedicated to his memory, and now, ten years later, we feel honoured to be able to present the Toronto première of music from Paul Bunyan as a tribute to Benjamin Britten.

As Auden admitted, there were problems in writing an operetta about Bunyan. The major one was the fact that the central character is variously recorded as being from one mile to ten miles high. This is solved by presenting him as an offstage voice. Another difficulty is the almost complete absence of female characters - 'yet in its earliest stages at least the conversion of forests into lumber is an exclusively male occupation. Accordingly we have introduced a camp dog and two camp cats.'

Our excerpts show the development of North America from virgin forests up to the time when Bunyan bids farewell (at a Christmas party) because he is no longer needed - 'external physical nature has been mastered, and for this very reason can no longer dictate to men what they should do.'

Characters in order of appearance

The voice of Paul Bunyan	CARL MOREY
1st lumberjack	MARK WILSON (baritone)
2nd lumberjack (Ben Benny)	PETER BARNES (baritone)
3rd lumberjack	ROBERT DIRSTEIN (tenor)
4th lumberjack (Sam Sharkey)	DANIEL STANTON (tenor)
Western Union boy	JAY LAMBIE (tenor)
Hel Helson, foreman	DANIEL NEFF (baritone)
Johnny Inkslinger, book-keeper	HENRY INGRAM (tenor)
Fido, a dog	MARY LOU FALLIS (soprano)
Moppet)	KATHY DOMONEY (soprano)
Poppet) two cats	MONICA ZERBE (mezzo)
Hot Biscuit Slim, a good cook	JAMES LEATCH (tenor)
Tiny, Bunyan's daughter	THERESA LEE RYAN (soprano)
A hostess	SUZANNE VANSTONE (mezzo)

STEPHEN RALLS & BRUCE UBUKATA: pianos

Concert staging by MICHAEL ALBANO

The excerpts are as follows:

From Act I scene 1 -

Bunyan's greeting
Lumberjacks' chorus
Bunyan's welcome (BUNYAN and LUMBERJACKS)
Western Union boy's song
Cooks' duet (SAM SHARKEY and BEN BENNY)
Animal trio (FIDO, MOPPET and POPPET)
Bunyan's goodnight

From Act I scene 2 -

Chorus accusation (LUMBERJACKS and INKSLINGER)
Slim's song
Bunyan's return (LUMBERJACKS)
Tiny's entrance (LUMBERJACKS)
Tiny's song
Inkslinger's regret

From Act II scene 1 -

Fido's sympathy
Cat's creed (MOPPET and POPPET)

From Act II scene 2 -

The Christmas party (ENSEMBLE)
Bunyan's farewell
Litany (ENSEMBLE)

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The remaining concerts in this ALDEBURGH CONNECTION SUNDAY SERIES are: February 1 - Winter daydreams (songs of Tchaikovsky) with HALYNA DYTNYIAK, MARCIA SWANSTON and MARK PEDROTTI; March 29 - The old wizard of Bayreuth (a portrait of Wagner) with MARTHA COLLINS and MARK PEDROTTI, and May 10 - Brush up your Shakespeare with CATHERINE ROBBIN, TONY BOUTTÉ and DANIEL NEFF. Series subscriptions are still available - please send this afternoon's ticket stub(s), together with \$22 (seniors/ students \$16) to: The Aldeburgh Connection, 74 Follis Avenue, Toronto M6G 1S6 (Tel: 531 3330).

Please also consider making a donation to our funds. A gift of \$35 (or \$50 per couple) will qualify you to become a Friend of The Aldeburgh Connection Concert Society, and will help to ensure the continuation of our presentations. All donations will be acknowledged with a receipt for income tax purposes.

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Aldeburgh, on the east coast of England, is the small town where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. STEPHEN RALLS and BRUCE UBUKATA have visited and worked there for many summers now, together with most of the singers appearing in the concerts of The Aldeburgh Connection. The group is their brain-child, and has been filling a major gap in the Canadian concert scene for the past five years.

All but two of this afternoon's singers have studied at the Britten-Pears School at Aldeburgh through the generous assistance of the CANADIAN ALDEBURGH FOUNDATION, to whom we are indebted for help in presenting our series.

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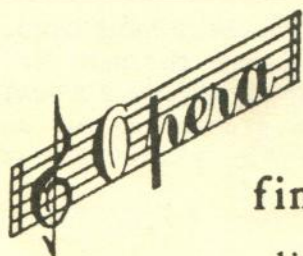


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THE CANADIAN ALDEBURGH FOUNDATION

- and we would like to thank the following:
OPERA FINE PASTRIES, for providing afternoon tea
Bruce Philpott (BEDFORD HOUSE DESIGNS) for the
floral arrangements, and decorations in the hall
Carl Morey, Dean of the Faculty of Music
Opera Division, Faculty of Music

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The Aldeburgh Connection is represented by HART/MURDOCK
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