

generations, as the ghosts of the present family's forefathers can attest when, in Act 2, they descend from their portraits and interact with the living. The sentient Sir Ruthven (played and sung with manic energy by Matthew Kellett) is charged by his dead uncle to commit one crime per day, but as an essentially decent man he is running out of plausible loopholes. As he observes, surviving the family curse is 'uncommonly dear at the price'.

A 16-strong contingent of the City of London Sinfonia conducted by Eaton gave a sprightly account of Sullivan's score in Eaton's own orchestral reduction, while 14 of Opera Holland Park's finest choristers lent their talents to Gilbert's assortment of 'bridesmaids, bucks and blades'. Add a featured cast of ten named soloists and this was hardly a budget enterprise. For one thing it had been immaculately rehearsed ahead of its meagre quota of five performances; for another, Savournin's direction, Merry Holden's choreography and Madeleine Boyd's designs had reserves of zip and flair. Their use of OHP's forestage apron capitalized on the audience's proximity to assist with engagement. In fact, the production could hardly have done a better job of keeping the opera's head above water.

Every singer was a trouper but some were more at ease than others with the spoken word, and in such a dialogue-heavy show the text-declaimers tended to struggle. The evening's class acts were Savournin himself as Sir Despard and Heather Lowe as Mad Margaret, both of whom oozed class on their every appearance. Lowe in particular gave a performance of riveting showbiz versatility. Llio Evans and Heather Shipp convinced in underdrawn roles, while the tenor David Webb, in ringing voice, upped the hunk quotient as the oh-so-eligible bachelor Richard.

There was a cameo by G&S royalty when Richard Suart popped up as Sir Ruthven's factotum Old Adam, while as the late Sir Roderic, the devil who gets the best tune ('When the night wind howls' isn't bad pickings as an entrance aria), the estimable and rumbustious baritone Stephen Gadd made a magniloquent late appearance and stole the show.

MARK VALENCIA

The Rake's Progress

Glyndebourne, August 10

The last revival of an, on the whole, vintage Glyndebourne summer was of the company's (and the UK's) oldest production: John Cox and David Hockney's 1975 staging of Stravinsky's only full-length opera in designs which have travelled the world and enjoy iconic status. Robin Ticciati conducted most of the performances, but on the night I attended he was indisposed and was replaced expertly by his assistant, Jack Ridley, who presumably adopted Ticciati's pacy tempos, and got playing of outstanding clarity and punchy rhythmic elan from the London Philharmonic, along with equally memorable singing from a carefully chosen cast and the excellent Glyndebourne chorus.

This must be a tricky show to take on at short notice. By today's standards the scene changes are inordinately long and, consequently, it must be hard to sustain the momentum of the piece. Ridley managed it very well indeed and was enthusiastically applauded not only by the audience but by the cast, chorus and orchestra as well.

The look of the show—which I first saw on the 1975 tour conducted by a young man named Simon Rattle—remains fresh, and even though this was my ninth viewing, Hockney’s visual imagination and inventiveness are such that you invariably notice something you hadn’t before. His ‘after Hogarth’ sets still capture the pastoral quality of the country scenes, the bustle of the town, the *Don Giovanni*-like darkness of the graveyard scene and above all the horrors of Bedlam, with its



Thomas Atkins as Tom and Louise Alder as Anne Trulove in *The Rake's Progress* at Glyndebourne

quasi-abstract compartments, the inmates disguised by bizarre masks—a design of genius.

Assisted by Ptolemy Christie and Donna Stirrup, Cox returned to keep the action and characterizations fresh, and Hockney attended the later rehearsals. Stravinsky’s opera may never be an easy sell, but this performance was substantially full. Glyndebourne’s decision to revive this, sparingly (as well as the six-years-younger Peter Hall production of Britten’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), has paid rich dividends over the years. The Britten sold out.

The musical performance in 2023 was especially memorable for the Anne Trulove of Louise Alder, who sang her beautiful music with bright, radiant tone, crowning her Act 1 curtain aria with a magnificent top C. Her gentle, loving persona was greatly affecting too in her interactions with Thomas Atkins’s handsome (if occasionally vocally tight) Tom and Alisa Kolosova’s larger-than-life Baba the Turk. Kolosova’s fruity Russian mezzo is surely the sound Stravinsky had in his head for the bearded lady.

Sam Carl, who sang Shadow on the last tour outing in 2021, earned his promotion as one of the darkest-voiced villains here since Samuel Ramey or Gerald Finley. The smaller roles were all beautifully etched, by Alastair Miles (Father Trulove), Carole Wilson (Mother Goose) and Rupert Charlesworth, who delivered a camp star turn as the flamboyant auctioneer Sellem. Michael Ronan, a fine young bass from the chorus, sang the Madhouse Keeper. All in the great ensemble tradition, and a hallmark of Glyndebourne at its best. I sense there’s life still in this venerable staging.

HUGH CANNING

Carmen

Waterperry Opera Festival at Waterperry, Oxfordshire, August 15

Waterperry Opera’s ambitious staging of *Carmen* opened with an inopportune bout of choral speaking, the import of which escaped me since I was trying to hear the orchestra beneath it, and closed after Bizet’s dramatic climax with a wall projection as redundant as it was inane: ‘VIOLENCE IS NOT LOVE’ (their capitals). Yes, thank you, I’ve seen the opera and worked that out for myself.

Opera, October 2023

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