

Bulletin 7 - London Quarter Programme - Winter 2010

London Assurance at the National Theatre

by Dion Boucicault

Sir Harcourt Courtly is lured away from the epicentre of fashionable London by the promise of a rich and beautiful bride, Grace, several decades his junior. Arriving at Oak Hall, Gloucestershire, he marvels at this rural Venus until her charms are eclipsed by her hearty cousin, the foxhunting Lady Gay Spanker. Meanwhile his disguised son turns up in flight from his creditors and falls head over heels for Grace. When Lady Spanker discovers the young couple, she needs little prompting from the visiting chancer Dazzle to lead Sir Harcourt astray.

I am about to present society with a second Lady Courtly: young – blushing eighteen; lovely – I have her portrait; rich – I have her banker's account. An heiress and a Venus!

Dion Boucicault, the Irish genius of London theatre in the age of Dickens, wrote the brilliantly funny **London Assurance** in 1841 and thereby created – in Sir Harcourt and Lady Spanker – two of the great comic roles of the English stage, played at the NT by Simon Russell Beale and Fiona Shaw.

Give me the trumpet neigh, the spotted pack just catching scent. What a chorus in their yelp! The view-halloo, blent with a peal of free and fearless mirth! That's our old English music – match it where you can.

www.nationaltheatre.org.uk



Interesting facts on Oxford

The Ashmolean Museum in Oxford was the first museum in the world to open its doors to the public when it officially opened in 1683. Its treasures include the lantern that Guy Fawkes had when he was arrested for his part in the Gunpowder Plot on 5th November 1605. It was given to Oxford University in 1641 by Robert Heywood, son of a Justice of the Peace who had been present at the arrest of Guy Fawkes when the Gunpowder Plot was foiled.

The bell in the tower of Christ Church Cathedral is called the Old Tom which strikes a unique 101 times at 9.05pm every evening. Originally, this was the curfew time for students in the city and the bell rang to signal their return back to college - things have obviously changed but the tradition lives on.



The University of Cambridge was actually founded by Oxford students who were fleeing Oxford following riots that erupted in 1209 between students and townspeople. Violent confrontations between townspeople and students have erupted in Oxford at various times throughout history. On this occasion, trouble began following the murder of a local townswoman by students. Oxford University is the oldest English speaking university in the world, dating back to the end of the 12th century.

The St. Scholastica Day riot of February 10, 1355, is another notorious example of the 'Town and Gown' rivalry. The dispute took place in The Swindlestock Tavern (now the the Abbey Bank on Carfax) between townspeople and two students of Oxford University. Insults grew into armed conflict and local citizens attacked the University which left 63 scholars and many locals dead. The dispute was eventually settled in favour of the university. Every year on St Scholastica's Day from then on, the Mayor of Oxford had to pay a penny to the University for every life lost and attend a Mass for the souls of the dead scholars. The penance continued for 470 years, until the mayor refused to take part in 1825.

Oxford was once the capital of England during the English Civil War when Charles I held his court here from 1642, following his expulsion from London by the Parliamentarian forces lead by Oliver Cromwell. Oxford itself supported the Parliamentarian cause, but the University was a strong supporter of the king. From 1642 to 1646 King Charles stayed at Christ Church College.

Oxford University has educated 25 Prime Ministers including Tony Blair and Margaret Thatcher.

This Week's events

Monday, March 8th

12:30 pm **Mandatory Group meeting**

Tuesday, March 9th

12:50 pm ****Class starts 10 minutes early****
Victorian Churches Walk (Art & Arch). Meet Carole at AHA and leave together for walk.

7:30 pm **London Assurance, National Theatre (all students).** DIRECTIONS: Take any bus but the 91 from the stop on Southampton Row to the National Theatre stop on Waterloo Bridge.

Wednesday, March 10th

10:00 am **ICE Class at AHA.**

1:00 pm **London Walk (Tudor).** Meet Judy at AHA.

7:30 pm **Benjamin Britten's opera, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Sadler's Wells Theatre (all students).** DIRECTIONS: Take the 19 or 38 bus from Theobald's Road in an eastbound direction to the Sadler's Wells Theatre stop (heading towards Angel—get the bus from the same side of the street as Caffe Nero) or walk up Roseberry Ave from AHA.

Friday, March 12th

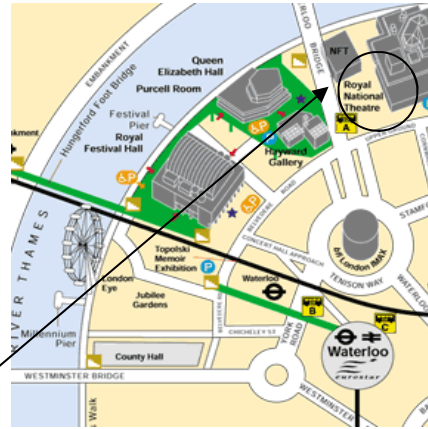
12 Mar **Oxford Day Trip with Carole (all students).** Meet Carole at the Oxford Bus Station inside Caffe Nero at 10:30 am. To get to Oxford in time you will need to get the Oxford Tube (bus service) from outside Hillingdon Tube around 9:00am. More information to follow in a handout in Wednesday's ICE class.

next week

- 15 Mar Victoria & Albert Museum (Theatre)
- 17 Mar Mayor's Question Time (ICE)
National Portrait Gallery (Tudor)
Live Debate in the House of Commons (ICE)
- 19 Mar Bath/Stonehenge Day Trip (all students)

Looking ahead

- 22 Mar Classes as normal
- 23 Mar Classes as normal with
EXAM: London Theatre (3:30 pm)
- 24 Mar NO ICE class, Tudor Exam due in class
- 25 Mar **EXAM:** Victorian Art & Architecture (10:00 am)
Exams for Nature and City due (3:00 pm)
End of term meal



A Midsummer Night's Dream

'Hike miles to see this. ETO's staging of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is wonderful beyond words. A corker of a show" - THE INDEPENDENT



First produced in 2004, ETO's hugely successful production of the Britten/Shakespeare masterpiece returns. In a fairy-haunted wood, lovers' knots are tangled, and strange dreams create monstrous romances. Only in an hilarious play performed by working men are all the opera's tensions and enchantments eased. Michael Rosewell conduct's Britten's eerie, highly theatrical score, with a cast led by Jonathan Peter Kenny and Andrew Slater.

(Running time approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes, including a 20 minute interval between acts II and III. There will be a short pause between acts I and II.)

englishtouringopera.org.uk