



OPERA SEASON

I Want To Be Pavarotti

Robert Alderson is a singing teacher whose ability to identify a singing voice with potential has made him both successful and controversial. He can spot new talent merely by hearing a child shout in a playground. Under Robert's tuition, his students rise from the ranks of those with seemingly ordinary vocal ability to being able to attain full operatic sound by fully utilising their voice.

Christine Rice, Alice Coote and Paul Whelan, recognised as some of today's brightest young opera talent, trained with Robert. Four of his protégés were real-life Billy Elliots, beginning as students at a rough comprehensive school in Leigh, Lancashire. Footage shows the transformation achieved under Robert's tuition and all four students have gone on to sing principal roles in major opera houses. With this success already achieved, the programme's primary focus is on two of Robert's newest students as their voice, dress and attitudes are dramatically transformed.

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Glyndebourne Live 2004

An exciting double bill broadcast live from the beautiful grounds of Glyndebourne offers two strikingly different short operas: Puccini's popular comedy *Gianni Schicci*, and a rarity – Rachmaninov's *The Miserly Knight*.

Puccini's only comedy features loveable rascal Gianni Schicci who can remedy any situation, down to impersonating a notary and dictating a new will. His daughter's future in-laws have been cut out of the will of a relative, Buoso Donati, who has just died. In order to save their inheritance, the family don't announce Buoso's death publicly and Schicci disguises himself as the dead man, summons a lawyer and dictates a new will, which amply provides for the family – and for himself.

Rachmaninov's all-male cast opera, based on a Pushkin poem, is an altogether darker affair, featuring duels, denouncements and death. The story focuses on Albert, a young medieval knight, and his father, a miserly baron who refuses to help him settle his debts and start a new life. Loving his money more than life itself, the baron dies under the strain of his wayward son asking for help, calling not for the knight, but for the keys to his beloved chests of gold. Both operas are directed by Annabelle Arden.



Onegin

The most successful of Tchaikovsky's ten operas, *Onegin* is a romantic tragedy of desperate lost love. Eugene Onegin realises too late – after she has married another man – that he has rejected the woman he loves, Tayana.

Based on Pushkin's classic poem, the opera is full of passion, power, drama and excitement, with a soaring emotional score. While writing it, Tchaikovsky was pursued by one of his students who claimed to be desperately in love with him. Under the influence of his own opera, and not wanting to make the hero's mistake, Tchaikovsky married the girl. Unfortunately, this impulsive act led to a miserable marriage that ended in divorce.

The cast includes Vladimir Moroz, Amanda Roocroft, Marius Brenciu, Anna Kiknadze and Robert Tear.



Merlin

This spectacular performance of Isaac Albéniz's lost opera, *Merlin*, takes place in Madrid's state-of-the-art opera house, the Teatro Real. Stars include David Wilson-Johnson as Merlin, Stuart Skelton as Arthur and Eva Marton as Morgan Le Fay. The conductor is José De Eusebio.

Written 101 years ago, *Merlin* was intended as the first part of a trilogy of Arthurian legends. Albéniz, who had teamed up with the appropriately named banker and amateur poet Francis Burdett Money-Coutts (who had offered Albéniz a pension for life if the composer agreed to use him as a librettist), died while working on the second instalment, and so the opera was never completed. Consequently this magical production is the world stage première of the long-awaited *Merlin*.