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The Chairman's Welcome

Andrew Claringbull

A hearty welcome back to another New Aquarian Opera Company production at the beautiful Barn Theatre, Oxted.

Following Aquarian's widely acclaimed and successful production of "Less Miserable" last year, I am proud to welcome you to our latest production, Franz Lehar's popular and very funny operetta, The Merry Widow (Die Lustige Witwe).

Last year's production was cutting edge, being the English premier of a completely new show based on somewhat older Gilbert and Sullivan material. This year's production dates back to the first performance in Vienna in 1905. However, without giving too much of the plot away, given current global economic woes, it really hasn't dated at all! The modern libretto translation by Peter Melville is easy to follow, amusing and has saved us hours of work in translating from the original German to English.

We are truly blessed to have our supremely talented and hardworking production team of Creative Director Melanie Vinall and Musical Director Guy Middlemiss who have miraculously pulled a cast together to make what I promise to be a very memorable show. In the background is James Vinall who as treasurer, set builder and publicist has been a real stalwart this year.

In this day and age it is difficult to cast shows and we compete with other amateur companies to recruit performers who can schedule their busy lives to attend rehearsals and the performance dates. This is not an easy task at all and this year has been no different. To have found so many hugely talented singers from far and wide is an astonishing feat. It is wonderful to welcome new cast members and to welcome back those who have performed with us many times over the years. We need more members and supporters who can help us to enlarge the company and enable us to fulfil our charitable commitment in providing tuition in the art of singing and performing opera. If you find yourself wondering if you could sing opera with us, do let us know!

Please sit back and indulge in the glamour and frivolity of the 1900's, be swept away by the music, the soaring vocals, the flirting and romance of another night at the opera.

SPECIAL NOTICE

By order of Surrey County Council, no obstructions, whether permitted or temporary, shall be allowed in any Exit Doors, Exit Ways (whether corridors or staircases), external passageways, gangways, foyers, lobbies or entrance hall. Persons seeking admission shall not be allowed to form queues which obstruct exit doors etc.

SMOKING IS NOT PERMITTED IN THE THEATRE

Sound familiar?

Franz Lehár and The Merry Widow An Austro-Hungarian Maestro and A Pontevedrin Masterpiece



Set in 1900's, Franz Lehár's masterpiece is the world's most popular operetta., The Merry Widow encompasses all of the intrigue, jeopardy and political double-dealing familiar to us a century later.

It's a story of Parisian excess in the dying days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and averting Pontevedro's financial meltdown.

The Merry Widow (Hanna Glawari) has inherited the vast majority of Pontevedro's national wealth from her husband, who died on his wedding night. Old Mr Glawari acquired his unrivaled prosperity as chairman of the central bank and all of Paris is keen to see Hanna and her fortune land in their lap.

Baron Zeta, the Pontevedrin Ambassador in Paris is under strict instructions to ensure Hanna marries a Pontevedrin to keep her wealth in the country, but two Parisian diplomats, Viscount Cascada and Baron St Brioche have their own ideas.

Hanna's previous paramour, playboy Count Danilo refuses to leave Maxim's to reignite their liaison and save Pontevedro, not wanting to be seen as a gold digger.

Will Hanna and Danilo be reunited and Pontevedro be saved from ruin?

Act I The Pontevedrin Embasssy, Paris

Although the country is bust, Baron Zeta, the Pontevedrin Ambassador in Paris, is throwing a party. He awaits the arrival of the fabulously wealthy Hanna Glawari, who has recently been widowed. To avoid her fortune leaving the impoverished country, he plots with Nejgus, the embassy clerk, how she can be prevented from marrying a foreigner

Act II Hanna Glawari's garden, the next evening

Hanna hosts a garden party that celebrates the historic traditions of Pontevedro, which involve food, dancing, and telling the story of Vilja, about a wood spirit and unrequited love.

Act III Chez Maxim's Night Club comes to Hanna's garden

To provoke Danilo, Hanna brings his favourite club to her garden with the grisettes from the cabaret.

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Production Team

Melanie Vinall - Artistic Director

Melanie began her musical training whilst at school, where she was chosen to take a lead role in a festival musical at The National Theatre. She later trained and performed as an operatic soprano. Her operatic stage experience includes Violetta (La Traviata), Micaela (Carmen), the Dew Fairy (Hansel and Gretel), Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni) (Contessa) The Marriage of Figaro and Cio-Cio-San (Madame Butterfly).



Melanie has performed in Italy and the USA and regularly sang in Germany. Closer to home, Melanie has sung with London City Opera, Leitmotif Opera, Opera Piccola and Abbey Opera. She appeared in cabaret, was the guest soloist with the Croydon Male Voice Choir and has given recitals encompassing Opera, Lieder, French, Russian Song and Musical Theatre.

Melanie has provided the singing and speaking voices for radio and tv commercials and was the voice of the Opera Singer in Vodaphone's "It ain't over 'til the fat lady sings" campaign.

As a director, she and has worked with several companies including Guildford Opera Company, where she directed Offenbach's operetta La Belle Helene, and Westerham Amateur Dramatics, where she directed their Panto Beauty and the Beast. She's directed three shows at The Barn Theatre for Oxted Operatic, The Pirates of Penzance, The Wizard of Oz and for the junior company, Curtain Up! Melanie is now Artistic Director of The New Aquarian Opera Company and future plans include a series of concerts and The Marriage of Figaro in October 2023.

GUY MIDDLEMISS – MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Guy has been on the musical theatre scene for the last 30 years. Gilbert and Sullivan was one of his first engagements, with the Imperial College Operatic Society (London). He has subsequently been repetiteur, orchestral keyboard player and musical director for a number of companies in the London area, including SEDOS, BROS Theatre Company, Questors Theatre, Wallington Operatic & Dramatic Society, Younger



Generation Theatre Group, Oxted Musical Theatre Company (with my director for this show, Melanie Vinall, The Pirates of Penzance, 2014), Hashtag Opera, Harrow Opera, Brent Opera, Creative Minds Academy, Camberley Musical Society and Lost for Words Theatre Company. Last year he was MD for Aquarian Opera's revival launch show, Less Miserable. He is delighted to be working with Melanie again and to be part of New Aquarian Opera's first full-length production. He hopes you enjoy the show.



Kerry Payne L.I.S.T.D/ Sports Pysch Dip Choreographer
Having trained at the Alexandra Barnes School of Dancing in
Hurst Green for 10 years, Kerry went on to study at the
famous performing arts college, Laine Theatre Arts in Epsom.
Kerry proceeded to a long and successful career as a
professional dancer, performing all over the world, including
Italy, Mexico and Japan. Kerry appeared on television and cruise
ships as lead dancer, Adagio dancer and dance captain as well
choreographing fashion shows, hair shows, dance troupes and

magic shows. Kerry now teaches at theatre schools, colleges and runs her own Kerry Payne Academy of Dance. Kerry has choreographed at The Barn Theatre many times, including Pirates of Penzance, My Fair Lady, The King and I, Curtain Up and three pantos, Mother Goose, Once Upon A Time and Puss In Boots. Kerry is delighted to be reunited with Melanie and Guy bringing Aquarian Opera back to The Barn



Caro Rowley – Lighting Design and Lighting Engineer

Caro has been lighting shows at the Barn Theatre since 1981 and has been instrumental in bringing the latest advances in technology for the benefit of audiences and performers.

Caro is a Barn Theatre Trustee and takes a leading role in the management of the theatre. Aquarian Opera are extremely grateful for Caro's ingenuity, advice and support on so many levels,

as she makes it all look so easy.



Alison Grogan – Stage Manager

Alison has worked with Aquarian Opera on many occasions and is delighted to be working with them once more on their latest venture. A regular at the Barn Theatre for many years. Alison's last acting roles were for the Oxted Players Fringe this summer. She particularly enjoyed playing Jamie Plum, an antiques expert from Swansea, where she could indulge her love of the Welsh accent. Other roles include Grace Farrell in

Annie, Nellie Forbush in South Pacific and Crystal in Little Shop of Horrors, as well as many chorus roles. Alison is now more often than not found backstage helping husband Richard with lighting or working front of house.

The Merry Widow - Scenes and Cast

Act 1

- Introduction
- 2. I am a respectable wife
- 3. Gentlemen, I say
- 4. Fatherland, to earn my pay
- 5. Come on! What is all this about?
- 6. A little hide-away
- 7. Finale I Ladies' choice

20 minute interval

Act 2

- 8. Introduction, Dance & Vilja Song
- 9. Women Women
- 10. Melodrama and Dance
- 11. Camille, enough
- 12. Finale II

Act 3

- 13. Grisette Song
- 14. Music playing, no delaying
- 15. Women Women reprise

CAST

Hanna Glawari - The Merry Widow

Baron Mirko Zeta Pontevedrin Ambassador to Paris

Valencienne - his French wife

Camille Rosillon -her Spanish lover

Count Danilo Danilovich First Secretary at the Pontevedrin Embassy

Njegus General factotum at Embassy

Victor Cascada French diplomat

Raoul St Brioche French Diplomat

Bogdan Bogdanovich Pontevedrin diplomat

Sonja his wife

Kirilo Kromov Pontevedrin diplomat

Olga his wife

Petko Prichich Pontevedrin diplomat

Nadja his wife

Featured Guests

Featured Dancers

Grisettes / Pontevedrin Dancers

Janette Cattell

Joel Robson Vicki Hodaes

Ulises Horca

Gari Glaysher

Richard Peachey

Matt Stainer

Julius Wills

Doug Fisher

Melinda Cherrett

Keiran Kerswell

Nancy Fisher

Andrew Claringbull

Justine Middlemiss

John Tolley Charley Munns

Emma Clandon

lan Green

Jess Bartholomew

Emma Clandon

Rosie Ellis Flena Vinall

Aoife Witham

Band members:

Clarinet:

Andrew Power

Violin: Cello: Nicky Goodwin Catherine Brooker

Piano:

Guv Middlemiss





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FOBS - Friends Of The Barn Theatre

The Barn Theatre is entirely run by volunteers - We need you

For 40 years the Friends Of The Barn Theatre (FOBS) have played a dual role of fundraising to maintain and improve the theatre and providing volunteers to staff all the Front Of House roles to make every performance possible.



The Barn 100 Project is the latest fundraising effort the extend the front of the theatre to double the number of the toilets and improve access and storage.

Contactless donations can be made at the bar or box office, or by PayPal on the *www.barntheatreoxted.co.uk* website or drop some change in the Red Buckets at the end of the show.

If you wish to become involved with The Barn Theatre as a FOBS volunteer or help behind the scenes, speak to the Front Of House staff or email *fobs.membership@barntheatreoxted.co.uk* or come along to the Barn Sunday Club between 12pm and 2pm on the first Sunday of every month and meet the team.

The FOBS volunteers are the living soul of The Barn and the busy calendar means we are always looking for new friends', whatever skills you may have,

A SMILE IS THE ONLY QUALIFICATION

Janette Cattell

Having been involved in the launch event for the Merry Widow in 2019, Janette is delighted that the show is finally able to go ahead and to be working again with cast and production team from Aquarian Opera's successful production of 'Less Miserable' last year. This is her second time playing Hannah Glawari and she has also taken lead roles in many operettas by Strauss, Offenbach, and Sullivan, as well as lyric and coloratura soprano operatic and oratorio roles. She is an avid fan of 'Strictly Come Dancing' and is watching closely for tips on how to properly 'execute' a Viennese waltz!



Melinda Cherrett

Melinda studied singing privately and did a foundation course at Birkbeck College. She has sung with Surrey Opera and Kentish Opera, she was a regular performer with the Old Aquarian Opera and is delighted to be back for the second time with the New Aquarian Opera. Melinda keeps busy running Showtime Theatre Schools in Kent and Surrey.



Andrew Claringbull

Andrew is delighted to back performing with The New Aquarian Opera Company after having taken the role of Sullivan in last year's critically acclaimed production of A night at the Opera and the innovative new operetta Less Miserable. Tackling the cameo role of Petro Prichich has been great fun. He has enjoyed performing principal roles at The Barn Theatre for the past 16 years in operas, musicals, pantomimes and plays. For very many years a chorister, Andrew is enjoying stretching his vocal cords and once again singing opera. Previously with Aquarian he has also performed in Carmen and Die Fledermaus and is really looking forward to The Merry Widow.



Doug Fisher

Doug has had a varied career—clock maker, jeweller and china shop manager in Regents Street, interior designer, and now self-employed as a gardens and maintenance contractor. In his sprightly youth he was a champion short track ice speed skater. He can do almost anything. But until about six years ago he never sang. Enjoying Nancy's choral concerts Doug expressed a desire, had a series of lessons with her director, Jozik Koc, who immediately made him sing the part of the Mikado in a concert performance. He has since, to his astonishment, been in church and concert choirs on both sides of the Atlantic.



Nancy Fisher

Nancy longed to be in a choir, singing harmonies from the time she was a small child at church in Alabama. She has sung in church choirs ever since, and in fine chamber choirs at university in Alabama, and in Maidstone and Sevenoaks as well as occasional choirs. Early music and Twentieth Century polyphony are her favourites, so finding herself in The Merry Widow is something of a surprise!

A high school teacher of English, Nancy came to England on a summer study course, followed up a burning curiosity, then fascination, with English church bell change ringing... and never went back. She taught in secondary schools in Dartford, Maidstone and Sevenoaks until retirement, sang, rang, painted and crafted, and met Doug.



Gari Glaysher

Born in London, Gari took an unconventional path into his classical music career. As a youth, he took up training in boxing and then went onto Taekwon-do, becoming a three-time national champion. He currently holds a second-degree black belt. Gari credits his background in Taekwon-do for teaching him discipline, self-control and focus...all skills which have been invaluable to him as a professional singer. He recently had the great honour of singing the national anthem and other songs for the ITF Taekwon-do World Cup opening ceremonies in Brighton, performing for an appreciative audience.



Gari got his start in music playing guitar in a rock band, doing gigs in pubs and nightclubs until the lead singer left and Gari was called on to fill the spot. His teacher recognised Gari's strong, natural spinto tenor voice and encouraged him to train for classical and opera. His first opera role was as Cavaradossi in Puccini's "Tosca". Since then, he has performed leading tenor roles in operas such as "Carmen", "La Traviata", "La Bohème", "Pagliacci", "Cavalleria Rusticana", and "Aida". Gari has also built an impressive repertoire in operettas, especially in Gilbert & Sullivan, as well as on the musical stage in the role of Tony in "West Side Story". He has sung for Prince Albert of Monaco and HRH Sophie the Countess of Wessex, and has performed on concert stages in England, Italy, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Spain and Canada.

Gari has performed in many prestigious venues such as the Royal Albert Hall and the Studio Theatre in the Royal Opera House Covent Garden. In 2008, Gari performed his first solo concert at the indig02 in London to a sold-out audience, which was met with rave reviews. In 2009, Gari released his debut album "Serenata", a collection of Italian love songs including two songs which were penned by Andrea Bellentani and Cristina Pavarotti, daughter of the famed opera tenor Luciano Pavarotti, and which were among several songs offered personally to Gari by them. Gari followed up "Serenata" with his second album "Somewhere" in 2011, which includes three completely original songs. In 2012, he released his third album "Come What May", his first all-English album of songs from the musical theatre and classical/crossover genres. "Full Circle", a collection of favorite arias and Neapolitan songs, was released in 2014. Gari's first gospel album, "It Is Well With My Soul", was released in December 2016, followed by "The Parting Glass" in 2018- featuring all Irish songs.

Being a versatile singer...equally at home in music ranging from rock, musical theatre, to classical and opera...has earned Gari many fans from around the world. The Merry Widow will be Gari's very last show!

Vicki Hodges

Vicki is thrilled to be back with Aquarian Opera fan-mis-placer..!

She has sung previously with Aquarian Opera, New London Opera Group, Surrey Opera, and Hampstead Garden Opera, in roles spanning from 'ditzy French maid' to 'sassy French gypsy'. She is nothing if not versatile! Usually you can find Vicki running choirs, teaching singing and performing to anyone and everyone who will listen.



Keiran Kerswell

Keiran best describes himself as a Dramaturg, having studied and practiced the dramatic arts for his entire life. Most recently performing in open air theatres in Sussex, Wales, and Kent, playing various roles with Shakespearean specialists Bowler Crab Theatre Company.



Ulises Llorca

Cuban lyric tenor, 'Uli' Llorca recently returned to the UK and is delighted to be playing Baron Zeta for the first time.

Uli graduated from the Escuela Superior de Canto de Madrid and has performed all over the world, including Teatro National de Cuba, Teatro Real de Madrid, Gran Teatre del Liceo – Barcelona, Teatro Principal de Palma de Mallorca.

Uli's operatic and zarzuelas roles include Rodolfo, La Boheme; Tamino, Die Zauberflöte; Ruiz, Il Trovatore; Borsa, Rigoletto; Ruggero, La Rondine; Alfredo, La Traviata; Pinkerton, Madame Butterfly and also Julio, Amalia Batista by Prats; Alberto; El Cafetal by Lecuona; Leonardo, Cecilia Valdés by Roig.



Uli has extensive recital experience, covering Italian Song (Bellini, Rossini, Tosti, Toselli); French Song (Hahn, Massenet, Duparc, Debussy); German Lieder (Schumann, Schubert, Gluck, Beethoven); Spanish Song (Falla, Turina and Granados); Mexican Song (Grever, Ponce), and Cuban Song (Lecuona, Prats, Grenet, Garay, Mulens, Sánchez de Fuentes, Guzman, Carrillo and Roig).

Uli has performed across Spain in the Broadway productions of The Beauty and the Beast and Hello Dolly, produced by the Spanish actress Concha Velasco.

Justine Middlemiss

The Merry Widow marks Justine's return to the stage after 25 years of absence. She is, however, often to be found wearing strange costumes, carrying out complicated actions and singing in her day job as a priest in Purley and Kenley. She's not sure that she should comment on the morality of the plot of this show, or her character Nadja and would like to reassure the Bishop that she's 'acting'.



Charley Munns

This is Charley's first performance with Aquarian Opera, she is about to start auditioning for music colleges and would like to pursue singing as a career.

Richard Peachey

Richard returns to the Barn stage after performing in Aquarian's Less Miserable last year. This year he has extended his skill set to include not only comedy but opera. He has enjoyed this new vocal challenge with the support of our excellent musical director.

Favourite roles have included Rene Artois in Allo Allo, Manuel in Fawlty Towers, Otto Frank in The Diary of Anne Frank, and Ali Hakim in Oklahoma.



Joel Robson

Joel is very excited to be joining New Aquarian Opera to sing the role of Baron Zeta, the good-natured but rather pompous (and remarkably unobservant) Pontevedrin ambassador . Joel has recently relocated to London from North Wales, having completed his studies at King's College Cambridge last year, where he received a BA in Music and an MPhil in composition. Whilst there, he also sang under Sir Stephen Cleobury and Daniel Hyde as a Choral Scholar in the Choir of King's College. Since leaving Cambridge, Joel has had engagements with the Plymouth University Choral Society, Buckingham Choral Society,



and Random Opera, and currently studies at the Morley College Opera School, where this term he will be playing the roles of Golaud (Pelléas et Mélisande), Don Estoban (Der Zwerg), and Dr Dulcamara (L'elisir d'amore) in their production of opera scenes. Joel studies with Justin Lavender.

Matt Stainer

Matt is delighted to be performing again with New Aquarian Opera after the smash hit (Less Miserable) last year. He is putting his "Allo Allo" cod French to good use again as the arrogant (yet ridiculous) Count Cascada / Waterfall – half of a would-be-gallic comedy duo with Baron St Brioche (ma little breakfast bun!).

Matt has sung many roles with Aquarian in both Savoy and Grand Opera. His role in the latter with the company started many years ago as the elderly sleazy landlord in La Bohème. Although conveying sleaze has never been a problem, he would now need rather less makeup to reflect that character's age. Indeed, judicious artifice is now needed to make him look a bit/lot younger



John Tolley

John says he is glad to be re-joining Aquarian in a full operetta this time, though Less Miserable last year was lots of fun. John is an original member of Aquarian Opera, taking part in several shows including the final production Die Fledermaus in 2011. John also sings with several local and not so local choirs and takes part in other community activities.



Julius Wills

Julius trained at Year Out Drama in Stratford-upon-Avon and Fourth Monkey Theatre Training Company in Finsbury Park. Gaining his footing in touring Shakespeare, he now runs his own theatre company "Tell No Tales Theatre" and the London Lovecraft Festival, dedicated to Cult Horror writer H.P Lovecraft. Previous Musical Credits include Surrey Opera's "Madelaine" and Aquarian Opera's "Less Miserable" the previous year.



Featured Dancers

Fmma Clandon

Emma is a passionate performer and is excited to be doing lots of dancing in her first opera. Graduate from Laine Theatre Arts where she studied musical theatre. Numerous roles include Victoria in Cats (STC), Teresita in West Side Story with Vivo D'arte and Kitt in Betty Blue Eyes (PWOS)



Ian Green

This is lan's first performance with the company. He says he is not really a singer so very glad a way has been found to not subject too many people to his voice! He's a keen dancer in his spare time, performing with his dance partner Emma Clandon and various shows with other amateur groups, mainly in London. Most recently, he performed as the choreographer Bobby in Curtains in Sidcup and next month he'll be performing again in the Barn Theatre as Choreographer Bobby in Curtains... deja vu?



Grisette / Pontevedrin Dancers

Jess Bartholomew

Jess is 14 years old and loves acting, singing and dancing anywhere and anytime she can. Jess has performed at The Barn Theatre in Dracula, Robin Hood Panto, Curtain Up, Wendy and Peter Pan, and Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. Jess says she is very excited and pleased to be part of the dancing troupe with such amazing choreography!



Rosie Ellis

I love to dance, sing and act so I have very much enjoyed dancing in this production of "The Merry Widow", the girls have been so lovely and it's so inspiring to hear the singers perform so beautifully.



Elena Vinall

Elena has been dancing since the age of 2 and has always been a regular at the Barn Theatre. She played the role of Young Fiona in the UK tour of Shrek the Musical and spent two years training in Musical Theatre at The BRIT School. Elena is now in her second year at The Emil Dale Academy where she is completing an intensive two-year Musical Theatre Diploma. She hopes you enjoy the show!



Aoife Witham

Aoife says she is in Year 9 at Oxted School. I started dancing when I was 3 years old. I love performing and have been in the last 3 Panto's at The Barn. I'm delighted to have the opportunity to dance in The Merry Widow. I would like to pursue dance as a career in the future.



Production Team



Director Melanie Vinall
Musical Director Guy Middlemiss
Choreographer Kerry Payne

Additional Choreography Melanie Vinall, Elena Vinall

Ian Green and Emma Clandon

Dance Captain Elena Vinall Stage Manager Alison Grogan

Stage Crew Richard Grogan, Tom Littleford,

James Vinall

Lighting Design

Lighting Engineer

Follow Spot Operator

Follow Spot Operator

Digital artwork design

Sound Engineer

Caro Rowley

Caro Rowley

Ollie Lockett

Philip Eaton

Abi Chapman

John Chinnock

Set Building James Vinall, Richard Grogan, Alison

Grogan, Muriel Lister, Bruce Reed

Set Dressing Muriel Lister

Backcloths Malcolm Le Croissette, Richard Grogan

Star Cloth Whisperer Richard Grogan Programme James Vinall

Costumes Monica Nickels, Melanie Vinall, Mike

McKenzie

Social Media Matt Stainer

Chaperones Laurie Witham, Michella Bartholomew

Acknowledgements

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St. Peters Limpsfield - The Musicians Church for rehearsal space

Guy Middlemiss for hosting rehearsals

Barn Theatre 100 Front Extension Project 1924 - 2024

Fundraising

As you can see, The Barn 100 Project has come a long way in the past year and the work completed so far has transformed the theatre.

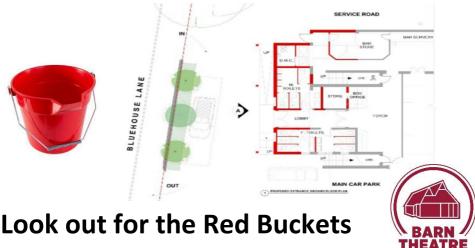
We still require a further £65,000 to finish the Front of House improvements.

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Keep in touch with Aquarian Opera

If you want to be kept in touch about future shows, email melanie@aquarianopera.com with your details or look on our website www.aquarianopera.com

Be in the next show

If you want sing with Aquarian Opera or help out behind the scenes, email melanie@aquarianopera.com with your details or give us a call on 01 883 715126

Future Productions

The next planned show is a fully staged production of Mozart's opera, The Marriage of Figaro, at The Barn Theatre 2023



THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO



Rehearsal Photos



The Merry Widow October 2022



















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