

# HALLÉ

## POPS CONCERTS

# AT THE BRIDGEWATER HALL

# 2011-12 SEASON

Saturday 17 March 2012, 7.30pm

West End Musicals

Carl Davis conductor

Elizabeth Cragg soprano | Richard Burkhard baritone

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Programme notes  
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Please turn off all mobile phones, pagers and watch alarms. The use of cameras, video cameras and recording equipment is strictly forbidden.

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The Hallé Concerts Society gratefully acknowledges the financial assistance of Arts Council England, Manchester City Council, the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities and the Heritage Lottery Fund.



## About the music

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ERIC COATES (1886–1957)

### **Knightsbridge March** from **London Suite** (1933)

Though not actually taken from a musical, this evocative opener takes us right to the heart of the West End. Eric Coates was originally a country lad but he loved living in the capital, a fact reflected in his endearing London Suite. Its last movement, the jaunty 'Knightsbridge March', was famously used by BBC Radio for its Saturday night show *In Town Tonight* and was suggested to Coates as he walked the streets of the exclusive district (presumably at a brisk marching pace!).

IVOR NOVELLO (1893–1951)

### **Perchance to Dream: We'll Gather Lilacs** (1945)

Until Andrew Lloyd Webber came to dominate the West End, Ivor Novello was the most successful British composer of musicals and a figure admired as much for his beauty as his talents. 'Whenever and wherever he appears the vast majority of the British public flock to see him,' wrote his equally eccentric friend and rival Noel Coward. *Perchance to Dream* opened at the Hippodrome Theatre on 21 April 1945. It was one of Novello's most successful works and enjoyed an original run of over a thousand performances as well as numerous subsequent tours and revivals, including one at London's Finborough Theatre last year. Of course, its touching hit song 'We'll Gather Lilacs' had particular resonance at the end of the Second World War when so many couples had experienced enforced separation.

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IVOR NOVELLO

### **Keep the Home Fires Burning** (1914)

As well as his many stage successes, Novello created the patriotic song 'Keep the Home Fires Burning'. With words by Lena Guilbert Ford, it was originally published with the title 'Till the Boys Come Home' just after the beginning of the First World War. Hugely popular during that conflict and the next, it subsequently featured in Joan Littlewood's controversial 1969 musical *Oh, What a Lovely War!*

LORD LLOYD WEBBER (b. 1948)

### **Cats: Suite** (1981)

A show about cats, eh? When Andrew Lloyd Webber decided to write a musical based on T.S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, a volume of puss-inspired poetry, everyone was, to say the least, sceptical including potential investors. How wrong they were! The show ran in the West End for 21 years and on Broadway for 18, both establishing long standing records (it is now the second longest-running musical on Broadway and the fourth in the West End where a revival is planned for 2013). Its story as such is set on a rubbish dump where a posse of cats called 'The Jellicles' assemble to make the 'Jellicle choice' and decide which mog should be granted

## About the music

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an extra life. During the show the various feline characters – Macavity, Old Deuteronomy, Rum Tum Tugger and co – reveal their different personalities before the final choice is made.

Lloyd Webber loves cats and is particularly drawn to their athleticism. Hence the show is a genuinely all-singing and all-dancing affair, with extreme demands being placed on the cast in the latter department. Dame Judi Dench was cast as Grizabella in the original production but, just three days before the opening night, snapped her achilles tendon during rehearsal. Enter Elaine Page who was to become almost synonymous with the show, not least for her soulful singing of 'Memory'. Tonight we hear an orchestral version of that classic number followed by the music for the sinuous dance-sequence 'The Jellicle Ball'.

LEONARD BERNSTEIN (1918–1990)

### **West Side Story: Somewhere** (1957)

By locating Shakespeare's tale of star-crossed lovers *Romeo and Juliet* in the violent world of New York gang culture, composer Leonard Bernstein, lyricist Stephen Sondheim and choreographer Jerome Robbins conceived a truly ground-breaking musical, a form that had hitherto been largely escapist in orientation. In *West Side Story* Shakespeare's play becomes a modern, urban tragedy, a portrayal of feuding hoodlums – the Jets (a gang of white teenagers) and the Sharks (tough Puerto Rican youths) – as they battle for supremacy of the New York slums with inevitably murderous consequences. Coming as they do from either side of this ethnic gang rivalry, Tony and Maria's love is doomed from the outset.

Introduced by a solo viola, the haunting strains of 'Somewhere' envisage a place where the couple will be happily united, though later, dark harmonies suggest this is little more than a utopian dream.

LIONEL BART (1930–1999)

### **Oliver!: Reviewing the Situation and Where Is Love?** (1960)

Rather than compete with *West Side Story* on its own very American terms, Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* – a Tony award-winning musical based on the classic Charles Dickens novel *Oliver Twist* – was a thoroughly British affair set in Victorian London's dark and dangerous criminal underworld. Bart couldn't read a note of music but it little mattered – *Oliver!* established him as one of the greatest creative talents in the history of the West End. He was certain the show would flop, however, and left the theatre during its premiere to visit a friend, returning just in time to join the cast as they took their 23rd (yes, 23rd) curtain call! The show went on to become a massive Broadway hit as well, proving that it was Bart and not The Beatles who first took British popular music to the States.

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In both the original production and the film version that followed, the character of Fagin – the egregious head of a juvenile gang of pickpockets – was memorably made his own by the superb Ron Moody. The Semitic, show-stopping strains of 'Reviewing the Situation' are sung by the solitary Fagin as he ponders the prospects of 'going straight'. By way of contrast, the emotive 'Where Is Love?' expresses Oliver's misery and loneliness after he is thrown into the cellar of a funeral parlour following a fight with the bullying Noah Claypole.

## About the music

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LORD LLOYD WEBBER

### **The Phantom of the Opera: The Music of the Night and All I Ask of You** (1986)

In *The Phantom of the Opera* the Paris Opera House is believed to be haunted and when a backdrop suddenly collapses, nearly killing the Prima Donna, Carlotta, she refuses to continue. Her replacement is Christine, who has been taking singing lessons from the shadowy 'Angel of Music' – the Phantom. Christine is in love with Raoul but is warned by the insanely jealous Phantom that if she leaves him, Raoul will die. The musical was written for Lloyd Webber's (now ex-) wife Sarah Brightman, though Director Hal Prince insisted she audition for the part of Christine like everyone else. In the event, she got the part (which was probably just as well!)

The Phantom sings the seductive 'The Music of the Night' to Christine after he has lured her down to his lair in the bowels of the Opera House. As he declares his love for her the song puts her into a trance-like state. 'All I Ask of You' is a tender love duet sung by Raoul and Christine on the roof of the Opera House where she has fled to escape the Phantom's creepy attentions. In both numbers Lloyd Webber's melodic skills are very much in evidence and the songs partially explain why *Phantom* is now the most successful entertainment project in history.

ALAIN BOUBLIL (b. 1941) and CLAUDE-MICHEL SCHÖNBERG (b. 1944)

### **Les Misérables: I Dreamed a Dream and Bring Him Home** (1980/1985)

A revival of Bart's *Oliver!* gave Alain Boublil the idea of adapting another classic novel – in this case Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* – into a musical. The show's original French-language version was staged in Paris in 1980 but soon flopped before Cameron Mackintosh and the Royal Shakespeare Company's hugely-atmospheric production opened at the Barbican, London in 1985. Reviews were initially mixed though: critics complained about its substantial length and 'heavy' subject matter, while some of the more sniffy scribes felt it was a travesty of Hugo's novel. The public, however, saw and heard otherwise and in late 1985 'Les Mis' moved to the West End where it remains to this day (it is now the longest-running musical in history). 'I Dreamed a Dream' is sung by the dying and destitute Fantine who looks back to better days and wonders just where it all went wrong. It has been covered by numerous singers, most recently Susan Boyle. The main protagonist Valjeans sings 'Bring Him Home' as he pleads to God that Marius shall return safely to him and his adopted daughter Cosette.

interval

BJÖRN ULVAEUS (b. 1945) and BENNY ANDERSSON (b. 1946)

### **Mamma Mia!** (1999)

A prime example of the 'catalogue' or 'jukebox' musical, *Mamma Mia!* opened in the West End in 1999. Since then over 40 million people have sung and danced in the aisles to its strains – a succession of songs by the popular 1970s Swedish group ABBA, around which Catherine Johnson wove a fictional plot. Set on a Greek island, it tells the story of Sophie who decides she wants to be given away by her father when she gets married. The problem is she doesn't know who her real father is. After narrowing it down to a trio of possible Dads, she invites all three to the wedding which, as you can imagine, is something of a shock to her mother! This medley includes seven ABBA smash hits, all of which feature in the musical: 'Money, Money, Money' (a lot of which the show has made); 'Knowing me, Knowing You'; 'Fernando' (just a few bars of which are hummed in the show by Sophie's mother); 'Mamma Mia' (of course); 'Dancing Queen'; 'The Winner Takes it All'; and finally, 'Thank you for the Music'. No wonder audiences just keep going back.

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SIR ELTON JOHN (b. 1947)

### **The Lion King: Can You Feel the Love Tonight** and **The Circle of Life** (1997)

Another sub-genre to have emerged in the last decade or so is the film-based musical. Disney's *The Lion King* was a hugely popular animated movie that was successfully transferred to the stage in 1997 and it remains both on Broadway and in the West End to this day. The story concerns a young lion called Simba who is to succeed his father Mufasa as king. When Simba's uncle Scar murders Mufasa, Simba must prevent him from conquering the Pride Lands and avenge his father's death. At one point in both the film and the musical, Simba and the lioness Nala share an intimate exchange. According to Elton John his Oscar-winning 'Can You Feel the Love Tonight' was intended to follow 'Disney's great tradition of love songs' and expresses 'the lions' feelings for each other far better than dialogue could.' 'The Circle of Life' is a wonderfully African affair that is sung at the beginning of the show and then gloriously reprised by the chorus at the end.

NOEL COWARD (1899–1973)

### **London Pride** (1941)

Though in many ways the quintessential Englishman, Noel Coward's extraordinary all-round artistic gifts made him stand apart from the vast majority of his merely mortal countrymen. Always ready with a pithy witticism, Coward was not just an ingenious composer and lyricist but also a singer, actor, director, painter and author. He wrote 'London Pride' in the spring of 1941, during the Blitz. Coward later recounted being on the platform of a bomb-damaged London railway station when he was 'overwhelmed by a wave of sentimental pride'. The seed of this song was sown and he completed it in a matter of days. Coward conceded that its melodic starting-point was the London street song 'Won't You Buy My Sweet-Selling Lavender?' and, strangely perhaps, also acknowledged a debt to the German national anthem 'Deutschland über alles'. It was used in *This Happy Breed* – a 1944 film based on a Coward play – and has been covered by a variety of singers including Gracie Fields, Julie Andrews and Damon Albarn.

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FREDERICK LOEWE (1901–1988)

### **My Fair Lady** (1956): **Medley**

*Prelude – Wouldn't It Be Lovely; The Rain In Spain; Ascot Gavotte; I Could Have Danced All Night; On the Street Where You Live; Show Me; I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face; Finale (I Could Have Danced All Night)*

*My Fair Lady* is still regarded by many as the greatest musical ever written and remains both continually professionally revived and a staple of amateur musical societies. Based on George Bernard Shaw's play *Pygmalion*, it tells the story of the misogynistic Professor Henry Higgins who accepts a wager that he can take a cockney flower girl, Eliza Doolittle, and make her presentable in high society. As this melodious medley reminds us, the show simply brims with show-stopping numbers such as 'Wouldn't It Be Lovely' and 'The Rain In Spain' (which, as everyone knows 'falls mainly on the plain'). Interestingly, in the 1964 film version of the musical, Audrey Hepburn's songs had to be dubbed, though this didn't stop it from winning no fewer than eight Academy Awards.

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