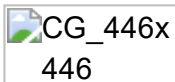


## A Glyndebourne Summer Part II



English tenor Philip Langridge at Glyndebourne in 1964

In Part II of his Glyndebourne diary, Christopher Gillett is delighted to discover his own links to two legendary tenors: the English Philip Langridge and a certain Luciano Pavarotti.



It's Glyndebourne's 80th anniversary - making it the oldest professional opera company in Britain. I may not be quite as old as that, but thanks to the company, I've made a connection (albeit one of them extremely tenuous) to two great tenors.

After my first blog about Glyndebourne I got a message from Stephen, a director friend. In 1964 his dad had been in the Glyndebourne chorus and he too had written something, for a local school. Would I like to see it? As Stephen's dad was the great tenor Philip Langridge, I of course said yes.

**With Philip that year in the chorus were Ryland Davies, Richard Van Allan, Anne Howells, Elizabeth Bainbridge and Stafford Dean; big names to singers and fans of my generation**

In 1964 Philip was just 24, fresh out of the Royal Academy, still working occasionally as a freelance violinist, and recently married. The Glyndebourne Chorus was his very first job in an opera house. Stephen (no slouch himself - his most recent production for the Royal Opera was *Parsifal*) was a toddler, learning to walk on the Glyndebourne lawns. With Philip that year in the chorus were Ryland Davies, Richard Van Allan, Anne Howells, Elizabeth Bainbridge and Stafford Dean; big names to singers and fans of my generation.



I won't regurgitate the whole piece that Philip (pictured left with Stephen Langridge) wrote, called 'Sussex in the Summer' but here are some snippets, written in a style that reflects not only his own youth but the different age in which he was writing.

*'Just four miles from Lewes stands the village of Glynde, surrounded by the South Downs and some very beautiful countryside. On the outskirts of the village stands a country mansion - Glyndebourne - which has been the centre of public interest since 1934,*

*when Audrey and John Christie produced a summer festival of opera there.*

*'Before an opera can be performed, months of preparation are required. The company begins work at Glyndebourne in April. The principal artists rehearse their individual parts with pianists, discussing all aspects from a musical point of view. The head of musical preparation has already been working with the conductor (who may well be in another country until the week before the performance) and is able to give everyone some idea of tempi, dynamics and, to some extent, general interpretation.'*

Ah, the habits of conductors haven't changed over the years... No, that's unfair. There's no way the conductor would be allowed to roll up a week before the show opens. Robin Ticciati is here for all six weeks of *Rosenkavalier* rehearsals.

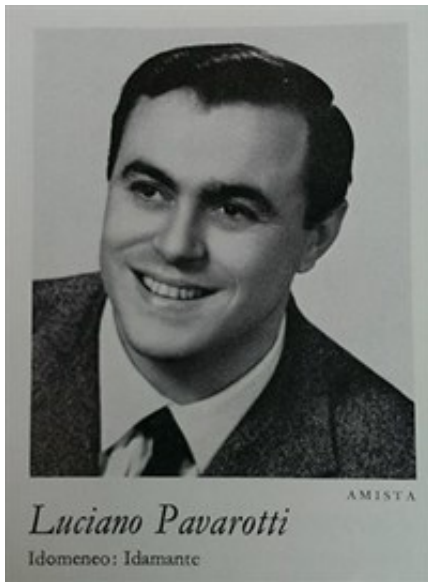
*'As soon as the music has been prepared (usually about two weeks) production rehearsals begin on the stage. The producer, together with the sub-producer and the stage staff, uses the two weeks to plot the opera on the stage. Sometimes the producer speaks very little English and the sub-producer translates everything for him. Gradually the opera takes shape and after two or three days the whole company is geared to a high-speed organisation.'*

**In the 1960s the job of the director was pretty well limited to getting people to stand in the right place**

Two weeks. Ha! In those days, in opera, the director was always called the producer. I'm not sure exactly when that habit changed. Probably as opera became more director-led. In the 1960s the job of the director was pretty well limited to getting people to stand in the right place.

*'Eventually the first night arrives and when all is ready the conductor is signalled to begin. The overture is played while the singers wait anxiously for the curtain to rise. Below the stage in the dressing rooms other artists are making up their faces and getting into their costumes...*

*'This is my first season in an opera house. It is hard work but great fun. I arrive at Glyndebourne at 10.30 am and leave 12 hours later every day of the week including Saturday and Sunday. Occasionally there is a free day but these are few and far between. Altogether we have our own little world which seems divided from the other by the footlights.'*



One of the operas in the 1964 season was *Idomeneo*. In 1983, when I sang in the chorus alongside Susan Bullock and Peter Coleman-Wright, to name but two, we also did *Idomeneo* and Philip Langridge was gob-smackingly magnificent in the title role. I understudied the late, tragic Jerry Hadley as Idamante, Idomeneo's son, but I never got to go on. When Philip was in the chorus, Idamante was sung by a young chap called Luciano Pavarotti ([/uk/learn/artists/luciano-pavarotti](http://uk/learn/artists/luciano-pavarotti)).

So, there you are you see, me, Philip, Pavarotti... Well, it works for me.

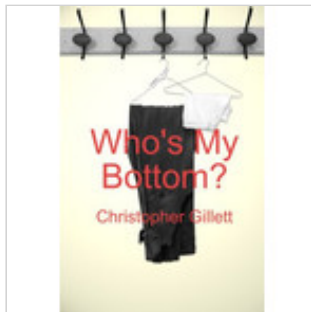
**Der Rosenkavalier opens on 17 May. Booking is open now. (<http://glyndebourne.com/how-book>)**

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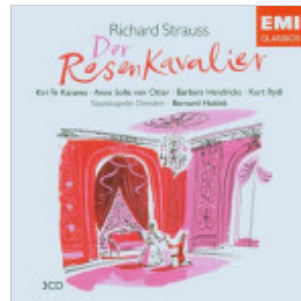


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