

Diner Heaven **America's best invention**



The post-rehearsal, pre-concert lull can present a distinct challenge for the singer with a growling tummy and nowhere to eat. Not so in America, says Christopher Gillett, who finds himself on a musico-culinary road trip...

There's nothing quite like an American road trip. You just slide the car's gearshift to Drive, switch on the cruise control, sit back and watch the world go by. The only thing quite like it was a rather relaxed performance of Stainer's *Crucifixion* I once gave in Goring-on-Thames.

Gliding along the highways and turnpikes your mind inevitably turns to food. Well, mine does. Mine makes a beeline to finding a good, independent diner. It's increasingly difficult, as is finding a good independent motel, but I'll do anything, ANYTHING to avoid the homogenised awfulness of modern chain glooperias, which are about as appealing as being stuck in a broken-down lift with a [Jackie Evancho](#) ([/uk/features/blogs/christopher-gillett/why-it-is-wrong-to-let-children-sing-opera](#)) fan. No, to be fair, they're a tiny bit more appealing, but not very much.

How we could have done with diners in Britain, back in the 1980s when I was touring with Opera 80 (now called English Touring Opera), the late and hugely lamented Kent Opera, Sadler's Wells and [Glyndebourne](#) ([/uk/features/blogs/christopher-gillett/glyndebourne-1](#)). Finding somewhere to eat between 5pm (when the afternoon balance rehearsal ended) and 7pm (when we had to get into make-up) was well-nigh impossible.

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Pub kitchens were either closed for the day or waiting to open. There were no Marks & Sparks takeaway salads, no sandwich chains or nationwide coffee shops. You couldn't take fish 'n' chips back to the theatre as eating smelly food near costumes was, and is, a strict no-no. Apart from the odd Chinese or Indian, there was nothing. I could swear that I've seen tumbleweed rolling down half the high streets of England at six in the evening. [Tippett](#) ([/uk/learn/composers/michael-tippett](#))'s *King Priam* was fuelled by pork pies and crisps.

It was the same after the curtain came down. We ate a lot of very bad curries in the old days, mainly because there were an awful lot of very bad curry houses.

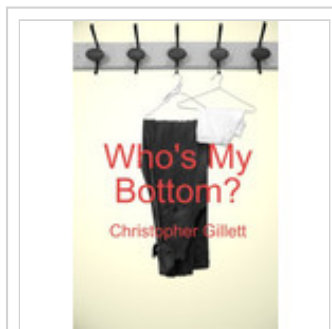
What a godsend a diner would have been, before and after a show. A slab of meatloaf at five in the afternoon? No problem. Eggs, bacon and pancakes at 11pm? Of course, sir! A slice of pie and coffee at 1am during the drive home? Certainly.

Frankly we could still do with diners in Britain, as any musician who has bought a cold Ginsters pasty from a garage and chewed it while driving home after a gig will attest. Heck, if it meant we could have diners, I'd even be prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice: I'd get in a dodgy lift with a Jackie Evancho fan.

Read more of **Christopher Gillett on Sinfini Music (/uk/features/blogs/christopher-gillett/singers-on-the-road-with-dogs).**

The tenor's own blog is **christophergillett.co.uk. (http://christophergillett.co.uk/)**

Recommended



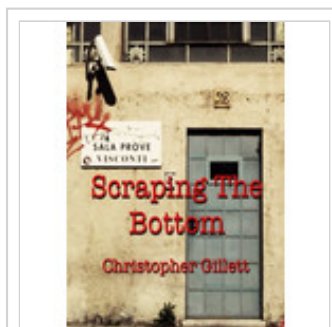
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