

Preston Arts News

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Welcome Back to Preston Arts News

It's lovely to be back after an enforced absence of two years. I say enforced because with so little activity taking place across our arts groups it would have been difficult to put enough interesting material together, and impossible to compile a meaningful What's On guide. We all look forward to a gradual if not speedy return to the normality we had enjoyed for so long. Interestingly, our first edition after the pandemic, is issue 100, which is a special number and deserving of some special material. Well, we managed to get the show back on the road last year with a trimmed down arts festival and will be able to report on that, as well as announcing this year's festival, which will be earlier than ever before. We have decided to run a spring festival as an experiment in the hope that audiences might be bigger than ever with the encouragement (we hope) of the splendid weather we have enjoyed at that time of year for the last two or three years. As this festival will be number 20, it too will be rather special. It's interesting that we tend to celebrate things when they reach round numbers but it's just a trick of the numbering system we use. At the millennium, I wrote a poem pondering on that observation but few understand how number systems work, so it didn't win any literary prizes. Nevertheless, it might amuse those who do understand them so I might slip it into this newsletter if there's a free corner somewhere.

But let's continue from where we left off. On the front page of PAA99 we featured a forthcoming production of **Carmen** from Preston Opera. It was postponed of course, but will be produced this year, so let's kick off with that.



Preston Opera presents
Bizet's
CARMEN
Fulwood Academy
Black Bull Lane
Preston PR2 9YR

Thursday 2nd June 2022 at 7:15pm
Friday 3rd June 2022 at 7:15pm
Saturday 4th June 2022 at 2:30pm

With
Preston Opera Orchestra
Conductor: Helen Harrison

TICKET DETAILS:
www.prestonopera.org.uk
Or
Email prestonoperamail@gmail.com
Or
Pay On The Door

Scan Me!



Charity Number: 512872

Preston Opera

This will be the first opera production of the season and will take place in June. The story is well known especially to opera buffs, but to summarize briefly, Carmen is a volatile gypsy girl who knows what she wants and how to get it. She falls for a young corporal in the dragoons (Don Jose) who is equally smitten and abandons his own fiancée to begin an affair with her. An affair with such a capricious and hot blooded young girl is fraught with danger, especially with the mild and besotted Jose, so anything might happen. When famous toreador Escamillo enters the picture, it does! Much intrigue, romance, merry making, smuggling, and who knows what else in a production that will be as exciting as the score is musical. Full of melodies we all know and love, stunning costumes, exciting scenes and much more. No spoilers for those who don't know the whole story, so come along, have a splendid evening and see for yourselves.

Preston Opera will be performing Bizet's Carmen on Thurs 2nd June 7:15pm, Fri 3rd June 7:15pm and Sat 4th June matinee 2:30pm at Fulwood Academy, with a full orchestra conducted by Helen Harrison. Tickets are available through TryBooking links that you can find on Preston Opera's website www.prestonopera.org.uk.

Prices are £12.00 Adults and £5.00 Children under 16, with a small online booking charge.

PRESTON ARTS NEWS

Produced by Preston Arts Association.

Copies are available free of charge from local libraries, local arts societies, at the Guildhall, Travel Information Office in the Bus Station, Waterstones Bookshop, Alston Hall and other arts venues in the area.

Information and any news items should be sent to Vincent Smith 13 Woodford Copse Chorley PR7 2ER Email: vsmith@pagehall.idps.co.uk

The next issue will cover the period September - November 2022

Deadline for submissions July 31st 2022

MEMBERS

Broughton Players
Club Players at Broughton
Company of Voyces
Danson Poets
Dancing the Next Step
Find Your Voice
Fired 4 U
Grimsargh Players
Gujurat Muslim Welfare Society
Hall Players
KTB Music
Longton Players
New Longton Artists
One Voice Community Choir
Penwortham St Leonards Gilbert & Sullivan Society
Preston Art Society
Preston Cardmakers
Preston Cecilian Choral Society
Preston Circle Dancing Group
Preston Drama Club
Preston Flute Group
Preston Friends of the Phil
Preston Gilbert & Sullivan Society
Preston Historical Society
Preston Lacemakers
Preston Opera Company
Preston Orpheus Choir
Preston Photographic Society
Preston Poets' Society
Preston Recorded Music Society
Rawstorne Singers
SATA Theatre
Silver Bell Jazz Band
South Ribble Strings
UCLan Confucius Institute
U3A

X-ennials

When, long ago, my friends and I decided to time the world x-ennially, my hands gave me the idea – two hands, two symbols. Now, two hundred and fifty octennia later, I am completely vindicated.

One friend was more astute and went for fingers, but chose to use one hand for counting. Five symbols gave him sixteen celebrations. but the system failed nomenclatively - *centenavigintiquinquennium* seemed extravagant.

Our cleverest friend counted with his eyes, and had ten fingers to base his system on: so it was and has been ever since. But perhaps he wasn't clever after all: two thousand years - and only two birthdays!

(See introductory article in this newsletter for reason for including this. **VS**)

Rob Mosley

Rob Mosely, a chemistry student at UCLan, is also a versatile musician, composer, singer and teacher hailing from Derbyshire. During his time in Preston he has struck a chord with St George's Church and often deputises for the regular organist, Sam Walmsley, who is himself a student, studying theology at Durham University. He plays piano and both cinema and church organs in addition to other instruments. Rob has agreed to travel back from his hometown of Belper to play a wide variety of organ music at the Arts Festival launch on 12 June.



Preston Poets' Society (PPS)

For some years the society has met at St George's. There was a long period during which the church was remodelling its community area, so we had to find an alternative venue. After looking at several possibilities, we settled on St Wilfrid's This is as central as St George's and is thus convenient for those without transport. It is also the venue we used for many years until a change in church policy left us unable to meet there on our usual dates. It is a pleasure to be back in our old home.

The society continues to thrive and will be celebrating its 75th anniversary this year. Our objectives are to provide a forum for people who love poetry, whether they write it or just read or listen. We have a programme of activities which we create at the beginning of the year. Four of our evenings are taken up with adjudication of competitions, which are often followed by talks from the adjudicators, if they are able to attend. If they cannot come to present the prizes, we usually have readings of members' poems to fill the rest of the evening. Two more are given to Poets' Projects in which we encourage members to do a little research on a chosen topic and spend perhaps 10 minutes talking about it. Usually there will be one evening taken up by a talk, given either by an invited guest or one of the members, and the remaining evenings are devoted to members' poems.

The other main poetry group in Preston is Danson Poets, which differs from PPS in consisting of open mic evenings. Danson meetings are held at the Continental (currently in the Boatyard) and are very popular. The two societies complement each other very well and there is a considerable overlap, with many PPS members also attending Danson events.

Book Launch – The Attendant's Room

Dorothy Nelson, who is secretary of Preston Poets' Society, is also a novelist. Her latest novel, *The Attendant's Room*, is soon to be published and will be launched during the Arts Festival in June. Details of time and venue will appear in the festival brochure.

The Attendant's Room features Sunshine, an unreliable narrator with an imaginary baby. Unable to function on an ordinary level she reveals her story as honestly as she is able. Her story alternates with her mother's, with whom she lost contact in early childhood. The lives of the two women develop in sharp contrast, the result of post-war hardship and a life-changing event for both in 1962.

Preston Arts Festival 2022

At last year's festival launch I commented that we were proud of the fact that until we were felled by the pandemic, we had had 18 annual arts festivals in an unbroken string. Last year we added number 19. So this year it's a special – the 20th. Of course, where birthdays are concerned, the 21st is even more special so perhaps we'll really go to town on it next year.

We're experimenting this time and going for a spring rather than our usual autumn festival. The thinking behind it is mainly that the weather has a better chance of favouring us in spring, so there might be more people out and about, or willing to come out and join in the activities. Last year, for example we had a poorer than expected gate at a superb piano recital by Reiko Fujisawa and we were convinced that the deluge of the day was largely responsible. In fact much of the festival week was bedeviled by bad weather,

The official Launch will be on Sunday 12th June. There's a bit of a youth element this time, with UCLan student Rob Mosley playing the organ (see separate feature in this newsletter), and a performance from the St John's Girls Choir. During the festival we are expecting a considerable involvement from our Chinese friends, including Faxiang Fan (pictured) who will be giving demonstrations of Tai Chi and other martial arts at various venues. We might also persuade Feixia Yu to provide Chinese tea tastings as a prelude to other events.

Joyce Tinsley's **Find your Voice** workshop has long been a regular offering and this year it will be a pre-launch activity on



10th. Also fast becoming a regular event is the **Preston Portrait Challenge** which is sponsored by the Harris and this year will have the Mayor and Mayoress as sitters. Friends of Winckley Square will be providing several activities, including a walk celebrating extraordinary women of Winckley Square and another show-casing Regency Preston. Other events include talks on painting and sculpture from Richard Catmore and Peter Hodgkinson respectively, a performance by Worldwide Samba Drummers, a tribute

to Bruce Springsteen, and concerts by Katy Bradley and Preston Cecilians. There are two further concerts, both at St George's Church and both compered by Stephen Hall. The second of these, entitled **Jubilee Concert**, will provide the grand finale to the festival and will include Preston Flute Band, The Dunelm Duo, Preston Opera, and a Last Night of the Proms to finish with. Do come along and shed your inhibitions, bob up and down to the music of Elgar and see if you can outdo Preston Opera in belting out the lyrics of Land of Hope and Glory.

The full Festival brochure will be available at our pre-Festival concert on 6th May at St. George's Church starting at 7.30pm. It's called **Broadway Comes to Town**. It sounds great so come if you can, enjoy the concert and pick up your Festival Brochure.

Vince Smith

APRIL

- Fri 1st** 7.30 pm - St Andrews Church Hall, Ashton-on-Ribble. SATA Community Theatre is performing the whodunnit 'Who Shot the Sheriff?' Don't miss your chance to come and pit your wits against their intrepid actors!
- Sat 2nd** 12 noon- 4 pm – New Longton Village Hall. Meeting of Preston Lacemakers. Ring 01772 339913 for further details.
- Sun 3rd** Doors 1.30pm – The Conti. SK2 Jazz Orchestra (formed in 1983 as Shades of Kenton)
- Wed 6th** 7.00-9.30 pm – Fired 4U, Hennel Lane. Adults evening. Clay and pottery painting. Must be pre-booked 01772 203060.
- Wed-Sat 6^{th-9th}** 7.30 pm – Preston Playhouse. Preston Drama Club presents the thriller "Deathtrap" by Ira Levin
- Fri 8th** 7pm – 11.55 pm – The Ferret. Popular local band Mobius Loop with support.
- Thu 14th** 7.30-9.30 pm- The Conti. Strictly Sherlock. Jonathan Goodwin returns as Sherlock Holmes in a show written by himself.
- Fri 15th** 4pm The Ferret Bank Holiday Special. The Shambolics, The Shakes, The Ruby Tuesdays, House of Wolves, The Rafterns and Preston's own Connor Banks.
- Wed 20th** 7.00-9.30 pm – Fired 4U, Hennel Lane. Adults evening. Clay and pottery painting. Must be pre-booked 01772 203060.
- Sun 24th** 7.00-10.30 pm – The Conti. Martin Carthy, one of folk music's greatest innovators, returns to the Conti with supporting acts Gwenifer Raymond and Zoe Fegan
- 27^{th-30th}** 7.30 pm – Preston Playhouse. The Hall Players present "Blackadder Goes Forth" by Richard Curtis, Ben Elton and John Lloyd, a comedy set in the WW1 trenches.

MAY

- 11^{th-14th}** 7.30 pm - Preston Playhouse. Broughton Players present "Murdered to Death" by Peter Gordon, a hilarious spoof in the Agatha Christie tradition.
- 25-28th** 7.30 pm - Preston Playhouse. Preston Drama Club presents **The Farnedale Avenue Drama Society Murder Mystery** By David McGillivray & Walter Zerlin Jr
- 25^{th-28th}** 7.30 pm - St Andrews Church Hall, Longton PR4AA The Longton Players present the comedy "Run for your Wife" by Ray Cooney

JUNE

- 2^{nd, 3rd & 4th}** Preston Opera perform Bizet's great opera Carmen at Fulwood Academy. There will be evening performances at 7.15 pm on Thursday 2nd June and Friday 3rd June with a matinee performance at 2.30 pm on the afternoon of Saturday 4th June.
- 5th** Doors 1.30pm Band plays 2-4.30 pm- The Conti. The award-winning Tom Sharp Jazz Orchestra is based in Leeds. Expect fearsome exciting arrangements and a classic big band sound.
- 8^{th-11th}** 7.30 pm - Preston Playhouse. Preston Musical Comedy Society presents "Calendar Girls The Musical" by Gary Barlow and Tim Firth.
- 10th** 7.30 pm Preston Recorded Music Society – Favourite Naxos Recordings by Chris Rodwell.
- 10^{th-19th}** Preston Arts Festival (see details elsewhere)
- 24th** 7.30 pm – Preston Playhouse. Gary Meikle – Surreal. Scottish Comedy Award winner on tour.
- 30th** 7.30-9.00 pm- The Conti. Sylvia vs the Fascists a one woman play by Manchester playwright Rob Johnston. Emma Laidlaw plays Sylvia Pankhurst, who stood up against a British Establishment in the 1930's

JULY

- 8th** Alison Cotton on tour at the Conti. For devotees of contemporary psychedelic folk and viola trance-out, Alison Cotton requires little introduction. Plus guests TBA
- 8th** 7.30 pm Preston Recorded Music Society – A Medley of Musicians by Mike Cracknell
- 13th** Doors 7.00 pm – The Ferret. Carsie Blanton, wide ranging style singer/songwriter, support TBA.
- 16th** 12.45pm-2.45pm Galloway Hall, Brackenbury Rd. Circle Dancing with Preston Circle Dancing Group. Beginners welcomed.
- 16th** 8.00-11.00 pm - The Conti. The Soul Federation – an award-winning band playing classic Soul as it should be played – with a real horn section and harmony vocals!

AUGUST

- 12th** 7.30 pm Preston Recorded Music Society – Sergei and Vladimir by Vince Smith
- 20th** 12.45pm-2.45pm Galloway Hall, Brackenbury Rd. Circle Dancing with Preston Circle Dancing Group. Beginners welcomed.

Preston Arts Festival 2021

We managed a short festival last year so this is just a brief account of it. The launch took place as usual in St George's in the presence of Mayor of Preston, Javed Iqbal. This was followed by a delightful concert featuring a piano recital from Robin Stopford, songs from Rawstorne Singers and more songs from Pippa Lane, accompanied by Robin. Other performance events over the following

week included poetry readings from Damson Poets and several concerts from the Ferret and the Continental. Drama was presented at the Playhouse, there was a one woman show from Katie O'Brien and a two-man show from Dean Taylor and Associates. The latter, presented at St Andrew's Community Centre in Longton, was entitled **Sir Walter Raleigh and his Queen (Raleigh's greatest gamble)**, and was full of hilarious takes on history with frequent anachronistic but very amusing references to the politics and entertainment of our own times.



Exhibitions included **Extraordinary Women of Winckley Square**, paintings by Norman Long, also at

Winckley Square, and presentation of the results of the Portrait competition at the Larder. I had a chance to study the entries whilst attending a poetry workshop at the same venue. I was amazed at what these artists could achieve in three hours. All the entries were very commendable and there was a worthy winner in Liam Dickinson (see photo). There was a guided walk from regular presenter David Hunt and no fewer than five walks presented by Friends of Winckley Square. Talks included one from Katy Bradley entitled **An Introduction to Musicals of the 21st Century** and workshops were well represented by Preston Card Makers, Fired4U, Preston Photographic Society and Preston Art Society, as well as the above mentioned poetry from Preston Poets' Society.

There were concerts at St George's on the final Saturday and Sunday. That on Saturday featured a group of individual performers, including Katy Bradley, Helen Latham, Pippa Lane, Michael-Peter Bilsborough, David Twizel and Ethan Castle. It focused on songs from famous shows of the past that highlighted social issues of the day. They were often not the best known songs from those shows, but it was instructive as well as enjoyable to hear this different take on a musical pot pourri. The Sunday concert was the finale to the festival and featured Preston Opera in the first half and our own version of Last Night of the Proms in the second. For this, St George's was duly decorated with mini union flags, which were also handed out to the audience. It was a very successful evening, so much so that we are repeating it this year. VS

Fired4U

After many years of pondering, we creatives are not known for quick decisions, I decided to introduce a potter's wheel to my studio. It all started off because my ceramic painting teacher threw pots too. I had her booked to do a day of 1 to 1 lessons in October 2020. Due to restrictions this did not happen until June 2021. By this time I had decided to put a wheel into the studio to allow me to teach throwing lessons. I learnt to throw a few years ago but didn't have a wheel to practice on. After seeking training for myself to teach others we have had these available since September 2021. The TV programme, **The Great Pottery Throw Down** always brings us some new customers so I thought it was time to get a wheel. I run regular days where you can book a half hour 1 to 1 lesson with me to learn a few basics which allows you to throw a pot on the day. Feeling and seeing the clay move in your hands and flow to become a pot is like magic itself. The thrill of achievement is amazing every time. You then return in a couple of weeks to paint your pot and have it glaze fired. Sometimes a colleague will bring his wheel on the same day and we can have two people learning together.

To book yourself in to have a go with your own Throw Down experience please see www.fired4u.co.uk or call direct on 01772 20 30 60

Jane Fox

Jim Minall (1947-2021)

It was with great sadness that I learned about the death of Jim Minall whom I got to know very well when he brought a stream of well known folk musicians to perform at New Longton village hall in his Friends of Folk shows. I was able to get interviews from many big names for the Preston Arts Scene programme on Preston FM. Jim always arranged for me to talk to the likes of Julie Felix, Joe Broughton and Brian McNeill prior to the show. Born in Derby Jim was also a transport enthusiast with a particular interest in trolleybuses. He spent around a year between 1966 and 1967 taking hundreds of photographs of trolleybuses before they disappeared from the streets of Derby. He's pictured below at the wheel of one of them. After moving to Lancashire he continued to travel to Derby to see all the Derby County home matches. He will be sadly missed by many. Jim's widow Jean sent me the article which follows.

Mike Cracknell.

For 16 years Jim Minall's mission in life was "to bring the best in folk, folk-rock, acoustic and other good music to its supporters" in Lancashire through his Friends of Folk platform.



In 2004 after Jim had asked Maddy Prior at a gig in Derby when she was next performing in Lancashire after a long absence from the area, she replied "When you invite me" and in 2005 this was arranged in Preston Guild Hall Foyer, and Friends of Folk was born. Over the next 16 years he organized gigs in venues ranging from the Guild Hall main hall to social clubs and village halls and Preston Minister.

As well as bringing some of the best-known names in folk music to the region including Ralph McTell, Julie Felix, Feast of Fiddles, Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span, Jim also provided performance opportunities for many local singers and musicians. His intention was never to make money and from the outset Friends of Folk was a not-for-profit organization. He absolutely loved it and made many friends amongst the artists and the music fans who attended the shows.

Covid-19 meant cancellation of gigs in 2020 and early 2021 but Jim had the enthusiasm and courage to restart when audiences were still reluctant to come out in large numbers and he had organized 17 events for the second half of 2021 and 2022. Unfortunately he was diagnosed with a brain tumour in August 2021 and only two of the planned gigs could take place. He died on 17th December in St Catherine's Hospice.

Jean Minall

