

Friends of Buxton International Festival

WNO in Llandudno with Donald Maxwell – April 2019

Join Donald Maxwell and fellow Buxton Opera Friends for a relaxed 3-night stay in Llandudno to see WNO's 2019 touring programme and raise funds for the 2019 season.

WNO - Un Ballo in Maschera – Magic Flute – Roberto Devereux Wednesday 24 to Saturday 27 April 2019

Llandudno



The elegant North Wales seaside town of Llandudno, “*Queen of the Welsh Resorts*” was largely developed in the latter half of the 19th century. The sea front and old town still retains much of its original Victorian elegance and charm. The nearby sheer limestone cliffs of the Great Orme provide a sweeping backdrop to the view across the bay, ideal nest sites for a wide variety of sea birds and a home for peregrine falcons and a species of wild cotoneaster which is only found in this one location.

The Operas

For many years the North Wales Theatre in Llandudno – renamed *Venue Cymru* when it was modernised and extended in 2006 – has been one of the most popular touring venues for Welsh National Opera. This year the company is bringing three productions:

Verdi – Un Ballo in Maschera: Described by the Guardian as a “*rattlingly good production*” and “*musically very fine indeed, with exceptional performances from all its principles*”. Un Ballo features tenor **Gwyn Hugh Jones** and Soprano **Mary Elizabeth Williams** reprising their successful pairing in last year’s *La Forza del Destino*.



Mozart – The Magic Flute: A revival of the original 2005 WNO production last seen in 2015 – a colourful fantastical, fairy-tale-esq design inspired by Magritte with its giant lobster, fish-bicycle and host of other newspaper reading animals. The production features young English Tenor **Ben Johnson** as Tamino and Australian Soprano and former ROH Jette Parker Young Artist **Anita Watson** as Pamina.

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Donizetti – Roberto Devereux: You may recall the fizzingly triumphant production from the 2007 Buxton Festival. This WNO version is a revival of the 2013 show described as “*thrilling*” by the Guardian where “*The tale of Queen Elizabeth I's passion for her lover Robert, Earl of Essex, accused of treason and destined for the block, produced bel canto singing to honour composer and company alike*”. Stunning Lebanese/Canadian Soprano **Joyce El-Khoury** stars as Queen Elizabeth alongside the effervescent **Barry Banks** as Roberto Devereux.

Travel

Whilst you may prefer to make your own way to Llandudno, to make travelling easy and hassle-free you may like to join the comfortable coach specially arranged to travel directly from Buxton leaving at 11.00am on Wednesday 24th, arriving mid-afternoon at our hotel, the St George's Hotel, on Llandudno Sea Front, via further pick-ups at Manchester Airport and Chester en-route. If you do decide to drive there is limited “first-come-first-served” parking at the hotel (it can't be reserved in advance), with public car parks a short distance away.

Accommodation

The luxury 4* St George's Hotel was built in 1854 and has hosted no fewer than 7 different prime ministers as well as being home to a series of 28 hand-painted panels commissioned from Chester artist Alfred Catherall in 1979.

Holiday Programme

Our holiday starts in earnest with a relaxed dinner in the hotel at 5.00pm on the Wednesday, before setting off at around 6.45pm for a short 10-15 min walk along the sea front to our first Opera – **Un Ballo in Maschera** which starts at 7.30pm. Should anyone feel that the ½ mile level walk to and from the theatre is too much, the hotel is adept at helping with taxis.

On Thursday and Friday and Saturday mornings, breakfast at the hotel is served until 10.00am, enabling a leisurely start to days which are essentially free time with lunch independent, save for:

- **Pre-Opera Dinner in the hotel** at 5.00pm on Thursday and Friday
- On Thursday morning, we will join the North Wales Friends of WNO for an **informal concert** for an hour at 11.00am in Holy Trinity church hall just around the corner from the hotel. Members of the WNO chorus will entertain with opera excerpts over coffee.
- On Friday morning, we have booked a vintage bus for a **tour of the Great Orme** via Marine Drive – a four-mile trip lasting around an hour, enabling stunning views of Llandudno bay and Great Orme itself from the warmth and comfort of a characterful seat. On a clear day, you can see as far as the Isle of Man, Blackpool and the Lake District.



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On Thursday and Friday in the hotel at 4.00pm we will enjoy **two talks with renown Baritone Donald Maxwell**. As the icing on the cake for our holiday this year, we are delighted to have his company throughout the trip. Donald's 40 years association with Buxton goes right back to the start of the festival. He has been both Artistic Director and Artist in Residence of and for 15 years was Patron of the Buxton Festival Friends. Donald will give short talks looking back over his work with Buxton and his life in Opera framed in the context of the operas we will be hearing

Free Time Suggestions

During free time you may like to have a ride on **The Great Orme Tramway** - Britain's only cable-hauled public road tramway which has been delighting visitors since it opened in 1902. It climbs a mile up the Great Orme Country Park and Nature Reserve starting from Victoria Station to the Halfway Station where you can pause, discover the history of the tramway and view the Victorian engineering before continuing to the top.



Or you could explore the **Oriel Mostyn Art Gallery** – North Wales's premiere modern art gallery which will be hosting an exhibition of work by Contemporary Welsh Artists.



You may enjoy walking along Llandudno's fine **Victorian Pier**, completed in 1878. It stretches 2,300 ft into the Irish Sea. Before it was destroyed by fire in 1994, the Pier Pavilion was famous for its musical concerts. Sir Malcolm Sargeant made his career conducting debut there 1927.

Visiting **West Shore Beach** – for those who enjoy walking and nature, the West Shore Beach is very different in feel to the North Shore in front of Llandudno – worth wrapping up warm and taking a pair of binoculars to enjoy the views and the wildlife.



What do I do next?

We hope this overview of the holiday tempts you to join us. The cost per person of £835 (based on two people sharing) includes a donation to the Buxton Festival Friends and covers coach transfers from Buxton, circle seats for the three operas, breakfast and evening meals, Donald Maxwell's talks, WNO Friends concert, Great Orme tour and the services of tour escort, Sarah Hussle. Single room supplement is £85.

This exclusive Buxton Friends trip being organised by *John Whibley Holidays with Music* in association with its ABTA/ATOL bonded travel partners *Specialised Travel Ltd*.

To talk through any queries you may have, or to make a booking, please consult our website – www.whibley.co.uk, email john@whibley.co.uk or phone John or Catherine in the John Whibley office on **01663 746578**.