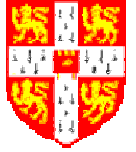




Oxford and Cambridge Musical Club



*Saturday 8 November 2008 at 6:00 pm
in the United Reform Church, Pond Square, Highgate, N6*

Falstaff

by

Giuseppe Verdi (1893)

Libretto by Arrigo Boito
Concert No 1993

Conductor: Edward Kay

CAST

Falstaff	Carl Murray
Ford	James Gilbert*
Alice Ford	Tamara Migrina
Meg Page	Jo Parton
Mistress Quickly	Oenone Cox
Nannetta	Susanna Hogan
Fenton	Benjie del Rosario
Dr Caius	Alan Mayall
Pistol	David Banbury
Bardolph	Toby Scholz*

Répétiteur: Nick Reading
Chorus Director: Lyn Parkyns

**Guest*

Organisers: Jo Parton and Carl Murray

There will be a 5 minute pause at the end of Act I with an Interval at the end of Act II

The performance will be followed by a party for performers and guests.

ORCHESTRA

Violins

Peter Wall (leader)
Pauline Harding
Carole Kaldor
Ping-Yi Kuo*
Amelia Michael*
Roger Morgan
Hannah Nepil*
Alexandra Reid
Jane Reid
Anupam Roy
Sargen Zac-Varghese*
Byung-Yun-Yu*

Violas

Caroline Hayman
Donald Ray
Jon Denbigh

Cellos

Elizabeth Atkinson*
Deborah Behrman
Juliet Solomon*

Double Bass

Peter Neville
Flossie Challands*

Flutes

Libby Summers
Sue Morrell

Piccolo

Sue Verger*

Oboes

Nick Murray
Judith Roads

Cor Anglais

Angela Escott

Clarinets

Debbie Simon
Ed Cook

Bass Clarinet

Ed Cook

Bassoons

Glyn Williams
Jo Rushton

Horns

Peter Kaldor
Adrian Rushton
Sophie Pratt*

Trumpets

Frank Burgum*
Matthew Paterson*

Trombones

Charles Mackworth-Young

Bass Trombone

Arthur Hawks*

Tuba

Martin Humphries*

Timpani

Andrew Westlake

Percussion

Tony Summers

Harp

Alan Reddish (*synthesiser*)

Guitar

David Johnson*

CHORUS

Soprano: Claire Campbell*, Christine Fisher, Lyn Parkyns, Jenny Watkins

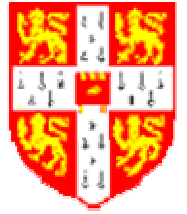
Alto: Vivien Price, Jo Rodgers

Tenor: Brian Blandford, Patrick Howard, Norman Parkyns, Alan Reddish

Bass: Mike Crowe, Giles de la Mare, Christopher Reynolds, Peter Sowerby, David Johnson*



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Notes

Operatic settings of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* date back to Papavoine's stage work of 1761 followed thirty seven years later by Salieri's *Falstaff* of 1798. Dittersdorf, Balfe, Adam and Vaughan Williams are among the other composers who set the play to music, one of the best known being Nicolai, whose *Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor* was completed in 1848. Perhaps the most unlikely but rightly the most popular, is Verdi's *Falstaff*, often referred to as one of the miracles of operatic history.

After the success of *Otello*, the composer, by then a national monument in Italy, was urged to begin another work for the stage. Two years later the librettist Boito, with whom he had collaborated so successfully on *Otello*, suggested a new opera based loosely on *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. Boito reduced the number of characters in *The Merry Wives*, streamlined the plot and included passages from *Henry IV*. Although questioning whether at the age of 76, he would have the strength to complete the work Verdi responded enthusiastically to Boito's synopsis.

'What a joy', he wrote, 'to be able to say to the public, "Here we are again! Come and see us!"'.

Synopsis

The scene is set in Windsor in the reign of Henry IV.

Act I Part 1 – inside the Garter Inn

Falstaff's carousing is interrupted by Doctor Caius who threatens to report him to the Star Chamber. Unable to ruffle Falstaff's bibulous calm, Caius turns on Bardolph and Pistol who the previous night had made him drunk and emptied his purse. The charges are denied and Caius storms out. Finding they have no money to pay the bill, Falstaff blames his companions. Bardolph's glowing nose means they can economise on lanterns, but the savings are more than consumed in wine bills. He outlines a new enterprise: two wealthy citizens, Ford and Page, have beautiful wives; he will lay siege to their virtues as a means of getting at their husbands' money. Bardolph and Pistol refuse to assist so dishonourable an enterprise. Falstaff harangues them on the subject of 'honour' before kicking them out.

Part 2 – the Garden by Ford's house

Alice and Meg have received identical love letters from Falstaff and decide he must be taught a lesson. Ford enters with Fenton and Caius (rivals for Nannetta's hand), and Bardolph and Pistol, from whom he learns that Falstaff is bent on seducing his wife and emptying his money bags. While the women engage Mistress Quickly to lure Falstaff to an assignation, Ford plans to visit the Garter Inn in disguise to investigate these tales. Twice Nannetta and Fenton break away from their companions to kiss in the shadow of the trees

Act II Part 1 - inside the Garter Inn

Mistress Quickly arrives with the answer to Falstaff's letters: both wives love him but only Alice is able to receive him – any day between eleven and one - when her husband is always out. Bardolph announces 'Mastro Fontana' (Master Brook). 'Fontana' introduces himself as a wealthy man accustomed to want for nothing, but he has fallen in love with Ford's wife and all his wooing has been in vain. The gold he has brought with him is Falstaff's if he can seduce her, for once she has fallen to a man of the world like Sir John, she is more likely to listen to his own suit. Falstaff accepts the challenge – indeed it is almost won already, for he has an assignation with the lady in half an hour. He excuses himself a moment, and Ford is left alone, a prey to jealousy. Falstaff returns dressed to kill and they go out together.

Part 2 – a room in Ford's house

Mistress Quickly reports on the success of her mission. A screen is set up, a lute laid ready, and servants carry in a laundry basket. They all look forward to the adventure. Falstaff arrives, woos Alice ardently and recalls the days of his slender youth. But Ford is heard approaching. Falstaff hides behind the screen while Ford, assisted by Caius, Bardolph

and Pistol, seeks high and low for the intruder. He soon rushes off to another part of the house, Falstaff is bundled into the laundry basket, and Fenton and Nannetta retreat behind the screen. While Ford closes in on – as he supposes – his wife and Falstaff, Nannetta and Fenton continue their romantic tet-à-tete.

The screen is snatched away to reveal only the young lovers and a new hunt begins for Falstaff on a false scent laid by Bardolph. The laundry basket is hauled to the window and as soon as Ford returns, Falstaff is tipped into the river.

Act III Part 1 – a courtyard outside the Garter Inn

Falstaff broods over his humiliation ('Mondo ladro') but the consolations of steaming wine are infallible. Mistress Quickly brings a letter inviting him to a midnight assignation in Windsor, but he must come disguised as the 'Black Huntsman' who haunts the forest. The conversation is overheard by the other wives and by Ford, Caius and Fenton, and while Falstaff accompanies Mistress Quickly into the inn they plan the details of the night's masquerade. Mistress Quickly reappears to hear Ford plotting Nannetta's marriage with Caius.

Part 2 – Windsor GreatPark

Fenton's musings are interrupted by the wives: to outwit Ford and Caius, last-minute changes of mask and costume are necessary. As midnight strikes Falstaff enters; but his wooing of Alice is interrupted by a horde of spirits. With Falstaff prostrate on the ground in terror, Nannetta, disguised as the queen of the fairies, and her attendants weave a spell in solemn song and dance. Then while she and Fenton are hurried away, fantastically garbed figures torment Falstaff and conduct him through a litany of repentance. In the excitement Bardolph loses his hood; further unmaskings follow and Falstaff realises he has been made an ass of. Ford proposes that the betrothal of the queen of the fairies be celebrated. Caius' bride proves, when unveiled, to be Bardolph, while another unmasked couple brought forward for blessing, are revealed as Nannetta and Fenton. Ford accepts the situation philosophically and Falstaff leads the company in a fugal chorus celebrating the absurdity of the human condition (*Let us enjoy our folly*).

Programme Notes by Carl Murray