

ings of Tom's mind. In his deluded state, he sees himself as Adonis, Anne as Venus and appeals to the pantheon of Greek gods, so the masks could equally be those associated with classical Greek tragedy.

The cast was excellent. Soprano Louise Alder sang her high notes effortlessly and with much tenderness, conveying her ongoing love for Tom despite his erring. Her leave taking of Tom at the end was poignant as we know she knows there is no way back; she comforts him like a small child. Bass baritone Sam Carl's Nick displayed great characterisation, beguiling and persuasive, and his voice had a rich deep tone. Thomas Atkins' Tom had the requisite level of naivete, gullibility and greed, but also wistfulness when thinking of Anne. Mezzo Alisa Kolova's Baba showed the irritation at being kept waiting in her sedan chair, her temper around the matrimonial breakfast table but also her kindness and understanding in her 'girl to girl' talk with Anne. As always, the chorus did whatever was required of it with aplomb, whether it be the bawdiness of the brothel or the despair (and clipped responses) of Bedlam. My favourite scene was the auction, with the elaborately amusing bidding for Tom's possessions followed by the unveiling of Baba as one of the objects for sale and her subsequent driving everyone out of the house, whilst Tom and Nick can be heard singing in the street. A full stage, with lots going on and plenty of humour!

Glyndebourne stalwart Robin Ticciati was clearly enjoying himself and conducted the LPO at a good pace, receiving a very warm reception from the cognoscenti. The LPO was a perfect timbre for a twentieth century composer, yet the use of the harpsichord, particularly in the graveyard scene between Tom and Nick, highlighted the eighteenth century setting of the piece.

This was a super production. I loved the set and can understand why it has stood the test of time, the music was engaging and there were no weak links in the cast. A grand day out!

TIM WICKENS

Fair Oxford, or, an alma mater

(to 'The Ash Grove', Welsh trad.)¹

Fair Oxford, how gracious, how plainly 'tis speaking;
the bells through her ringing have language for me.
Whenever the light o'er her limestone is setting,
praises unbidden from my spirit doth spring.
The host that is coming before now receive us,
to outstretchéd hands fling we the torch aflame.²
First illumination of God o'er these Isles;³
fair Oxford, fair Oxford, alone is my home.

Down yonder green meadow where streamlets meander,
when twilight is fading I pensively rove.
Beneath the high arches, low cloisters, quadrangles:
pilgrim returning to the flower'ed lair of youth.
From ev'ry dark nook they press forward to greet me:
the faces I long for again gather here;
around us with gladness the waters were bubbling,
but then little thought I how soon we would part.

Adieu now, dear Oxford, we leave thee our mother,
whatever we had gavest thou us again.⁴
May glowing thy star e'er this land bold to counsel,
and give to thy children the fruits of thine age.
With freedom to think and with honour to bear,
and bravely for right e'er to live and to strive.⁵
So till time shall be done, and eternity near,
thy children, fair Oxford, shall exult in thy peace.

ALEXANDER YEN

¹ With much credit to the original, traditional, lyrics.

² Newbolt, 'Vitai Lampada'.

³ *Dominus Illuminatio Mea*.

⁴ Belloc, 'To the Balliol Men Still in Africa'.

⁵ Gilman, 'Fair Harvard'.

Alexander Yen is a postgraduate in international relations at Green Templeton College, having been an undergraduate in history and politics at Magdalen College. His interests include university ceremonial and traditions.