



Paul Goussot

Paul ends series

THE closing concert in an organ series is being held next Saturday, May 4, in **St Albans Cathedral**.

It marks the return to the city of **Paul Goussot**, the winner of the 2011 Improvisation Competition at St Albans and subsequently the improvisation competition in Haarlem.

Paul was born in Bordeaux where he is now titulaire of the prestigious organ in the Abbey of St Croix. He graduated from the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris where he gained numerous first prizes in both harpsichord and organ.

He has given concerts in Europe and the US including being First Young Artist in residence in Louisiana.

The concert brings together the **Caius Consort** from Cambridge, directed by **Geoffrey Webber**, and piper **Barnaby Brown**, who leads the revival of the northern triplepipe, the precursor of the bagpipe in Britain and Ireland.

As a result, Celtic chant from the fourteenth century and **Durufle's Quatre Motets** will be interleaved with Scottish psalm singing traditions.

Entrance to the concert, which starts at 5.30pm, is free with a retiring collection in aid of the International Organ Festival Society. After the concert the audience will have the opportunity to meet the performers at a reception in the cathedral refectory.

■ **The 50th Anniversary of the St Albans International Organ Festival** is being held from July 11 to 20 this year and online booking can be found at www.organfestival.com

Gallery oils the wheels

SIX leading oil painters will have their work on display in a Harpenden gallery from this Sunday.

The **A&K Wilson Gallery** in Station Road is playing host to an exhibition of paintings by six selected members of the **Royal Institute of Oil Painters**.

Founded in 1882, the institute is the only major art society which shows only oil paintings. Granted royal status by King Edward VII in 1909 it has exhibited many world famous artists including Rodin.

Today the membership still boasts many of the leading oil painters in the country.

Drew Wilson of the gallery revealed: "Selecting six artists from such a talented membership could have been an extremely difficult job but actually it was quite easy, as all the artists I chose were already friends!"

He is exhibiting work by Bill Dean, Adebajji Alade, David Pilgrim, Andrew King, Chris Bennett and the president of the institute, Peter Wileman.

Drew added: "Their styles vary hugely but they all have one thing in common, a strong commitment to upholding the age-old tradition of painting in oils."

The exhibition begins from 11am to 3pm on Sunday until Saturday, May 11.

Lords of the dance

AN UNASHAMED wallow in the songs written for Broadway and the West End of the 1920s and 30s is promised at **The Radlett Centre** this Sunday.

Michael Law's Piccadilly Dance Orchestra (PDO) featuring 10 musicians and a female vocalist come on stage at 7.30pm with **You're The Top**.

It features a cocktail of songs by Cole Porter, Irving Berlin, the Gershwin brothers, Noel Coward and friends.

The orchestra has been in demand wherever style and swinging music are required. Highlights have included several BAFTA Awards parties including special evenings for Julie Andrews and Sean Connery, West End Theatre first night parties and Earl Spencer's 30th Birthday party, where Princess Diana asked Michael and the orchestra to play *In The Mood*.

In addition, they have performed at parties for Sir Paul Getty – at which Margaret Thatcher took to the dance floor – and Cunard themed a complete transatlantic cruise around the orchestra.

While much in demand as a dance orchestra, the PDO also tour theatres and concert halls with their concert programmes including sold-out performances at The Queen Elizabeth Hall, Cadogan Hall, Snape Maltings, Buxton Opera House and many other venues.

Tickets are £18 with concessions £16, available from the box office on 01923 859291 or go to www.radlettcentre.co.uk



The Piccadilly Dance Orchestra

Art show comes to village

NEW and established artists will be exhibiting oils, watercolours, pastels and mixed media next weekend at the annual **Kimpton Art Show**.

Each year, the show brings together 150 artists and in 2012 they included a number of new artists who have exhibited with Herts Open Studios.

Artists in other media displayed glassware, stained glass, wood, sculpture, framed photography and textiles.

The show is held at **SS Peter and Paul Church** in the village and together with the **Kimpton May Festival**, raises money towards the ongoing maintenance of the church, the village hall and other local charities.

The show runs from 11am to 6pm next Saturday, May 4, from midday until 5.30pm next Sunday, May 5, and from 11am to 4pm next Monday, May 6. Admission is £1 with children free.

The opening night is from 6pm to 9pm next Friday, May 3.

Admission is £5, payable at the door, and includes a complimentary glass of wine.

At various times during the weekend, local musicians will be playing informally.

Feeling the Passion with Choral Society

"A WORK that simply shines out as being one of the greatest pieces of all western choral music" is how **George Vass**, music director of **St Albans Choral Society** described **Bach's St John Passion**.

He was speaking after the choir's performance last Saturday in **St Albans Cathedral**.

The older of two surviving Passions composed by J.S. Bach, its dramatic recitatives and choruses are interspersed with reflective chorales and arias, the whole framed by an opening and a final chorus and a closing chorale.

The glories of the work were presented in a meticulously-prepared performance by the choir and soloists sung in the original German.

Mr Vass explained: "The piece was composed in German by a German who knew how to colour his text beautifully. The musical illumination of the text is accented in the right place with stresses on vowel and consonant sounds far easier to produce than any English translation. In particular, the Evangelist's text flows very naturally in the original language."

Assiduous practice and determination resulted in a polished verbal performance worthy of a professional

choir. **Mark Dobell** in the demanding role as the Evangelist was completely at home in the language, allowing the natural light and shade of the words to propel the story forward.

Bass **Charles Gibbs** as Jesus portrayed the quiet assurance of one who accepts his fate for the salvation of Man.

The intervening arias were sung by mezzo, tenor and baritone soloists who also sang the roles of Peter, Pilate and a Maid. **Helen-Jane Howells** is an experienced soloist and Bach singer who performed her arias with a natural ease, her voice carrying in the sometimes difficult acoustic of the Cathedral. She was totally immersed in the music even when not singing.

Mezzo **Clare McCaldin** conveyed a tenderness which was moving in its simplicity and **Christopher Bowen's** high tenor voice was bright and carried well in the louder passages but was also capable of great compassion.

Michael Bundy can always be relied upon to give a confident performance although some words were not always clear.

The continuo was provided by **Sebastian Comberti** (cello), **Christian Wilson** (organ) and **Richard Harvey** (harpsichord) with appropriate lightness of touch. The superb musicians of **Orchestra Nova** played with their usual exemplary understanding of style.

But the evening was mostly carried by the choir who had clearly worked hard on the Herculean task of learning a lengthy text in what is a mostly unfamiliar language.

All voice parts came over well but the sopranos in particular were confident and accurate. Perhaps one could have asked for a little more engagement with the text but considering the challenge of singing in a foreign language, this is nit-picking.

The chorales were nicely balanced with a lush warm tone and a good legato line. Although some entries were not clearly anticipated, all the choruses had a very strong finish with the final chorus confident and optimistic.

The choir is at its best when in full cry and the closing chorale in particular provided a thrilling finish.

MARY COOK

The Sky's the limit

GUYS and DOLLS in the hands of the NODA award-winning **St Albans Operatic Society**, is taking over the stage of the **Alban Arena** from next Tuesday, April 30.

The production runs until Saturday, May 4, with a 2pm matinee on the final day.

St Albans Operatic Society has a reputation for putting on high quality productions such as their recent **Jesus Christ Superstar** and **The Sound of Music**. **Guys and Dolls** features eye-catching sets and sumptuous costumes.

Based on **Damon Runyon's** short story *The Idyll of Miss Sarah Brown*, **Guys and Dolls** revolves around Nathan Detroit, the organiser

of the oldest established permanent floating crap game in New York, who bets fellow gambler **Sky Masterton** that he can't make the next girl he sees fall in love with him.

The next girl he sees happens to be **Miss Sarah Brown**, a pure-at-heart Salvation Army type reformer.

Evening performances start at £16.50 (£10 for restricted view) and concessions at £2 off apply to the Tuesday evening and the Saturday matinee performances.

There is also a two seats for the price of one offer on front stalls on Tuesday evening. To book tickets go to www.alban-arena.co.uk or ring the box office on 01727 844488.

Museums' towering tales

A SERIES of storytelling sessions for all ages gets underway at **St Albans Clock Tower** next Saturday, May 4, as part of national **Share-a-Story** month.

Hosted by **St Albans Museums**, the sessions kick off with storyteller **Olivia Armstrong** who specialises in telling traditional folk tales, wonder tales, legends and myths from around the world.

The following Saturday, May 11, Olivia will again relay her tales at the **Sopwell Nunery** and on Saturday, May 18, **Kathryn Holt**, will be delivering tales in the activity room of **Verulamium Museum** in St Michael's Street.

All three sessions run from 2pm to 3pm and tickets are £3 per person, available on the day.

The series ends on Saturday, May 25, with an event at the **Museum of St Albans** in Hatfield Road to commemorate the museum's **Lion Under the Stars** storytelling initiative in which budding storytellers have been attending a series of workshops to learn how to write and perform their own tales. It runs from 2pm to 4pm.

Further information is available from www.stalbansmuseums.org.uk or phone 01727 819340.