

THE JENNIFER VYVYAN FOUNDATION



A HIDDEN TREASURE-TROVE OF ENGLISH SINGING IN THE 20TH CENTURY REDISCOVERED, WITH THE LAUNCH OF THE JENNIFER VYVYAN WEBSITE

THURSDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER, 5PM, BECHSTEIN ROOM, WIGMORE HALL

Not everyone remembers Jennifer Vyvyan: she died in 1974 at the age of just 49. But those who do will recall that she was one of the leading British singers of her time. A member of the English Opera Group from its earliest days, she became one of Benjamin Britten's favourite voices. For her he wrote the Governess in *Turn of the Screw*, Tytania in *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Lady Rich in *Gloriana*, and Mrs Julian in *Owen Wingrave*.

But she also played an important role in the music of other mid-20th composers, from Poulenc and Milhaud to Malcolm Williamson and Lennox Berkeley. And beyond that she was a leading figure in the revival of baroque repertory: a celebrated interpreter of Purcell, Bach and Handel who starred in landmark reappraisals of the Handel operas.

Born into the landed gentry, with an ancient family seat not unlike that of the fictional Wingraves, she led a complicated and tempestuous life that echoed several of her Britten roles. And when she died, her personal effects – a serious quantity of letters, diaries, contracts, tape recordings, photographs: she was a hoarder – were stored in a loft in Hampstead. Where they remained, largely undisturbed, for the next 30 years.

Last Christmas her son Jonathan invited the music critic Michael White to look through them. And what emerged was so fascinating that Michael has spent the past seven months sorting the material into the basis for a substantial website which not only celebrates Jennifer Vyvyan's life and work but explores its significance in the wider context of English singing.

We hope the website launch will be attended by surviving friends, colleagues and fans of Jennifer Vyvyan. And we very much hope you will join us for what should prove a revelatory unearthing of a piece of modern music history.

**RSVP by September 16th latest to: Ana Fernandez, at
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