

Can We Save the Antarctic Wilderness?

by Sydney Charles

IN SEPTEMBER NORTH London student Charlie Drew (19) spoke to a packed audience from Transition Highgate and the Highgate Society about his expedition to Antarctica with polar explorer and youth leader Robert Swan. Swan's remarkable expeditions to both the poles in the 1980's made him aware that serious change was afoot.

ON HIS RETURN from the Pole in 1991, Swan was handed an ambitious 50-year mission – to prevent the expiration of the 1961 Antarctic treaty that currently protects the Antarctic as a 'land for science and peace'. The treaty expires in 2041. After that territorial claims for the last pristine continent can be exercised.

SO SWAN'S AIM is to train young ambassadors for his cause who will champion renewable energy, promote conservation and be influential enough in their careers up to 2041 to ensure that the treaty is renewed and that the wilderness of Antarctica remains. The International Antarctic Expeditions are run each year and have so far taken 1300 young people from 75 countries to the world's most extreme environment. Charlie Drew, who comes from Belsize Park and attended UCS, was lucky enough to be a part of this year's team.

IN DECEMBER 2016 the team of campaigners and youth leaders, including Charlie, will follow in the footsteps of Robert Falcon Scott's 893 mile epic journey to the pole 105 years ago. This time the journey will be achieved without any dependence on fossil fuels and using only solar and wind energy. The group hopes to become the first group ever to survive and undertake the polar journey independent of any propulsion from fossil fuels.

OVER THE NEXT 25 years, the 2041 project plans to build its network of youth leaders so the group is influential and powerful enough in the year 2041. Charlie will be speaking to schools, universities, climate groups and businesses around the country, making the case for the importance of Antarctica as the regulator of our global climate. Meantime he has begun reading for a degree in Geography at Durham University.

FOR MORE INFORMATION on the work 2041 does, to arrange for Charlie to speak, and to apply to take part in 2041's annual youth expeditions, please visit <http://2041.com/expeditions> or contact 2041@charliedrew.com

H.G.O's 'Don Giovanni'

by Edmund Gordon

HAMPSTEAD GARDEN OPERA'S production of 'Don Giovanni', reviewed below, was its last 'Upstairs at the Gatehouse'. After 30 productions there since 2001, the company is moving to the more spacious Jacksons Lane Theatre, starting, from 13 to 22 May 2016, with 'Cavalleria Rusticana' and 'Pagliacci'.

PERHAPS FROM A subconscious desire to prepare loyal followers for a change of setting, perhaps just fortuitously, the location of HGO's latest 'Don Giovanni' (last performed in 2007) was altered from 17th century Seville to a present day Oxford college.

THE UPDATING WAS linked in a programme note by Oliver-John Ruthven, HGO's Music Director, with Mozart's having reworked the Prague 1787 original for Vienna a year later, adding new arias and cutting the Finale. Music from both the 1787 and 1788 versions, including some not often heard, was included in the HGO production but substantial cuts were also made. Textually the aim of the HGO team and translator Benjamin Hamilton was stated to be to bring Da Ponte's libretto to life in modern English.

DID THE ALTERATIONS to time and place of action work? Overall, for me and I would guess from audience reaction for most at the (first night) performance reviewed, they did. 'Don Giovanni' performed faithfully to the original concept rarely fails to fulfil, and to thrill at its most dramatic moments. This contemporary HGO version was constantly absorbing, at critical points in the plot intensely so.

JONATHON HEYWARD CONDUCTED the 13-strong orchestra, first night principals Joseph Kennedy (Don Giovanni), Samuel Lom (Leporello), Emma Dogliani (Donna Anna), Heather Caddick (Donna Elvira), Sofia Troncoso (Zerlina), Shaun Aquilina (Masetto), Timothy Reynolds (Don Ottavio), John Suddaby (Il Commendatore/College Master) and the Chorus (Camilla Jeppeson, Lara de Belder, Helen May, Luke Churchill, Michael Hobson-Kennedy) to high effect.

HIGH MUSICAL STANDARDS were matched by convincing characterizations, under the stage direction of Genevieve Raghu, with movement direction by Lucy Cullingford. Two elegant sets designed by Rosanna Vize and lit by Ben Donoghue effectively and economically evoked all places of action.

GENEVIEVE RAGHU IN her programme note described the production as a 'Don Giovanni' for a new generation, envisaging facilitation by the Internet of the capacity of the evil hero to change shape to his advantage. This Internet-related concept was realised performance-wise by projections designed by Douglas O'Connell on elements of the set. If this resulted, for me, in slight inconsistencies of characterization of the Don (seen by Jane Austen more simply as a 'compound of Cruelty and Lust') it is gratifying to be able to record, overall, such a successful and stimulating end to HGO's Upstairs at the Gatehouse sojourn.