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Merrie England

an operetta by
Edward German
with lyrics by
Basil Hood
in an enhanced
concert version

Edward German's patriotic pageant reveals the love and rivalries at the court of Queen Elizabeth I, a monarch consumed with jealousy over Walter Raleigh's attentions to Bessie Throckmorton, information she has gained from the Earl of Essex. It perpetuates the fiction that the England of Good Queen Bess was actually merry. It includes much delightful music including *O peaceful England* and *The Yeoman of England*. The work established German as a possible successor to Arthur Sullivan.

Merrie England was my first production with WOS and I recall dancing on the Guildhall stage dressed all in green with a wicker waste paper basket on my head draped in green streamers. Brian Hurst was *Bill* or *Ben* (not one of the flower pot men!) and the late Dorothy Crosby was an imposing and authoritative Queen Elizabeth.

I hope you enjoy this departure from our usual productions which has enabled all our members to take part without the usual restrictions of "space on the stage".

Richard Steel - President

SYNOPSIS:

The young Earl of Essex wants to gain the aging Queen Elizabeth's favour; in place of Sir Walter Raleigh, with whom she has been flirting, Raleigh has fallen in love with Bessie Throckmorton, the Queen's maid of honour, but they dare not declare their love in public. Raleigh has written a love-letter to Bessie, but she has lost it, and it has been found by Jill-All-Alone, a gypsy. Jill is accused of witchcraft, and she seeks the protection of Essex, who on reading the letter and realising how he can use it, agrees to help Jill. He shows the letter to the Queen, and in a fit of jealousy she orders Raleigh's banishment from Court, Bessie's imprisonment and Jill's execution as a witch.

Now that he has replaced Raleigh in the Queen's favour, Essex decides to try to repair the damage he has caused. Playing on the Queen's superstitions, he arranges for the appearance before Elizabeth of a Forester dressed as the mythical hunter Herne (as impersonated by Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*). Essex tells the Queen that Herne only appears when the monarch is contemplating committing a crime. To help with the deception everybody else denies seeing Herne. The gullible Queen is taken in, relents and pardons Raleigh, Bessie and Jill, and the operetta ends with a short masque of Robin Hood and Maid Marion.

ORCHESTRA

Violins: Tessa Welford (Leader), Gideon Baker, Andy Henderson, Lesley Lemon **Viola:** Jane Houghton **Cello:** Samantha Harris **Flute:** Loraine Brazier **Clarinet:** Ann Clausen **Oboe:** Barry Collisson **Bassoon:** Sandra Woolsey **Trumpet:** Sue Williams **Trombone:** Richard Honeysett **Horn:** Catherine Marchesi **Percussion:** Paul Lovegrove.

GEOFFREY BURNABY - DIRECTOR

Geoffrey has been directing operettas, musicals, pantomimes and plays for over 40 years. *Merrie England* is his seventh production for WOS. Six years ago he directed *Carmen* with Derek in New Hall: he is delighted to be back with Derek, and also working with Suzanne Hall.

DEREK BECK - MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Derek has now been directing for WOS for 7 years. (with the odd break for good behaviour) The fact that he is now often affectionately known as "Uncle Derek" is proof of the high esteem in which the society hold him. Derek and Geoffrey last worked together on the award winning production of *Carmen* in 2000.

SUZANNE HALL - CHOREOGRAPHER

Suzanne choreographed for the society's junior group, The Encore Youth Theatre before working and performing with WOS. Her most recent work being with *Oklahoma!* and *La Vie Parisienne*. Inside knowledge tells us that next year she will be turning her talents to directing.

BACKSTAGE

Stage Manager	Angie Barks and Team
Production Secretary	Jacqui Beckingham
Production manager	Pamela Jones
Orchestra Secretary	Gill Beck
Costumes	Nina Connolly, Barbara Chase, Pamela Jones, Llyn Parker and the 'hem night' team
Set Design	Sue Aiken
Set Construction	Brain Hurst
Assistant Choreographer	Louise Hodson

THE LEGEND OF HERNE THE HUNTER AND HERNE'S OAK

Medieval Europe was full of legends of a wild huntsman who frequented certain forests with a pack of spectral hounds. A notable English version tells of Herne the Hunter, one time Keeper in Windsor Forest, who according to Shakespeare walks in wintertime about midnight, blasts trees and takes cattle. He wears horns and rattles a chain. An oak in Windsor Great Park, blown down in 1863 and replanted by Queen Victoria, was reputed to be haunted by Herne.

Basil Hood adapts the Herne legend by creating a secret tunnel from Windsor Castle to Herne's Oak, and supposing that Henry VIII made use of the tunnel en route to his romantic rendez-vous. Jill-All-Along says that the King disguised himself with deerskin, stag horns and carried a hunting horn to put snoopers off the scent. Fifty years after Henry's death these props are apparently still hanging inside the mouth of the tunnel!

THE TIME - May Day, 1590

ACT ONE - The bank of The Thames, opposite Windsor morning
Interval 30 minutes

ACT TWO - Windsor Forest, near Herne's Oak late afternoon

The Winchester Morris Men (Bagman Stroph Rayner) will perform during the interval

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF RANK

Queen Elizabeth I	Joyce Smith
Robert, 2nd Earl of Essex	Adrian Hickford
Sir Walter Raleigh	Daniel Hickson
Bessie Throckmorton, the Queen's maid of honour	Sarah Walker
Walter Wilkins, a player in Shakespeare's company	Brian Hurst
Long Tom) Royal Foresters.....	Andrew Hartley
Big Ben)	Rick Bremner
A tailor) Men of Windsor.....	Vernon Tottle
A baker)	David Anderson
A tinker).....	Martin Larcombe
A butcher)	Bob Jones
A mead seller	David Rowe
The May Queen.....	Carole Lilly
Kate, the May Queen's attendant	Anne Croudass
Jill-All-Along, a gypsy	Lizzie Gilbert
Basil Hood, the narrator.....	Clive Burgess

CHORUS OF WINDSOR TOWNFOLK

Sue Aiken, Gill Beck, Jacqui Beckingham, Hannah Benwell, Margaret Bone, Clare Britton, Emma-Claire Crook, Michelle Crorie, Elizabeth Duff, Pam Farren, Jill Fitzpatrick, Talia H dstrom, Annette Hilton, Louise Hodson, Grace Honeysett, Linda Howard, Jan Gwynne Howell, Pamela Jones, Margaret Millen, Nicola Moore, Helen O'Sullivan, Gill Russell, Frances Stirrup, Mary Twomey, Nathalie Walker, Heather Williamson, Alex Bond, Alan Matheson, David Tatnall.

Props team.....	Debra Green
Hair & Make-up	Pamela Jones, Christine Harding, Libby Crawford
Lighting.....	Adrian Davis
Rehearsal Accompanists.....	Eileen Evans, Christine Walker
Rehearsal Refreshments.....	David Rowe
Front of House	Ron & Pauline Wilson & team
Front of House sub committee.....	Talia H�dstrom, Bob Jones, Gill Beck
Sales & Marketing	Sue Aiken, Jill Fitzpatrick

VICE PRESIDENTS AND HONORARY LIFE MEMBERS

Fred Allgood, Valerie Bell, Margaret Bone, Margaret Elton, The Mayor of Winchester, Phyllis Hamblin, Irene Hayne, Brian Hurst, Bob Jones, Pamela Peskett, James Sabben-Clare, Richard Steel, Dick Trower, Christine Walters, David Weait, Michael Williams

COUNCIL OF MANAGEMENT AND COMMITTEE (2005-2006)

Richard Steel (President), Susan Beckett, Brian Hurst, Anne Croudass (Chairman), Martin Larcombe (Company Secretary), Nathalie Walker (Hon. Treasurer), Sue Aiken, David Anderson, Jacqui Beckingham, Pam Farren, Lizzie Gilbert, Lorraine Morgan (Hon. Secretary), Adrian Hickford, Pamela Jones

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For further information, please contact: Margaret Bone, Friends' Secretary, 65 Fairfield Road, Winchester, SO22 6SG, Telephone: 01962 852165

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Headteacher, Western Primary School

Mr Les Yaldren, Caretaker, Western Primary School

The Theatre Royal Management

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Some principal costumes hired from Haslemere Wardrobe

NEXT PRODUCTION:

KISS ME KATE

7-11 November 2006, Theatre Royal, Winchester