



WADHAM
COLLEGE
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James as friend, and lover of music and drama

As a Wadham wife I've met many good people over the years, and James has to be one of the best. Apart from being a very genial, kind and clever companion at college events and at home, it soon became apparent that we all shared a love for music and theatre. Consequently Jeffrey and I are lucky to have very fond memories of numerous trips to the theatre, cinema and concert hall; here in Oxford, in London, Stratford or Birmingham, and even once, via the roundabouts, to Milton Keynes for a performance of *The Turn of the Screw*. Even now, when we receive concert or theatre programmes, there is a voice in my head wondering whether James would be interested in this or that, and I don't expect it to disappear any time soon, because he is constantly in our thoughts.

James's love and understanding of the performing arts was deep and wide-ranging, taking in plays, films, classical music, - particularly opera-, Gilbert and Sullivan and, miraculously for an Oxford academic, the musical. I'm still not sure how he packed so much into an already busy life, but I suspect that these cultural injections were essential for his general well-being.

Our interests didn't always coincide. James **resisted** our growing appreciation of unaccompanied Bach for violin, cello or keyboard. I think he found them too austere, without the theatricality he loved. We, in our turn, failed to appreciate on his terms, the operas of the 19th and early 20th centuries, which he would travel the world to see and hear. There is, however, a visit to Birmingham for a semi-staged *Rosenkavalier* which will always be a treasured memory.

It was good that, when James was going to have his cancer treatment, the hospital urged him to go on one of his planned overseas music trips first, and it was indicative of his recovery that he had embarked on other trips last year. Our last post card from him was from Munich on which he wrote 'I am having a great time here. Operatic standards VERY high (the very in capital letters).

But there was a wealth of classical and modern music that we gladly shared - symphonies, concertos, chamber music and lieder - and **we** almost certainly got the best of the bargain. James was more knowledgeable than us - he read all the newspaper previews and criticisms, and often spent Saturday mornings listening to the Radio 3 record reviews. Consequently our visits were enlivened by his comments, before and after the performances, and over the meal breaks. **They** ranged from a bit of fine dining in London to a sandwich picnic in the Wadham SCR before concerts here, or in the Holywell Music room, or at the Phoenix cinema for the live relayed performances of plays, operas and ballets. There was also companionable talk in his or our car when we went to London. On one such occasion - a very hot summer afternoon when we were going to the Wigmore Hall - we even introduced James to the air-conditioning possibilities of the car he had been driving for 2 or 3 years. He was so perceptive and analytic over music but so vague at times over the practicalities of life.

When James died we had three events already booked and initially we were at a loss as to how to deal with James's tickets. We certainly didn't need an empty seat to remind us of our loss.

The first visit was to the Barbican to hear Simon Rattle and the LSO in an epic programme of the 3 great Stravinsky ballets suites, and we were very cheered in our sadness to share that occasion with James's brother, Bryan.

The second occasion was a trip to Stratford to see 12th Night. On that occasion our student granddaughter came. She knew a lot about James and it was she who proposed his toast at the meal before the play.

Our last visit, only 2 weeks ago, was to Birmingham to see the new young CBSO conductor in a programme of Brahms and Bartok. James had not had chance to see her before. We were joined there by a young violin student from the Birmingham Conservatoire. He didn't know James but was very grateful for the gift from one music lover to another. He also, like James, was able to illuminate the performance with his own expert knowledge.

I think that James would have approved.

And I hope that, if there should be any form of afterlife, the angels are performing to a **very** high standard.