

# La Fontenille

## Summer Singing School

### France, 2009

**La Fontenille** is a superb 'petit château' situated in the heart of a small village in the Languedoc region of the south of France. The house overlooks the Canal du Midi, a World Heritage Site. David and Sundara, its owners since 2004, frequently open their house for song and instrumental recitals (*soirées lyriques*), which take place in their *salon*, accommodating up to 75 people.

Following the success of our residential singing school in 2007, we are offering another school for 2009. They are for aspiring classical solo singers of a wide range of age and ability, ranging from conservatoire students, through young professional, to enthusiastic amateur. Participants will receive a week of one-to-one tuition as part of a small group of four, up a maximum of eight, all staying at *La Fontenille*. The repertoire catered for will comprise French and English art song; Lieder; oratorio; Italian and other operatic arias.

**Dates:** Arrival, Saturday 25 July in time for dinner; departure, Sunday 2 August after breakfast.

**Tuition** will be led by Helen Lawson, vocal tutor at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow, one of the UK's five royal conservatoires, and noted particularly as a centre of excellence in singing. In addition, there will be **two** experienced accompanists available, together with three pianos, to supply an ample opportunity for one-to-one rehearsal and practice outside of the group masterclass sessions. There will be a group warmup and breathing class every morning, of about 45 minutes, before the lessons begin

**Participants** should prepare six or so songs for study, at least some of which should be singable from memory. Languages – English, French, German, Italian. The course language will be English, plus French and German when necessary. If participants wish, we will hold a public recital for our friends on the final Saturday, at which each participant will have the opportunity to sing three songs.



**Accommodation:** Spacious twin or double rooms (20 to 25 sq. m) each with en-suite facilities (private toilet, sink and shower). The gardens and 12.5 m pool are at the disposal of all participants and guests.

**Fee:** £650, including full board, all food, drink and tuition, based on sharing a room (for single occupancy add £150). Day participants (for local French residents only): £300, for tuition and lunch. Non-participant partners (sharing the room): £500 for full board, all food and drink, and observing the classes if desired. Extra nights of accommodation will be available on a bed-and-breakfast basis at £70 per night.

**Application:** Please enquire in the first instance by email or telephone either to David Smythe in France or to Helen Lawson in Glasgow. A non-returnable deposit of £200 will be required to be paid by 1 May 2009 if you are accepted, and the balance paid by 1 June 2009. Payment is accepted by cheque in pounds sterling or in euros at the market exchange rate. Bank transfer can also be arranged. You should also submit before 1 June copies of your study songs, to give time for the pianists to study them.

**Student singers:** If your attendance is dependent on gaining a bursary then your deposit will be returned in full if you are not successful. We have to know by 15 May whether or not you have obtained the bursary. Full details of the course can be supplied on request, to help your application.

**Travel:** Air to Carcassonne, Béziers or Perpignan; rail to Narbonne. Travel costs are not included, but we provide free pickup from Carcassonne Airport on Saturday 25 July, and return on the Sunday a week later. Other pickups or dropoffs will be charged at £25 per car load of up to four people (driver excluded). Perpignan and Béziers are alternative low-cost airports. You may wish to arrive via the superb French high-speed rail system to Narbonne, where you will be picked up and dropped off for free, as for Carcassonne Airport. For other dates/times to/from Narbonne Station - £15 per car load.

**Cancellation:** If there are insufficient participants to justify running the course (fewer than four) we shall return your deposit. But please don't make firm travel arrangements more than three months in advance of the start date.

### **Contacts:**

*David Smythe:*

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*Helen Lawson:*

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**La Fontenille:** Location, how to get here, accommodation and other information are all available on our website [www.lafontenille.org](http://www.lafontenille.org)

**Further course details:** These will be published on our website. In summary; arrival Saturday, departure Sunday one week later. Daily classes Sunday-Saturday, except Wednesday, a free day. Daily classes comprise a one-hour joint breathing class, and a half-hour one-to-one open teaching session with each student, at which one accompanist will be present. The other pianist will be available for private coaching / rehearsal during the day.

**Helen Lawson (A.R.C.M. (Hons), soprano**, was born in Northumberland and studied singing at the Royal College of Music and the National Opera Studio in London. In 1979 she was awarded several scholarships, including a Sir James Caird Travelling Scholarship, which enabled her to pursue further singing studies in Germany with Prof. Erik Werba at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Munich, and Prof. Konrad Richter at the *Hochschule für Musik* in Stuttgart. On returning to the UK she was chosen by Sir Geraint Evans to appear as Mimi in his B.B.C. Television Masterclass '*La Bohème*'.



Helen has appeared as soloist in opera houses both at home and abroad, including English National Opera; City of Birmingham Touring Opera; English Touring Opera; De Vlaamse Opera Antwerpen; Schlossfestspiele Zwingenberg and Landestheater Thüringen, and she was also a member of the Bayreuth Festival Chorus. Amongst the roles she has performed are: Madam Butterfly (Puccini: *Madama Butterfly*), Countess Almaviva (Mozart: *The Marriage of Figaro*), Pamina (Mozart: *The Magic Flute*), Tatiana (Tchaikovsky: *Eugene Onegin*), Echo (Richard Strauss: *Ariadne auf Naxos*), Solo Blumenmädchen (Wagner: *Parsifal*) and Senta (Wagner: *The Flying Dutchman*).

Helen has also appeared as soloist in concerts and oratorio, including performances of Britten's '*War Requiem*' and Verdi's '*Requiem*' at the Royal Albert Hall, conducted by Sir David Willcocks, as well as in song recitals both in this country and abroad.

In 2002 Helen was offered a Lectureship in Vocal Studies at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD) in Glasgow. Helen moved to Scotland from Germany, where she had been living and working both as a singer and singing teacher for 15 years. She now lives in Glasgow.

### **The accompanists:**

**Celia Duffy** studied music at the University of London and Trinity College of Music, London. As Director of Academic Development at the RSAMD, she leads the team responsible for development and management of research and consultancy, and has overall responsibility for research degree programmes. In her spare time, playing the piano competes with sailing round Scotland's beautiful west coast with husband Robin.

**Janet Barwell** studied piano, piano accompaniment and violin at the Royal Academy of Music in London, and later harpsichord in Cambridge. She has had a varied career as soloist in concertos, playing chamber music and accompanying instrumentalists and singers performing in England and in Europe. She gives piano lessons and coaches pupils for exams at home and in schools in Suffolk, and hopes to impart some of her enthusiasm and love of music to her students.