

# PRESS RELEASE

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## Top chamber opera company returns for seventh annual charity performance:



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Cecily's Fund, an Oxfordshire-based charity which sends Zambian orphans to school, is hosting another gala opera evening on 19<sup>th</sup> June.

This is the seventh year that Diva Opera, one of Britain's leading chamber opera companies, has performed in the region to help raise money for Cecily's Fund.

This year Diva Opera will be performing Verdi's Falstaff in a marquee in the grounds (by Capability Brown) of Wotton House (by John Soane), once home to the

Dukes of Buckingham.

Stephen Pritchard wrote in the Observer of their performance of Cossi Fan Tutte, last year, which they also performed for Cecily's Fund;

“It requires nerves of steel to sing in such an intimate manner; each expression and gesture is under the microscope. Only the best voices can stand up to this close-quarter action. Thankfully, Diva Opera cast with taste and precision. There was singing of real quality here, led by Matthew Hargreaves as a magnificently assured Don Alfonso... this is a production to be warmly applauded.”

John Bird of Remotegoat.co.uk said of the performance: “...this was a very accomplished performance and full credit must go to David Roger for an imaginatively conceived set which, together with the great costumes of Nicola Jackson, allowed the singers plenty of scope to make the piece visually interesting, despite a minute floor area.”

All the ticket money from the evening goes direct to the charity as a trust covers the costs of the evening. Guests are also invited to dine in the magnificent house or bring their own picnics to eat in the Sunken Garden or the marquee.

## Notes for editors:

### Diva Opera

Diva Opera, Britain's foremost chamber opera company, was founded by Anne Marabini Young and Bryan Evans in 1996. During the past thirteen years the company has produced more than forty different operas and has performed in Festivals, theatres and for charities throughout Great Britain, the Channel Islands, France, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Russia, Greece, Slovenia, Japan and Italy; including a performance of *La Cenerentola* at Teatro La Fenice in Venice in 2004.

Each year Diva Opera gives more than sixty performances world-wide and this year will perform with the internationally acclaimed tenor José Carreras for the eighth time since 2002. Diva Opera is also delighted to announce that Dame Kiri Te Kanawa will join them for the first time as special guest in the party scene from *Die Fledermaus* in London on 25th March.

In concert the company has performed at such prestigious venues as St. John's, Smith Square and the Wigmore Hall in London and in the presence of HRH The Princess Royal, HRH Princess Alexandra and HRH The Duke of Kent. Diva Opera's exciting new productions for 2010 are Bizet's *Carmen*, Verdi's *Falstaff* and the Party Scene from *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss.

### Cecily's Fund

Cecily's Fund was set up in 1998 in memory of Cecily Eastwood who died, aged 19 in a traffic accident while on her gap year in Zambia. Cecily's father is former British Ambassador to Switzerland, Basil Eastwood.

With funds raised by supporters in the UK, Switzerland and the USA, and working with local partner organisations, Cecily's Fund is currently supporting over 9,500 children in primary and secondary school. It also funds 35 young people to train as teachers and 50 a year as peer health educators to help teach other children about HIV and children's rights.

HIV has hit Zambia harder than almost anywhere else in the world. Already, one in five of all Zambian children are orphans and tens of thousands have been pushed into extreme poverty by the disease. HIV mainly affects adults, many of whom are parents. Many teachers have also been lost, are sick, or are frequently absent for funerals or to care for sick relatives.

Cecily's Fund won an Institute of Chartered Accountants' award for the clarity and user-friendliness of its Online Accounts in 2009.

Cecily's Fund is a UK Registered Charity number 1071660.

For more information please visit [www.cecilyfund.org](http://www.cecilyfund.org) or contact us direct.

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