

Festive cheer

Mezzo-soprano Pippa Dames-Longworth has performed throughout the world, but this Christmas she will be bringing a Victorian-style festive programme a little closer to home at the Royal Pavilion as she tells Simone Hellyer

I was asked by the Royal Pavilion in 2016 to do a recital and they very kindly said that I they didn't mind what I did. So, I had immense fun creating a programme about the arrival of spring. I love creating programmes that have a real theatrical mix and it was received very well.

For my last show at the Royal Pavilion I decided that I wanted to take the audience on a journey. I adapted Mozart's *The Magic Flute* down to 40 minutes and 'Mozart' and I took the audience through the corridors and fantastic rooms of the building on a journey to the Music Room for the performance. There was then a wonderful meal and I did some *La Traviata* and packaged it all as imaginatively as I could.

This year they have asked me to do a Christmas concert, which will be in the Music Room again. But, I'm still going to take the audience on a journey along with a mince pie and rum cocktail. I've called it *A Christmas Parlour* because what was wonderful about Victorian times was that everyone from the lowliest families to the grandest would have a piano and everyone would stand around and either narrate or sing. So, I'm going to try and create that environment in the second half of the show.

The shows take place under my Operatic Adventures banner, which is me and my Singing Salon group. About five years ago I started a group of about 15 singers called Singing Salon, which has been tremendously fun and rewarding to develop. It started as a way of helping solo singers out there who don't sing professionally. I am very aware that there are singers who leave college and don't go into the profession, but who are



Pippa Dames-Longworth

passionate singers who want to make music. I've now done lots of concerts with them and each time we do one, they just nail it.

I've been devising programmes for many years, but as a performer I have continued my conventional career too.

The last opera I performed in was with Paris Opera. I love performing in Paris; getting off the Metro at a stop called Opéra and looking at the kind of opera house you would draw as a child is just magical. But what I love about Operatic Adventures is that I get to be really creative and I get to direct and design too.

I love acting, so in the last few years I've been involved with pieces that have allowed me to develop that. I did a piece in Antwerp that was about World War I and a composer called Ivor Gurney. There were just three of us in it and we performed it

in the war museum in Ypres. We were taken to see some trenches that the public don't normally go to because they have been so well preserved. Things like that really interest me, because it was a programme devised around a subject.

I've lived in Lewes for about 20 years and now we've moved into the loveliest house just north of Lewes with a fascinating history. It was given by George III to a royal plumber who had saved him from an attempted assassination. It's a lovely house and I run the Singing Salon from our home. I always try to make a lovely, big homemade lunch – I'm not a great cook, but I have got much better!

A Christmas Parlour is at the Royal Pavilion on Thursday 6 December at 7pm, tickets £35/£31.50. brightonmuseums.org.uk/discover/events