

THE SUNDAY TIMES SECTION 6 | JUNE 20, 2010

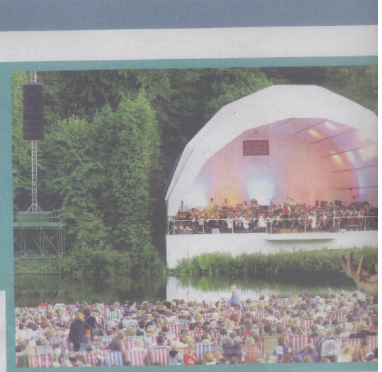
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THE ARTS GO ALFRESCO

Summer festivals aren't all rock, tents and mobile loos. Rob Ryan combs the stately homes and grand gardens of Britain for the season's most civilised cultural events



OPERA AND CLASSICAL
Don't go to open-air opera if your taste runs to Philip Glass or Harrison Birtwistle — outdoor productions tend towards the popular side of things. For instance, June 27 sees the mezzo-soprano Katherine Jenkins singing with the National Symphony Orchestra for a Last Night of the Proms at Wylands Estate, near Chelmsford, Essex, in its 574-acre of very picnicable parkland. Tickets cost £32.50 for adults, £16 for children aged 12

and under, under-5s free (01223 890153, www.essex-live.co.uk). The 15th-century Aberglasney gardens in Carmarthen, has an opera night on July 18 that features an extended interval ripe for dining on the lawn. It's Glydebourne. The Opera Box event will concentrate on Vienna, with selections from Strauss, Mahler and Tchaikovsky. Tickets cost a very un-Glydebourne £59 (01558 469669, [aberglasney.org](http://www.aberglasney.org)). The romantic, picturesque estate of the ruined stonery

Castle, in Lambethurst, Kent, hosts a production of La Bohème by Opera Brown in the walled garden on July 17. Bring your own rug and, if you haven't seen it before, option tickets if you don't end well. Tickets cost £22.50 (01424 63000, [nationaltheatre.org.uk/events](http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/events)). An eclectic mix of classical live performances will be at Mercedes-Benz World (mercedes-benz.co.uk) on the old Brooklands race circuit in Surrey on July 4. There'll be performances from Jussell

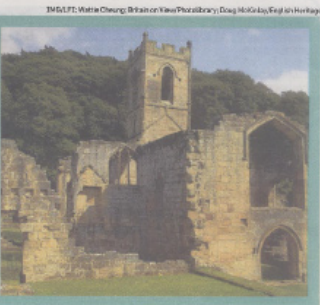
Watson (pictured, right), the former US Opera star, winner Darius Mythen Klass, Blake Evans, Paul Smith and Gemella Kenlake; tickets from £40 (844 483 3875, [ticketmaster.co.uk](http://www.ticketmaster.co.uk)). There is also a Last Night of the

Brooklands Proms on August 1, with fireworks, from £25. Book picnic hampers for both events from £29.95 (01932 499 4000, [brooklands.co.uk](http://www.brooklands.co.uk)). Leeds Castle, in Kent, also has pyrotechnics for its July 9 open-air concert with the Royal

Philharmonic Orchestra, the soprano Elizabeth Watts and narrator Robert Powell. Tickets from £17 (0845 652 692, [heritage-events.co.uk](http://www.heritage-events.co.uk)). On July 31, Tutins Park, in Knutsford, Cheshire, has the



See Russell Watson at Brooklands — or, from left, jazz at Kenwood, opera at Aberglasney and theatre at Mount Grace Priory



Halle performing Puccini, Dvořák, Bizet, Verdi and Wagner, with more fireworks. Tickets £27.50 (01223 344400, www.park.org.uk).

In London, 31 Buckingham Gate is turning its new Courtyard outdoor restaurant into an opera/classical venue, with the Covent Garden Strings Company (with vocalists) performing on July 30 and 31 and August 20 and 21. Special menus on the evening cost £39.50 (020 7769 7265, www.buckinghamgate.com).

At 1400s Manor, near Stratford-on-Avon, Warwickshire, you picnic in the garden and the concerts take place in the beautifully atmospheric Italianate cloisters. This July and August there are seven performances of Verdi's *Rigoletto*; tickets from £33. Performances of Rossini's *Cinderella* and Handel's *Xerxes* are scheduled, too, plus jazz and world music (01223 868124, [fordsters.com](http://www.fordsters.com)).

IN CULTURE

The cutting edge of the arts outdoors, from piano mobs to ice-cream van music. Page 8

THEATRE
No masque needed here: Elworth House Hotel, near Lutterworth, in Leicestershire, comes with its own 540-seat open-air theatre, in a wooded glade in the grounds. Until July 3, it's putting on the classic musical *Ozys and Dolls*. An overnight stay with breakfast, pre-theatre dinner and a ticket for the show costs £106pp on a Sunday night, £110 Tuesday-Thursday and £125 on a Friday or Saturday. There'll also be one-off comedy performances from the likes of Paul Merton and, er, Ken Dodd (01858 880058, www.pricedirect.com).

The Rose Garden at Lowther Pavilion, in Lytham, Lancashire, hosts a children's summer theatre season in late July and through August. Productions for 2010 include *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Dragon Who Lost His Home*, *Pinocchio* and *Peter Pan*. In the

event of wet weather, the productions switch to the nearby theatre. All tickets are £6 (01223 638666).

In nearby Lytham Hall, on July 16, the Illyria Theatre Company performs *Romeo and Juliet*; tickets are £12 ([lythamhall.org](http://www.lythamhall.org)). The company is taking it on tour, along with plays of *Friday* and *Providence* and James and the Giant Peach, to a string of stately homes, hotels, abbeys, gardens, forests and castles across Britain throughout the summer, including several National Trust properties. See [illyria.co.uk](http://www.illyria.co.uk) for full listings.

Bolton's hall, oaks and gardens, in Northumberland, play host to Oscar Wilde and Shakespeare, with *The Importance of Being Earnest*

June 26 and July 31. Tickets are £13 (01536 872150, [ladlowfestival.co.uk](http://www.ladlowfestival.co.uk)). The 123-acre Pennyhill Park Hotel, in Bagshot, Surrey, has an open-air *Pride and Prejudice* on July 27. Tickets cost £16/£20, and there's the option to order a hamper (£30pp) or tuck into a barbecue (£10/£15). Or bring your own picnic (01276 471774, [pennyhillpark.co.uk](http://www.pennyhillpark.co.uk)).

JAZZ
The lovely grounds of Kenwood House, in Hampstead, London, play host to two very different jazz stars this summer. Initially (and foolishly) perceived as yet another soft-focus, easy-listening blonde, Diana Krall (aka Mrs Elvis Costello), who plays on July 10, has serious jazz chops with both piano and voice, and great taste in material. On August 14, the impish Jamie Cullum can win over the most jazz-cynical crowd (all those years on cruise ships honed his audience skills) with his genre-busting approach. Tickets from £31.80/£33.30 (www.ticketmaster.co.uk).

Jazz royalty will be playing after the racing at Royal Windsor on July 19, when Ronnie Scott's All Stars venture upriver from Soho. The group draws from a pool of the finest British players, and if James Pearson, the band's regular pianist, is among them, take note — he is on blistering form at the moment. Tickets from £9, under-18s free with an adult (01293 498445, www.windsor-scources.co.uk).

The manicured 61-acre grounds of Lainston House Hotel, in Winchester, has an afternoon of jazz classics on July 31, performed by the Andy Dickens Band and Jambalaya. Tickets are £52, under-12s £26, including Pimm's and a hog roast (01962 726188, [lainstonhouse.com](http://www.lainstonhouse.com)). If you stay over, there is a special B&B rate of £135 per room.

The grounds of the gothic-meets-classical Castle Ward, in Strangford, Co Down, has mainstream jazz in its exotic sunken garden every Sunday afternoon from July 11 to August 22. It costs £5.80/£3 (028 4468 1204, [nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk)). Just north of Aberdeen, in Elton, the National Trust

for Scotland is offering jazz on a Summer's Evening on July 17 at the 18th-century Pitmedden Garden, with the New Orleans and Dixie specialists the Atholl Smith Band playing in the walled

garden. Tickets start at £13 (0844 492 2177, www.org.uk). They haven't finalised the line-up for London's riverside Imperial Wharf Jazz Festival on September 16 and 18, but we do know that a) it'll be free and

b) it will have impressive names on the bill (in previous years, Slye Eastwood, Ian Shaw, Stan Tracey and Neil Cowley). Keep your eyes on www.imperialwharf.com/jazz — it'll be a good way to wind up the season.



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