


THE NUFFIELD THEATRE, Southampton
and the
MUSIC DEPARTMENT OF SOUTHAMPTON UNIVERSITY
present  

DICKENS AND THE GREAT OPERATIC DISASTER!



Friday 26 October 7.30pm



£12 £10 Concessions

BOX OFFICE: 023 8067 1771 WWW.NUFFIELDTHEATRE.CO.UK

A COMEDY behind the scenes featuring
MR CHARLES DICKENS and the final
rehearsal of his rarely performed early
work THE VILLAGE COQUETTES,
an operatic burletta in two acts.

*"...it has the demerit of having the incidents
most clumsily hung together... the
disappointment was deeply and generally
felt... very exaggerated theatrical puff...in
the band there is a little boy who beats the
drums, but never tunes them. He should
be whipped...The costume is absolutely
disfiguring... acting harsh, overstrained
and unnatural..." (John Forster,
Dickens's Best Friend & Biographer)*

Music by JOHN HULLAH, at the Piano MR DAVID OWEN NORRIS,
under the direction of MR RUSS TUNNEY

VARIOUS NOVELTIES ARE IN ACTIVE PREPARATION

The Nuffield
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DICKENS AND THE GREAT OPERATIC DISASTER!

THE NUFFIELD,
Friday October
26th at 7.30pm

FOR

One Night Only!

In late December 1835 Charles Dickens and English composer John Hullah wrote a comic operetta entitled *The Village Coquettes*. Dickens was 23 and not yet the literary star that we now know him to be. Hullah was also 23 and a rising star of the music world. They began working on the piece – Hullah was inspired by the great work of the Italian opera and Dickens wanted to create an English drama where the characters would act and

talk like everyday folk. The result was a critical disaster, being famously mauled by critic John Forster. However, within the piece lie the seeds of future greatness – Dickens's superb characterisation, dialogue, and comedy. Hullah with his following Melodies and rollicking choruses. *The Village Coquettes*, a tale of country maidens seduced by slimy types from Town, of quarrels and evictions, and all with a happy ending, hit the

stage in 1836. It was immediately eclipsed by the enormous success of *The Pickwick Papers*, closely followed by *Oliver Twist*, and Dickens's destiny as a novelist rather than a librettist was sealed. The libretto was published, but has never been widely known. *Dickens and the Great Operatic Disaster* takes us backstage to the final rehearsal and we see the bickering, the tension, the nerves, the rewriting...

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