

POPULAR West Wales tenor Aled Hall is sporting the biggest of smiles this week after making his first 'stage' appearance in seven months.

The pandemic has decimated Aled's concert diary, but the 'have suitcase, will travel' operatic tenor was back on the road at the weekend to appear in Pagliacci in London.

"It was great to get that buzz back again," said Aled, 52, who has spent most of the pandemic in rural isolation in the lovely setting of the family smallholding in Dolgran, Pencader.

"Seven months down the line, you wonder have you still got it? Have you still got the voice? Thankfully, it is still there! I love live performance and this version of Pagliacci was a joy to do.

"It was excellent, working with a great bunch of people – singers and production staff who really know their stuff."

The performance featured Elin Pritchard and Robert Hayward, with Aled Hall playing the role of Beppe in Ruggero Leoncavallo's Italian opera.

It was staged at St James' Church in Islington.

The Stage magazine review of the production said: "Director Christopher Luscombe manages to create lust and longing among the cast at two metres' distance, and virus-carrying props are reduced to Nedda's belt, with which she beats off Tonio's advances.

"Aled Hall excels as Beppe – needing no more than a reversed baseball cap to support his comic persona."

Aled revealed the Pagliacci performance had started as a discussion with operatic friends over what to do in the 'new normal' world of Covid-19.

He said: "Basically, we were trying to think outside the box and put something on. Everyone is out of work, so we thought it best to try something ourselves. Something that didn't involve too many people.



Popular operatic tenor Aled Hall, from Dolgran, Pencader. Left, Elin Pritchard, Robert Hayward and Aled Hall in Pagliacci at St James' Church, Islington. Picture: Robert Workman

"Pagliacci is perfect – it's an hour and 20 minutes, no interval and you can do it with a small cast.

"We had six singers, a conductor, a director, a pianist, cellist and a violinist – and an eight-strong chorus (two of each voice) from British Youth Opera, who were socially distanced down the side of the church.

"We put it together in a short space of time, keeping all the social distance rules in the production. If we sang to each other, for example, we made sure we were at least three metres away to stay within the rules and advice.

"It was a big challenge to put a production on.

"We were allowed 70 in the audience, but just to be sure we kept it to 50 just to make sure everyone was safe. And we sold out.

"The audience went crazy at the end because they hadn't heard live music for seven months. A few of the

national theatre critics even paid for their own tickets as well.

"It was a very slick production exercise. Basically, I took the train up early Thursday morning and went straight into rehearsal. More rehearsals on Friday and a dress rehearsal at 4pm. And then the show at 8pm on Saturday.

"It was great fun. It was a huge challenge because we are so accustomed to being up close and personal with each other on stage.

"It was an absolute joy to hear music again and hear singing again. I have been here in my bubble (near Pencader) and haven't heard any other singers. It was great being back 'in the room' with great friends and great singers.

"Hopefully, this may start something. People will have seen this little troupe has put on a show.

"Pagliacci is about a small group of entertainers, so it was a perfect story

for us to put on. The audience were delighted and there was a standing ovation at the end.

"We are setting up a little company called Opera Ensemble. The plan is to launch this week and the idea is to target smaller venues.

"For example, if somewhere like St Peter's Church in Carmarthen wanted us – and if the social distancing rules can be followed – it would be a case of seeing if we could do the date, checking the singers are available. And then we all turn up a day before to rehearse and the stage the show.

"Hopefully, people will hear about what we have just done and people will want us to do it again. Islington was very much an experiment. The vicar of St James' Church offered us the venue for nothing and we did it all 'at cost', so to speak, just for expenses.

"Hopefully, in setting up Opera Ensemble, we can get some sponsorship or arts funding to make the project get lift-off."

You can follow Opera Ensemble on Twitter @OperaEnsembleUK

Aled, who is one part of Tri Tenor Cymru (The Welsh Three Tenors), is now widely recognised as a 'go-to guy' for the character tenor repertoire in opera, both in the UK and abroad.

Aled's lengthy CV reads like a guide to top flight opera.

Highlights, both in the UK and abroad, have included the following roles: Valzacchi, Der Rosenkavalier (Royal Swedish Opera); Pang, Turandot, Spoletta, Tosca, the Dancing Master, Manon Lescaut (Royal Opera House); Don Curzio, Le nozze di Figaro (Aix-en-Provence, Tokyo, Baden Baden); Mr Upfold, Albert Herring (Salzburger Landestheater) Valzacchi, Der Rosenkavalier, Main-top, Billy Budd, and Gherardo, Gianni Schicchi (Opera North).

■ During the coronavirus crisis, this column will not be featuring events, but will be putting the spotlight on west Wales singers and choirs. If you have news of cancelled and postponed events, email robert.lloyd01@walesonline.co.uk



Your 7-Day TV listings starts here

## WEDNESDAY'S TV 7.10.20

### CHOICE



Helen Baxendale

#### Agatha and the Midnight Murders

**Channel 5, 9pm**  
Premiere. As the bombs fall on London during the Blitz, writer Agatha Christie decides it is time to kill off Hercule Poirot – her most famous creation. She decides to sell the novel featuring the Belgian sleuth's death to a private buyer, a superfan who will pay a fortune to own a piece of history and keep the beloved detective alive.

### BBC1

**6.00** Breakfast. **9.15** Rip Off Britain. **10.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **11.00** Critical Incident. **11.45** Paramedics on Scene. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News at One; Weather. **1.30** BBC Wales Today; Weather. **1.45** The Indian Doctor. (R) **2.30** Hairy Bikers' Best of British. (R) **3.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **3.45** Garden Rescue. (R) **4.30** The Repair Shop. (R) **5.15** Pointless.

**6.00** BBC News at Six; Weather. **6.30** BBC Wales Today; Weather.

**6.55** Party Political Broadcast. By the Welsh Conservative Party. (R)

**7.00** The One Show. Presented by Alex Jones and Jermaine Jenas.

**7.30** Ghosts.

**8.00** The Repair Shop. Jay Blades and the team bring four treasured family heirlooms back to life. (R)

**9.00** Ambulance. Police request urgent assistance at the scene of a stabbing.

**10.00** BBC News at Ten.

**10.30** BBC Wales Today; Weather.

**10.45** Love Life.

**11.10** Love Life. Darby embarks on a non-committal hook-up bender.

**11.45** The Grand Party Hotel. Lawrence gives the staff just one week to set up a glamping festival on the roof. (R)

**12.45** Weather for the Week Ahead. **12.50** BBC News.

### BBC2

**6.30** The Repair Shop. (R) **7.15** Critical Incident. (R) **8.00** Sign Zone: See Hear. **8.30** Highland Road Rescue – Our Lives. (R) **9.00** BBC News at 9. **10.00** BBC News. **11.15** Politics Live. **1.00** Decimate. (R) **1.45** Make Me a Dealer. (R) **2.30** 800 Words. (R) **3.15** The Great British Sewing Bee. (R) **4.15** The Bear Family and Me. (R) **5.15** Flog It! (R)

**6.00** Richard Osman's House of Games. With Rick Edwards, Scarlett Moffatt, Naga Munchetty and David O'Doherty. (R)

**6.30** Fish Town.

**7.00** Blitz: The Bombs That Changed Britain. An incendiary bomb that set fire to a Bristol church in November, 1940. Last in the series. (R)

**8.00** Mary Berry's Simple Comforts.

**8.30** Nadiya Bakes.

**9.00** Murder Case. New series. A man who was brutally assaulted and found fighting for his life.

**10.00** Motherland. (R)

**10.30** Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby. (R)

**10.45** Newsnight.

**11.25** Weather.

**11.30** In the Face of Terror. (R)

**12.30** Sign Zone: See Hear. (R)

**1.00** Saving Lives at Sea. (R) **2.00** The Diagnosis Detectives. (R) **3.00** This Is BBC Two.

### ITV WALES

**6.00** Good Morning Britain. **9.00** Lorraine. **10.00** This Morning. **12.30** Loose Women. **1.30** ITV Lunchtime News; Weather. **1.55** ITV News Cymru Wales; Weather. **2.00** Judge Rinder. **3.00** Tenable. (R) **3.59** ITV Cymru Wales Weather. **4.00** Tipping Point. **5.00** The Chase.

**6.00** ITV News Wales at Six; Weather.

**6.25** Party Political Broadcast. By the Welsh Conservative Party.

**6.30** ITV Evening News; Weather.

**7.00** Emmerdale. Billy asks Ellis for advice on dealing with Dawn.

**7.30** Coronation Street. A suspicious Leanne pries the truth out of Nick.

**8.00** Wales This Week. Current affairs issues.

**8.30** Coronation Street. Leanne reels from Nick's confession that he has a son.

**9.00** The Savoy. Staff prepare for Valentine's Day, one of the busiest nights of the year.

**10.00** ITV News at Ten; Weather.

**10.30** ITV News Cymru Wales; Weather.

**10.45** Peston.

**11.45** British Touring Car Championship Highlights. Races 16, 17 and 18 of the season from Silverstone.

**1.00** Ideal World. **3.00** James Martin's American Adventure. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** Judge Rinder. (R)

### S4C

**6.00** Cyw. **11.00** Dysgu Gyda Cyw. **12.00** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd. **12.05** Ceffylau Cymru. (R) **12.30** Datganiad Covid-19. **1.00** Seiclo: Giro d'Italia. **3.30** Codi Pac. **4.00** Prynhawn Da. **4.55** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd. **5.00** Stwnsh. (R)

**6.00** Y Ty Cymreig. (R)

**6.25** Darllediad Gwleidyddol Gan y Ceidwadwyr Cymreig.

**6.30** Pysgod i Bawb. (R)

**7.00** Heno.

**7.30** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd.

**8.00** Heno Aur.

**8.25** Dau Gi Bach.

**8.55** Newyddion S4C a'r Tywydd.

**9.00** Bwrdd i Dri.

**9.30** Seiclo: Giro d'Italia.

**10.00** Mwy o Sgorio.

**10.35** Y Sioe Fwyd. (R)

**11.05** Trysorau Cymru: Tir, Tai a Chyfrinachau. (R)

**11.40** Diwedd.

**Channel 4: 9.35** Frasier. (R) **10.35** Undercover Boss USA. (R) **11.30** Channel 4 News Summary. **11.35** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **12.30** Steph's Packed Lunch. **2.10** Countdown. **3.00** A Place in the Sun. **4.00** The Great House Giveaway. **5.00** Couples Come Dine with Me. (R) **6.00** The Simpsons. (R) **6.30** Hollyoaks. **7.00** Channel 4 News. **8.00** Location, Location, Location: 20 Years and Counting. **9.00** 24 Hours in A&E. **10.00** Grayson Perry's Big American Road Trip. **11.00** Trump: An American Dream. (R) **12.00** Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **12.55** Couples Come Dine with Me. (R)

### CHANNEL 5

**6.00** Milkshake! **9.15** Jeremy Vine. **11.15** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away! (R) **12.10** 5 News at Lunchtime. **12.15** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.10** Access. **1.15** Home and Away. (R) **1.45** Neighbours. **2.15** Film: Deadly Vengeance. (2019) **4.00** Friends. (R) **4.30** Friends. (R) **5.00** 5 News at 5. **5.30** Neighbours. (R)

**6.00** Home and Away. Bella discovers Colby and Taylor kissing. (R)

**6.30** 5 News Tonight.

**7.00** Railway Journeys with Chris Tarrant. Chris travels through the Middle East to explore what remains of the colonial railways, which were built there more than 100 years ago; (R) **5** News Update.

**8.00** Walking Britain's Roman Roads. Dan Jones travels along the Fosse Way; (R) **5** News Update.

**9.00** Film: Agatha and the Midnight Murders. (2020) Premiere. As the bombs fall on London during the Blitz, writer Agatha Christie decides it is time to kill off Hercule Poirot. Mystery, starring Helen Baxendale.

**11.05** White House Farm Murders: The New Evidence.

**12.05** Patrick Mackay: 45 Years Behind Bars. (R) **1.00** The 21.co.uk Live Casino Show. **3.00** Access.

**3.10** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away! (R) **4.00** Britain's Great Cathedrals with Tony Robinson. (R) **4.45** Wildlife SOS. (R)

### DIGITAL

**BBC Four**  
**7.00** A Garden in Snowdonia **7.30** The Joy of Painting **8.00** Castles: Britain's Fortified History **9.00** The Secret Life of Landfill: A Rubbish History **10.30** Filthy Cities **11.30** The Secret History of Writing

**ITV2**  
**3.50** The Masked Singer US **4.55** Dress to Impress **6.00** Take Me Out **7.00** You've Been Framed! **7.30** Totally You've Been Framed! Gold **8.00** Two and a Half Men **9.00** Love Island USA **10.00** Celebrity Karaoke Club **11.00** Family Guy

**ITV3**  
**3.55** Midsomer Murders **5.55** A Touch of Frost **8.00** Foyle's War **10.00** DCI Banks **11.00** Agatha Christie's Poirot

**ITV4**  
**10.30** French Open Tennis: Roland Garros Live. Coverage of the men's and women's singles quarter-finals. **10.00** British Superbike Championship Highlights **11.30** Isle of Man TT

**E4**  
**4.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **5.00** Young Sheldon **6.00** The Big Bang Theory **7.00** Hollyoaks **7.30** The Goldbergs **8.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **9.00** Celebrity Gogglebox **10.00** Gogglebox **11.05** Buffy the Vampire Slayer

**Film4**  
**3.05** The File on Thelma Jordan (1950) **5.10** Last Train from Gun Hill (1959) **7.05** The Two Faces of January (2014) **9.00** Mechanic: Resurrection (2016) **11.00** In Bruges (2008)