

PRESS RELEASE
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Footy to Verdi boys to sing at Wembley on Saturday



The stars of the hugely successful short film *From footy to Verdi*, in which three Chelsea fans were taken to the opera, are to lead the traditional rendition of 'Abide with Me' from the pitch at Wembley Stadium connected by EE on Emirates FA Cup Final Day.

Adam Porges and Rob Joyce, whose journey into opera was charted in the documentary, and Michael Volpe, General Director of Opera Holland Park and mastermind of the film, will join 21 other singers to open the match between Arsenal and Chelsea on Saturday 27 May. The choir is part of the FA's 'For All' campaign and will be rehearsed and conducted by the tenor Seán Ruane, whose company CHANT Productions has arranged this on behalf of the FA.

From footy to Verdi followed the three Chelsea fans - Adam, Rob and Harry the Greek - on their emotional journey into the world of opera. It included a visit to the Royal Opera House, with the men experiencing rehearsals and backstage life, and finally enjoying a performance of Verdi's *La traviata*. Having won several awards in the UK, *From footy to Verdi* recently crossed the Atlantic with a nomination and screening at Silicon Beach Film Festival in Los Angeles. It is available to watch on YouTube and also via BBC Arts.

Michael Volpe, General Director of Opera Holland Park comments:

"*From footy to Verdi* was a remarkable success, really demonstrating the power of the classical arts and breaking down stereotypes. The men in the film, especially Harry and Rob, have discovered new horizons and a whole new way of thinking about music, singing and culture in general. We have made a short film about our trip to LA that further illustrates this."

"This amazing opportunity to participate in singing 'Abide with Me' in front of a sell-out crowd as well as the millions watching on television is just the culmination – or perhaps it's the beginning – of an extraordinary journey. The fact we are all Chelsea fans and that our club is in the final makes it all the more special."

Such was the film's impact last year that many previously uninterested people have begun to attend performances at Opera Holland Park, including large groups of Chelsea fans. 25 fans led by Adam, Harry and Rob gathered for an evening at *La bohème* soon after the film's release last summer.

The Emirates FA Cup Final choir will have a series of rehearsals in London before the big day, when they will perform alongside the Band of the Royal Logistics Corp.

From footy to Verdi can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/6QxaLMiHsUU>

Investec Opera Holland Park's 2017 season runs from 1 June to 29 July. For further information and tickets visit www.operahollandpark.com.

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For more information about *From footy to Verdi* and the Emirates FA Cup Final choir, as well as interview and picture requests, please contact:

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