

# PHANTOM OF THE GALLERY

Andrew Lloyd Webber once said he only wrote musicals so he could buy paintings. Now his multi-million pound collection is on display at London's Royal Academy for the first time.

*A Vision Of Fiammetta*  
by Dante Gabriel  
Rossetti, 1878

TEXT PHILIPPA ANDERSON



**W**hat would you buy if you were extremely rich? For some, the choice would be a luxury car, maybe a yacht, a house (or two) in a must-have location, like Hollywood, or even a far-flung island.

But what if you were inordinately rich, so rich that you could indulge your wildest obsessions?

For Andrew Lloyd Webber, that 'wildest obsession' is Pre-Raphaelite paintings. Not for him

'highly desirable' — so much so that he recently paid £6.6 million for *St Cecilia* by John William Waterhouse — his 'like' has progressed into an 'obsession'.

**L**loyd Webber was just 12, a student at London's Westminster School, when he became fascinated with Victorian architecture and furniture. One name kept cropping up: Dante Gabriel Rossetti. So when he attended an art sale at the young age of 15 with his grandmother,



*Dante in Exile* by Lord Leighton

modern art collected by the likes of David Bowie, Elton John, Madonna and Charles Saatchi, but an art genre which today for many has a powerful mystique.

Back in the 1960s, when he first became interested in the Pre-Raphaelites, their paintings were out of fashion — as were most things connected with the British Victorian era. The more friends told him he was wrong to buy Victorian art, he claims, the more he liked the pictures.

At the beginning, when he was paying a few pounds for each piece, that may have been the case. But as the years rolled by, Pre-Raphaelite paintings became

he was delighted to be able to afford a Rossetti drawing for £12.

To this day, he remembers that what he really wanted to buy was one of Rossetti's paintings. He also remembers another painting that cost £50. That was *Flaming June* by Lord Leighton — today estimated to be worth more than £4 million.

Lloyd Webber himself admits that his interest in the period has now become a 'totally consuming passion'. He travels the world with his dealer David Mason in search of pieces from this period, often buying up whole auctions of Pre-Raphaelite works. It is reputed that in 1994, in one

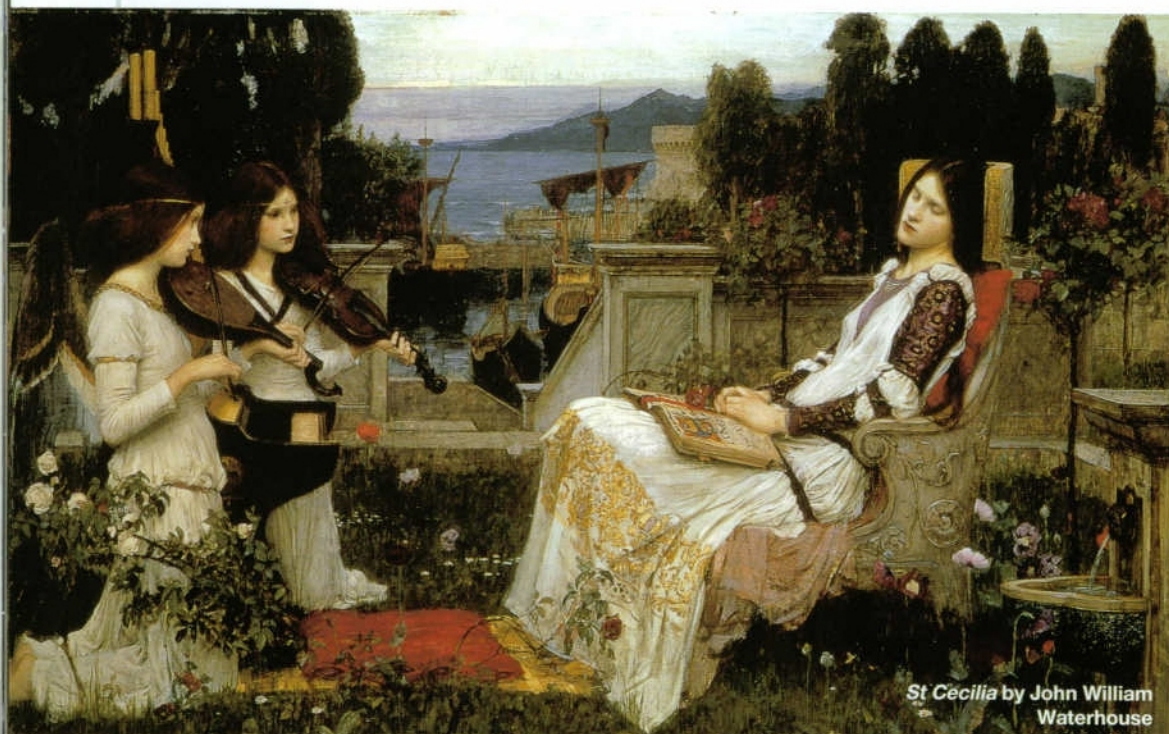
*Treasure a hallmark  
of aesthetics,  
precision and  
elegance with  
Masterpieces*



**MAURICE LACROIX**  
Switzerland

*Tomorrow's Classics*





*St Cecilia* by John William Waterhouse



*Pandora* by John William Waterhouse, 1896

three-week period, the composer spent £10 million on paintings.

But then, as the UK's greatest modern composer (or as some say 'the most powerful figure in world theatre'), he has earned vast sums from his successful musicals — including *Phantom Of The Opera*, *Starlight Express*, *Evita* and *Cats*. *Phantom Of The Opera* alone is said to have notched up US\$2.5 billion in box office takings — even more than *Titanic* at a meagre US\$1.8 billion. *Phantom Of The Opera* has already played to more than 58 million people in 105 cities in 19 countries around the world.

**N**early 40 years after he bought his first piece, Lloyd Webber has earned enough to collect more than 200 paintings, predominantly Pre-Raphaelites, and now has the finest collection in private hands. Initial acquisitions of key works by both well-known and second-generation

Pre-Raphaelite artists led to increasingly significant purchases of works by members of the original Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. He has also broadened his purchases to masterpieces by other major artists including works by Picasso, Reynolds and Canaletto.

And now his entire collection is at the Royal Academy, London, for a three-month exhibition. The exhibition *Pre-Raphaelite And Other Masters, The Andrew Lloyd Webber Collection* is from September 20, 2003 to December 12, 2003. (For more details visit: [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk)).

While a small number of paintings from his collection are on loan to galleries around the world — including the Tate Gallery in London, the Prado in Madrid and the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh — many of the paintings which will be on show at the Royal Academy have never been seen in public, and are unlikely ever to be shown again.

In addition to 200 paintings in the exhibition, will be drawings, tapestries, rugs, books and artefacts — around 300 items in total. The academy has space for only about 80 per cent of his collection which usually grace his homes in New York, London, south of France, Ireland (a castle) and England's rural Berkshire (a 4,000-acre estate).

Andrew Lloyd Webber said, "It will be fantastic to see the collection together in one place in this way. I sincerely hope it will give as much pleasure to those who visit the exhibition as it has given me, my family, and friends over many years."

**F**riends have commented that he will be bereft without his beloved paintings, unable to cope with the blank spaces on his walls — so much so that he is expected to be a keen visitor to the exhibition himself.

The Royal Academy



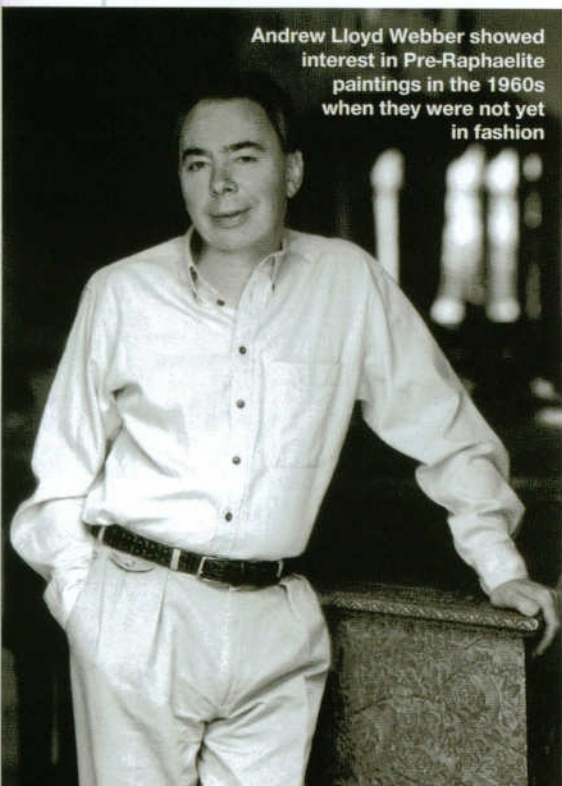
certainly expects the show will be as big a sell out as Lloyd Webber's musicals, if only for the celebrity connection. Certainly the opportunity to see one rich person's indulgence is bound to appeal to many.

For instance, when he bought *St Cecilia*, the £6.6 million he paid was the highest price ever paid for a Victorian work of art. It had in effect been lost to the world for 60 years, being last sold in 1913 for less than £3,000. When it came to auction at London's Christies in 2003, Lloyd Webber paid twice the estimate.

He already owned six Waterhouse paintings, but claimed that this was the best. Painted in Pre-Raphaelite style in 1895, it shows *St Cecilia*, an early Christian martyr, sleeping in her garden with two angel musicians serenading her. Visitors to the exhibition will no doubt want to gaze on and see what it is that makes this painting so special.

Another Waterhouse painting which will also be on show is *Pandora* which illustrates the Greek legend of Pandora's Box. Fifteen works by Rossetti

Andrew Lloyd Webber showed interest in Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the 1960s when they were not yet in fashion



## THAT PRE-RAPHAELITE APPEAL

### An Intriguing Secret Brotherhood

The Pre-Raphaelite Movement was a name adopted by a group of young English painters in 1848. The founder members included Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Holman Hunt and John Everett Millais, and they formed a secret brotherhood. (The initials PRB — Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood — were first used on a painting by Hunt in 1849.) Other members of the movement included Ford Madox Brown, but never admitted to the brotherhood. Other painters continued their style after the group broke up in 1860, including Lord Leighton and John William Waterhouse.

### Young And Idealistic

The movement could have come straight out of a plot for a Lloyd Webber musical. The young painters (Millais was only 19) were idealists, searching for what they believed was the purer art of the late medieval period adding a renewed emphasis on a realistic depiction of nature. While they were linked by their revolutionary fervour, their individual styles were quite distinctive. Rossetti was the driving force, but Millais was the most gifted, painting *Ophelia* (Tate Gallery, London) — thought to be the greatest work of this period. Hunt's *Light Of The World* (Keble College, Oxford) is also well known.

### Paintings That Tell A Story

Their detailed paintings often feature beautiful women and usually illustrate legends, bible stories and classic literature. For example, *Ophelia* by Millais shows the drowning heroine of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

### Scandalous Love Lives

Rossetti was said to be inspired by the beauty of Elizabeth Siddall, whom he married in 1860. She was the model for *Ophelia* and many other Pre-Raphaelite works. But their marriage was short-lived as within two years she was dead from a laudanum overdose. He later began an affair with Jane, the wife of William Morris. Millais fell in love with the wife of John Ruskin, the contemporary art critic and writer, and later married her after her marriage to Ruskin was annulled on the grounds of non-consummation.

### Strong Influence On British Art

The Pre-Raphaelites influenced the English Arts & Crafts Movement through a connection with William Morris. They left a legacy of beautiful pictures and, through Edward Burne-Jones, stunning stained glass windows that grace many Victorian churches.

(one of the original Brotherhood) will be on show with the stunning *A Vision Of Fiammetta* sure to attract much attention.

When the exhibition of his paintings was announced in May, Lloyd Webber said, "It's a good time for me to lend them — I'm going to be up to my eyes in work with the film for *Phantom Of The*

*Opera* and a new musical." He recently revealed that this next musical will be based on the novel *The Woman In White* by British author Wilkie Collins, a writer who was a contemporary of the Pre-Raphaelites. And no doubt he will earn more millions from this show enabling him to buy yet more paintings. ▲