

Conductor doubles as promoter at Shugborough

Music man who pulls the strings

In the first of three features looking at Shugborough's musical extravaganza, ANNA JONES meets Adrian Jackson



IT'S A RARE quality to have business sense as well as an artistic soul but conductor and concert promoter Adrian Jackson is a man of many talents.

He owns the Lichfield-based City Concert Organisation and is busy organising a musical extravaganza at Shugborough next month.

As the sky darkens on Friday, August 5 the estate will be echoing with the bang of fireworks, the clash of cymbals and the roar of applause as the Music and Fireworks Weekend gets under way.

And Adrian is the man behind it all. Not only is he booking acts and organising car parking – he is conducting the orchestra on the second night too.

It sounds like a complete stress fest but, relaxing over a cup of coffee in the Shugborough tearooms, Adrian looked cool as a cucumber. In fact he wouldn't have it any other way.

"I have always wanted to be in charge," he said. "I am not content looking after a little bit, I want to look after everything. I'm probably a bit of a control freak."

His reputation spreads far beyond the Staffordshire borders, both as a musician and a businessman. He has worked with many renowned orchestras performing at countless prestigious venues including the International Festival of Music at the Musikapella in Austria and, closer to home, the Symphony Hall Birmingham.

Projects

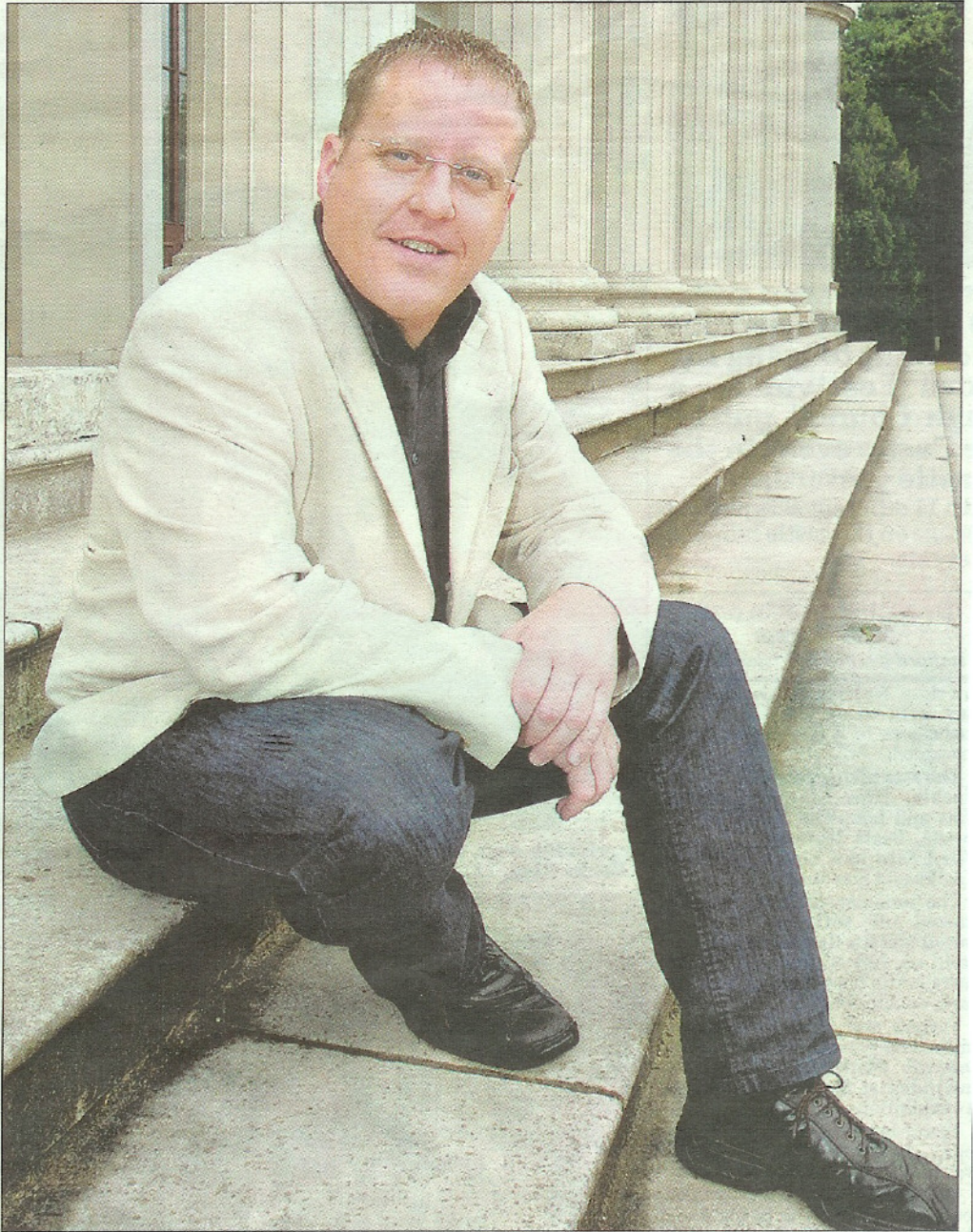
And he is linked with big names including Matthew Kelly, Terry Wogan, David Jacobs, Nicholas Parsons, Darren Day, GMTV's Fiona Phillips and Coronation Street's Bill Roach, better known as Ken Barlow. And (as if that wasn't enough) he presents the popular musical theatre programme Showstoppers on Saga 107.5FM every Sunday evening.

But, of all his projects, Shugborough has a special place in his heart.

"I had a vision," he said dramatically. "Shugborough has got a great history of concerts and it is a perfect venue in the Midlands for this type of event. I used to come along to concerts and think, 'Wouldn't it be great to make them special? To give people the chance to see three different events in one weekend.'"

This summer's programme offers something for everyone – a tribute to rock and pop on the Friday evening, a proms spectacular on the Saturday and some nostalgic VE Day celebrations on the Sunday called Flavours of the Forties. There will be Big Band music from the John Miller Orchestra, led by Glenn Miller's nephew, and Adrian has bagged former royal correspondent Jennie Bond to host the Proms Spectacular.

"I just wanted to make it a special event for the Midlands; the biggest and best really. I don't think small I always think big," he grinned.



"I was born to be a conductor," says Adrian Jackson of the City Concert Organisation

"Shugborough is perfect for the British proms. We are not just giving people a musical experience but a British experience. They will come here no matter what, whether they are wearing shorts and T-shirts or waterproofs and wellies. Whatever happens these concerts will go ahead."

The last two years have been blessed with sunny skies and were a huge hit with the crowds. "I conduct the Saturday night concert and when you turn around and see 8,000 people having a nice time it makes it all worthwhile," said Adrian glowing with pride.

"I come from a very musical family. I can always

remember visiting my grandparents' house and conducting records with my grandma's knitting needles. I was born to be a conductor; I always wanted to stand in front of an orchestra."

It takes a whole week to prepare the site and, with 5,000 cars arriving at the same time, there's a rigorous health and safety infrastructure in place.

"Every year we look at ways of making it bigger and better and this year we have upped the ante on the whole weekend," added Adrian. "We literally transform the field into a concert arena. I have worked all over the country and this is the best venue for an outdoor concert."