

**NATIONAL
YOUTH
MUSIC
THEATRE**

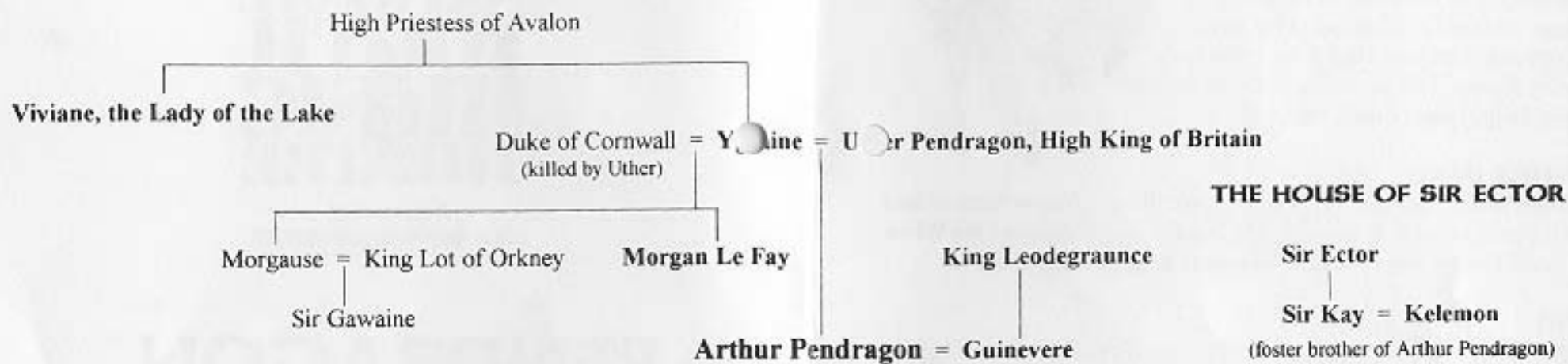
Supported by
SIR ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

PENDRAGON

A new music theatre work by
Peter Allwood, Joanna Horton,
Jeremy James Taylor and Frank Whately

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE HOUSE OF PENDRAGON



UTHER PENDRAGON

Uther Pendragon succeeded Ambrosius, perhaps the last Roman king of Britain, as High King and began to unite the warring factions. He fell in love with Ygraine, wife of the rebel Duke of Cornwall. Arthur was conceived before the Duke's overthrow and Ygraine's subsequent marriage to Uther.

THE MERLIN

Variously seen as a magician, a druid and a prophet, the Merlin helped Uther to win Ygraine and overthrow her husband, the Duke of Cornwall. Uther was obliged to hand the baby Arthur over to the care of the Merlin, who lodged him in the house of Sir Ector, father of Kay. Thus Arthur was Kay's foster brother. The Merlin's influence upon Arthur Pendragon was to guide him through foresight, rather than to affect his fate through magic.

MORGAN LE FAY

Medieval French tradition established Morgan as Arthur Pendragon's half-sister. Malory's "Morte d'Arthur" claimed she was "put to school in a nunnery, where she became a great mistress of magic". Her theft of Excalibur in an attempt to destroy Arthur is recorded in "The Vulgate Cycle".

GUINEVERE

The daughter of King Leodegraunce of Camelliard, Guinevere was famous for her beauty. A protective upbringing did not prevent her later reputation for passion and strength of character. Stories relate several occasions when she was abducted, and Arthur Pendragon's consequent quests to recover her.

THE LOATHLY LADY

Stories of a beautiful young spirit imprisoned in an old and horrifically ugly body as a result of an evil curse recur in medieval folklore, most notably in Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale" which is set,

"In th'olde dayes of the King Arthour,
Of which that Britons spoken greet honour."

VIVIANE, THE LADY OF THE LAKE

Viviane was the daughter of the High Priestess of Avalon, whom she succeeded, and was the half-sister of Ygraine. As the Lady of the Lake, she was the female figure-head of ancient worship.

EXCALIBUR

There are many remarkable swords in the Arthurian Legends, and this can be confusing. We have designated Excalibur as the sword of Pendragon, wielded by Uther, set in the stone from which only the future High King could draw it, stolen by Morgan Le Fay, and returned to Arthur Pendragon by the Lady of the Lake.



THE WHITE STAG

The mythical White Stag could appear to protect the good from harm or lead them on the path to truth. It was also said that if a knight captured the White Stag he could kiss the most beautiful woman in King Arthur's court.

QUESTS

While the most well-known quest was for the Holy Grail, knights would go on quests to prove themselves, or in search of truth, or sometimes as a penance. King Pellinore's search for the Questing Beast became an occupation. Arthur Pendragon won the gratitude of the people of Brittany for his slaying of the Man-Eating Giants of Mont St Michel.

THE ROUND TABLE

The Round Table came into Arthur Pendragon's possession from King Leodegraunce as part of Guinevere's dowry. Its roundness symbolised the earth and the heavens. Arthur seated his knights around it to give a sense of unity and to avoid any arguments about precedence and status, and placed Excalibur at the centre.

THE GAMELAN

"Gamelan" is the Indonesian word for "instrumental ensemble". It consists of gongs and drums. The particular instrument used in PENDRAGON is a Gamelan Degung which, interestingly, has the same pitch as western instruments. The Gamelan has spiritual powers and is played with great reverence.