

BRITISH MUSIC SOCIETY

news

APRIL 2018

**AMBASSADOR
FOR BRITISH
MUSIC IN USA**

*Madeleine Mitchell
across the pond*

**A GARLAND
FOR JOHN
MCCABE**

*Monica McCabe's
reflections on a life
lived for music*



Agenda

British Music Society's news and events

Chairman's welcome

BMS member Madeleine Mitchell is back from America and has submitted the first BMS Ambassador report from her visit to the Kansas State University (see opposite page). The committee is closely monitoring the progress of this new scheme and are always interested to hear members' views.

For those of you with access to the internet, a visit to the BMS website now offers the preceding Printed News that opens by clicking on the image of the cover. By the time you receive the next Printed News, the updates for the Recording pages on the website will have been completed. Other developments on the recording front include news from the Treasurer that our latest release on Naxos 8.571377 in November 2017 of Arthur Benjamin and Edgar Bainton songs has produced some of the best sales figures ever for the Society, and James Dickenson of the Villiers Quartet has been busy recording the music of William Sterndale Bennett for our next BMS recording. We look forward to hearing the results of the editing process and will be publicising the date of its launch this year.

Please note that this year's AGM will depart from our usual London venues and see a move north to St. Alban's to support a concert by the Amadeus Orchestra with the choir of St. Alban's Chamber Choir conducted by John Gibbons. Save the date of Saturday 30 June in your diary for this event at 7.30pm in St. Saviour's Church, Sandpit Lane, St. Albans AL1 4DF. Entitled 'Light and Love', the programme consists of Ralph Vaughan Williams *Epithalamium*, William Alwyn *Pastoral Fantasia*, Cecilia McDowell *Ad Lucem* and Malcolm Arnold *John Clare Cantata*. Details of where and when the Society will meet in St. Alban's before the concert will be issued in due course.

Wendy Hiscocks

British music scores search

Jörg Schneider from the German wind ensemble Four Points One (www.four-point-one.de) is on the hunt for scores the following compositions by British composers:

- Marian Arkwright Quintet for piano and winds
- Edith Swepstone Quintet for piano and winds
- Henry David Leslie Quintet for piano and winds op.6
- Edward Davey Rendall Quintet

for piano and winds (1890)

- George Alexander Osborne Quintet for piano and winds (1889) (Yes - he is actually Irish)

If anyone from the BMS network could help him track down these scores please get in touch with him at joerg.th.schneider@gmx.de.

Jörg is also on the look out for any information about the Sir Michael Costa Prize 1896 Anyone know anything about this?

Reviving Victorian opera

Victorian Opera Northwest have made full opera recordings of works by Balfe, W V Wallace (both Irish), G Macfarren, Sullivan as well as a collection of overtures by Balfe, Barnett, Benedict, Loder, Macfarren, Goring Thomas, Wallace, and now Cellier.

Over the last year we have had requests for a lighter vein of operetta, the most interesting of which is by Alfred Cellier. An Englishman of French parentage he was a chorister with Sullivan at the Chapel Royal before acquiring formal musical education. With six operettas/musicals to his name he became Sullivan's musical director for the Savoy Operas in London and New York writing some 10 curtain-raisers to accompany the G&S operas.

His first three operas were written when musical director at the Theatre Royal, Manchester. The Sultan of Mocha written in 1874 reached New York, but Nell Gwynne was a failure. The librettist blamed the composer while the composer blamed the librettist! Cellier decided

to revise Nell Gwynne by inviting B C Stevenson (a librettist of Sullivan's *The Zoo*) to write the new book. Dorothy was the result and it became a tremendous West End success that even out-shone the popular *Mikado*, which was playing concurrently.

A project is underway by Victorian Opera to record this forgotten comic opera, Dorothy and rediscover the secret of its fascinating and unbridled success. With no autograph and the music presumed lost, extensive research eventually uncovered the band parts from which a full score has been prepared by Michael Harris. The project will be carried out in collaboration with the Royal Northern College of Music under guest musical director, Richard Bonyngue.

Victorian Opera is hoping to attract the support of sponsors and subscribers who have an interest in helping revive our British Musical Heritage. For more information visit www.victorianoperanorthwest.org.

Raymond Walker

Chairman of Victorian Opera

British Music Society Committee

Wendy Hiscocks (Chairman), John Gibbons (Vice Chairman), Stephen Trowell (Treasurer), Advisory roles: Karen Fletcher

Printed News designed by Revolution Arts

Music of Margaret Kitchin

A website dedicated to the pianist Margaret Kitchin has been launched.

Margaret Kitchin (1914–2008) specialised in contemporary repertoire giving many premieres particularly of British music.

Michael Tippett, Iain Hamilton, Peter Racine Fricker, Alexander Goehr and Thea Musgrave all dedicated works to her.

Visit the website at:
www.margaretkitchin.org.uk

The new website has been compiled by Chris Crocker with the

help of Margaret's daughter Claire. However, after two years of research, the repertoire list is still incomplete. Many performances are missing along with 76 BBC broadcasts without specific details of the works Margaret played.

Chris Crocker would be delighted to hear from anyone who may be able to help fill in the gaps, or contribute any new material for possible inclusion on the website. He can be contacted on chris@crocker.eu.



BMS ambassador report from USA

I was delighted to be a BMS Ambassador, promoting British music abroad, giving a class and concerts exclusively of British music on a tour of the USA in November 2017.



My visit to Kansas State University was a return invitation and I was very pleased that the Head of Strings, Dr Cora Cooper, was happy not only to prepare 4 string players with pianists in music by Elgar (*Salut d'Amour*) and Rebecca Clarke for violin (*Midsummer Moon*) and viola (*Impetuoso* from *Sonata*), but also to incorporate the events into a Kansas State

Violin Week, with a careers talk. One of the students was ill for the class but it was still a useful forum in the Kirmser Hall, on 8 November, open to the public and well attended.

A Century of British Music

The students responded well to my input and attended my concert the following day with faculty pianist, Amanda Arrington in 'A Century of British Music' including music by Edward Elgar, John Ireland, Frank Bridge, Rebecca Clarke, Judith Weir and Michael Nyman. This was previewed on Kansas Public Radio with the contemporary tracks from my new album *Violin Muse*.

Two further recitals of British music were given at Texas Tech University and in Boulder, Colorado with local pianists. My experience has been of great enthusiasm for this music, which is not often heard in the USA and I believe it sowed the seeds for greater exploration by students and teachers of British music. I'd like to thank the BMS for this enterprising new scheme, which makes possible such visits.

Madeleine Mitchell



BMS CD in the news

The recently released Naxos CD of songs by Arthur Benjamin (pictured above) and Edgar Bainton has proven to be one of the Society's best selling recordings and is featured in the December edition of *Classical Music Magazine*. A fascinating article by Phil Sommerich describes the story of the discovery of these songs by pianist Wendy Hiscocks and singers Susan Bickley and Christopher Gillett.

For more information visit:
www.classicalmusicmagazine.org

Inbox



Send your letters to the Chairman to chairman@britishmusicsociety.com or write to 178 Alexandra Road, Muswell Hill, London, N10 2ES

RE Howells' Clavichord music; he told the story against himself, that, clutching the newly published score, he met Ravel in the street in Paris. After showing it, Ravel's comment was 'quelle gravure'!

- Sylvia Junge

Editor's reply: quelle gravure = What engraving! (Ed)

Chris Cope echoes much of that which composer Robert Simpson wrote in his 1981 essay *The Proms and Natural Justice*. His dissatisfaction with his BBC employer, for whom he worked as a producer for 30 years eventually led to his resignation. I would like to see the argument extended and broadened into persuading the BBC to give over at least one hour a week to recent issues of British Music, particularly that of newly released recordings of new music. We are told that the market for CDs has diminished significantly, although one would hardly believe it from the number of CDs being issued and reviewed. We cannot

hope to familiarise ourselves with all new music and make an assessment, but such a programme would be a start.

On another tack, perhaps, too, we might protest at the increasing use of irrelevant background music to many television and radio programmes, which often makes the commentary difficult to hear. David Attenborough's *Blue Planet II* being a case in point.

- Geoffrey Hanson

I am interested in finding out any information possible about the South Australian composer Clifton Johns - both about him and his work. He was active in the field of light orchestral music, at least, probably around the 1950s to 1960s: a composition of his, "Holiday Bound", is included on a recording of various music under the same title, as well as on another called "Here's to Holidays". Another work of his that used to be broadcast occasionally in Australia was an orchestral medley called "International Journey". And that is all the work of his that I have ever heard of.

I have a slight personal connection with him, in that, as a young boy, I lived next-door-but-one to him in the Adelaide hills in South Australia in the early 1960s, where I grew up, and knew his family casually, if not closely - hence my interest.

I would like to know of any works he composed, and to hear them if I can locate them anywhere, or to learn about any other musical activity of his, or any other details about his life. I don't even know if he is still alive, but he would have to be well into his 90s now if he is. That he served in World War II would also set his age at not less than his 90s.

Any details anyone knows would be gratefully appreciated.

- Michael Edwards
mjedwards@foxall.com.au

I have seen your message to the BMS. For further information on musical activity in the West Country I suggest you consult: Norris, Gerald: *A Musical Gazetteer of Great Britain and Ireland*, David & Charles, 1981, pages 308-341

- Michael Bryant

Welcome to all the new members who joined in 2017

Drew Adams (Pulborough)
John Barnett (Kent)
Derek G. Bevan (Essex)
Dr. Chris Crocker (Didcot)
Jonathan Delbridge (Somerset)
Geoffrey Hanson (London)
Mrs Nicola Harrison (Oxford)
Chris Henderson (Northampton)
Ms Henrietta Hill (London)
David R. M. James (Norfolk)
Paul Leadbeater (Walsall)
Philippa Mo (London)
Francis Pott (Winchester)
Matthew Schellhorn (London)
Martyn Strachan (Edinburgh)
Ms Rachel West (London)
M. J. Whalley (Quebec, Canada)
Dennis Wickens (Wantage, Oxon)

Guidelines for Printed News submissions

Revolution Arts would like to request that all submissions of future editions of E-News follow these suggested guidelines. This will help us ensure we can produce both E-News and *Printed News* in a consistent and high quality manner. Many thanks to all contributors!

TITLE

Please ensure there is a title to your submission eg the title of the CD, Book or Feature - or even a letter as thus helps us give it an identity. Also don't forget to put your name at the end.

CONTENT

Please supply text in an email or attached in a straightforward text file (eg Pages or Word) with clear paragraphs.

WORD COUNT

Each item should normally be up to 400 words please. Feature articles may be longer.

IMAGES

Please supply high-res images as .PNG or .JPG files. These are especially important for our printed materials.

DEADLINE

Please see the latest E-News for the deadline for receiving submissions. Submissions can be emailed to publications@britishmusicsociety.com

Events

Ludlow English Song Weekend

6-8 APRIL 2018, LUDLOW

For three days in April, Shropshire plays host to a unique musical event. The Ludlow English Song Weekend celebrates words and music in its own special, welcoming way.

This year the focus is on Ireland, and the music it has inspired. Bax, Bridge, Warlock and Moeran feature prominently, alongside Irish composers Ina Boyle and Seóirse Bodley. Ailish Tynan and Robin Tritschler head a crack team of Irish singers, and we welcome for the first time Carolyn Dobbin and Gavan Ring.

The Carice Singers bring a hugely imaginative choral programme, and we're joined by a bevy of wonderful instrumentalists: Adam Walker, Nicholas Daniel and the Gildas Quartet. With new works by Philip Hammond and Martin Bussey and a variety of talks and discussions we're set fair for an action-packed, stimulating Weekend. Join us for the craic!

For more information about The Ludlow English Song Weekend, visit: www.ludlowenglishsongweekend.com



The National Youth Choir

WOMEN IN SONG
SUNDAY 15 APRIL
The Halls, Norwich

Celebrating music and musicians from Imogen Holst to Imogen Heap, and commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Armistice. Music by female composers including: IMOGEN HOLST, THEA MUSGRAVE, SHEENA PHILLIPS, ROXANNA PANUFNIK
And concluding with PARRY'S 'Songs of Farewell'.

Tickets www.nycgb.org.uk

Great Missenden Choral Society

SONGS OF SEA AND SHORE
SATURDAY 28 APRIL

Great Missenden Parish Church,
Buckinghamshire

BMS member John Cotterill has been conductor of Buckinghamshire's Great Missenden Choral Society since 1995. He brings a wealth of experience to this post, having studied conducting in his earlier years with Alan Fluck, Meredith Davies, Myers Foggin, Sir Adrian Boult and Sir Charles Groves. In addition to numerous appointments during the course of his career of a variety of choirs, John has been Vice Chairman of Tilford Bach Society, and

is a past President of Maidenhead Music Society and a past Chairman of the Southern Region Committee of the Association of British Choral Directors.

At their forthcoming April concert they are presenting an all-British programme:

HENRY PURCELL: Welcome to all the pleasures

TONY HEWITT-JONES: Seven Sea Poems

GERALD FINZI: Let us Garlands bring

EJ MOERAN: Songs of Springtime

RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: Five Mystical Songs

Nicholas Morton *baritone*

Great Missenden Choral Society

St. John's Chamber orchestra

John Cotterill *conductor*

Tickets 01844 342566

Hitchin Symphony Orchestra

MCCABE, ARNOLD & MENDELSSOHN
SATURDAY 19 MAY
St Mary's Church, Hitchin, Hertfordshire
SG5 1HP

The next concert will feature a work by John McCabe - the orchestra's President from 1984 until his death in 2015 - and Malcolm Arnold. JOHN MCCABE: Concerto for Chamber Orchestra. MALCOLM ARNOLD: Concerto for Viola and Chamber Orchestra. FELIX MENDELSSOHN: Symphony No 3, 'Scottish' Helen Sanders-Hewett *viola*
Hitchin Symphony Orchestra
Paul Adrian Rooke *conductor*

Tickets 01462 458614

Victim of the Somme

Frederick Septimus Kelly (1881 - 1916)

Frederick Septimus Kelly DSC was an Australian/British musician and composer - and also a rower who competed in the 1908 Summer Olympics. He was killed in action during the First World War.

Kelly, who was killed at Beaumont-sur-Ancre in the latter stages of the Battle of the Somme (November 1916) whose centenary we marked last year, was born in Sydney, Australia, though I regard him as more of an English than an Australian musician. He went to school at Eton College and then Oxford and later (though he travelled widely) lived at Marlow, Bucks. When war came in 1914 it was natural for him to enlist in the Royal Naval Division rather than the Anzacs.

There he met and became friendly with, the poet Rupert Brooke; he was present when Brooke died on the island of Skyros a few days before the first landings at Gallipoli (Kelly's *Elegy* in memory of Brooke, composed later in 1915 and scored for harp and strings, was revived at the BBC Proms in 2014). Kelly survived Gallipoli and was indeed awarded the DSC for his exploits in the withdrawal early in 1916. The RND returned to England and then went to the Western Front later in 1916.

Kelly was a pianist and



composer, having studied at Frankfurt for a time (he knew fellow Australian and Frankfurterian Percy Grainger) and gave recitals in England and Australia which he toured in 1911. He knew Donald Francis Tovey, to whom he wrote in 1915 a moving account of Rupert Brooke's burial*.

Now for Kelly's compositions, which are varied, if hardly prolific. Apart from his memorial for Brooke, previously noted, there was a *Serenade* Opus 7 for flute and strings. Chamber music included a *String Trio* and *Violin Sonatas* in G Major and D Minor and naturally he wrote for keyboard(s) including a *Theme, Variations and Fugue*

for two pianos, opus 5, two *Pre-ludes* for organ and several for solo piano: *Waltz Pageant*, Opus 2B (for four hands piano) (1913) *Allegro de Concert* Opus 3 (1913), *Cycle of Lyrics*, Opus 4 and a *Piano Sonata*, left unfinished at his death and whose two surviving movements probably date from 1916.

This latter had to wait for its British premiere until 2015 and even though incomplete - it is not clear whether it would, if completed, have comprised three or four movements - is impressive as was shown by its British premiere, at a lunch hour recital at Doncaster Museum and Art Gallery by Alex Wilson on 15 April 2015^{^+}. The two movements, totalling 25

minutes, are a (conjectured) *Moderato* first movement and an *Adagio* worthy of Elgar whom Kelly knew personally (he actually played with Frank Bridge and the violinist Jelly d'Aranyi. Kelly published for solo voice *Two Songs*, Opus 1 (1912), the first a charming setting of Shakespeare's sonnet *Shall I Compare Thee to a Summer's Day?* (which has also been revived, in 2016, in the Doncaster lunchtime series and the *Six Songs*, Opus 6 (1913).

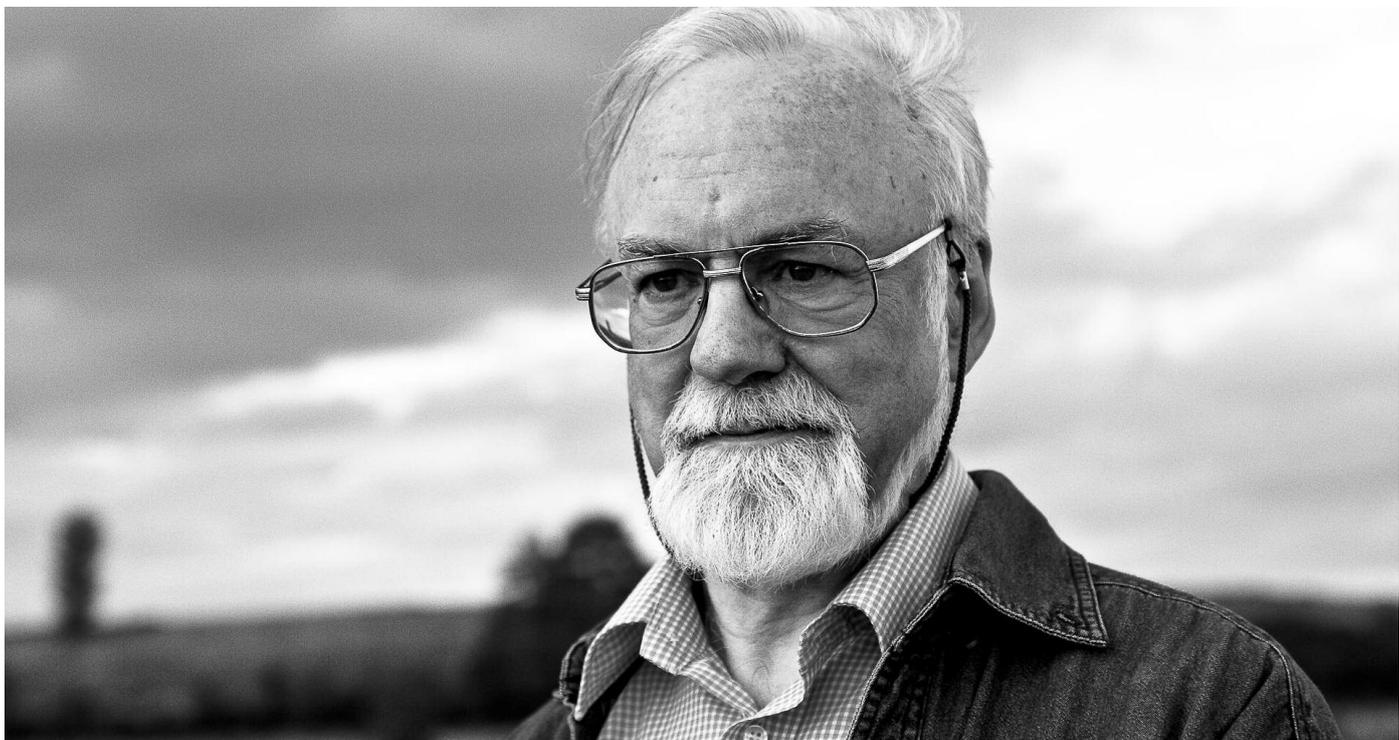
Kelly did not confine himself to music; he was an oarsman of repute and rowed (for Great Britain) in the 1908 Olympic Games^{^I}.

- Philip L Scozocroft

^{^*} Reprinted in Lewis Foreman (ed), *From Parry to Britten: British Music in Letters 1900 - 1945* (Batsford, 1987), p.72

^{^+} Mr Wilson tells me he has played Kelly's unfinished Sonata once since the premiere

^{^I} The Somme thus claimed two notable musicians, the other being George Butterworth who also by coincidence was at Eton.



A garland for John McCabe

All his life John McCabe was in love with music. This love began at the very start of his life. He purchased copies of Haydn and Beethoven scores with his pocket money, and as his life was drawing to a close he was fascinated to hear the music of a Scottish early composer, Robert Carver, of whom he had hitherto known little.

John's love was for the art of music, and for his joy in the created sounds. It was not self-seeking, even though, as with any composer, he had an imperative drive to express himself in music.

For this reason he was as happy to listen to the successful work of other composers as to succeed himself, and as a pianist he was able to take part in and promote the music of others. Above everything he fought to extend knowledge of the repertoire, so that such wonderful music as Haydn's keyboard sonatas and Nielsen's solo piano music did not

lie neglected in dusty corners, for lack of a champion.

He gave performances, including first, second and more performances, of such composers as Hoddinott, Richard Rodney Bennett, Maw, Mathias, Joubert, Anthony Gilbert, Tippett, Hugh Wood, Gerard Schurmann, Edward Gregson, and many others. He gave magnificent performances of Bax, while loving and appreciating Webern. Nor did he neglect to take interest in the work of the rising generation of composers, such as Emily Howard, Martin Ellerby, Matthew Taylor and James Francis Brown. And he paid tribute to the work of his composition teacher, Thomas Pitfield.

It is in recognition of this generous and wide-ranging devotion to the art of music that John Turner has gathered together this set of compositions in John's memory, composed in 2016, a tribute he would have been touched

and proud to receive.

Other tributes to John, in the form of choral, organ and piano pieces have also been written, set up by George Vass, which logistics would not allow to be included in this collection, but which I hope will one day be recorded.

The works on this Divine Art CD are by Peter Dickinson, John Joubert, Edward Gregson, Robert Saxton, Howard Skempton, Elis Pehkonen, Robin Walker, Malcolm Lipkin, William Marshall, Martin Ellerby, Rob Keeley, James Francis Brown, Gerard Schurmann, Anthony Gilbert, Christopher Gunning, David Matthews, Raymond Warren, Emily Howard and Gary Carpenter. They are performed by Linda Merrick (clarinet), John Turner (recorders), Alistair Venart (viola) and Peter Lawson (piano), on Divine Art CD dda 25166, available February 2018. The CD cover is of an original oil-painting of John by Angela Palmer.

- Monica McCabe

History of the Three Choirs

The Three Choirs Festival: A History

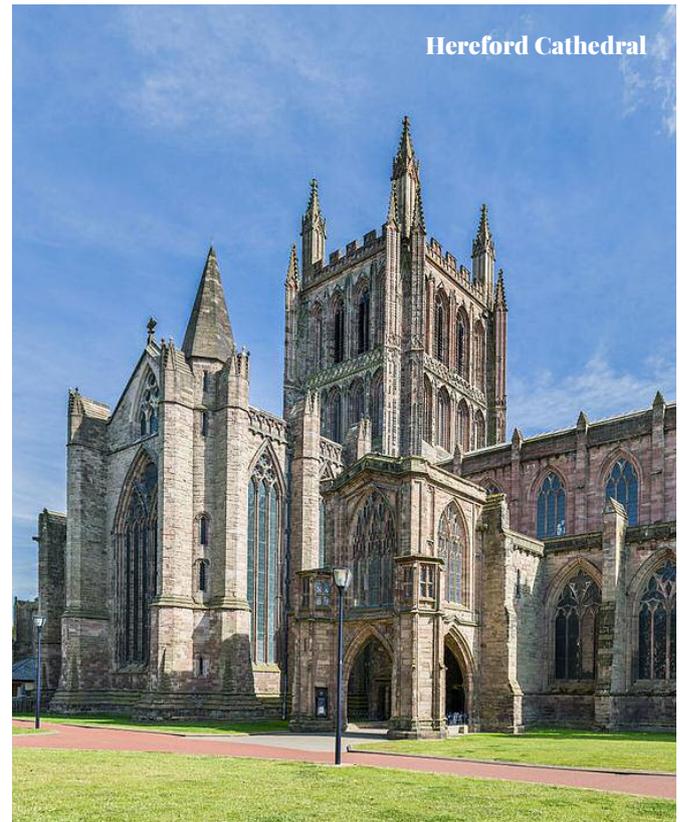
Anthony Boden
and Paul Hedley
Published by Boydell Press
475 pages

From the front cover of this book, with the backdrop of the large stained glass windows of Hereford Cathedral and musicians in mid-performance of *Dream of Gerontius* by Elgar, one is immediately drawn in. As a composer myself, I have always been fascinated about the origins of festivals, but also being an enthusiast of British music, the Three Choirs Festival has, and still is, in my mind when I think about important music festivals. As a regular visitor to each county, I have come to know each of the cities involved here, pretty well, over the years.

This is a revised edition of the book published by Alan Sutton in 1992. Within each of its 26 chapters, the details are almost overwhelming, and I found myself re-reading certain paragraphs and chapters, to make sure I didn't miss anything. The writing is so clear however, with each chapter having clearly de-

finer parameters, that the reader cannot but help be drawn into Boden and Hedley's world and their enthusiasm for the subject. We learn the origins of the festival, how it grew from the initial slight enthusiasm of the clergy, and organists/choir masters, from the three cathedrals Worcester, Hereford, and Gloucester, in the 18th century. Whilst not being afraid to 'tell it as it is' when showing behind the scenes difficulties, and using official papers, letters, etc, the controversial proposals with programming, secular, non-secular issues, artists demands, so many problems, as in all life, become apparent. We are taken through political changes, wars, etc., etc. but the belief of the local people who showed and continue to show, enthusiastic resolve and determination, to bring music and great art to the three cathedral cities.

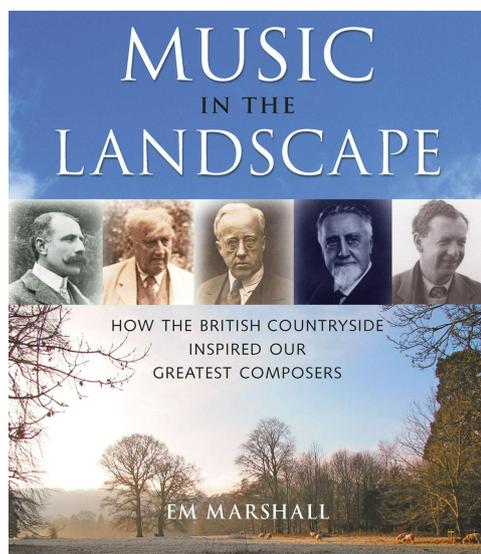
Reading through the programmes for many of the festivals, we realise, how many composers were given their first chance to share their voices to the wider world, this continues to today - obviously, we all know of



Elgar and his rise as a composer in Worcester, but many, many others too! In fact, over the more recent festivals, indeed, the last few decades, music of different genres has joined the programme, and venues are many and varied. The lists of performers, is actually quite astounding and we are able to see the development of musical artists, and composers, following their career paths and rise to prominence too. All

being said then, this book, makes for fascinating reading and is an invaluable book, for not only musicians, music lovers, festival attendees, but anyone really interested in the musical arts of Britain. I certainly hope the readers of this review will try and seek out a copy and hopefully, enjoy as much as I did, and take away thoughts about the origins, and future of such a fine festival.

- Peter Byrom-Smith



Music in the Landscape

Music in the Landscape: How the British Countryside Inspired Our Greatest Composers

Em Marshall
Robert Hale Ltd 2011
Hardback 296pp
Illustrated 248x195mm
9780709084686
Product Code: 501580

The Malverns, Tintagel, Egdon Heath and the Suffolk coast are just some of the landscapes evocatively portrayed in music by the 20th century's greatest British composers. This book explores how the diverse open spaces of the countryside have inspired distinctively British sound-worlds, from Elgar's Cello Concerto to Britten's Four Sea Interludes. Marshall surveys the work of some 40 composers, both world-famous names and lesser-known geniuses such as Havergal Brian and Hamish MacCunn. Introduced by Jeremy Irons and Jonathan Dibleby.

Currently on special offer from Postscript Books at just £12.99 instead of the normal price of £27.50.



An authentic realisation of Bax's second symphony

Bax; Symphony No 2, Winter Legends

BBC Symphony Orchestra
 Sir Eugene Goossens conductor
 John McCabe piano
 BBC Northern Symphony orchestra
 Raymond Leppard conductor

Lyrity REAM 1137

This issue is one of a series of reissues of recordings made from Richard Itter's enormous archive of domestic tapes which, using state of the art equipment to record broadcasts, he began to assemble in 1952. Itter, the founder of the Lyrity label, is of course a total hero for anyone with BMS connections and interests with a huge catalogue of LPs and latterly CDs of British music of all kinds. (For instance I remember with joy the emergence on LP of John Ireland's piano music in the 1960s.)

Thus here we have a very authentic realisation of Bax's second symphony. It really could not be more authentic inasmuch as Goossens gave the first performance of this mighty work in 1930, a performance which delighted the composer.

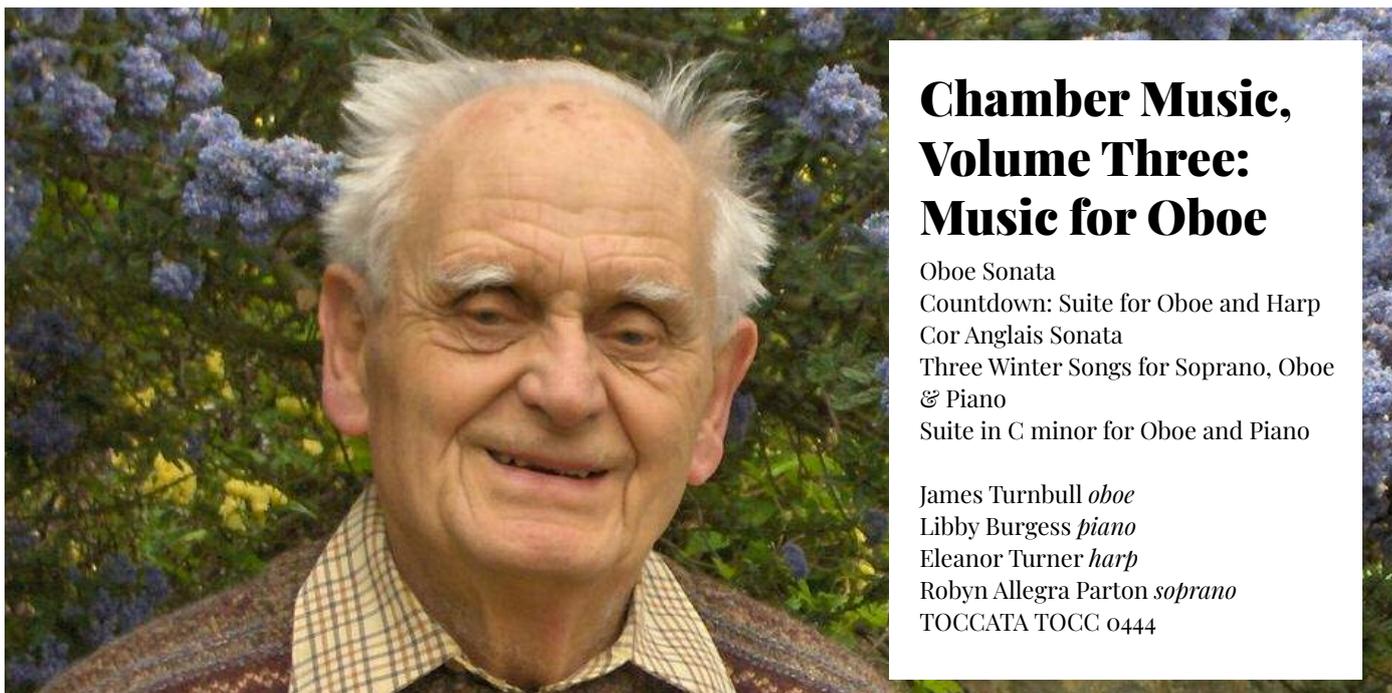
However one's response to this very much depends on personal tastes and perceptions. The elephant

in the room of course is that however good the performance, it now is only to be heard in dim, constricted 1950's mono, whereas as far as I am concerned, if I want to listen to Bax's second symphony (and I do) I want it in modern digital stereo. Colour, dynamic range, and spacious sound are so important given Bax's extravagant demands. For me the value of this issue is only to compare it to how modern conductors cope with the work, it is not something to which I would repeatedly return. This is an observation not a criticism.

Otherwise known as a composer, the late John McCabe was also a fine pianist, and one who was always a staunch advocate of 'Winter Legends' in which the piano part is treated concertante rather than as soloist. The writing is still very demanding but McCabe is fully up to it. The work has done well on disc with recordings by Ashley Wass (Naxos) and Margaret Fingerhut (Chandos), though the latter is the only one of the soloists to present the score uncut. Given that McCabe was such a strong supporter of the work it is odd that he decided to accept, or agreed to the cuts, a procedure which has always annoyed me intensely.

The stereo recording is decent enough if, understandably, not up to the latest standards.

- Geoffrey Atkinson



Chamber Music, Volume Three: Music for Oboe

Oboe Sonata
Countdown: Suite for Oboe and Harp
Cor Anglais Sonata
Three Winter Songs for Soprano, Oboe
& Piano
Suite in C minor for Oboe and Piano

James Turnbull *oboe*
Libby Burgess *piano*
Eleanor Turner *harp*
Robyn Allegra Parton *soprano*
TOCCATA TOCC 0444

Dodgson's true grit shines

This survey of Stephen Dodgson's oboe music, which is part of an evolving Toccata series devoted to his chamber works, covers a period of over three decades. The earliest piece is the Suite in C minor for oboe and piano, composed in 1957 and cast in five taut movements. As ever, Dodgson's ability to write song-without-words slow movements is pronounced here, notably in the lovely Arabesque, as is the slightly jazzy Scherzino in which loquacious exchanges and good humour are uppermost. Balancing this against a lyrical Romance ensures a just expressive quotient in a piece both attractive and accomplished. A decade later he wrote a Sonata for cor anglais and piano and James Turnbull and Libby Burgess rightly take the Andante con moto instruction in the first movement at face value, vesting the music with an urgent lyricism. Dodgson was especially drawn to Bartók but I thought more of Mar-

tinů at a few brief moments in the fast second movement before he introduces another of his tightly conceived slow movements: he invariably ensures enough grit to stop things becoming predictable.

The Sonata for oboe and piano (1987), cast in six brief sections, opens with a skittish fanfare Intrada, and takes in an eloquently long-breathed melody in the Grave movement where supportive piano chording is apposite and sensitive. The Aria e Ciacona finale enshrines the songful lyricism of the former with the playful iconoclasm of the latter. A delightful envoi. In 1990 Dodgson wrote Countdown which he subtitled a Suite for oboe and harp. There is plenty to count here: candles, sheep, money and your blessings. The candles movement was a Salute for a Royal Birthday (the Queen Mother's 90th), a Nocturne promises lyrically-inspired sleep, whilst the Burlesque, a Scherzo in effect, suggests innocent high

spirits in the counting of money rather than avarice. In 1972 he wrote Three Winter Songs for soprano, oboe and piano. These are settings of George Crabbe, Osbert Sitwell and Hilaire Belloc (the three texts are printed in the booklet, and indeed one can see how Dodgson amended Crabbe's Birds in Winter from The Borough - the basis of Peter Grimes of course). Whether descriptive or more pensive - whether evoking the hunting horns of Sitwell's Winter the Huntsman or the fin de siècle shifting moods of Belloc's February - these are idiomatic and characterful settings.

The performances are uniformly good and are led by James Turnbull, an adroit and expressive instrumentalist, and one can't go wrong with sleeve notes by Lewis Foreman. Toccata's Dodgson series continues to produce first class performances of beautifully crafted music.

- Jonathan Woolf

The Scottish Modernist

Violin Concerto

Dance Suite for orchestra and piano
Preludes From the True Edge of the Great World
Matthew Trusler *violin*
Danny Driver *piano*
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
Martyn Brabbins conductor
HYPERION CDA 68208

For most people interested in music of the first half of last century, the name of Erik Chisholm has until now probably remained just that - a name in the history books. Now, with the enterprise of Hyperion we can satisfy our curiosity. Chisholm was an avant-garde figure whose characteristic mode of expression was comparable to the perceived giants of the period - Bartók (especially), Stravinsky, Berg, et al. Yet his distinctiveness, apart from this (from the British point of view), is that he was a truly Scottish Modernist, whose life blood was the true Highland folk music of his native land, but with Chisholm the folk music is used in a totally uncompromising manner. Andy Stewart it is not.

And there is another potent ingredient in some of his music. At the beginning of WW2 Chisholm found himself in India where he recognised that there were extraordinary parallels between Scottish folk music and Hindustani music. In this latter music one can find what we call the Scottish 'snap', similarities between Highland bagpipe music and Indian pipe music, an ever-present drone, and the structural use of grace notes. Chisholm did not push these parallels too far but



tends to make use of them often simultaneously or to feed off one another, or indeed just for creating a mysterious, exotic atmosphere.

There is no doubt that some of his music is tough. I found two ways into it. Firstly the explanatory notes are superb. These are by the eminent Scottish musicologist and historian, John Purser, who fully understands the complexities and significance of this oeuvre. Secondly it helps to start one's listening with 'From the Edge of the World', where Chisholm exploits in his own inimitable manner some original Highland music. This work comprises orchestrations of three his nine piano preludes. Here

the themes are more clear cut, but presented in highly imaginative figurations and masterly use of the instruments. They sound as though the originals must make virtuosic demands on a pianist and it is quite possible that they make better sense in orchestral dress.

Next up should be the Dance Suite, where the vigour and drive of the music are highly infectious. Here Chisholm explores the styles of both Scottish and Hindustani elements, to thrilling effect. The demanding concertante piano part is realised with splendid vigour by Danny Driver.

The Violin Concerto demands concentrated atten-

tion. The level of dissonance is almost unremitting and this, to some ears, may become somewhat tedious, but then suddenly, as at the end of the first movement, there is a welcome moment of much beauty and repose. In the end though one has the confident feeling that this music has a fundamental integrity, along with an assured technical mastery and sure-footed and often energetic drive.

Though no comparison is to hand, the performances here seem excellent, as is the recording, though in passing it may be noted that some of the climaxes sound a bit congested.

- Geoffrey Atkinson

George Dyson: St Paul's Voyage to Melita

Choral Symphony **St. Paul's Voyage to Melita**

Elizabeth Watts *soprano*
Caitlin Hulcup *mezzo soprano*
Joshua Ellicott *tenor*
Roderick Williams *baritone*

The Bach Choir, Bournemouth
Symphony Orchestra, David Hill
conductor

NAXOS 8.573770

Abandoned art can often re-emerge years later to deliver stunning surprises. So it has proved with British composer, Sir George Dyson. After more than a century of a lamentable neglect, well-deserved recognition has at last been given to his Choral Symphony. This powerful work is slickly divided into selected verses from Psalm 107 into four movements for double choir, four

soloists and symphony orchestra.

Here, since its academic conception in 1910, this highly tuneful and influential work is given a well-deserved premiere recording. This finely engineered enterprise captures an all-encapsulating sound that clearly demonstrates Dyson's creative flair and musical skills. Contemporary composers, Charles Stanford and Hubert Parry, are acclaimed to have been Dyson's main influences. For me this music also has an uncanny affinity with Edward Elgar's choral masterpiece, The Music Makers, which was premiered two years later, in 1912.

Dyson was born in Halifax to a working class family and the Choral Symphony was written while he was at Oxford University, where he earned a Diploma in Music.

This crystalline recording shows Dyson's Choral Symphony as far more than simply an academic achievement. It carries a vivid imagery of wide and

heartfelt appeal, with a superbly cohesive balance between choir, soloists and the meticulous Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra players.

This is beautifully evident in the haunting opening strings of a Largo movement which will emotionally charge even the stoutest soul. The wonderfully pitched soprano voice of Elizabeth Watts adds a shimmering shiver to an other-worldly atmosphere.

David Hill marshals the large forces with a spiritual inspiration and panache. Surely all serious music enthusiasts will now accept this towering work as a highly influential benchmark for British music overall.

A total programme of more than 75 minutes of fascinating Dyson music is made up by another of the impressive lists of works by Sir George, St. Paul's Voyage to Melita (1933).

- Chris Bye

Unsettling response to wartorn Afghanistan

Sadie Harrison **Return of the Nightingales:** **Music for solo piano**

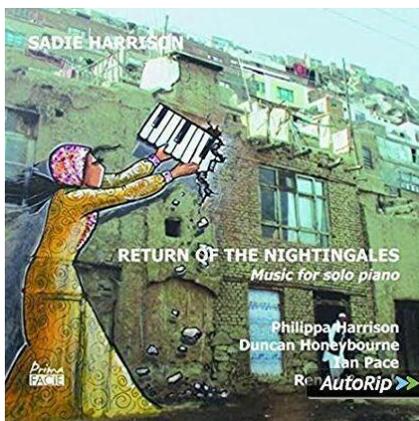
Par-feshani-ye 'eshq:
Six Pieces after Bidel
Lunae: Four Nocturnes
Shadows:
Six Portraits of William Baines
Four Jazz Portraits
The Souls of Flowers
Northern Lights
Luna

Duncan Honeybourne
Philippa Harrison
Ian Pace
Renée Reznik *piano*

PRIMA FACIE PFCDO72

The word eclectic has become rather a pejorative word in recent times so I think the best words to describe Ms Harrison's music as wide ranging in style, expression, emotional content, form and structure.

The Return of the Nightingales, is the first and longest work on the disc. It begins with a recording of the eponymous bird around which the



piano paints arabesques based on Afghanistan music. All this is treated in a Messiaen like way. It is an unsettling often violent work, appropriately so as it is a response to the devastation of the wars in Afghanistan.

Par-feshani-ye 'eshq, are six miniatures based on texts by Sufi poet Bidel. They are varied in their evocation of the words but in their brevity capture a perfumed world much in the way that Sorabji took much longer to do.

Lunae are four instantly appealing nocturnes reminiscent most notably of French piano works of the early 20-th

century. There is Debussian harmony and Messiaen like bird song, while the second is an elaborate fantasy based on Dowland's famous Lachrymae Pavan.

Shadows, are a homage to the composer William Baines who died tragically aged 23. Each piece is based on some chord or motif from one of his works. These are wide ranging pieces and the music of Ives came to my mind more than once while listening to them. Hymns, marches, slow moving water are perfectly conjured: a strange and wonderful set of works.

Four Jazz Portraits are just that, evocations of the piano style of jazz giants seen through a 21st century lens. The laid back boogie woogie which ends the set is a delight. The rest of the disc is made up of three exquisite miniatures dedicated to friends of the composer.

All of the pianists are excellent in conjuring up Ms Harrison's sound world. At the end I am not certain exactly who Ms Harrison is as a composer but listening to the disc is a rewarding experience.

- Paul RW Jackson

An 'old bufoon' and his musical tour

This recording by the enterprising Retrospective Opera reunites Gilbert and Sullivan expert Simon Butteriss with the accompanist Stephen Higgins here playing fortepiano. It builds on the success of their work on Retrospect Opera's previous release, F.C. Burnand and Edward Solomon's *Pickwick* and George Grossmith's *Cups & Saucers*.

Composer and librettist Charles Dibdin was apparently well known as 'a cantankerous old buffoon' but also the most significant writer of English comic opera and song in the late 1700s, and the leading singer-songwriter of his age, highly respected as a versatile performer on the London stage.

The disc begins with *The Musical Tour of Mr Dibdin* (the title of Dibdin's autobiography) which is made up of work selected by Mr Butteriss from various 'table entertainments' by Dibdin. These were one man shows, revues in all but name in which Dibdin would intersperse songs with dialogue and narrative. Mr Butteriss is well suited to this type of work having in his vocal armoury a seemingly inexhaustible range of voices and characters ranging from a relative of *Lady Bracknell* to close relations of *Rambling Sid Rumpo*. All these make their appearance in his spirited bravura delivery, a style familiar to anyone who has seen his homage to George Grossmith or his television programmes on Gilbert and Sullivan. The speedy delivery of the dialogue however reminds me of the tongue twisting dexterity of

Leonard Sachs on *The Good Old Days*. The tale is a florid and eccentric journey on the oceans with side-lines into Ulysses' travails with the song style ranging from parlour ballad to raunchy sea shanty. Mr Butteriss is well capable of wringing every bit of theatre from this type of work and in doing so is ably assisted by Mr Higgins, who is here playing a singularly inoffensive fortepiano.

Christmas Gambols (1795) was intended specifically as a Christmas show and it gives the fullest picture of an eighteenth-century Christmas to have come down to us. It is full of references to festive traditions of the time, and features charming and engaging songs in a range of different styles intended to put the listener in the spirit of the season. The work begins with a lengthy spoken introduction that sets the scene in a country house owned by Sir Alfred English and where Christmas has long been observed. Later episodes tell us a great deal about preparations for Christmas festivities, something which is missing from the songs which move between nautical and rustic numbers. Once again Mr Butteriss has an inexhaustible range of characters to introduce us to and to keep the party moving along at a brisk pace; there is no humbug here. The disc certainly gives an intriguing insight into entertainment of two hundred years ago and as we approach Christmas offers a good natured alternative to more traditional Christmas fayre.

- Paul RW Jackson

Christmas Gambols & The Musical Tour of Mr Dibdin

Simon Butteriss *baritone*
Stephen Higgins *fortepiano*

RETROSPECT OPERA RO 003



Tumultuous trio of sleeping giants awoken

British Violin Concertos

Paul Patterson
Kenneth Leighton
Gordon Jacob

Clare Howick *violin*
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
Grant Llewellyn *conductor*
NAXOS 8.573791

A tumultuous trio of sleeping giants finally awake in this release. Expressive violin concertos by the unfamiliar British composing names of Patterson, Leighton and Jacob, make well-deserved breaks into the recording world. All three composers punch through the ice with engaging World premieres. And not a minute too soon.

At the heart of this cheery news is the superbly-proficient solo violinist, Clare Howick, whose polish and

panache delivers each work with a wonderfully infectious aplomb. This is a perfect musical partnership with experienced conductor, Grant Llewellyn and shows real musical perspicacity.

A perceptively subtle balance between orchestra and soloist is a remarkable feature of this release. Listeners will find this a sparkling trawl through Britain's unfairly-ignored 20th century violin concertos both edifying and educational. Perhaps the most dramatic of these three scintillating scores comes from that seasoned Great War composer, Gordon Jacob.

His concerto for violin and string orchestra, composed 30 years after that conflict's conclusion, is still an abject reflection of that sorrowful period and its ever-haunting memories. The three-movement piece moves from a mournful and contemplative opening

through a prayer-like andante, and, finally, to a reflective but optimistic, allegro finale. The highly-disciplined Scottish strings deliver a memorable, luscious, sound throughout.

This highly-charged emotional writing is intensified by the addition of perky woodwind and subtle brass lines, in two other concertos by Messrs Patterson and Leighton. These also convincingly break into new recorded ground and certainly make this release a thoroughly pleasing example of British 20th century music.

Ms Howick really gets under the skin of all these scores and shows a razor-sharp articulation that contrasts sharply with a dreamy, languid, smoothness. She has an abiding interest in British violin repertoire. More power to her bow.

Rule Britannia!
- Chris Bye

Admired, but not particularly loved

Elgar: Falstaff Orchestral Songs Grania and Diarmid

Roderick Williams *baritone*
BBC Philharmonic
Sir Andrew Davis *conductor*

CHANDOS CHSA 5188

Falstaff is a work that seems to be respected and admired but not particularly loved. Elgar himself had a high opinion of it but the problems seem to be that the expected wonderful tunes are not very much in evidence, and the writing is dense and remarkably advanced for the period. Above all, to follow the music is a daunting task because the intricate programmatic basis of the work demands close attention. Thus the progress of the music is difficult to follow in the concert hall, however helpful the booklet notes. Very sensibly for this issue Chandos tag 11 way points during the 36 minute length of the piece which makes armchair comprehension



straightforward.

The work sounds tough for both conductor and orchestra, but the performance and pacing here are splendid, with the mercurial and ever-changing moods infallibly caught.

The fill-ups on this issue are very worthwhile. The two movements of Grania and Diarmid (a commission for a play) are fine music, with an arresting first movement and a characteristic funeral march. Apparently Elgar was so delighted when he was asked to provide

this music, that he had largely written the latter before he had seen the script.

The songs are a revelation and particularly so since Roderick Williams is on top form. Some were originally set with piano accompaniment, others with orchestral accompaniment, but such is Elgar's skill that it is difficult to envisage any difference in provenance. The 3 songs of Op 59 (numbered 3 5 and 6 - the others were never composed) are particularly good. No 6 Twilight is so unmistakably Elgarian with its descending 4 notes in a scale that anyone being 'innocent-eared' with it would name the composer immediately. One is tempted to say the disc is worth the money for this track alone. I immediately downloaded the piano version from IMSLP.

The disc concludes with a ludicrous 'jape' (as EE would have called it) the so-called Smoking Cantata, where the text 'Kindly do not SMOKE in the hall or staircase' is dressed up into a full-scale highly dramatic Scena. It lasts 49 seconds.

- Geoffrey Atkinson

Best of Vaughan Williams' treasured output

Vaughan Williams: A London Symphony

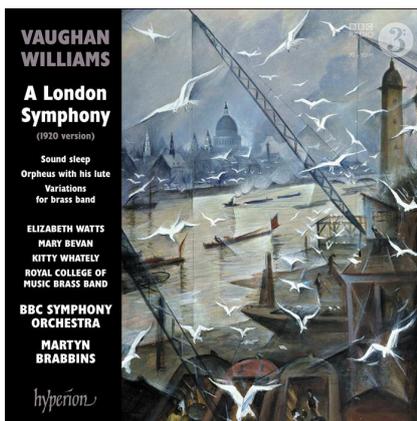
A London Symphony (No. 2)
Sound Asleep
Orpheus with his Lute
Variations for Brass Band

BBC Symphony Orchestra and
Royal College of Music Brass Band
Martyn Brabbins, conductor

Hyperion CDA68190

Many eminent musical scholars consider the popular London Symphony (No 2) is the best of Vaughan Williams' cherished and treasured output of nine. This may be a fiercely arguable point in the face of some brilliant VW symphonic literature, but the fact that it was also a favourite of the composer himself, must add considerable weight to this view.

Not surprisingly, recorded versions of the highly expressive work abound. Big rostrum names make recordings of this enchanting piece highly competitive. Haitink, Handley, Hickox, Davis, to name but a few, are all famous conductors to have recorded



tremendously desirable versions.

Now the indefatigable Martyn Brabbins steps into the fray as the latest heavyweight to turn in a pre-eminent performance. He also enjoys the back up of some articulate and dramatic playing from the widely acclaimed BBC Symphony Orchestra.

Brabbins' thoughtful phrasing and pacing of the rarely performed 1920 version, is also well founded by a purposeful direction showing deep intuition and bubbly enthusiasm. This account soundly captures a vivid picture of the UK's vibrant capital city. From the impish humour of the mischievous Cockney accent (chirpy

woodwind) to the contrasting grandeur of London's historic architectural gems (electrifying brass harmonies) and the beautiful serenity of parks and places like the Thames (slow, seductive strings) shows this is a heavily indulgent orchestra, really enjoying itself. An emotionally-charged VW aural picture bursts out with an overall energy which seems to enshrine that perpetual London hustle and bustle we all love. It is totally captivating.

Committed professional playing from the flourishing BBC string, woodwind, percussive and blaring brass sections combine to show some fine musical artistry. A cracking up-to-the-minute sound recording technique makes this another top flight release to be reckoned with.

Interesting VW short support works entitled Sound Sleep and Orpheus with his lute feature the vintage voice of soprano, Elizabeth Watts, together with Mary Bevan (soprano) and Kitty Whatley (mezzo-soprano).

The short but sweet Variations is also satisfyingly rendered by an appealingly mellow RCM Brass Band.

- Chris Bye

Delving into the BBC's mesmeric archives

Peter Racine Fricker

Symphonies 1-4
Rondo Scherzoso
Comedy Overture

BBC Northern Symphony
Orchestra, Bryden Thomson,
Albert Rosen, Edward Downes,
Maurice Handford, conductors

LYRITA REAM 2136

An impressive plundering of the comprehensive and mesmeric BBC archives is here again with fascinating recordings that will help to rekindle a growing interest in the magnificent music of ex-Royal Academy of Music professor, Peter Racine Fricker (1920-1990).

Fricker must have suffered a degree of disillusionment and disappointment to the indifferent

reception to his distinctive work coming from an unappreciative British public and musical establishment. It was a sad loss to British musical art, and eventually and understandably, the frustrated composer took his prodigious talent to Santa Barbara, California, where he took up another professorship.

Fricker's inimitable contrapuntal and acerbic style flew openly in the face of more fashionable contemporaries, like Vaughan Williams and Holst, whose treasured music was based on the more popular traditional lyrical, folk-song, English idiom.

These wonderful recordings plucked from past performances under a range of notable conductors, expose the overall gripping drama of Fricker's forceful works and show that their unforgettable claim to fame has re-emerged.

Bartók, Stravinsky and Schoenberg

influences unmistakably shine through this collection of memorable symphonic phrases exposed by some superb orchestration and polished playing.

A particular favourite of mine comes from the 1960 baton of Sir Edward Downes, who conjures up his players to deliver a luscious earth-quaking sound. A courageous score flirts openly with the very edge of atonality, even though all Fricker's works stay within the strict bounds of a more accessible tonality.

Maybe this brave momentum to take orchestral music into an undiscovered new 12-tone world was the cause of its initial demise.

Whatever the reason, this welcome release helps to put Fricker's musical art where it belongs, well back in the listener's ear!

- Chris Bye



How sweet Arnold roams

Malcolm Arnold: The Complete Songs

Claire Joanne Thompson *soprano*
Scott Mitchell *piano*

MAFF 001

In Arnold's output the voice does not figure large and this new disc from the Malcolm Arnold Festival runs to only 47 minutes. It purports to be complete but misses out some songs including *The Peacock in the Zoo* to words by his daughter and the late song cycle *Contrasts*, written for Robert Tear. There are no liner notes so I include a little more information on the songs below

The first *Beauty Haunts the Woods* (1934) sets words by Arnold's sister Ruth. For a 13 year old it is a rather accomplished elegiac setting, pastoral in feel but perhaps too full of teenage angst in hoping that "Pan will pipe upon my grave".

In songs from *Kensington Gardens*, poems by Humbert Wolfe are the last works he wrote in 1938 for his first composition teacher Philip Pfaff. Accomplished as they are he was once again in teenage

mode when he wrote on the score "music? By M.A." They show he had a good grasp of chromatic harmony and of clear unadorned word setting. They are pastoral in tone and in their brevity never outstay their welcome.

Two Songs: *Neglected And Morning Moon* opus 8 were written in 1944, are settings of translations of poems by Mei Sheng. They are a curious pair; the first contrasts a perky piano part and lyrical vocal line with lengthy recitative passages and in the second is part blues part dirge, the juxtaposition not being entirely successful.

Songs from *Purple Dust* are arrangements of Scottish folk songs created for a production in Glasgow in April 1953 of the farcical comedy by Sean O'Casey. They are straightforward in outlook, and Miss Thompson is suitably straightforward in her delivery but with a nice Celtic brogue..

The *Five William Blake Songs* (1959) are Arnold's most substantial contribution to the solo voice repertory. They were originally written for voice and strings and more atmospheric in that setting.

The songs are often reminiscent of Britten but "How sweet I roam" is pure Arnold in every way. Miss Thompson sings all with appropriate simplicity,

The song of accounting periods (1967) was commissioned by the musical humourist John Gould and sets parts of a finance act and fulfils its purpose well.

The disc ends with *Three John Donne Songs* from 1974. Only the first two were published and the final one may have been completed by another hand. Beautiful melodies have safe accompaniments and Arnold seems unwilling to interfere with the metre of the poetry to develop them much. The final song *The Dreame* simply drifts away which may be appropriate to a dream but not to a musical setting.

Miss Thompson is clearly a gifted young soprano but her voice is for me too light for most of these songs, particularly in the Blake and Donne settings which call for darker dramatic colour. Mr Mitchell sympathetically makes the most of the largely functional piano accompaniments.

Paul RW Jackson

McCabe's Silver Nocturnes

John McCabe: Silver Nocturnes

The Woman by the Sea
Silver Nocturnes
Horn Quintet

Roderick Williams Baritone
David Pyatt Horn
John McCabe Piano
Sacconi String Quartet
NMC Recordings:
NMCD230

This new album of Quintets by the late John McCabe, is a welcome addition to the catalogue. I have known McCabe's music for a long time, but these pieces were all new to me. As always from NMC, the quality of production is excellent, from the cover artwork, the beautiful audio through to the informative booklet, with programme notes and biographies, etc.

The first work is The Woman of the Sea, a piano

quintet, performed here by the amazing Sacconi string quartet, with the composer himself at the piano, driving the work along in his own direction. I always appreciate hearing a recording by the composer of their work, as we get an insight into their creative thinking at that particular moment in their lives, and this he does here, whilst playing in an amazing ensemble of sounds. McCabe's interests outside music, were very wide, and here the inspirational impulse behind this work, was the film Kenji Mizoguchi "Sansho Dayu" (1954). Structured in one continuous, through composed form, McCabe creates a mood, of enhancing music, which provides the listener, some inner mind images, by challenging the ensemble, to their upmost musicianship. From the very first sound of the piano, to the entry, one, by

one, of the string quartet, he opens a door, and we enter a sound world of intense, emotional reflection. Trying to capture such an emotional story in music alone, without the visuals, can be extremely difficult to bring off for the listener, or audience, but here, McCabe does exactly that.

Silver Nocturnes, the title track of the album, which is a quintet for baritone, sung here by the astonishing Roderick Williams. The vocal settings, are of 16th century poems, from the so-called 'silver poets' Henry Howard, Edward Dyer and Philip Sydney. McCabe also sets a short extract from a speech by John of Gaunt, from Shakespeare's Richard III. Throughout this work, the diction of the words is clear and distinct and the voice and string quartet are an ensemble of expression, power, intimacy of thought,

in one unit. The whole cycle of is absolutely stunning, and every now and again, the hairs on the back of my head, did, stand up!

The final work on this recording is the 'Horn Quintet' the solo horn being played here by the awesome David Pyatt. After a very short, calm intro, we are led into a wonderful, lively movement, with some fine, and tight ensemble interplay from everyone on board for this musical journey. McCabe hints the programme for the work could be a Midsummer Night's Dream, with its fleet-footed sections, around sections of dream like beauty. However, all that being said, I think this work doesn't need any sort of programme at all. Indeed, it easily stands up as a great work of music, and a wonderful addition to the repertoire for horn and string quartet.

- Peter Byrom Smith

William Walton: Symphonies 1 and 2

Kirill Karabits *conductor*
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
Onyx 4168

Kirill Karabits is a conductor destined to reach the very pinnacle of his art. This exceptional reading of the two Walton symphonies blazes out in spectacular proof that he is destined to enjoy a brightly-lit future that seems to go hand-in-hand with taking over the reins of the well-oiled, proficient, Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

The young energetic Ukrainian - still in his early 40s - is successfully following the footsteps of other great BSO names like Berglund, Barshai, Litton, Alsop and the historic Sir Charles Groves.

Kirill Karabits. This is a memorable name which easily trips off the tongue and is definitely one for listeners to follow in the future.

This fine recording is a first class

illustration of how Karabits nurtures orchestras along by using his very own distinctive, minimalist, flair. It is a product of his enigmatic economy of movement which coaxes the very best from both these penetrating scores and the dedicated Bournemouth players alike.

These two Walton symphonies are popular gems already masterly recorded by great interpreters such as Previn, Szell and Mackerras. They now provide the ideal platform for Karabits to demonstrate his fresh, tremendously accomplished, talent.

Arresting articulation from well-trained instrumentalists makes the most of a fascinating First symphony score, featuring clever Sibelian-like flashes and bold dissonances.

No wonder this powerful piece has left such a lasting impression on British music lovers, ever since its pre-war premiere in the late thirties.

A scintillating delivery of that well-

loved Walton grandiose is emphasised overall by some blistering brass and forte string work. A wonderfully haunting Andante in the First Symphony ebbs atmospherically along, with gentle woodwind and violin phrases capturing an infective pathos.

Dazzling, jagged strings launch a delightfully ebullient scherzo. These are classic performances that will certainly leave a lasting impression.

The Second Symphony's reflective Lento it is also sublimely controlled. A sturdy Passacaglia, opening with a crisply delivered blazing brass theme, eventually leads to a satisfying conclusion of Fourth and final movement.

One enthused French critic wrote recently: "Karabits is part of a young generation who shines through everywhere now." Maybe this excellent release sums up his words.

Vive Karabits!

- Chris Bye

Youthful exuberance and warm acoustics

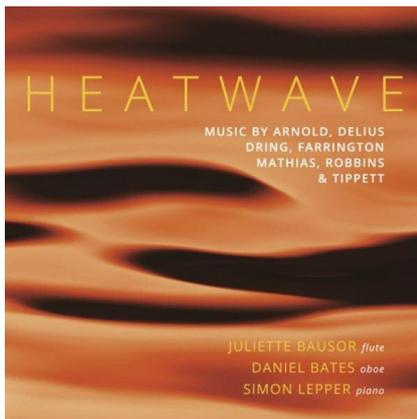
Heatwave: Music by Arnold, Delius, Dring, Farrington, Mathias, Robbins & Tippett

Juliette Bausor *flute*
Daniel Bates *oboe*
Simon Lepper *piano*

Stone Records ST8071

Juliette Bausor, Daniel Bates and Simon Lepper, all soloists with impeccable pedigrees come together here to perform trios by British composers. British they may be but there is something French sounding about this combination of instruments and all the works have a Gallic feel to them. On this exceedingly well recorded disc with a warm acoustic and each instrument perfectly balanced, they sound marvellous.

The world premiere recording of Iain Farrington's *Heatwave*, commissioned by the group in 2006, gives the disc its title. This is an attractive accessible work- indeed all the works on the disc are tuneful each with their own earworms- with two



whirlwind outer movements surrounding a bitter sweet, heat laden Siesta.

The Tippett Prelude, Recitative and Aria is a comparative rarity. Based around themes from Act 3 of his rather tough opera *King Priam* it is surprisingly lyrical the contemplative mood perfectly suited to this instrumental combination.

Mathias's *Divertimento*, is instantly recognisable as his work, the dance rhythms and modal harmonies are beautifully shaped by the trio. The

slow movement is the heart of the work its rhapsodic lines seeming to be a precursor of his magnificent *Harp Concerto*, its emotional power surprising in such a short movement.

The heart of the disc is Dring's *Trio* one of the great works in the genre. The spiky outer movements are full of knowing humour while the slow movement is based around melodies of such exquisite beauty that time seems to stand still while listening to them. This is probably the best recording of the work I know.

The 19 year old Malcolm Arnold's *Suite Bourgeoise* (sic) was thought lost until the score reappeared in 1996 and since then has proved itself rather popular around the world. It is full of youthful exuberance, not a little silliness and of course wonderful tunes. Arnold would use part of the *Dance* in his *Piano Duet Concerto* and the *Valse* -one of his greatest melodies- in the *St Trinian's* films and it provides the perfect ending to this well thought out programme.

Paul RW Jackson

Unfairly ignored British gems get to shine

George Lloyd: Symphony No.6, Symphony No.7 'Proserpine'

BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra
Edward Downes conductor

LYRITA REAM 1135

Here are two unfairly ignored British gems successfully reinvigorated with an irresistible rehearing, courtesy of that reliable artistic bedrock - the BBC musical archives.

Lloyd's highly expressive number seven - arguably the best of his momentous 12 symphonies - is powerfully delivered in a 1979 studio recording performed by that seasoned conducting master, the late, great, Sir Edward Downes.

The BBC Northern Symphony players certainly expressively immerse themselves in this deeply moving and

tragic work, subtitled 'Proserpine', the ancient Roman goddess of the underworld.

Mellow and snarling brass phrases, under-pinned by plaintive strings and swirling woodwind tightly wring every milligram of emotion from this terrifying score.

In this fraught piece is genteel British composer, George Lloyd, trying to come to terms with the devastating psychological after-effects of a tragic torpedo blast during the Second World War, when he served as an innocuous Royal Marine bandsman? It certainly was a shipboard disaster destined to scar Lloyd for life.

Severe depression and a nervous breakdown saw him for many years turn away from composing to mushroom farming in a desperate search for relief. The terrible angst he suffered at this time was cruelly summed up in his own words, during a

life in rural Cornwall: "Dead dreams that snows have taken. Wild leaves that the winds have taken" was how he encapsulated his programmatic seventh symphony. This impressive music graphically illustrates an uncharacteristic gritty side of a composer normally associated with works of a more pastoral quality.

The sharp analogue recording is shared by this symphony's predecessor, the small-scale Sixth. Lloyd had a particular interest in the output of Berlioz and Verdi but these two works seem to be more of a faint echo of Richard Strauss and Edward Elgar.

Sir Edward and his well marshalled BBC players implacably show in these treasured recordings that Lloyd's music is distinctive rather than derivative.

Their appearances among outstanding British recorded repertoire are long overdue.

- Chris Bye



A very welcome disc

Sir Richard Rodney Bennett

Vol.1:
Marimba Concerto
Symphony No.3
Celebration
Summer Music
Sinfonietta

Colin Currie *marimba*
BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
John Wilson *conductor*

CHANDOS CHSA 5202 [SACD]

In 2006 Chandos released a Richard Rodney Bennett Vol.1 under Richard Hickox, since that conductor's sad death they have clearly decided to start over with this the first disc in a new series under John Wilson. Bennett was the most supremely talented British musician of his generation, pianist, composer, singer, in classical, film and jazz genres and this is one of the reasons he is so little regarded, too gifted by half. Since his death at Christmas 2012 performances of his music have been few and far between which is why this disc is all the more welcome. All of the music is from 1982 onwards when Bennett stopped worrying about his wish to write tonal, melo-

dious music and just got on with it. Indeed in later life he often questioned why anyone would want to play his early dissonant works as he certainly didn't care to hear them.

Celebration (1992) is a brilliant orchestral overture full of dynamic jazzy rhythms and athletic melodies. It has much in common with his hugely popular Partita written about the same time. Rather like a mini concerto for orchestra different sections have a chance to shine. Summer Music (1982/84) started off as a work of medium difficulty for flute and piano and has become a staple of the repertory. This arrangement for small orchestra shows his genius at orchestration, the material sounds as though it was always meant for these forces. Sinfonietta (1984) was written for amateur orchestras, but its brilliance is that it does not sound like it. Bennett never wrote down to his performers and in this works three sections are beautiful developments of tuneful engaging music. This material does bear some close similarities to that in Summer Music, but is none the worse for it.

The Marimba Concerto (1987-88)

is probably the most successful written for that fascinating instrument. Bennett ensures that the very wide range of the solo instrument is allowed to shine through in orchestration of transparent elegance. Colin Currie plays it with both grace and virtuosity.

The 3rd Symphony (1987) so Bennett told me was his favourite of his works. It contains the most erotic music written by an Englishman since Tippett's Ritual Dances. It is a tightly constructed work based on the opening intervals which are pushed through extraordinary lush orchestral colours; all the more brilliant since it is written for a smallish orchestra. Like his cello concerto Sonnets to Orpheus with which it shares material it is clearly an ardent love song. James DePreist's passionate 1996 recording for Koch has the edge over this recording.

Bennett had enormous regard for John Wilson and here he draws superb playing from the BBC Scottish, who actually seem to be enjoying the music. I can't wait for volume 2.

- Paul RW Jackson



Violin Muse

The UK's finest contemporary composers and musicians

Madeleine Mitchell: Violin Muse

- Poole: Rhapsody
- Puw: Concerto Soft Stillness
- D. Matthews: Romanza
- Harrison: Aurea Luce
- Weir: Atlantic Drift for Two Violins
- M. Berkeley: Veilleuse
- Nyman: Taking It as Read

Madeleine Mitchell violin
 Cerys Jones violin
 Nigel Clayton piano
 BBC National Orchestra of Wales
 Edwin Outwater conductor

DDA 25160

The disc provides a set of world premiere recordings from some of the finest of the UK's contemporary composers and performers. In Rhapsody by Geoffrey Poole, virtuosity shines throughout this work tempered with emotional intensity yet equally balanced against movements of song like quality and stillness. Throughout its challenges Madeline Mitchell's tone is balanced by the wonderful accompaniment of Nigel Clayton on piano. It seems a truly inspired work and totally convincing performance of it.

The Violin Concerto - Soft stillness

by Guto Puw is set in two movements, instead of the usual three. What a beautiful, tense, beginning there is to this work, the solo violin, drawing the listener in, before we're taken into the 1st movement proper. Inspired by lines from Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice (famous from Vaughan Williams Serenade to Music) the compositional



Madeleine Mitchell with BMS chairman Wendy Hiscocks

result is a tremendously effective work. The terrific orchestral playing from the BBC National Orchestra of Wales under Edwin Outwater, provides a powerful accompaniment to the virtuosic, intense power of the soloist. The orchestration is truly wonderful; at times open and spare, allowing the violin to weave its way in and out of the texture, whilst at

other times, taught with psychological tension. The slow orchestral introduction to the 2nd movement, with some beautifully toned solo playing, takes us to a completely different tonal world. This one, haunting in reflective beauty, with once again, inspired scoring, melodic and harmonic invention which is brought to a gentle close, by a long drawn out note, dying away, thus leaving us, well, leaving us to reflect and breath once more.

David Matthews' Romanza was commissioned and premiered by Mitchell and Clayton and it is truly a composition where both players are almost equal partners, in their musical exploits! Even from the outset, the two instruments, discuss, parry each other in a musical dual, also, sharing each other's melodic and harmonic feelings. In the dance, a waltz, which a major part of the work holds a number of surprises and absolutely magnificent it is too.

Aurea Luce by Sadie Harrison is based on a plainsong melody, sung for the Feast of St Peter's chair, in Rome, where the actual premiere took place. From the beautiful entrance of the violin, we enter a musical space of thoughtful reflection. The violin spins its mystical magic, by stating the melody, whilst bare chordal piano supports it. This work is totally convincing as a work of musical

Dreams and darkness

Mark Simpson: Night Music

Night Music, Ariel, Barkham Fantasy, Echoes and Embers, Lov(e)scape, UnRegalo, Windflower, Nur Musik
NMC D225

The Debut Discs series is an excellent initiative on the part of NMC Recordings to support and establish the next generation of gifted young composers by producing a solo disc devoted to their music. Releases in the series have included musical portraits of Helen Grime, Huw Watkins, Charlotte Bray, Joseph Phibbs, and Emily Howard, among others. Night Music features eight highly accomplished works by the (almost) 30-year-old Liverpoolian wunderkind Mark Simpson, who was simultaneously announced the BBC Young Musician of the Year (clarinet), and the BBC Proms/Guardian Young Composer of the Year in 2006.

Opening with the disc's eponymous track, Night Music, Simpson explores and manipulates a sound-world inspired by 'dreams, nightmares, moonlight and darkness' in a work for cello and piano, performed excellently by Leonard Elschenbroich and Alexei Grynyuk. Themes of darkness and sinister unease continue in the Sylvia Plath inspired Ariel, for basset clarinet, violin, cello, and piano, in a tour-de-force performance by the Mercury Quartet that pushes the limits of compositional technique and instrumental facility. The ghostly Barkham Fantasy showcases Simpson's more restrained writing in a work for solo piano, throughout which pianist Richard Uttley brilliantly conveys the creepy overtones of an observant spectre that imbued the composition with a chillingly unnerving presence.

In Echoes and Embers and Lov(e)scape, Simpson establishes himself the consummate chamber musician, both as composer and performer, while in Un Regalo, composed for the 300th birthday of Guy Johnston's David Techler cello, Johnston gives an engaging and compelling account of Simpson's celebration of an extraordinarily versatile, sensitive yet powerfully resonant instrument.

Windflower, a descendent of Britten's Six Metamorphoses after Ovid and is a welcome addition to the oboe repertoire, and Nicholas Daniel's accomplished performance is likely some of the best oboe playing on disc. Closing the disc, another work prominently featuring the oboe, this time played by Jonathan Small, with the larger accompaniment of Ensemble 10/10, Nur Musik is purely abstract, and explores a range of textural and emotional intensities, whilst also highlighting the lyrical capabilities of the solo oboe.

This is a disc of exemplary performances that translate well in recordings, the likes of which any composer would be grateful for. Simpson's oratorio The Immortal and his first chamber-opera Pleasure both deserve further performances and recordings. April 2018 will see Simpson return to Manchester for the premiere of his Cello Concerto with the BBC Philharmonic.

- Andrew H King

art, as it is taking us into an intense, but also intimate imagination. Atlantic Drift by Judith Weir is a set of three short pieces for two violins in which Mitchell is joined by Cerys Jones. All have the sound of Scotland in them though all are not authentic tunes. Michael Berkeley's Veilleuse (Nightwatch) was written in 1997 for Madeleine Mitchell. It is a somewhat melancholic work, but also quite restless too, with passages of such intense power bursting out, sometimes catching the listener off guard completely - terrific stuff!

The final work on this recording is *Taking it as Read* by Michael Nyman. Composed in two short movements is a truly delightful work, and a pleasure for one's auditory nerves and heart, in equal measure. Both Mitchell, and Clayton are totally in tune - no pun intended - with the composers thoughts and inspirational expression. With these two short movements, they bring the listener to a conclusion of a really expressive and creative project - 7 composers works written for superb violinist Madeleine Mitchell; throughout her playing is a total wonder.

- Peter Byrom-Smith



Heritage and landscapes

Paul Lewis: Heritage & Landscapes

Heritage Suite (1990)
 English Country Pictures (1988)
 Sussex Variations (1972)
 An English Overture (1971)
 An English Fieldscape (1993)
 Festival of London March (1970)
 Seasonal Variations (1988)
 Battle Over Britain (1990)

Conducted by the composer
 EMRCDO39

Paul Lewis is the self-taught composer of much music for television and his style is very much in the English light music tradition. There are wonderful tunes a plenty which alongside lush orchestration and stunning orchestral playing make up for a winning disc. EM Records have brought together eight works conducted by the composer. They date from sessions over more than twenty years and with a variety of orchestras and in these remastered recordings all sound exceptionally good.

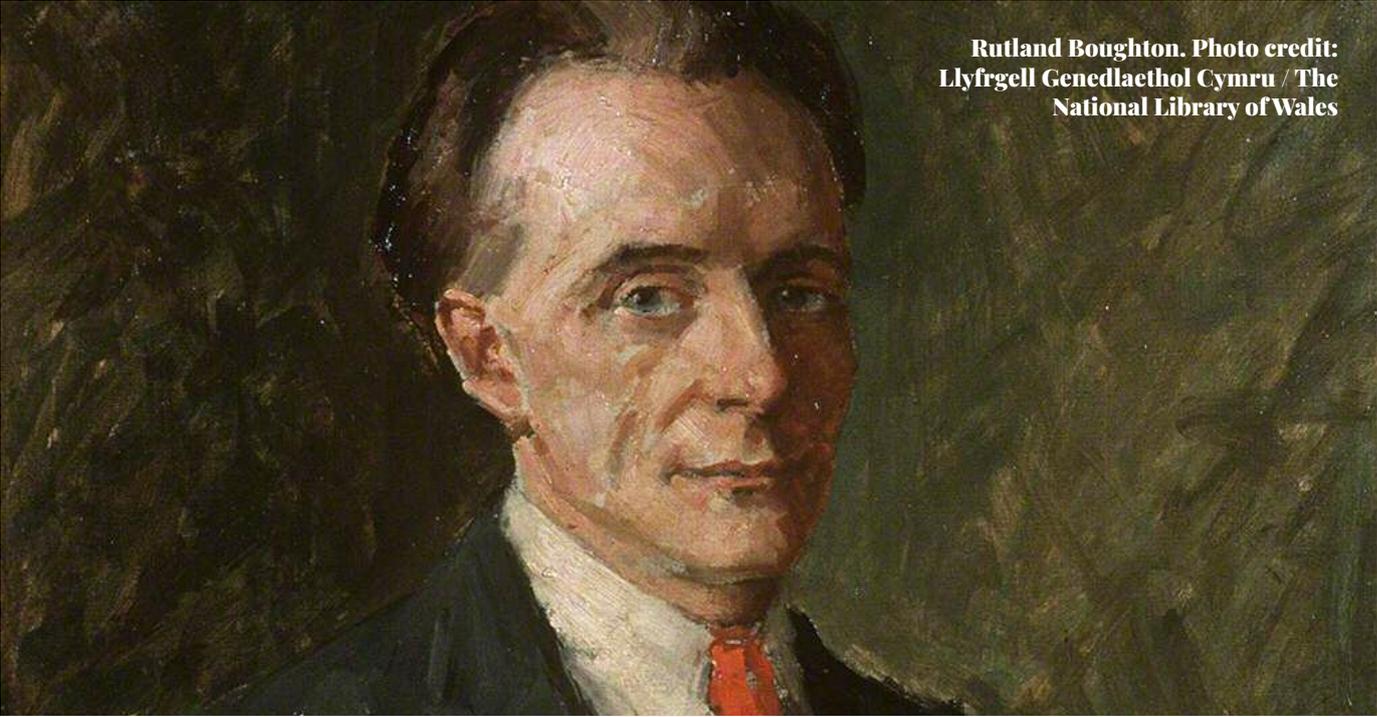
Lewis's liner notes tell us he was initially inspired by Walton and the disc starts off with the very Waltonesque Heritage Suite. The first movement Cutty Sark, a tribute to the tea clipper and where Lewis effortlessly captures the feel of the sea spray and wind in the sails. Likewise in Cornish Express an image of the train (steam here of course) that runs from Paddington to Penzance leaps out of the speakers. Four works depict England's "Green and Pleasant Land" and are the musical equivalents of landscape painting in mood music, and while the landscapes he conjures may no longer exist it is nice to think they could. Lewis comes from Sussex, and in the Sussex Variations, which was written for Living with Colour a 1972 documentary on the county he paints a loving portrait of his home turf. The recording is let down by a rather out of tune harp. The Seasonal Variations are delightful miniatures depicting the four seasons with a particularly chilly

winter. The ingenuity with which he manipulates the variations hint at what he could achieve in larger forms, should he want to. The mad-cap An English Overture based on well-known sea shanties burst energetically onto the scene and the orchestra has every chance to show how much they enjoy it.

The disc ends with The Battle of Britain which Lewis was commissioned to write in 1990 for the 50th anniversary of the event. It is a well thought out 10 minute tone poem depicting the Kent countryside, the call to arms and the one-to-one aerial combat. The work ends with dignified and heroic march that Walton would have been proud of.

This is a great collection of works that once upon a time might have been heard on Radio 3's Matinee Musicale or Brian Kay's Light Programme but are in a style which we never hear anymore; more's the pity.

- Paul RW Jackson

A portrait painting of Rutland Boughton, a man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a red tie. The background is dark and textured.

Rutland Boughton. Photo credit:
Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / The
National Library of Wales

Boughton's work gets a rare outing

Rutland Boughton: For Joyance
Chamber music for oboe.

Oboe Quartet No. 2
Two Pieces
Three Songs without Words
Portrait
Greensleeves
Oboe Quartet No. 1

Mark Baigent, *oboe*
Oboe Classics: CC2034

Rutland Boughton's music is so seldom performed these days which is a great pity as he was, as this disc demonstrates, a fine composer in the lyrical English tradition. The music here which he, composed between 1925 and 1945 was, with the exception of one piece, written for his daughter Christina Joyance or "Joy" Boughton (1913-1963). Born to Boughton's second partner Christina Walshe, Joy became one of the most accomplished oboists of her generation and it was for her that Benjamin Britten composed his *Six Metamorphosis* after Ovid, Op. 49 in 1951. She also

played in Britten's orchestra at Aldeburgh.

Folk music is an inspiration in all of these works and indeed some are based on actual folk songs. This version of *Greensleeves* for Oboe and string quartet is a welcome alternative to Vaughan Williams setting. There are some delightful counter melodies and wayward harmonies that prevent the melody becoming boring.

The main works on the disc are the two *Oboe Quartets*, the first of which is mainly elegant and pastoral, the rococo like first movement with its quasi fugal writing setting the scene for the rest of the work. The brief middle movement is a jig like scherzo that Holst would have been proud of. The finale, longer than the previous two movements together, is a set of variations on a wistful folk like theme. The quartet gets much to do in developing the material with the skittish oboe providing commentary. Mr Baigent is able to show his controlled technique as

the oboe plays throughout its range with much made of the lower register.

The *Second Quartet* is a much more robust affair and although written in 1945 inexplicably had to wait till 2014 for its first outing. A folk like feel is set from the outset and through its near 7 minutes a variety of folk like melodies are bounced around and skilfully interwoven. The slow movement is a lyrical barcarolle, the sinuous melody perfectly placed for the oboe's timbre. The waltz like third movement leads to the finale is a madcap scamper with hints of a hornpipe in which the oboe is put through its paces and which brings the work to an exhilarating close.

This is a well-planned disc which shows Mr Baigent as a skilled performer ably supported by his colleagues. I only wish it had ended with the high of the *Second Quartet* rather than the more subdued mood of the first.

Honouring Bennett

BMS members, far more than the rest of us, will already be familiar with go-to English Romantic composer William Sterndale Bennett (1816-75). Listeners knowing perhaps just the G minor Symphony and the Capriccio for piano and orchestra will be interested to know how this F minor sonata compares. All of us will be delighted that a Japanese pianist has honoured the piece enough to make this splendid recording of it.

Bennett was, of course, a close personal friend of Schumann, making this disc's coupling far more than just a happy coincidence of opus-number. The two men were such firm friends that Mendelssohn jokingly complained to Bennett that he could never see him alone, for Schumann was always with him! Yet it is Mendelssohn, rather than Schumann, who provides the closest musical influence here, and in fact it was Mendelssohn to whom Bennett offered the piece as a wedding present, in 1837.

Less predictably perhaps, Weber is an influence too. Weber in songful rather than acrobatic mood, it must be said – the prevailing texture is of soprano-register aria and steady accompaniment, and the writing, although adventurous for the time, contains few flights of fancy above the staff for such a large work (four movements, 36 minutes, of which 16 are taken up by the first movement). Maybe the key of F minor discouraged such frivolity. Severe critics might notice that the finale's texture remains unvaried compared to, say, that of Beethoven's sonata Op 2 No 1 in the same key. Hiroaki Take-

nouchi does the piece proud, his tasteful and controlled playing enhanced by an enviable handling of rhythmic flexibility.

The only other recording I know of is from Ilana Pruny on Naxos. She couples the sonata with more Bennett, the Suite Op 24: Takenouchi-san chooses the Schumann work that most of us call by the French title *Etudes Symphoniques*, though Artalinna opt for a more English alternative: *Etudes in Form of Variations "Symphonic Etudes"*. This is Schumann's first version, not the perhaps more familiar second. Musical differences between the two are tiny until the finale, which departs considerably from the Clara-Schumann-edited score that many of us may possess. Takenouchi is a safe pair of hands, and his interpretation preserves momentum both within each variation and through the structure as a whole. And – again, as many BMS members will already know – the coupling is perfectly appropriate, for the *Etudes* are dedicated to none other than Sterndale Bennett himself.

– *Michael Round*

Sterndale Bennett: Piano Sonata in F minor, Op 13

Schumann: *Symphonic Etudes*, Op 13

Hiroaki Takenouchi *piano*

ARTALINNA ATL A018

