

BRITISH MUSIC SOCIETY

news

Summer 2021

Diversity and the String Quartet

Exploring diversity in British classical music

10 pages of CD reviews

Including reviews of music by Moeran, McCabe & Beamish

AN APPRECIATION OF HONOR SHEPPARD

Remembering the life of the distinguished soprano

Cover picture: Nick Fawcings



Chairman's welcome

Dear Members,

May I welcome you to the summer edition of the BMS Printed News, and I hope you will find much to interest you.

First of all, I'd like to announce a change in date for this year's AGM. Once again we will be resorting to a Zoom platform and would love to see as many members as possible on the screen during our meeting on Monday 4 October 2021.

Please note that this will be held in the morning 10am-12pm to enable our Australian members to attend.

The link to the AGM is provided in this Printed News - see back page. If there are members needing assistance and advice on downloading Zoom, please communicate with our Secretary Dirick von Behr at secretarybms@outlook.com

Many thanks to the team of volunteers now working on the video tributes to John McCabe and John Joubert.

We are off to an excellent start with the first videos of performances and interviews being submitted; many more are planned over the summer months. Then the hard work of editing will begin!

More information about our wonderful new Digital Archive Manager is revealed in these pages and we have exciting updates regarding Amy Yuan's New Talent British International Youth Music Competition and Festival and the BMS Essay Competition.

With all good wishes,

- Dr. Wendy Hiscocks

British Music Society committee

The committee comprises:

Wendy Hiscocks (Chairman), John Gibbons (Vice Chairman), Stephen Trowell (Treasurer), Dirick von Behr (Secretary), Dr Ian Maxwell (Journal Editor), Dr Jonathan Clinch. Advisory role: Karen Fletcher

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News

British Music Society's news and events

BMS essay competition closing date nears

Dominic Daula reminds us that the closing date for entries for the second British Music Society Essay Competition 2021 is 30 September 2021

Student researchers are warmly invited to submit entries for this competition. The winning essay will be published in a future edition of *British Music*, and its author will be awarded a cash prize of £100.

2019 saw the inaugural event which was won by Matthew McCullough from Durham University (pictured).

Matthew's winning entry was *A History and Analysis of Gerald Finzi's Dies Natalis*: "At a young age, Gerald Finzi suffered the loss of many important figures in his life.

"These losses had a pernicious effect on Finzi who took refuge in poetry and music, in particular that which explored the fragility of life and transience of time.

Finding a personal association with Thomas Traherne's *Centuries of Meditations*, Finzi set the text in what would become his *Magnum Opus, Dies Natalis*."

Providing a critical analysis of the



Competition winner Matthew McCullough

music, its themes, and the compositional process, as well as a brief history of its publishing and recording, this essay explores how Finzi's personal connection with the chosen text and his experiences of the period's Bach revival have combined to create the *Cantata, Dies Natalis*.

Read the full essay in *British Music* volume 41, 2019/1.

You can find out more about Matthew at the Durham University website <https://www.durham.ac.uk/staff/matthew-mccullough/>

Digitising the BMS Journals

The BMS produced its first journal in 1979. Over 40 editions later we eagerly await the latest edition which is due very soon.

Many of these journals are now out of print and therefore inaccessible to BMS Members and other British Music enthusiasts.

Increasing number of articles from past BMS Journals are being digitised and made available online to members.

We are therefore delighted to announce the start of an exciting new project which is to digitise all articles from all existing BMS Journals.

This is a big project which will take many months to complete. It is being coordinated by Revolution Arts with the help of Eleanor Spence (pictured above).

A graduate of Photography from Falmouth University, Eleanor is currently



working in digitisation alongside her work as a freelance photographer. She lives in Oxford with her fiancé.

Articles are being added as they become ready and available are free to download, read and print by any BMS member registered on the website.

We shall keep you up to date with recent additions through the E-News.

Visit the website and look under publications to see the Journals that have been digitised.

Dr Ian Maxwell returns as BMS Journal editor

We are delighted that Dr Ian Maxwell will be joining the team once again as BMS Journal Editor following Dominic Daula's sterling work on the publication over the past few years.

Dr Ian Maxwell graduated with a BMus (Hons) degree from the University of Aberdeen in 1979 and subsequently spent two years undertaking postgraduate research into computer-assisted music style analysis at the University of Southampton.

Personal imperatives obliged him to abandon this, and for 25 years he pursued a career in Financial and Banking Information Technology.

Semi-retirement in 2005 enabled him once more to spend time researching for a doctoral programme, and in 2014 he graduated with a PhD on the life and work of composer E. J. Moeran from the University of Durham.

Between 2011 and 2014, he was editor of the British Music Society, with responsibility for the quarterly newsletter BMS News and the annual journal *British Music*.



In 2015, he was appointed to a one-year Visiting Research Fellowship in the Faculty of Music at the University of Cambridge. Subsequently, he was an Affiliated Researcher in the faculty until the end of 2019.

Dr Maxwell is presently an Honorary Research Fellow in the Music Department of the University of Sheffield.

In January 2022, he will take over the editorship of *British Music*.

His biography of Ernest John Moeran was published by Boydell & Brewer in June

2021, and he has contributed chapters to the following: *The Creative Worlds of Joseph Joachim*, eds. Eshbach & Goetzen, (Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, forthcoming late 2021), *Music in Twentieth-Century Oxford*, eds. Wollenberg & Darwall-Smith, (Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge, forthcoming late 2021), and *Joseph Joachim: Identitäten*, eds. Uhde & Uhde, (Georg Olms Verlag, Hildesheim, forthcoming early 2022).

Photo: Zerlina Villiam

Diversity and the British string quartet

Over three days in June composers, performers, students, and academics explored issues of diversity in British classical music through the case study of the string quartet.



In this project, the Villiers Quartet and Torch: The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities have:

- * released digital concerts with the Villiers Quartet presenting string quartets from British composers with varied connections to national identity

- * coached remotely 14–18 year old students from schools with low access to music education or diverse student bodies to compose their own string quartets with mentoring from Oxford students

- * produced a live-streamed symposium with lectures, round-table

discussion with composers, student workshops, and performances of historic British quartets.

The string quartet – and British classical music in general – are often associated with elitism and exclusivity, yet historically the genre has attracted composers who defy this stereotype: women, BAME musicians, communists, and others from traditionally marginalised groups such as Ethel Smyth, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and Elizabeth Maconchy.

All the events are now available to watch free online. Full details of the project with links to the lectures and concerts can be found on the Torch website: www.torch.ox.ac.uk/

This project has been generously supported by TORCH as part of the Humanities Cultural Programme, Arts Council England, the RVW Trust, The David Willets Fund for Teaching Innovation, and supporters of the Villiers Quartet's From Home Commissions Fund.).



All change at the Holst Museum



Cheltenham's hidden gem, the Holst Birthplace Museum, is emerging in good health from the Covid pandemic.

The long closure period has been used to plan for a new direction, led by Steve Wood, whose six-year chairmanship ended in early July.

Managed by an independent charitable trust since 1999, the museum celebrates the life of composer Gustav Holst (1874–1934) and opened in 1974.

Taking on the role of Chair of trustees is Hilary Simpson. With 30 years of experience in HR and policy roles at Oxfordshire County Council, she and husband John retired to the town in 2012.

Since then she has immersed herself in Cheltenham's civic life as Chair of Friends of The Wilson until 2018, along with her involvement in Friends of Pittville and since 2014 the immense work done by its Pittville History Works group.

More recently Hilary has focused on public appreciation of Pittville Pump Room. Appropriately for a Victorian period museum like The Holst, Hilary is also involved with the William Morris Society.

Hilary is looking forward to leading the museum in an exciting new direction – details coming soon.

For more information about the museum visit <https://holstmuseum.org.uk/>

Obituary: organist Richard Lloyd

25 June 1933 – 24 April 2021

Richard Lloyd, who died in April, was the Organist and Master of the Choristers at Hereford Cathedral from 1966 to 1974.

He was also a noted composer of church music with more than 600 anthems to his credit.

During his time there, where he succeeded Melville Cook, he supervised three Three Choirs Festivals, in 1967, 1970 and 1973.

On the final night of his first Festival, his performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* was distinguished by a now legendary team of soloists which included Janet Baker, Ronald Dowd and Roger Stalman.



He continued to programme much of Elgar's music, including *The Apostles*, which was given in the last Festival for which he was responsible.

That 1967 Festival also included an outstanding performance of the then rarely heard *Mass no 3 in F Minor* by Bruckner, its choral cadences perfectly suited to the acoustic of the Cathedral.

Lloyd also brought new music to the Festival: he commissioned, or played, works from many contemporary composers, among them, Alun Hoddinott, Bernard Naylor and our former President, John McCabe, whose *Notturmo ed Alba* received its first performance at the 1970 Festival.

In 1974 he was appointed Organist and Master of the Choristers at Durham Cathedral, and after a short period as deputy headmaster of Salisbury Cathedral School, retired to Anglesey before finally settling in Herefordshire in 2001.

His anthem *View me, Lord* was sung yesterday (July 31) by the Hereford Choir at this year's Three Choirs Festival, held in Worcester.

An appreciation of Honor Sheppard

The distinguished soprano Honor Sheppard died in her home village of Bowdon, Cheshire, at the age of 89 on 29th May 2021.

She was born on 23rd December 1931, one of two children, in Horsforth, near Leeds, but she was very proud of her Cornish heritage via her mother's family.

Honor's first marriage was to the baritone John Lawrenson, but after that marriage broke down she married as her second husband the harpsichordist Robert Elliott, who had been a fellow student at the Royal Manchester College of Music, where her adored singing teacher was Elsie Thurston.

When Robert subsequently became Head of Keyboard Studies at the Royal Northern College of Music, this necessitated a move from their home in York to the leafy suburb of Bowdon, near Altrincham, where they bought one of several local houses which had strong musical connections.

The Firs, their adored home for the remainder of their lives, had been the home of the conductor Hans Richter. Nearby houses had been occupied by Adolph Brodsky (the distinguished Russian violinist and Principal of the RCM), the composer John Ireland, and also the composer and artist Thomas Pitfield (Robert's composition professor at the RCM and subsequently with his Russian born wife Alice close friends).

Honor was "discovered" by the conductor Maurice Miles, at whose instigation she went to the Royal Manchester College of Music, and she quickly started to build an international solo career, with a voice of startling beauty, keen musical intelligence, and a winning personality.

She shone in such works as Howells' *Hymnus Paradisi*, Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*, and Havergal Brian's *Gothic Symphony*, where she took part in the first professional performance with the BBCSO under Boult in the Royal Albert Hall in 1966.

Honor was however particularly renowned for her performances of baroque music, with Purcell and Handel being particular favourites.

She joined the world-famous Deller Consort in 1960, as first soprano, and with Alfred and Mark Deller, and such stalwarts as Maurice Bevan, Robert Spencer on the lute, and her husband Robert Elliott on the harpsichord they toured the world with immaculate performances of madrigals and baroque music, as well as thrilling audiences each



summer in Boughton Aluph Church, Kent, at the renowned Stour Music Festival.

To quote Mark Deller: "Not only was her voice liquid gold.....she was unsurpassed as THE oratorio/passion soprano soloist of her day....but she was also stunningly beautiful, and like everyone else, I adored her."

In retirement she continued to teach at the RNCM. Her many pupils, both at the RNCM and before, included fellow Yorkist Lynne Dawson, Tessa Bonner, and Sasha Johnson Manning (the composer of the *Manchester Carols*) who said: "Our lessons were magical and full of laughter.

Honor's wisdom, beauty and fabulous wit, combined with her magnitude of musicianship and one of the most beautiful voices I ever heard, made her an exceptional star to be guided by." Honor treasured and frequently performed a setting of "A Willow Bird", written for her by Robert, who had himself been a composition pupil of both Pitfield and (in Paris) Pierre Max Dubois.

I was first introduced to Honor by my lutenist friend Robert Spencer, and we collaborated on premieres of memorable works by Alwyn, Leighton, McCabe, Fricker, Petr Eben, Douglas Steele and Pitfield (her near neighbour in Bowdon).

For a celebration of her 80th birthday in 2012, in a packed Wilmslow Church, Howard Skempton continued the tradition with a setting of "Winter my Secret" for soprano (Lynne Dawson), recorder, harpsichord and cello.

Acis and Galatea was also on the menu, with a roster of well-known singers. It was a memorable occasion, with an audience just as emotional as all the performers. Honor is quite unforgettable.

She is survived by her Daughter Helen ("Fen"), her son Dominic and her four grand-children, Michael, Henry, Connor and Elizabeth.

- A tribute by John Turner

Obituary: composer David Beck

Despite, or perhaps because of, sharing a surname with Swiss, German, American and Canadian composers, the British composer David Beck, who died on 7th July last, of oesophageal cancer, remained for much of his life in the shadows as an orchestral violinist.

He was born in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, on 1 January 1941, but moved with his parents to Kent and attended school in Folkestone, as well as the Kent Junior Music School in Maidstone, where he made rapid progress on both the violin and clarinet. One of his friends from this time was the tenor Philip Langridge.

David joined the National Youth Orchestra as a "general musician" on the strength of his youthful compositions, before graduating to the tubular bells and then to the viola.

During his time with the Orchestra he benefited from helpful composition advice from Herbert Howells, and at the age of 16 won a music scholarship to Gonville and Caius College Cambridge, where he studied composition under Peter Tranchell and Patrick Hadley.

He became a member, playing second violin, of a student quartet, the Locke String Quartet, led by Simon Standage, who remained a lifelong friend.

After graduating, David stayed on to gain the degree of B.Mus. in both composition and performance. Works from this time included the String Quartet No. 1 (entered for the Clements Memorial Prize, but not performed until 2007), and a pair of pieces for clarinet and piano, much praised by fellow student David Blake. David Beck

subsequently joined the Halle Orchestra as a violinist, later transferring to the BBC Northern Orchestra (later the BBC Philharmonic), as well as freelancing with other ensembles.

He was known among the players particularly for his quirky and delightful takes on well-known Christmas carol tunes, but the demands of the work left little time for original composition, though he did manage to compose works for the Northern Chamber Orchestra, the Halle Brass Quintet, the Halle Wind Quintet and the Warwickshire Schools String Orchestra.



A mite disgracefully neither orchestra of which he was a member played a note of his music. In retirement he took up the oboe in a local amateur orchestra, to help out!

The first work he wrote for me was a delightful Serenade for recorder, cello and harpsichord, performed at the Phil club, though I confess that I had enormous difficulty trying to pitch the final section on a Swanee Whistle. Other works that he later wrote for me included two substantial and imaginative concertos, and two quintets with strings, all recorded (see discography).

David had a quirky sense of humour, and adored puns anagrams and

double-entendres (he was a dab hand at Scrabble and Monopoly. My birthday card from him last year read: "York Hard From Deep Heck". His response to a lovely review in *The American Recorder* was "This old wreck is glad to receive wreckognition for his Wreck Hoarder pieces".

Even in his last illness his sense of the absurd did not vanish. As he lost weight he wrote to me: "I have lost some weight in the last few weeks.

Trousers are falling down. Reached the limit of what my belt can do. It's as if it was made for someone else. For Whom the Belt Holds?? Eat your heart out, Mr. Hemingway."

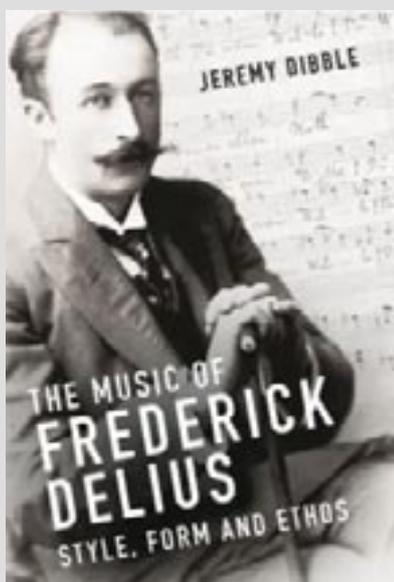
It is ironic and so sad that David survived with a mild form of leukaemia for almost half his life, yet succumbed in the end to a more aggressive form of the disease. I shall miss his sense of humour, his life-affirming personality, and the constant supply of fascinating, carefully wrought, immaculately scored and sometimes gently humorous music.

David's last music was a short fantasy for two recorders on the well-known theme tune by Nick Ingman (and with his consent) to the popular TV series "Keeping up Appearances", which will shortly be published by Peacock Press. Pace Mrs Bouquet / Bucket, pompous David was not!

David is survived by his second wife Caroline Densham, a harpist and astute genealogist.

- Obituary by John Turner

David Beck's full discography can be found on the obituary on the BMS website.



35% OFF NEW BIOGRAPHIES

Two new publications by Boydell & Brewer are available online to members at a special discount of 35% using discount code BB135.

Both books published on 18 June.

Dr Ian Maxwell's new book Ernest John Moeran – His Life and Music was inspired by his PhD on the life and work of composer E. J. Moeran from the University of Durham between 2011 and 2014.

A former editor of the British Music Society, with responsibility for the quarterly newsletter BMS News and the annual journal *British Music*, Dr Ian Maxwell is Honorary Research Fellow at Sheffield University's Department of Music.

He was awarded a PhD in 2014 from the University of Durham for his research into the life and work of composer E. J. Moeran.

You can buy this book with the discount at the Boydell and Brewer website.

Jeremy Dibble's new book on Delius is also being released on the same date and is available to members at the special discount of 35%.

Don't forget that to benefit from the 35% saving on either book use discount code BB135 at the checkout.

To buy these books at a discount visit the Boydell and Brewer website <https://boydellandbrewer.com> * see review of Ernest John Moeran – His Life and Music on page x/

Leading opera director dies



We record, with regret, the sudden death, on July 17th, of leading opera director Sir Graham Vick at the age of 67. Founder of the Birmingham Opera Group in 1987, his revisionist and often inspired productions graced the leading opera houses of the world for over 30 years.

Award for violinist Elizabeth Wallfisch



It is with great pleasure that we note that the German town of Magdeburg, birthplace of Georg Philipp Telemann, has awarded this year's Telemann prize to Elizabeth Wallfisch, the leading baroque violinist, who is also the wife of our own President, Raphael Wallfisch.

She will receive her award from the Mayor, Lutz Truempfer, on September 17th and will then give a performance with the Freiburg Baroque Orchestra.

We are sure that BMS members would wish to congratulate Elizabeth Wallfisch on receiving this distinguished award from Telemann's home town.

500th issue sells out

William Wordsworth Orchestral Works Volume III – 5th Symphony and Cello Concerto with Florian Arnicans, Liepaja Symphony Orchestra and John Gibbons – is the fastest ever selling Toccata Classics disc and has sold out in under a month (immediate repressing in action).

This is stunning news for Toccata's 500th issue.

It is also a mark of appreciation for this superb series of recordings of William Wordsworth's severely neglected orchestral music.

John Gibbons has just returned from another week in Liepaja where he and the orchestra completed William Wordsworth Volume IV – 7th Symphony Cosmos and A Spring Festival Overture, Jubilations and Confluence.

They also completed a disc of Malcolm Arnold containing the Ninth symphony and the premiere recording of A Grand Concerto Gastronomique.

This disc should be available for the centenary celebrations in October.

Guess the composer

BMS member John Turner has asked if any other members can identify this excerpt from the first and last pages of a Sarabande for piano dated 1939.

The style of the music is fairly sophisticated, the writing very precise, and the piece itself is rather beautiful. Any ideas, please email secretarybms@outlook.com



A PENCHANT FOR PINTO

Although he only lived for 20 years, George Frederick Pinto (1785-1806) was referred to as "The English Mozart" by his teacher Salomon and was close friends with John Field and Samuel Wesley, who described him as a "musical genius".

His works are rarely performed today and certainly deserve greater recognition – Jonathan Delbridge is performing Pinto's piano music live in a series of 30 minutes Facebook broadcasts.

"The performances will remaining online so they can



always be viewed at a later time," said Jonathan.

See Jonathan's facebook page for more information: www.facebook.com/JonathanDelbridgeMusic

BRING BACK BUSCH SONGS

The daughter of the composer William Busch has launched a crowdfunding campaign called Circles within Circles to bring back the forgotten songs of William Busch.

Julia Cornaby Busch said: I am endeavouring to bring the songs of my father back into the world after being forgotten for so long.

"I have the opportunity to record these together with songs of Gerald Finzi, Michael Head and Elizabeth Poston and to be sung by Roderick Williams, Diana Moore and Robin Tritschler together with the

pianist John Reid.

"We are all excited about this project and to go forward I have turned to Crowdfunder to make this all happen."

As John Amis said in his programme *Forgotten Reputations*, recorded in 1989 for BBC3 "of all the musicians of the 30's and 40's William Busch is the most likely to be forgotten". He was only 43 when he died.

For donations of £40 Julia is offering the complete CD. Visit www.crowdfunder.co.uk/Circles-within-Circles for more details.

2021 contest seeks young musical talent

Entries are now open for the New Talent British International Youth Music Competition 2021.

Amy Yuan's AY Academy has been running the annual competition in association with British Music Society since 2018 and based on last year's successful experience and in light of Covid-19, this year's competition will continue to be online this year.

The competition is open to young musicians of all nationalities and capabilities between the ages of 4 and 30 in the categories of Strings, Piano, Voice, Woodwind and Brass, Speech.

A seven-strong jury panel made up mainly of Royal Academy of Music professors determines the winners.

Bursaries are available for those who are currently receiving bursaries from their schools or local authorities so that as many people as possible can join the community.

To join the competition send in your videos; all participants will receive feedback and cash prizes totalling £1,600, one-to-one lessons with members of the jury panel and a



unique invitation to perform at London's prestigious Royal Academy of Music.

In addition to the competition, a series of talks hosted by members of our Jury Panel and other guest speakers are on offer.

The New Talent Talks are free of charge for participating Competition candidates and will take place online in the week beginning 16th August 2021.

The topics of the talks will be announced in due course and will cover 'How to practice more efficiently' to 'How to prepare for auditions', and other topics.

For more information about the competition and the recently announced jury panel visit www.newtalentyouthmusic.com

Composer celebrates his 95th

BMS members congratulated composer Joseph Horowitz on celebrating his 95th birthday in May

His contribution to the British music scene dates from the

war years and he has contributed to many diverse forms of composition over the years.

Happy Birthday Joe, from your many admirers at the British Music Society!

BASC 2021 plans unveiled

Nigel Foster, BMS member and Director of the London Song Festival, has announced Sarah Connolly as the teacher and judge of the BASC 2021 masterclass/competition to be held on Saturday 11th December 2021.

The two sessions of the masterclass and Sarah's adjudication at the 1901 Arts Club, Exton Street SE1 8UE will be recorded and streamed online from 2pm – 5pm and 6pm – 9pm.

One compulsory song by Delius must be sung by all BASC participants.

New titles published

Music publisher Goodmusic has announced the recent publication of around 100 new works, almost all of which are British.

Titles include previously unpublished Holst which have been published in conjunction with The Holst Society. Larger works include *Four New Seasons* (after Vivaldi), *Into the Light* (with a nod to Handel) and *The Light of Love – A Requiem* (with a nod to Mozart).

These include *The Voyager* – a collection of 12 part-songs for mixed voice choir, over 50 solo songs in four volumes each published for high and low voices, and *Clear and Cool* for choir and orchestra.

Find out more at www.goodmusicpublishing.co.uk

Seeking information about Alfred Ashpole

Dear BMS,

I have been searching for contact information about copyright for Alfred Ashpole's music.

I found an original composition for concert band and/or brass band in my library from the early 60s.

Alfred wrote the march for the band director who lived here at the time, Robert Latimer. The march is very interesting and I feel it should be re-introduced to the music world.

I have done a Finale transcription of the march, but I have not done anything else with it because I do not want to infringe on copyright.

Do you have any information on living relatives of Alfred's? Any help would be of great assistance.

Adrian Bourgeois
Melfort, Saskatchewan, Canada
email: bourgeois.adrian@nesd.ca

Memories of my grandfather

My mother always used to say with a sigh, “I wish you could have known your grandfather” (pictured above in 1929). She loved him dearly, and kept a rare full-face picture of him on her desk.

In recent years feel I have got to know him, through sorting out his archive to go to the British Library, and editing a compendium of his work, *The Greater Light*, with Stephen Connock.



Pictured are Martin Shaw, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Canon Briggs, who was influential in the committee which commissioned Songs of Praise Enlarged, to which he contributed hymns and a number of tunes. In later life he spent a lot effort on promoting The Daily Service, an offshoot of SoP for Boys and Girls which was widely used in schools until the 1990s.

with all his life. In 1957 a young Jane Manning was given a tactful warning about it when singing in Shaw’s ballad opera *Mr Pepys*, her first performance in front of the composer. The birthmark was never ever mentioned at home, and he only referred to it once, to say to his wife, “I am as God made me.”

When little, my mother would knock on the door of his study to see if she could come in for a cuddle, and if he was busy with a score, he would gently say, “not now darling.” Finding the silence a composer needs is a problem if you are a composer with children.

The solution for the Shaws was to rent Black Boy Cottage, part of the Dashwood Estate in West Wycombe where he was able to enjoy riding about the countryside and compose in peace. It was here that Shaw received Elgar’s letter confirming the arrival of his Heine song sequence, *Water Folk*, first performed at the 1932 *Three Choirs Festival* in Worcester.

Through his letters and articles I have sensed his humour, seen his calling to be a Church musician, and listened to the beauty of his secular pieces.

As a small child, my brother Martin (now the composer Dirk Mont Campbell) remembers sitting on Shaw’s lap fascinated by his face. By then Shaw was in his late 70s, and the birthmark he had been born with had grown and distended; it was that which so fascinated my brother.

If you were not used to it of course, it was terribly shocking, and this reaction from every stranger he ever met was a burden, if not a disability, that the man had had to live

Shaw worked unceasingly in his campaign to raise standards in church music, travelling round the country giving lectures, adjudicating and writing articles. He also worked to raise the standards of music taught in schools; this heavy workload was only possible through the continual support of my grandmother, Joan, who devoted her life to him. She was also secretary for Vaughan Williams and Shaw when they co-edited the original edition of *Songs of Praise* in 1925.

For the second edition published in 1931, my grandmother recalled Shaw giving the English poet Eleanor Farjeon a tune that needed some new words; Farjeon had already helped out in this way with the *Oxford Book of Carols*. Normally, Shaw explained, things were the other way about, but given a tune, Farjeon could produce a set of verses with perfect fit! (T S Eliot was not able to manage this when collaborating with Shaw in 1934.)

The tune in question was an old Gaelic melody entitled *Bunessan*, then set to a carol whose words would not have chimed with editor Percy Dearmer’s socialist principles. Farjeon helpfully altered her poem *Morning has Broken* to fit the tune, where it famously became hymn number 30, and has remained popular for the last 90 years.

As it happened, a year or so beforehand, the Shaws had been getting serious letters from their bank manager. Farjeon, by then a close friend, volunteered some money to help them out: “Please don’t mind me doing this, and make me happy by keeping it as a gift, made out of love to you both, and my admiration of Martin’s beautiful work”.

Placating his bank manager was no doubt why Shaw wrote his reminiscences *Up to Now* (not really an autobiography as the publishers say). Regarded by many as a literary gem, its dry humour details his adventures reviving Purcell’s music for Edward Gordon Craig’s theatrical productions, travelling the Continent conducting orchestras for the dancer Isadora Duncan, and among many other things, the eccentricities of rural vicars.

Vaughan Williams was a lifelong friend who took a great interest in our family. He was my uncle Diccon’s ‘special friend’ and benefactor (having refused to be his Godfather), who paid his fees to attend the Royal Academy and Cambridge. He came to my parents’ wedding. He was also mid-wife to Shaw’s *The Redeemer*, a cantata-length oratorio.

This work, originally titled *The Tree*, was the focus of what he and Vaughan Williams called a ‘field day’, a time to comment on each other’s work during a stay at The White Gates, the home of Vaughan Williams. Shaw’s manuscript of *The Tree* had been refused by publishers on account of the war-time paper shortage but was welcomed later with open arms under its new title *The Redeemer*.

I think Shaw’s grief at the recent death of his composer brother Geoffrey is reflected in its beauty and sadness, which brings people close to tears. Vaughan Williams commented: “It is a noble work, and should be done everywhere” and it was, at an international level. Shaw regarded it as his best piece, though I think I prefer *Sursum Corda*, a cantata with words written specially for him by Laurence Binyon. Then again, I have yet to hear *Easter*, written with John Masefield, or *The Changing Year* written for *The Festival of Britain*. There will always be more to know about Shaw.

- Written by Isobel Platings

ERNEST JOHN MOERAN: His Life and Music

Ian Maxwell

THE BOYDELL PRESS (355 pages)

Ian Maxwell has been examining and researching the life and work of E J Moeran for over 15 years and this book is the distillation of these efforts into a magnificent book detailing his conclusions.

The scholarship is deep, persistent and penetrating, and it is presented in a thoroughly readable style. I would go as far as to say this is one of the best books of its type I have ever come across, and up there with, say, Lewis Foreman's Bax.

The author has been presented with a large number of problems, notably the conspicuous absence of ancillary material, for instance correspondence, since the composer was careless about keeping ephemera, and destroyed work and sketches he deemed inadequate. Even more difficult is what the author calls the 'Moeran mythology' – tales which grew up around him (and not denied by him) which demands an appendix all to itself.

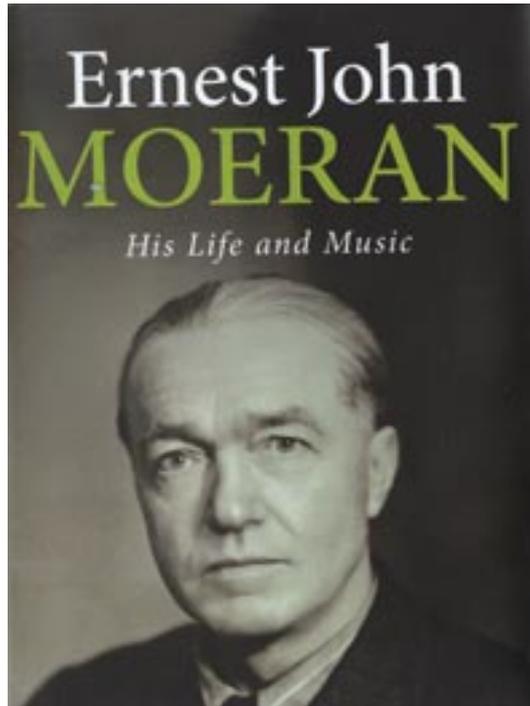
As Maxwell states on page 222 'Moeran invested time and effort during his adult life in constructing a persona, or series of personas, that were intended to correlate with how he believed others perceived him, and this construction was founded on extensive dissembling'.

The author has patiently examined all the data which can be verified and then, with scrupulous care, come to reasoned conclusions to the mysteries which are often at variance with former assumptions and stories.

For instance, Moeran was wounded in WW1 but not as a despatch rider (though he did love motor bikes). He was leading a patrol in dangerous territory when he sustained an injury to the back of his head, caused by metal fragments. He did not have a 'plate in his head' (as he was wont to claim).

The fragments were carefully removed after the war. Maxwell dismisses the notion that there was undetected nerve damage, though one does wonder if the subsequent alcoholism and irrational behaviour might have been a long-suffered consequence.

The author deals sympathetically with two difficult matters. Firstly, the baleful influence of Philip Helestine & co with



whom Moeran spent several years noted for hedonistic and doubtless immoral behaviour in the late 20s at a cottage in Eynsford, Kent. This virtually put a stop to his composing just as he was emerging as a 'promising' young composer.

Then there is the curious matter of the late marriage to the cellist Peers Coetmore. In the first instance Moeran was almost certainly bisexual. During his peripatetic life he was looked after during stays with family or friends, and wealthy enough for long sojourns in hotels, so he was not fully house-trained. Coetmore had a career to pursue, was frequently away, and was not a housewife. For her, being married to a significant composer was seen as a boost to her ambitions.

Moeran's letters to her have mostly been saved (but not vice-versa) and shows him to be soporily dependent on her, but he was frequently apologising for being drunk a lot of the time, which understandably made her somewhat cross. One may also surmise that the drunkenness caused him to be impotent.

The other difficult issue now confirmed is that of his sad death. The last years were full of serious health problems, and he was often very depressed. But his falling into the river Kenmare was not suicide – he was dead before he hit the water, a probable cause being a cerebral haemorrhage.

Moeran's music is dealt with at some length. One important suggestion is that this was sometimes seen as 'derivative' but this is too simplistic. For instance, he took some lessons with John Ireland in the early 20s, but this became two-way issue.

Ireland's harmonies became more complex having seen Moeran's work, but Ireland insisted on scrupulous attention to detail, which became a feature of his later output, and this might be seen as unexpected given other aspects of his personality.

Listening to his late Sinfonietta it occurred to me that if I had been listening with an 'innocent ear' I would have thought the music had been composed by Richard Rodney Bennett (in sensible, tonal mode). This of course would be impossible, the point being is that there is a difference between 'influence' and adventitious similarity.

So here is the whole story about a composer whose life was full of difficulties with mental confusion, health, alcohol, sexuality – you name it, but one who has given us some memorably lovely music (Just think for a moment of the slow movement of the cello concerto.....).

I have a few tiny gripes, if I may be so bold. I would like it if the author has given an authoritative opinion on the pronunciation of Moeran's name, which I have always assumed takes the relative stress on the first syllable, not as I have also heard, the second.

The genealogy at the beginning of the book is somewhat confusing. A chart would be very helpful.

Heathcote Statham, who makes a couple of appearances, is described as 'the conductor' whereas I would suggest he is better known (at least today) as the distinguished organist (and composer) at Norwich Cathedral from 1928 to 1966.

Finally, though the incomplete second symphony is discussed, I would have welcomed the author's opinion of Martin Yates's completion of the work. The result – from a Dutton Epoch CD of 2011, sounds mostly pretty good to me.

- Geoffrey Atkinson

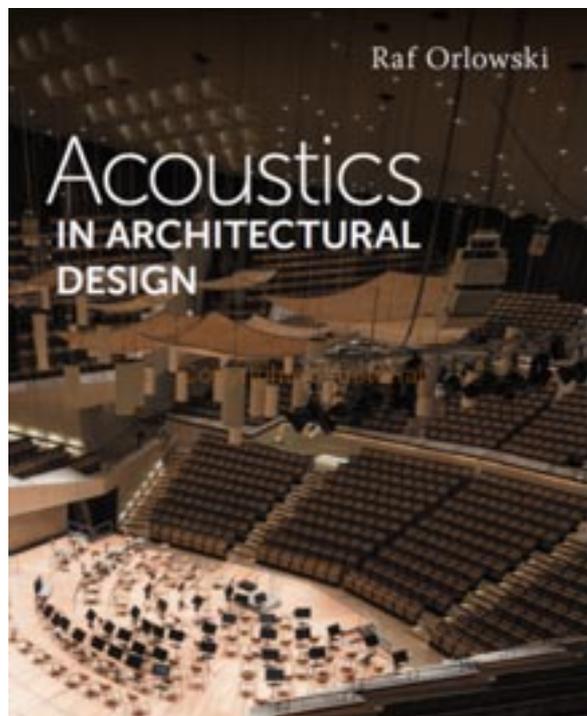
See discount offer on page 5.

BOOK & CD REVIEWS

ACOUSTICS IN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

Raf Orłowski

www.crowood.com



This is 'simply' a book about sound. Except it is not simple at all. For such a commonplace entity, its control and dissemination is a hugely complex matter, encompassing our experiences ranging from concert halls to railway station announcements etc., etc.

As these matters are something of an obsession of mine, a few comments will be filtered through a personal lens.

I noticed from an early age that some musicians seem unaware of sound in itself. They have battered old upright pianos, in the old days were not aware of the advantages of stereo reproduction (and now have cheap music centres), they were indifferent to the acoustic qualities of the concert hall they attended.

Whereas others ('me too') need a decent grand piano, have good quality hi-fi, and am acutely aware of the misfortune of being stuck with a concert hall with terrible acoustics (in my case, in student days, Sheffield City Hall) but thankful that the nearest one to me now is Aberdeen's Music Hall, once described by Beecham as being 'one of the best in the country'.

In this book, which is for the second category above, Mr Orłowski deals with very complex matters in a clear and friendly manner. An obligatory first chapter deals with the physics of sound ('Fundamentals of Acoustics') which provides the framework for that which follows.

I would suggest that these details are quite understandable to a knowledgeable and interested listener. There then follow a number of chapters exploring the practical applications of the matter from the Greeks to today.

Some of the problems can – perhaps too glibly, if cleverly – described as being based on the tensions between some architects (that most arrogant profession) who don't listen or hear, and some musicians who do not look and see. There are many circles to be squared, since there are a large number of issues at stake.

For instance, in the case of concerted music, it is nice to appreciate the warm acoustic of a good hall. But also important is the need for musicians to hear one another properly.

I once had to rehearse a local orchestra in a different venue where the players could not hear one another, but also the sounds coming to me on the podium arrived with different microsecond delays.

This was a nightmare for all, and my memories of, for example, Brahms *Academic Festival Overture* remain sore!

The book does not confine itself to concert halls. Chapters include discussions of pre-20th century opera houses and concert halls, then the same with many more recent examples.

Further sections concern theatres, schools, recital halls, lecture rooms, worship spaces and pulpits, law courts, transportation buildings (British Rail!) open plan offices, museums, and even planetariums. There are many photographs and diagrams.

It also seems that with all the recent technical analysis available that even some of the latest halls across the world are the subject of some criticism, even if they look absolutely splendid.

Paradoxically, London's Wigmore Hall, generally regarded as 'just perfect', breaks many of the rules which have been empirically established.

It is a matter of record that London's other three main halls are in varying degrees unsatisfactory and a national shame that Sir

Simon Rattle has gone back to Germany, fed up with the Barbican (wrong shape!) and denied the promised new hall.

After all, 'Sound' is his life's work, and he is not prepared to compromise. Good on him!

- Geoffrey Atkinson

DREAMS MELTING

Songs by Ferguson, Clarke, Maconchy, Finzi & Tate

James Geer tenor
Ronald Woodley piano

SOMMCD 0630

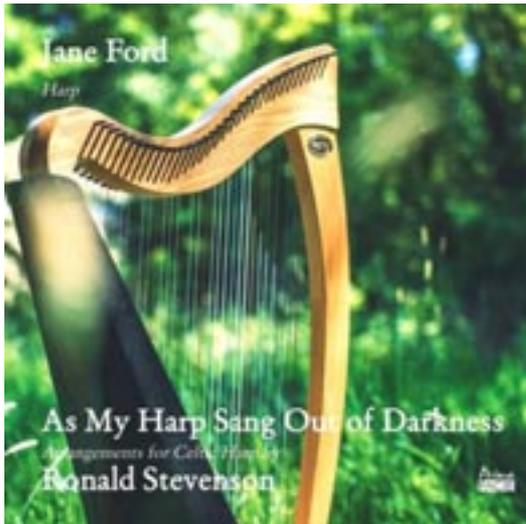
All but three of the songs on this disc have been recorded before, if infrequently; however for the most part this remains unfamiliar repertoire.

I've rarely thought of Howard Ferguson as an obvious songwriter, but his careful setting of five rather tortured and tortuous poems by Denton Welch raises them to another level; indeed the brief *Babylon* bears comparison with Holst's masterly *Betelgeuse* in its stark and attenuated beauty.

After years of neglect Rebecca Clarke's dramatic *The Seal Man* now seems to be popping up regularly (including on another recent Somm disc from James Gilchrist). Here, comparative newcomer James Geer sings this and five other songs with intelligence and taste – possibly even a little too much good taste.

Surely Blake's Tiger demands something more elemental from both composer and singer? Simpler lyrics such as *The*





RONALD STEVENSON As My Harp Sang Out of Darkness

Jane Ford lever clarsach

PRIMA FACIE PFCDD139

This CD is specifically issued as a 'balm for this troubled (Covid) era' – or, the notes say – to send 'a message of hope and comfort, and to be a light in the darkness during a difficult time'.

Ronald Stevenson (1928–2015) was a highly interesting, if not unique, figure in British music. His range was extraordinary. The famous Passacaglia on DSCH is thought, at 75 minutes, to be the longest unbroken movement in the piano repertoire.

Yet some of the items on this disc last barely a minute, and are just perfectly formed.

With his Scottish father and Welsh mother, he was, as his dedicated Society puts it, 'keenly aware of his Celtic heritage'. This disc presents 23 tracks of arrangements of traditional material.

The movements are full of interesting ideas and textures, but never too extreme in their musical language. The idiom is highly appropriate for the source material (and this cannot be said about many arrangements of traditional Celtic tunes).

The major collection here is *Sounding Strings* (an Album of Celtic Music) 14 short movements of sometimes well-known tunes. 'Celtic' here embraces Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish, Cornish, and Breton melodies.

So, we have, for instance, the *Eriskay Love Lilt*, *The Ash Grove*, *Londonderry Air*, *Hal-an-Tôw* (the Helston Floral Dance) and *La Basse-Bretonne*.

This particular collection is published by UMP, and – this might help members who can play the piano if not the clarsach – the edition is specifically available for either instrument.

The score notes where there are minor differences relating to particular technical demands. While I cannot comment on the technical

approachability of the harp version (!) the piano writing is quite straightforward (say, grades 4–6).

The rest of the programme on this disc is *What the Fairy Harper, Told Me* (from *3 Scots Fairy Tales*) and Rory Morrison's *Harp Book* which contains a further 8 movements.

Jane Ford is a well-regarded pianist as well as a clarsach player, and here one can assert that she is certainly a fine exponent of the latter. Her playing is sensitive and thoughtful, and it fully justifies and meets the stated ambition mentioned at the beginning.

My abiding memory is that of the final movement in *Sounding Strings*, the *Christ Child's Lullaby*, here played with exquisite rhythmic poise and tonal refinement.

- Geoffrey Atkinson

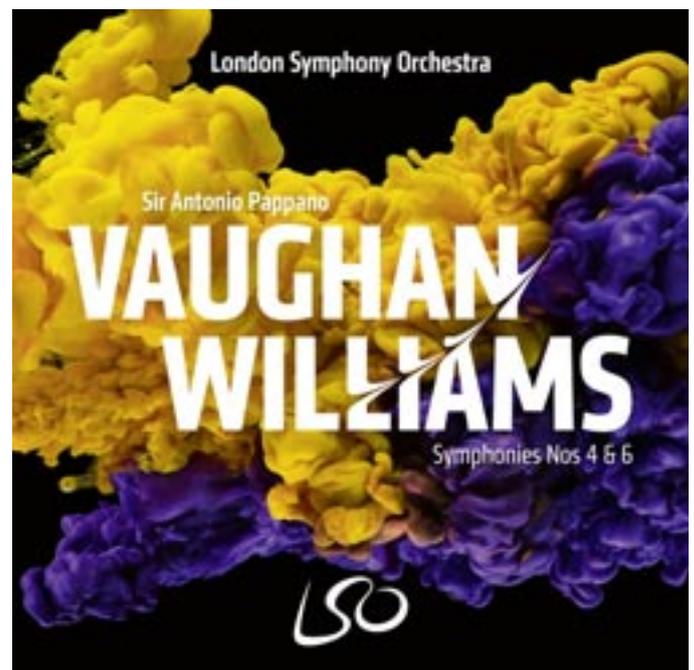
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS Symphonies 4 & 6

London Symphony Orchestra
Sir Antonio Pappano conductor

LSO Live LSO 0867

Sir Antonio has been Music Director of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden since 2002 and has a glowing reputation.

He also has a burgeoning career as guest conductor of many of the world's most prestigious orchestras, including, in particular, the London Symphony Orchestra.



Cloths of Heaven evoke from Clarke a tender eloquence which brings out the best in both performers.

Finzi's *Till Earth Outwears* is by far the best known and the most accomplished cycle here, and newcomers won't go wrong with this interpretation of Hardy's heart-broken meditations on time and loss, although to my mind more expressive performances can be found elsewhere on disc.

Elizabeth Maconchy's early settings of some well-known 17th century lyrics strike a pleasingly archaic note.

Some years later she set several Shakespeare lyrics in a rather more searching and angular style, considerably removed from the traditional idiom of say Finzi or Quilter, and reflecting (like many of her string quartets) a Bartokian influence.

If, at times, the results sound like a composer working hard to find a new angle, rather than the most natural word-setting, they certainly forced me to re-hear such over-familiar poems as *The Wind and the Rain*.

By comparison, the three songs by the grievously neglected Phyllis Tate have a pleasing unforced simplicity.

James Geer offers sound and solid readings throughout, although his tone is not always glamorous, and occasional vibrato is noticeable. He is very ably partnered by Ronald Woodley.

As with all Somm recordings the sound is exemplary and the booklet notes both thorough and thoughtful.

For a newcomer to English song, or those in search of some less familiar corners of the repertoire, this disc can be considered self-recommending.

- Kevin Mandry

CD REVIEWS

This new issue has been welcomed with something of a fanfare, one much deserved because it is frankly magnificent.

It is a live recording made in the Barbican. On receipt of the disc I did wonder how it would sound as this venue has been criticised for its acoustics.

In the event, this is certainly no problem. The sound-stage is close to the listener – you hear the music as though you were in the front seats, and it is very exciting.

The balance is fine and recording itself is brilliant, with astonishingly loud fortissimi and thunderous timpani blows. I did however find that at the other end of the scale that the pianissimi were almost inaudible. In other words, it was difficult to identify here the volume control should be set.

Sir Antonio's own notes remark that the dates on which these recordings were made were significant – 12 12 19 for no 4 (Election Day) and 15 3 20 (the day that Covid restrictions closed all concert halls). In consequence he says '(on both occasions) there was a particularly electric atmosphere in the hall....everyone felt it'.

This is all the more understandable given the violent and dramatic nature of these symphonies. VW famously said about the 4th: 'I don't know if I like it, but it's what I meant'. Well, I don't know whether I like it either, but I love its brutal angry force.

There is a less well-known VW observation about the end of the bleak slow movement which is worth sharing. He couldn't decide whether the final solo flute note should be F or E.

He said that 'in the end the good Lord came down and told me it should be E.' Whenever I hear this moment, I can under-

stand why there might be doubt, but also that the 'Lord' was correct.

It is quite clear that the atmosphere of the occasions mentioned above affected these performances. The orchestra plays 'out of its skull' (as they say), but also, I suggest, that the players are responding to the white-heat direction of Sir Antonio.

Hearing again the nuclear desert of the finale of number 6 led me to investigate those haunting final string chords. On one level it they could not be simpler – second inversions of alternating major/minor chords. This unlikely combination creates one of the most desolate endings in all music.

Footnote: In spring 2021 it was announced that Sir Antonio Pappano has been appointed chief conductor of the LSO from 2024

- Geoffrey Atkinson

JOHN MCCABE Requiem Sequence and other works

William Byrd Singers - director Stephen Wilkinson
Northern Chamber Orchestra - director Nicholas Ward
John McCabe piano

PrimaFACIE PFCDO44

John McCabe (1939-2015) composer, virtuoso pianist and, from 1983 to 1990, director of the London College of Music, worked at a time when challenge and complexity were at the forefront of classical composition.

Although not a full blown 'serial' composer there are strong elements of that in some of his music.

He was always open to the unusual and the unexpected, something that is at the heart of at least one of the sections of this CD. *His Irish Songbook Part 1* might suggest folk-like poetry and 'nice' tunes. Instead, McCabe chose four out of the six Irish poems with much darker themes.

In *The Mother* by Padraic Pearse for instance, a mother

lauds the death of her two sons fighting for Ireland against guess who? The music is powerfully dramatic, angry even, performed with fiery operatic intensity by soprano Lesley-Jane Rogers and a sensational pianist, Richard Uttley.

They are together marvellously too in the opening work that gives its title to the CD, *Requiem Sequence* (1971). Equally out of the ordinary, the text of the Latin Requiem Mass is boiled down to under 15 minutes with the texts not in the usual order. The piano is brittle and startlingly exciting while the voice often has a hint of plainsong in its rhythms. The sheer violence of the Sanctus made my eyes pop.

In *Two Dances from Mary Queen of Scots*, McCabe achieves an amazing marriage of early music and stark modernity.

The William Byrd Singers reach a softer vocal blend in two settings of verses by the Irish poet James Clarence Mangan. A poem of longing for lost love is interspersed with much darker verses from a different poem with suitable changes in musical colour. In *Siberia* the music lives up to the starkness of the landscape described in the poem.

Recorder virtuoso John Turner gives a fine modern style performance of solo recorder playing in 'Desert IV: Vista' (1983).

McCabe was sometimes celebrated more as a virtuoso pianist than as a composer. His own performance of his late friend Alan Rawsthorne's *Theme and Four Studies* which concludes the CD, demonstrates precisely why that was the case.

- Alan Cooper

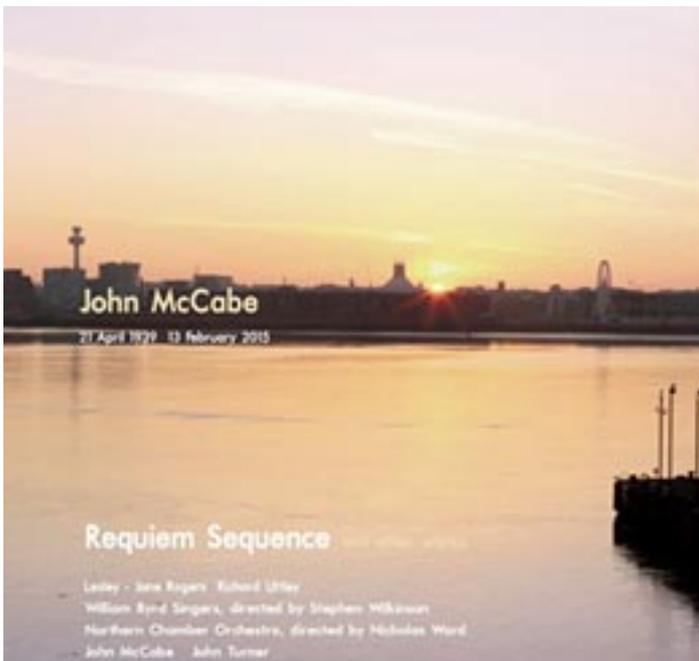
ARTHUR SULLIVAN Ballet Music – L'Île Enchantée, Thespis

RTE Concert Orchestra
Andrew Penny conductor

NAXOS 8.555180

This intriguing CD allows the interested listener some insights into what might be termed 'the lost Sullivan' comprising as it does material from what is a little known, and still less frequently performed, aspect of the composer's oeuvre.

L'Île Enchantée may be early Sullivan but already it demonstrates the composer's winning way with melody, dressed in colourful orchestration – the fruit of Sullivan's studies in Leipzig. 'In London he soon established his reputation,' writes Sullivan expert Selwyn Tillet, 'as a composer





SULLIVAN

Ballet Music

L'Île Enchantée • Thespis

RTÉ Concert Orchestra • Andrew Penny



of ballads, art songs and also a general music factotum behind the scenes at Covent Garden.'

Taking its cue from Italian and French practice, Covent Garden inserted a ballet, often at the end of the evening's entertainment. *L'Île Enchantée* fulfilled this function at the end of performances of Bellini's *La Sonnambula*.

Despite the fact that *L'Île* was very well received and was given a number of performances, the autograph score soon disappeared. However, thanks to Selwyn Tillet and Roderick Spencer we now have much of the material restored. In this world première recording we have the opportunity to hear this previously undiscovered and attractive music.

The quality of the inspiration is generally high: in particular the elegant Mendelssohnian *Prelude*, a witty *Dance of Nymphs and Satyrs*, a storm scene that would not disgrace William Tell, and the imaginatively scored Scene des Disputations. Mendelssohn figures again (although to a lesser extent) in the Scene de Jalousie. The three concluding numbers are charming but rather lack individuality.

The remainder of the disc consists of a selection of surviving numbers for *Thespis* or *The Gods Grown Old*. These pieces marked the beginning of the composer's collaboration with W.S. Gilbert. Selwyn Tillet in his informative programme note describes *Thespis* as a mixture of genres – 'effectively a superior pantomime'.

As mentioned above, with all comic operas of the time a ballet was interpolated – in this case the work of Sullivan himself. Unfortunately, the composer's score only amounted to a sequence of fragments which

in the present CD were revived once again by Spencer and Tillet.

Andrew Penny and the RTE Concert Orchestra do Sullivan's music proud – there is stylish and committed playing in evidence throughout.

This CD fills a noteworthy gap in our knowledge of nineteenth century theatrical (that is, non-operatic) repertoire. It will prove a rewarding experience for the listener.

- Alistair MacDonald



CECILIA MCDOWALL
Sacred Choral Music

The Choir of Trinity College Cambridge
Alexander Hamilton organ
Stephen Layton conductor

HYPERION CDA 68251

With this CD the discerning collector is once again in debt to Hyperion's stimulating catalogue of contemporary choral repertoire, one enhanced by performances and recordings of the highest quality.

Here we are introduced to the stimulating sound-world of Cecilia McDowall (b. 1951). As Gramophone magazine puts it 'Cecilia McDowall is a composer whose music consistently tweaks the ear with her range of spicy rhythms and colours, then suddenly produces a highly atmospheric, grippingly expressive interlude which is just as compelling.'

From the first note of the CD the disc's qualities are evident. The opening track *Alma redemptoris mater*, in the words of Paul Conway 'is a lilting and joyful six-part motet that combines harmonies and flourishes reminiscent of Renaissance settings'. From the outset it is clear that we are in the capable hands of Stephen

Layton and his phenomenally accomplished choir of Trinity College Cambridge.

There are many treasures to explore in this CD. Not least is a masterly setting of a medieval poem *Deus portus pacis* by John Walton (McDowall is notably discerning in her choice of texts). This motet uses a modal harmonic language skilfully and effectively with a chordal treatment of the word 'pacis' ("peace").

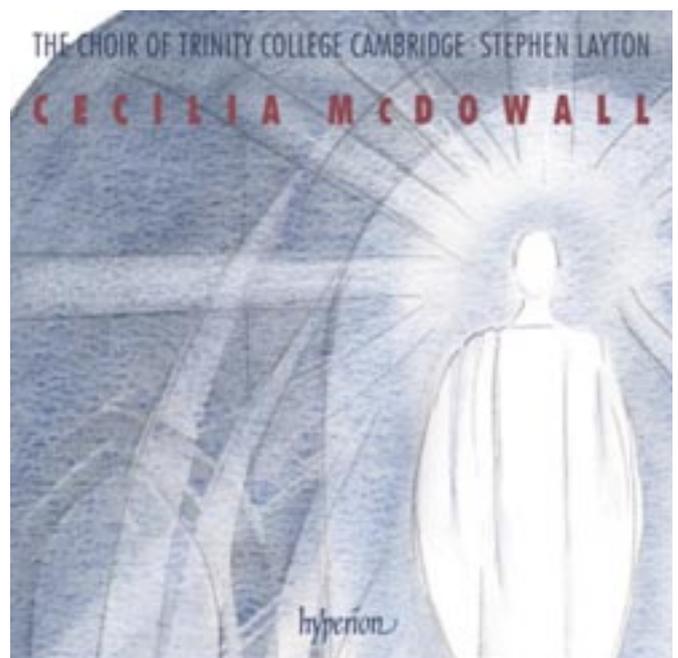
Throughout the CD McDowall's mastery of choral sonorities is noticeable. The Trinity choir is equal to the formidable technical and musical challenges posed by her work.

The multipart textures and the effective solo writing are handled with both confidence and sensitivity. What is so noteworthy about McDowall's music is the range of styles she employs despite the similarity in subject matter.

This was a well-planned CD – and it was good to include some organ music, the O Antiphon Sequence despatched with sensitivity and elan by the organ scholar Alexander Hamilton. Each piece of the sequence has its own distinctive identity ranging from the hushed and meditative to a virtuoso toccata style.

Cecilia McDowall has a truly distinctive musical language which the listener should find thought-provoking yet approachable. It should not deter a listener who is at home with, say, the music of James MacMillan. This is an altogether admirable release and is very well worth investigating.

- Alistair MacDonald



CD REVIEWS



BANTOCK British Music for Strings II

Granville Bantock & Christopher Wilson
Southwest German Chamber Orchestra
Douglas Bostock conductor

CPO 555 382-2

The short-lived Christopher Wilson was a very active (mostly theatre) composer of the early 20th century.

A (carefully chosen?) photo suggests an uncanny physical similarity to Bantock, the older composer. Lewis Foreman's erudite notes mention both Parry and Grieg as mock-baroque points of reference, and with titles such as *Rigaudon* and *Bourée* in imagining his six-movement Suite from 1901, you will not go far wrong if you think of a slightly less memorable Holberg Suite.

During Bantock's *In the Far West* for strings I was startled to hear at first, apparently, Swanee River, then Yankee Doodle!

The 'West' turns out to be the USA rather than the expected Western Isles, and these quotations sit rather oddly in a work which otherwise has no obvious American flavour. But at 32 minutes it is a substantial work, almost (to quote the conductor) a symphony for strings, though that suggests a depth to which it does not quite aspire.

By contrast the Highland Scenes use Scottish tunes to paint a series of picture postcards, to be enjoyed simply and immediately. However, I am afraid that, especially in the Bantock, Bostock too often simply beats through moments that cry out for more drama and imagination.

One example – Bantock cites the 'frenzy' of the Highland Reel, its driving rhythms and its growing excitement – but this Reel jogs along at an unfrenzied trot that

will leave no-one reeling! These are tidy stolid readings of music that needs rather more.

Deep in the internet archive may be found a frustratingly brief clip of Norman Del Mar conducting the Hebridean Symphony at absolute white heat – the kind of flair this highly theatrical music requires. Of course, we must be grateful to hear the music at all, and the disc certainly gives a reasonable idea of these scores.

If not quite on the level of the Celtic Symphony the Bantock pieces are solid and enjoyable, and all credit to those involved in their rediscovery. However, if CPO are to record any more Bantock (and here's hoping) they might invest in a

bottle or two of Talisker single malt – it could just give everyone involved a touch of the Celtic abandon that's missing here!

– Kevin Mandry

ENGLISH SONG COLLECTION A 25 disc celebration of the richness and diversity of British song

Various artists

NAXOS 8.502507 (25 Discs)

In *The Story of Naxos* (Piatkus 2012), the music journalist Nicholas Soames says that the ambition of the company's founder,

Klaus Heymann, was to record the complete (valid) repertoire of all classical music, and during the last 30 years or so he and his associates have gone a long way to achieving that ambition.

I would be certain that we all have Naxos issues – which are outstandingly good value – in our personal libraries.

The Naxos English Song Collection is a massive contribution to this corner of the market, niche doubtless, but with a faithful following amongst artists and listeners.

Clearly, I cannot review it in the normal sense (at the approved level the word count would be around 10,000) but at least I can express a warm welcome and much enthusiasm for this remarkable issue.

The track listing can be viewed on-line as detailed above. Fifteen mostly prominent English composers feature from Alwyn to Warlock, with substantial contributions from Britten, Finzi (all the song cycles), Holst, VW, and, I am pleased to say, Ian Venables.

The list of artists too, is impressive and includes such luminaries as Felicity Lott, Gerald Finley, Roderick Williams, and Iain Burnside.

This collection consists of reissues of recordings made between 1995 and 2014, so they are modern digital compilations of high quality. Full details can be found on the Naxos website.

Amazon, inter alia, is offering the set at around £67 which equates to £2.60 a disc. Or, in other words, this is about the same outlay as required to fuel your car.

– Geoffrey Atkinson



PROUD SONGSTERS

English Solo Song

Michael Chance, Tim Mead, Lawrence Zazzo counter-tenors

Ruairi Bowen, James Gilchrist, Andrew Staples tenors

Mark Stone baritone

Gerald Finley, Ashley Riches bass-baritones

Simon Lepper piano

HYPERION KGS0052-D



This recital has been devised to showcase 10 alumni (nine vocalists and a pianist) of King's College Cambridge. Many of the names and much of the repertoire will be familiar, although even a few years ago it would have been unusual to feature one – let alone three – counter-tenors, while the staples of Finzi, Quilter and Britten etc have been leavened by new songs from Ian Bell, Celia Harper and Jonathan Dove.

Since the list of tracks can easily be checked online it seems simpler to state that the whole forms a highly agreeable exploration of English song. I especially enjoyed Ashley Riches whole-hearted *I will go with my Father A-Ploughing* (reeking of freshly-tilled earth and scudding clouds) while Howells' King David takes on an almost spectral air sung by a countertenor.

Recently I remarked on the sudden popularity of Rebecca Clarke's mini-scena *The Seal Man* – and here it is again, in perhaps the best performance yet.

However, while the range of voices certainly brings a change of colour, there is a certain sameness about the actual repertoire which can get a little monotonous (the chief exception being Dove's biting setting of Vikram Seth) so perhaps it is not a recital to play straight through.

And this brings me to another concern, which is that often purity of line and beauty of tone seem to take precedence over meaning and expression – surprising,

given the operatic experience of so many of the performers. One small example: in Finzi's *The Sigh* the line 'And she loved me staunchly, truly till she died' can be a sudden swell of gratitude, surprise and pride; there are four separate thoughts in that line, all hinged on that little comma.

Here, Andrew Staples simply records it smoothly as a matter of record, and this is rather typical; I repeatedly found myself yearning for greater dramatic expression, or more searching line-readings.

However, if you do not have my pernicky fussiness this can be enthusiastically recommended as sonorous example of both the best of English art song and the impeccable musical traditions of Kings College (including a bonus track appearance by another Kings 'old boy' Christopher Keyte). Excellent sleeve-notes by Stephen Banfield, too.

- Kevin Mandry

THE KING'S ALCHEMIST
British String Trios

Eblana String Trio

Willowhayne WHR067

I was told, as a young composer, that the writing of string trios was a challenge, and that was why fewer had been written than string quartets, and why some composers, often well-known ones, never tackled the form.

Before I tried my hand at one, I studied the score of Finzi's Prelude and Fugue Op 24 (here recorded). What I found so important, and still do, is how Finzi defies the Jeremiahs and writes a work rich in harmony and brilliant in counterpoint.

His love of Bach shines through, as well as his joy at writing for strings. His textures are airy but fulsome. It was a good lesson.

I wish that I knew of Moeran's String Trio as well. Polyphonic with a great independence of parts and a clear musical structure mark, it has impact, as does the dancing 7/8 first movement.

The Adagio seems to be a memorial at the news of the tragic death of Moeran's close friend Peter Warlock, but taken a little faster than I would like by this ensemble.

The scherzo bounds along in compound time before fading into a sad Lento. The final Andante grazioso is full of the kind of warm melodies we associate with Moeran.

There are two contemporary works. It is Sally Beamish's highly original *The King's Alchemist* that gives the disc its title, the King being King James IV of Scotland, killed at the battle of Flodden Field (1513) and the alchemist being the eccentric John Damian, who has so fascinated Beamish. (The latter attempted to fly by jumping off Stirling Castle's battlements.)

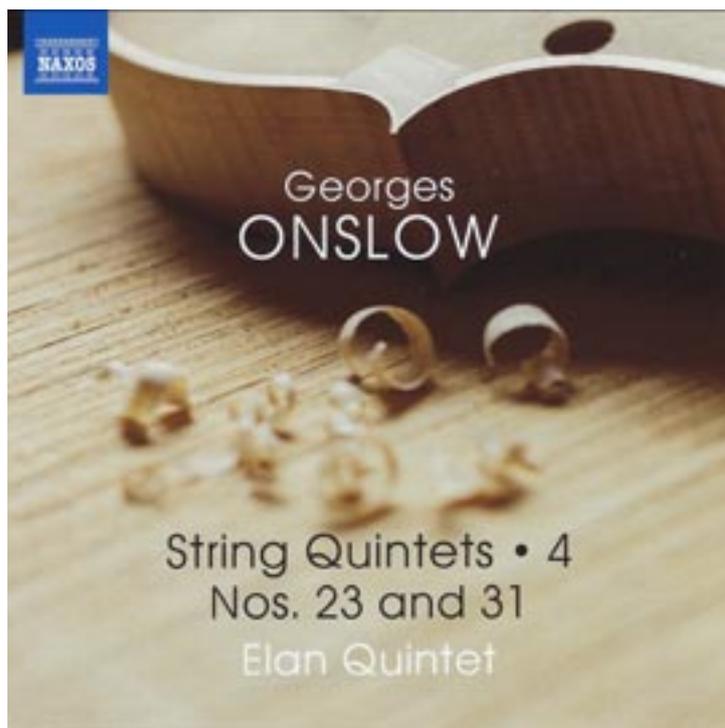
The work has four movements and is based in part on the *L'homme armé* melody used at the time for Mass cycles including one by the King's composer, Robert Carver. Also, for movement three there is a Pavane, a popular dance of the period.

The CD also includes a beautiful work by Hugh Wood, one of our most senior figures. His *Ithaka Op 61* is, as the composer admits, a programmatic piece inspired by Cavafy's poem *Ithaka*, which itself is based on the *Travels of Ulysses* as in Homer's *Odyssey*. It incorporates two fugues and a wide variety of often almost atonal harmonies, producing strong reactions expressed through these harmonic tensions. A fine work indeed.

The performances are wonderfully convincing and the recording is immediate and detailed. This is well worth exploring.

- Gary Higginson





GEORGES ONSLOW
String Quintets

Elan Quintet

NAXOS 8.574187

This disc is another stimulating exploration of the early 19th century chamber music repertoire. Georges Onslow, despite his aristocratic English lineage, demonstrates a highly professional command of the classical chamber ensemble.

This present disc is part of Naxos' continuing series which delves into the chamber music repertoire of the period.

The composer featured, as the liner notes make clear, is one of a family of four siblings exiled from England to central France.

As is obvious from this disc Georges was a musician of considerable talent, and had a number of notable teachers among them the Bohemians Dussek and Reicha as well as the virtuoso pianist Johann Baptist Cramer.

Onslow created, it appears, a prodigious output in a variety of genres although he particularly favoured smaller scale works: songs, piano pieces, works for wind ensemble. There are 36 string quartets and, of particular interest here, 34 string quintets(!)

To begin with the early quintets were scored for two violins, viola and two cellos but subsequently works for quartet and double bass were introduced. Two of these works – Op 75 in A major and Op 31 in A minor – are included on this disc in

world première recordings.

The music is, as Stephen Pettit writes in *The Times*, "beautifully crafted in intent". These qualities are immediately apparent, for example, in the first movement of the A major work where the musical language is strongly Mendelssohnian in flavour. As the movement proceeds the presence of the double bass becomes increasingly evident.

The second movement is a playful scherzo which contrasts with more serious material elsewhere.

In particular, there is a touchingly profound *andante sostenuto* which is followed by a walking bass articulated by cello and double bass in octaves.

The Schubertian fourth movement skilfully employs a variety of textures demonstrating once again the composer's confident compositional skill and originality.

With the Elan Quartet, the bass player Matthew Baker and the Naxos engineers, this beautifully crafted CD is enhanced by performances and recording of the highest quality. All in all we have here a disc that more than does this fascinating and original music justice.

- Alistair MacDonald

RICHARD ADDINSELL
British Light Music

Philip Martin piano
Roderick Elms piano
BBC Concert Orchestra
Kenneth Alwyn conductor

NAXOS 8.555229

This disc is not about the *Warsaw Concerto*. It is not the about *Warsaw Concerto*

because it is not included (although there is room) possibly because it has been recorded over 100 times previously.

Finally, it is only about the *Warsaw Concerto* because nothing in this compilation approaches it in sheer memorability and panache.

Addinsell's niche as a composer was as a significant contributor to film, incidental and light music. The liner notes say that his way of working was to 'play what he had composed at the piano, making small notes of the outline of the material, but leaving the detailed work of arranging and orchestrating to other hands.'

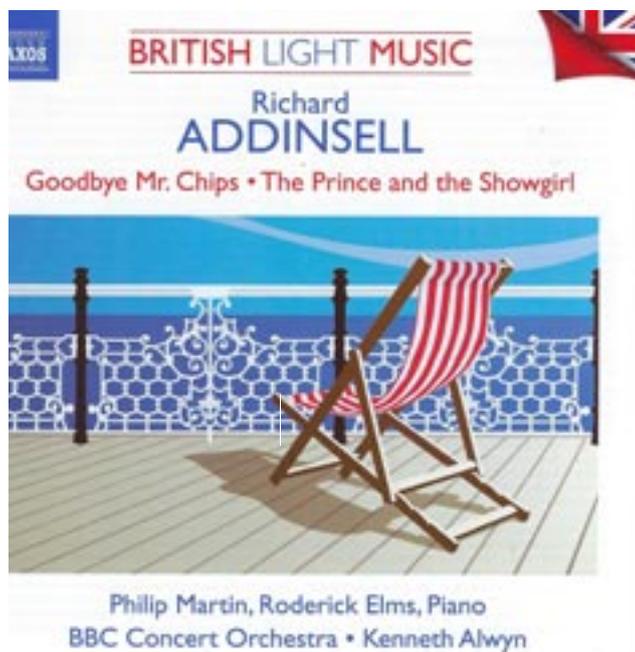
This is the way the trade works – rather like an old master painting the face and other fine details of an artwork, leaving the background material to apprentices and assistants. Classical composers of course often have had this sort of back-up.

The 13 tracks on this disc have all (I think) been treated in this way, and the music has all been arranged to make a more or less convincing concert items, mainly by Philip Lane, but also well-known names from Addinsell's period such as Douglas Gamley, Roy Douglas, and Leonard Isaacs.

While everything here sounds really rather splendid, the problem is that music in a film is only, literally, part of the picture, and in itself does not necessarily hold the attention.

One could argue that when the music is good (the *Warsaw Concerto* again (!) and say, like Walton's efforts in this field, it may distract attention from the other aspects of the production.

For me the best scores on the disc are both, coincidentally perhaps, linked by their subject matter – *Goodbye Mr Chips* and



Tom Brown's Schooldays. Here I detect genuine but subtle emotion. But suites derived from *The Prince and the Showgirl* and *Fire over England* are pretty thin gruel on their own.

Another oddity is that the score of *A Tale or two Cities* was developed later with a concertante piano part as Addinsell hoped to emulate the success of – you got it – the WC. But this later score has nothing to offer, which makes one wonder about the composer's powers of discrimination.

This disc is a bargain price reissue of a 1994 recording. It sounds good, the orchestra play with conviction, and the late lamented Kenneth Alwyn conducts with great sensitivity.

- Geoffrey Atkinson

THE BEST OF ARNOLD

Various ensembles and conductors

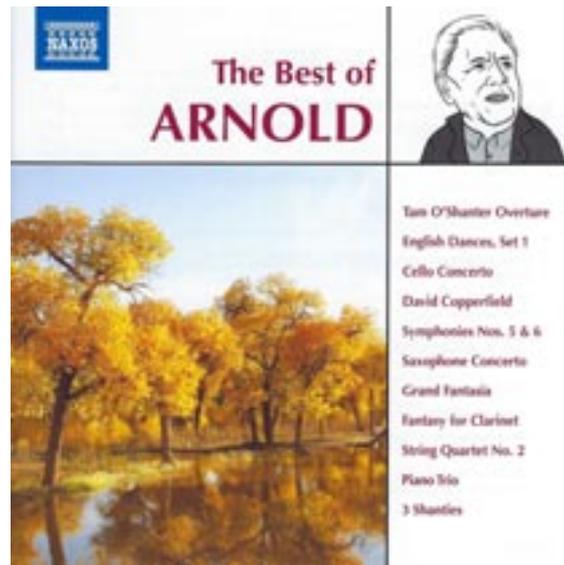
Naxos 8.578360

When I began writing my biography of Malcolm Arnold, around the time of his knighthood in 1993, things seemed on the up for the much-maligned composer.

Sadly, since his death in 2006, it has been business as usual, with a few popular works played fairly frequently but the more substantial works left on the shelf.

His centenary this year has prompted Naxos to produce this wide-ranging taster disc, compiled from their many recordings of his vast output. Arnold had an innate understand of each instrument and in his many chamber works he exploits them to the full.

Here we have five works, the highlights of which are the *Three Shanties* for wind quintet from 1942 when Arnold's



fully formed style is already apparent.

The 2nd String Quartet of 1975 was one of Arnold's most heartfelt works. I went with him to hear it in concert, and at the end the tears were streaming down his cheeks. The Maggini Quartet do full justice to its first movement's rich textures.

Of the orchestral works we get the hugely popular English Dances Set 1 in a terrific performance from Australia, and Tam O'Shanter from Leeds. The Irish provide the first movements of symphonies 5 and 6. While no one will ever match the composers searing recording of no. 5, the seldom-heard Andrew Penny comes close.

The extracts from the Cello Concerto and Saxophone Concerto are part Arnold part David Ellis.

The Cello Concerto of 1988 was greeted with horror at its premiere as it sounded like the sketch for a work, not the finished product. In 2000 David Ellis was asked to see if he could salvage something, and he did.

The tunes are developed, the orchestration filled out, and we have an elegant, if not stellar, addition to the repertoire. The Saxophone Concerto started off as his early Piano Sonata but was arranged by Ellis in 1994. As a piano sonata it was ungainly to play, but it works magnificently on saxophone.

All of the performances are excellent and, in some cases, come from the only available recorded versions. As a survey of his output from 1940-1988 it cannot be bettered.

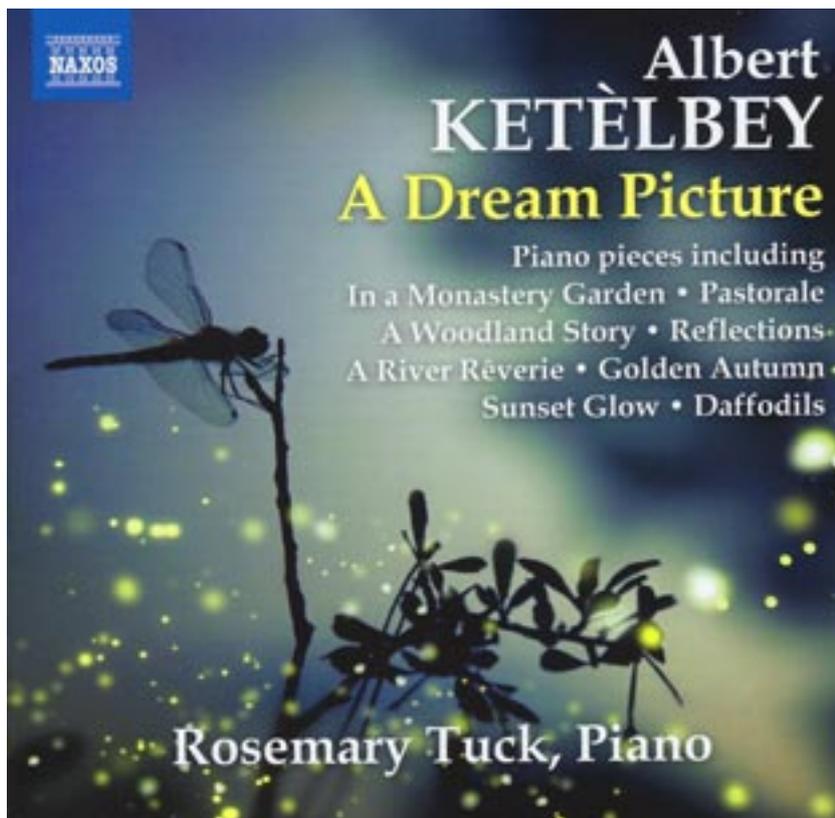
PS. If my life depended on it, I could not identify the caricature of the composer on the cover. A composer yes, Arnold no!

- Paul RW Jackson

ALBERT KETÈLBEY A Dream Picture

Rosemary Tuck piano

NAXOS 8.574299



For many people, in England and beyond, the years spanning the life of composer Albert Ketèlby (1875-1959) were less than happy, what with two World Wars and in the 1930s, the Great Depression. But was it all bad?

Ketèlby's piano music evokes a totally different world, one of childhoods where it was always summer, and the sun never stopped shining.

Consider the titles of some of the pieces on this CD – *A Song of Summer*, *Golden Autumn*, or *Sunset Glow*.

The final work on the CD is Ketèlby's best known piece, *In a Monastery Garden*. It is of course the definitive 'picture' piece. Nearly all the others respond to their titles though not in such a graphic way.

In the centre of the selection, are eight short pieces under the main title, *A Woodland Story*. They represent a day (picnic?) spent in the woods with titles like *The Voices of the Trees*, *Oh! Look at the Rabbits*, and *Let's Play at Indians*.

In his programme note, which includes a potted biography of the composer, Tom McCanna informs us that some of these pieces were derived from music that Ketèlbeÿ published as music to accompany silent films.

However, they do respond well to their new titles, beginning with a sparkling gavotte-like piece, *This is Where the Fairies Dance*, and concluding with a joyous happy romp of a piece, *Let's Hurry Home, it's Getting Dark*.

Many of the pieces have attractive melodies, not necessarily lasting long in the memory but with a sing-along feeling to them. The opening piece in the recital, *In the Woodlands*, is a waltz with a busy sparkling melody, then *A River Rêverie* is initially gently winding with a sonorous melody and later on, *Daffodils* does indeed suggest the nodding heads of the bright yellow flowers.

Some of the pieces were originally published to appeal to reasonably gifted amateur pianists, others are more demanding, but all are brilliantly performed by the Australian pianist Rosemary Tuck.

Even 'easier' pieces achieve something special when performed by a professional. If you are feeling downcast, Ketèlbeÿ's very English early 20th century piano music at its best is sure to bring a ray of sunshine into your life.

- Alan Cooper

ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF BRITISH SONG

Volume 2

James Gilchrist tenor
Nathan Williamson piano

SOMM RECORDINGS 0636

Volume 1 in this projected three-part series consisted of songs by Gurney, Rebecca Clarke, Holst and Bridge, note – not necessarily the usual suspects. Volume 2 introduces five composers also not automatically associated with the genre.

Elisabeth Maconchy is best known for her 13 string quartets. But she was never frightened to tackle 'difficult' poets. Her *Three Donne Songs* (1964) take famous poems, seriously, and set them movingly, – a *Hymn to God the Father* and a *Hymn to Christ*, but she follows them with a rhythmic, assertive setting of *The Sun Rising* (mis-labelled in the booklet) with its angular lines and exciting piano cluster chords.

But there is always excitement when starting to compose a song – how will these words fit into a musical landscape?

One feels somehow that Alan Bush composed in a cerebral way but the *Prison Songs* prove otherwise. This unique cycle, settings of poems by the ill-fated Ernst Toller, was commissioned by the Free German League of Culture and first heard in 1939, on the eve of the war.

The first, third, and fifth song is the same poem; the outer ones are by Bush, the middle one by Rawsthorne who also contributed the fourth song. Bush composed the second – this is all very moving and stylistically consistent. We are also treated to two further Rawsthorne songs, fine settings of John Fletcher.

William Alwyn and Doreen Carwithen married in 1975 after years of friendship. His cycle *A Leave-Taking* (1978) consists of seven settings of poems by Lord de Tabley.

Carwithen is represented by seven unrelated settings, but including her *Three Songs to Poems* by Walter de la Mare. Can one find similarity in style between the two?

All of Carwithen's extant

songs are heard here. She was comfortable with poetry evoking an English pastoral landscape. She grasps the overall mood required if not individual word-painting.

Her piano writing never obscures the voice but in *Echo* (Who called?), another de la Mare setting, it is the piano, which extends her harmonic language much further. My particular favourite is *Slow Spring* with its melancholy and distant musical horizons.

Alwyn's language is more pan-European and chromatic, and not surprisingly for the composer of *Miss Julie*, Alwyn often discovers the drama of the texts, although they also touch on aspects of the natural world. *Fortune's Wheel* is a good example.

Gilchrist and Williamson communicate all of these contrasting songs perfectly allowing the composers' intentions to be clearly audible in their impeccable partnership.

Roll on Volume three.

- Gary Higginson

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

Cello Concerto, Symphony no 5

Florian Arnicans, cello
Liepāja Symphony Orchestra
John Gibbons conductor

TOCCATA TOCC0600

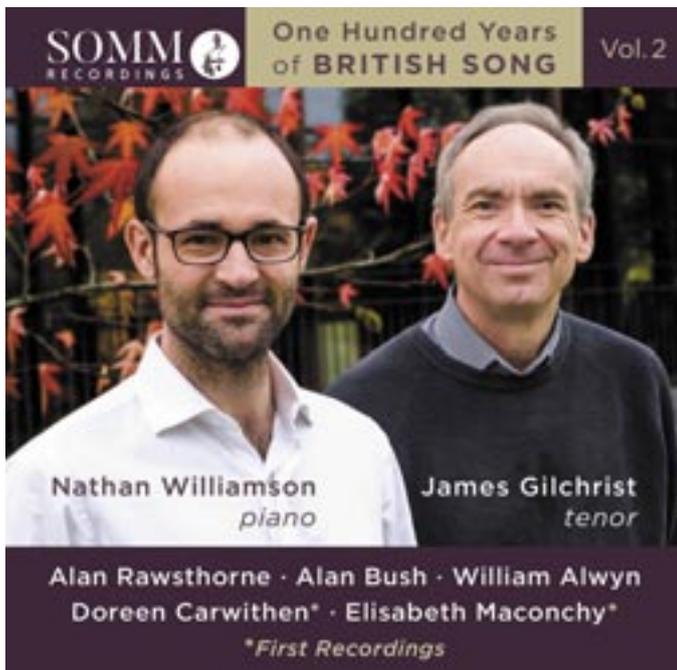
I have known Wordsworth's Cello Concerto from a venerable BBC broadcast without ever being quite engaged by it, so this CD première from (among others) our very own Vice Chairman seemed a perfect opportunity for re-evaluation.

The good news is that performances and sound quality are all that could be hoped for; however, I still struggle to locate the real intent of the piece.

The long self-communing first movement seems to offer little more than an atmosphere of generalised gloom alternated with some rather laboured fugal writing; but neither the basic musical material nor its development strike me as very interesting or (even after repeated hearings) very memorable.

The brief second movement is a real beauty of glinting iridescent half-lights, though it seems to be over before it has ever really got going.

The finale opens with a rather forced jauntiness, but alas, before long the music drifts into another somewhat listless fugue and I wondered if the composer really



had his heart in the piece. However, Wordsworth remains an eminently substantial figure, so I certainly shall keep trying...

I have also long known the 5th Symphony from a broadcast (now available on Lyrita) and the first movement is one of the composers finest; a ravishing Borealis landscape, a kind of Tuonela writ large (and without the swan).

If Robertson on Lyrita finds slightly more expansive mystery, the polish of the Liepaja orchestra and the clarity of the recording bring their own rewards.

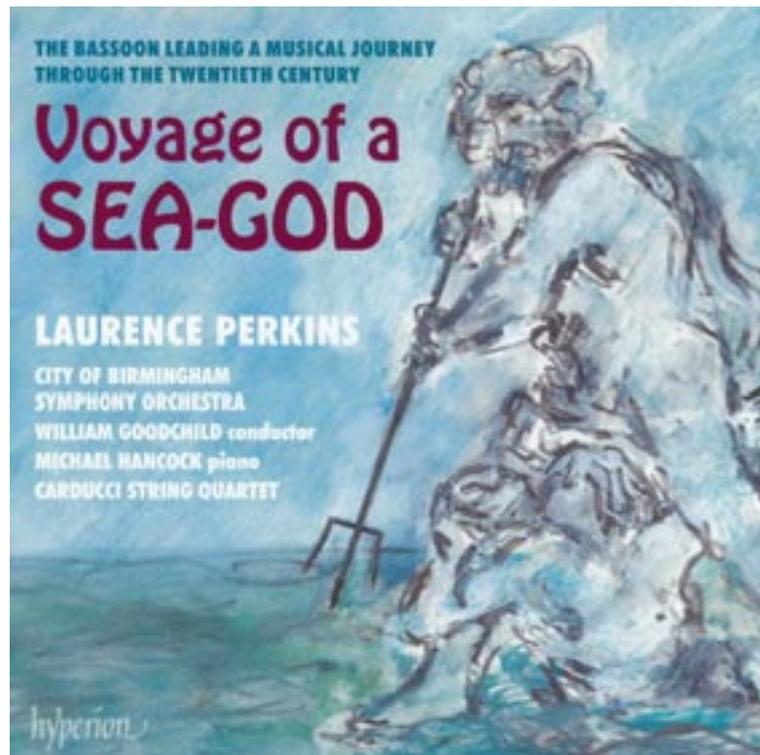
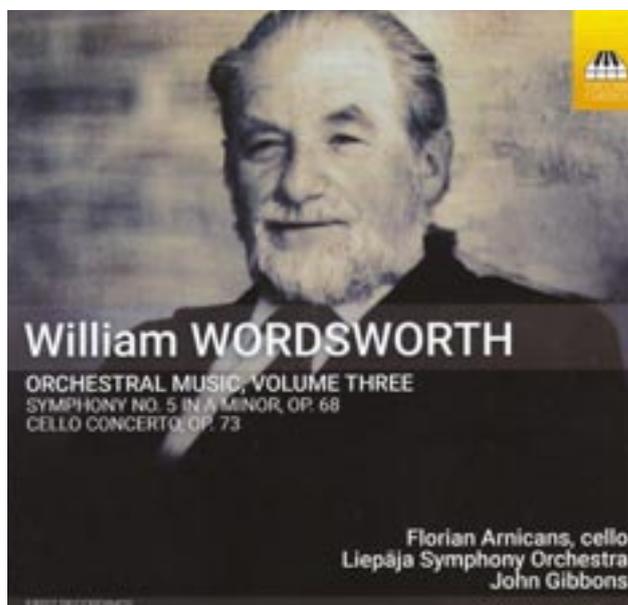
The knockabout scherzo might recall both Prokofiev and Arnold, and as such shows a quite different side to a sometimes painfully diffident figure, though I did wonder if the performance could have been a shade more manic.

Even if the pace flags once or twice (more fugal writing!) the big-boned finale carries the work through a series of closely-argued variations to a convincing if wrenching climax.

Others may find more in the concerto than I do, but either way this is clearly a must for collectors of this marvellous cycle (and it is wonderful that Vol. 4 is already in the can), as well as for anyone seeking a rugged mid 20th century symphony that reeks of integrity.

(Years ago I had a now-lost cassette of two Wordsworth string quartets, so can we hope that someone somewhere is looking at the chamber music too?)

- Kevin Mandry



VOYAGE OF A SEA-GOD

Michael Hancock piano
Carducci String Quartet
Laurence Perkins Bassoon
CBSO
William Goodchild conductor

HYPERION RECORDS CDA68371/2
(two discs)

The programme here follows the repertory for bassoon on its interesting journey from 1900-1999. Most, but not all, are by British composers, or British by adoption.

Beginning in 1900 with Richard Henry Walthew and ending in 1999 with David Bedford, the intrepid musical journey undertaken by Laurence Perkins and friends celebrates the extraordinary versatility of the 20th century bassoon. None of the works mention a *Sea-God*, the name coming from writings by Sacheverell Sitwell.

Disc 1 has short works by British composers set amongst larger works by international figures. A real find is Granville Bantock's, music for a 1926 production of *Macbeth* originally scored for the Hoffnung-like

line-up of three bassoons, six trumpets, three trombones, three drummers and two pipers.

Here we have a selection of the bassoon trio movements and what fun they are. The first is a lament with a distinct bagpipe feel to it. The second, drawing on the witches' dance from Act IV Scene 1, is a, perhaps, tongue in cheek fantasy on the Dies Irae, a witches sabbath for teddy bears. Bax's 1936

Threnody and Scherzo for bassoon, harp and string sextet, is a wonderfully scored imaginative work that has the makings of a concerto rather than an occasional piece, if only he had extended it.

Disc 2 is made up of more substantial works by British based composers. Elizabeth Maconchy called her 17-minute work concertino rather than concerto, but it is not light-hearted or frivolous. It was written as a showpiece for the great Gwydion Brooke and the bassoon is certainly put through its paces. Mr Perkins is more than up to its difficulties.

Andrzej Panufnik's concerto of 1985 is to this listener as hermetic as his other works. Dedicated to the memory of murdered Polish priest Jerzy Popieluszko. Mr Perkins' notes praise the work highly, but I found its world of disjointed articulations and gestures very difficult to enter.

Not so Richard Rodney Bennett's *Bassoon Sonata* most gratifyingly a work for bassoon and piano and not bassoon with piano. The two instruments share the wonderfully lyrical material as partners.

The work is a marvellous synthesis of Bennett's two styles the serial and the tuneful. There are spikey chords in the piano but nothing that would scare a jazz aficionado while the bassoon is generally smoothly seductive. Mr Perkins tone in the high register is exemplary.

The disc ends in 1999 with the imaginative and much missed David Bedford's solo work *Dreams of Stac Pollaidh*.

The inspiration for this piece which was written for Mr. Perkins, and which he played at Bedford's memorial celebration in 2012, is Stac Pollaidh the mountain itself, and the Scottish pibroch, beloved of Highland bagpipers. The gentle dream-like work provides an elegant and poignant end to the programme.

The discs come with copious notes on 20th century history and of course the music. None of the music seems involved with the, generally, traumatic events of that

difficult century, rather they occur during it. None of them are challenging as much 20th century music is, so it is a highly selective survey.

But that said, the disc does show just what a versatile instrument the bassoon is, capable of, which is so much more than The Sorcerer's Apprentice.

- Paul RW Jackson

New Journal available in print and digital formats

We are pleased to announce the recent issue of the delayed BMS Journal, British Music (Volume 42, 2020) which all our members should have received by now.



This latest edition is also now available digitally on the website along with a growing number of previous editions.

The contents includes essays by

Matthew McCullough on *Cecil Gray: The*

Last Romantic and Michael Jones writing about *Nicolas Medtner: An Honorary British Composer?*

You will also find appreciations by Paul Harris on P. J. Clulow and another by Stephen Banfield on Nicholas Temperley (1932 – 2020).

This Journal also features a profile on John Sykes by P. J. Clulow.

Finally you will find the following reviews:

* Philip Wheldon-Robinson - 'Critical Perspectives on Michael Finnis: Bright Futures, Dark Pasts (Pace and McBride, eds.)'

* Jürgen Schaarwächter - 'The Symphonic Poem in Britain, 1850-1950 (Allis and Watt, eds.)'

* G. W. E. Brightwell - 'The Royal College of Music and Its Contexts: An Artistic and Social History (Wright)'.



BMS AGM 2021

This year's AGM will now be held on Monday 4 October 2021, 10am-12pm

Once again we will be hosting this on a Zoom platform hosted by Revolution Arts to enable as many members as possible to attend 'virtually'

The meeting will be held from 10am-12am. We are placing in the morning to enable our Australian members to attend.

Hosted by Revolution Arts, the meeting details are as follows:

Topic: British Music Society AGM 2021

Time: Oct 4, 2021 10:00 AM (London time)

URL: <https://uso2web.zoom.us/j/83309408208>

Meeting ID: 833 0940 8208

Pictured below: members taking part in the 2020 AGM online



THREE CHOIRS FESTIVAL

The BMS is looking for someone to report on this year's festival for a future E-News.

If you attended the festival in Worcester in late July, please contact the Secretary Dirick von Behr via email at secretarybms@outlook.com

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