

NEWS **136** January 2013

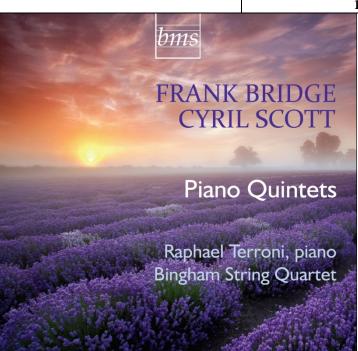
THE BRITISH MUSIC SOCIETY

"...promoting and preserving British Music"

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BMS CD RE-ISSUE - BMS442CD

FRANK BRIDGE & CYRIL SCOTT PIANO QUARTETS

Raphael Terroni, piano; Bingham Quartet

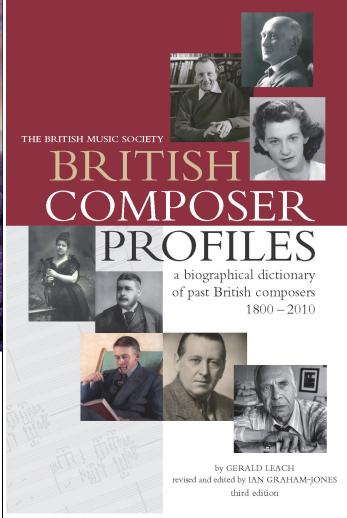
As a memorial to Raphael Terroni, Founder Member, one-time Chairman and late Vice-Chairman, the British Music Society is pleased to announce the first issue on CD of a recording made in 1989 and originally available only on cassette (**BMS411**).

Martin Cotton, BMS Committee Member writes: "Raphael Terroni was a modest man, never given to trumpeting his considerable achievements, nor wishing to promote his own recordings at the expense of others on the BMS label. But he was always especially proud of this première recording of two major British piano quintets, and very much hoped that it would see the light of day again on CD. Plans for this were already afoot at the time of Raphael's death, and, although it is sad that he is not here to see the final outcome, he would have been pleased to know that these vibrant performances are indeed once more available worldwide."

The CD includes new notes on the quintets and an encomium to Raphael by his friend and BMS Vice-President Giles Easterbrook.

The disc may be purchased by Members for £9 (in UK), £10 (in Europe) or £11 (outside Europe), US\$18 (USA only), including postage from BMS Treasurer Stephen Trowell, 7 Tudor Gardens, Upminster, Essex, RM14 3DE, UK (payment to accompany orders, favour "The British Music Society", US\$ favour S.C. Trowell – refer regarding payment in other currencies).

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BRITISH COMPOSER PROFILES (ISBN 978-1-8705-3699-8) is a biographical dictionary of past British composers 1800–2010. Gerald Leach's work on two previous editions in the 1980s was recognised as a valuable resource and the British Music Society has now published an expanded third edition, revised and edited by Ian Graham-Jones. The Chronology and Appendices have been enlarged and the Introduction by Lewis Foreman offers a useful insight into the background of the state of British music in the period.

Seven hundred and twenty composers are represented in this substantial 250 page dictionary. Each entry has brief biographical details and a list of principal works. Many of the composers listed will not be found in standard reference works – which makes this publication a first point of reference for some basic detail on British composers who have contributed to our musical heritage.

(for details on how to obtain this essential publication, see page 33)

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Editorial

Most readers will probably have observed that they only received three issues of *BMS News* during 2012 and may be wondering why they have been "short-changed"! I have mentioned in previous Editorials that the format of *News* is changing and part of that change is to make it more forward-looking, rather than retrospective. So it now carries a cover date marking the beginning of a calendar quarter, rather than the end. The annual subscription includes the same number of copies of the newsletter but for 2012/3, there is an unavoidable split and this issue is simultaneously the last issue of 2012 **and** the first issue of 2013. Also, as some compensation for its late appearance, this issue is extended to 36 pages. Further changes to the newsletter - made with the intention of rendering it more timely and useful to members - will be announced during the course of 2013.

As part of the planning for the new format publication, I would like to establish a reporting panel and I am now inviting BMS members to volunteer their services as reviewers for CDs, books, DVDs, television and radio programmes and, of course, for live concerts and recitals. For these last items, it would be useful to have a number of regional representatives. Anybody that is interested in taking on such a responsibility should contact me directly.

This issue features a number of interesting contributions from members but I have also found room for two more tributes to our late Vice-Chairman Raphael Terroni. Raphael touched many during his life and career and it is no surprise that so many have wanted to write about him.

Just the one Feature Article this time but it is of great interest. Like many researchers, Liz Wilson began one project and found herself drawn into a different but equally fascinating area. In her article Herbert Howells, the Teacher, she has collated the reminiscences of many of Herbert Howells students and gives us a glimpse of the composer as few saw him. The article fills out the persona of a man most of us know only through a few of his compositions.

Other highlights in this issue are Lewis Foreman's item Arnell's Symphonies Without Numbers in which he provides us with an interesting insight into how recording sessions work and there are detailed reports on the William Alwyn and London Song Festivals. News of some of the activities of BMS composer-members and some interesting information from the Robin Milford Trust are also included in this issue.

The last few days of 2012 brought us the sad news of the deaths of Jonathan Harvey, Sir Richard Rodney Bennett and John Carol Case. The next issue of *BMS News* will carry obituaries celebrating the lives and careers of these major figures in British Music.

Finally, may I wish all BMS members a happy, prosperous and fulfilled 2013.

Ian Maxwell - Editor

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Guidelines for Submissions to BMS News

BMS News is a newsletter – thus, the guiding principles for submission of items of news, articles, reviews, etc. should be a) brevity and b) informality of style. News is not really the platform for extended articles or scholarly papers (extended being defined here as more than about 3,000 words). The journal British Music and the occasional Monograph series are the appropriate places for such pieces. Exceptions may be made where there is a subject of especial interest – perhaps marking a significant anniversary of a composer that has not received much attention. That being said however, articles on all aspects of British Music within the remit of the society are welcome and members are encouraged to get out their pens, pencils or computer keyboards and contribute. BMS News is the newsletter for the members – it is your publication and it is read by people that share your interests. The issues of BMS News are currently prepared using Microsoft Office Word 2010 and, naturally, if you are able to use the same application for composing your submissions, that makes things easier for me. However, I am fully aware that not everybody has Word 2010 or even a computer at all. So please send your items in whatever form is most comfortable and convenient for you. The only criterion for assessing whether or not an item is suitable for inclusion in a particular issue is its content. Submissions will certainly not be rejected simply for being hand-written, typed or even scribbled on the back of a beer-mat – provided they are legible and interesting. Submissions for BMS News will not be peer-reviewed but may be subject to editing for content or length.

Feature Articles

Herbert Howells, the Teacher

Many of us who have taught have had mixed feelings about the vocation. It is a noble one, without a doubt. There is no other process by which humans can pass on their expertise, passion and skills to a new generation. Unfortunately, to take the time away from one's own personal expression of genius to teach others can be a frustration for many teachers. In his indispensable biography, *Herbert Howells*, Paul Spicer quotes Howells, writing in one of his journal entries, on the "drudgery" of teaching (Spicer, p. 178). And yet the composer would go on and teach at the Royal College of Music for a total of 59 years, an extraordinary record. It is impossible to imagine anyone teaching for so long if it had not provided some satisfaction, and benefitted students in equal measure.

My primary interest was not originally in Herbert Howells's teaching career, but rather to explore his childhood in Lydney. It occurred to me that I should try to contact some of Howells's former Royal College of Music students, to see if by any chance they might recall any conversations with the composer in which he spoke about his childhood. One by one, I connected with these musicians by mail, email, or phone. Now, a clearer picture is emerging – not, I am afraid, of Howells's childhood, but perhaps just as interesting, of his teaching persona during the last two decades before his retirement in 1979.

It is fun, first of all, to place these musicians' memories in the context of the era. The sixties and seventies were a time, literally, of social, political, and sartorial revolution. Everything was about protest, and the rejection of earlier values, social assumptions, and cultural, artistic and musical "givens". What a moment for a young person to encounter Herbert Howells! It is probable that word had already reached most of these students that Howells was a relic of the past. It sounds as if the younger composers on the teaching staff, while respectful, were somewhat dismissive of Howells: "respect aplenty but some tacit toleration" is the phrase Jeffery Wilson used. Howells – from his attire and his speaking manner, to his idiosyncratic yet arguably not groundbreaking, composing style – inadvertently may have represented everything against which the newer generation was revolting.

Thus it is not too fanciful to picture these young people, with long hair pulled back into a ponytail, wearing jeans and a tee shirt – having navigated London's cacophonous streets – arriving at Royal College of Music's basement Room 19. Once they opened the door, like the children in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,* they entered what was essentially "another world". Howells's classroom, whose windows looked out on a courtyard garden, was not particularly large, but it held a Broadwood grand piano, which, according to Robert Spearing, was Howells' own. Alan Bullard says that the piano had a "beautiful singing sound and elegant walnut inlay both of which seemed to match HH's style and music perfectly". The room also had a desk, a cupboard, and a mantel, on which there were photos of Ralph Vaughan Williams, Gerald Finzi, and others. Howells evidently kept the room tidy, although there could be scores on the desk or piano if he were in mid-composition. Peter Naylor says, "the general impression was artistic and pleasing, with an aristocratic element – but in no way forbidding".

The students' initial encounters with Howells were, in a few instances, memorable in themselves. American organist Kevin Walters, who was studying with Howells at the RCM while he was in residence at the Royal School of Church Music, says, "the first time I saw HH was when I was waiting for a bus in front of Royal Albert Hall, and he got off the bus in front of me just as I was about to get on – and he didn't wait for the bus to stop. Quite spry for eighty". (And for a man who had already had several significant falls!) Michael Christie, a composition student at the very end of Howells's RCM tenure, recounts: "As I was waiting in the room for my first lesson, I heard rapid footsteps approaching down the corridor. Knowing he was quite elderly...I assumed they could not be

his, but was surprised when he opened the door moments later. He explained that when he walked slowly, his legs hurt too much! So, as a result, he always walked fairly briskly".

Jeffery Wilson says that he was sent to the RCM's Ralph Vaughan Williams room for his first lesson "and was foolish enough to say to the rather well-dressed older gentleman sitting at the piano, 'You are not Vaughan Williams'. He replied, 'No, my boy, but I knew him'...I continued (in order to save face), 'I am studying the G-minor Mass by Vaughan Williams' and proceeded to play the opening bars. HH then sat down and played nearly all of it speaking all the way through". (Howells once told Michael Christie that in earlier years, Vaughan Williams used to wander down the hall from his classroom and into Howells's room for the purpose of asking a question, and "he would sit silently on a chair, with that celebrated rather grim look of his", utterly terrifying Howells's students!)

What was their visual impression of Howells? He was a short man with a "huge head of white hair" (Walters). Barry Ferguson says, "His wavy hair looked chiseled, sculpted...but it was always slightly wayward, never over-tended". The words "dapper," "impeccable" and "immaculate" come up frequently; evidently his usual uniform was a grey or "dark" suit, white shirt, white handkerchief, and tie. And yet there could be waywardness here too. Alan Bullard, who studied with Howells in the mid-sixties, notes: "His left cuff was usually frayed, much to his annoyance, because of the silver-strapped wristwatch he had. I remember one day he looked down and noticed that he was wearing odd socks – he explained that he had got up when it was dark, and didn't want to put the light on and wake his wife". This is a touching reference to Dorothy. And Howells's problems with the watchstrap evidently led him to the occasional use of a gold pocket watch, which must have made him seem even more ancient to this generation. Several students remember him wearing "tweedy" jackets (as did Michael Caine as the professor in the film "Educating Rita") but it is hard to imagine him feeling entirely comfortable in that mode.

His students found him to be warm, friendly, dignified, caring, gentle, genial, charming and considerate. Perhaps, "under the surface", one might say, there were deeper levels of complexity: several students referred to his shyness, and to his being more open to people he liked and trusted than to those he did not. Kevin Walters found him "slightly affected", and Jeffery Wilson calls him "slightly reserved with a sort of temperament for all circumstances". Some of this may simply be explained by his age. Alan Bullard says, "He was an educated and well spoken man nearly 50 years older than me – and felt as if he came from a different era – so to many young people like me he would have sounded strange in his turn of phrase and style of speech".

I asked students about his sense of humour. Telling jokes does not seem to have been part of Howells's nature, but evidently "he was a limitless source of anecdotes, especially from the brilliant years of his early career, and the glamorous artistic circles he moved in then" (Spearing). Several students spoke of how he would quietly laugh or chuckle, but it was not always clear exactly what he was chuckling at! Adrian Partington remembers that Howells "left his umbrella on the bus at least once a week, and he laughed about that".

Reading what this sampling of students said about Howells's teaching style makes me certain that he might not have survived our contemporary era, with its "outcome-based" teaching expectations. From the comments I have received, it is hard to get an entirely clear picture of a consistent teaching method or philosophy; certainly, no former student has mentioned syllabi, or rigid structure to his lessons. In general, Howells seemed to approach each student on an individual basis, and the musicians I heard from found him to be encouraging and positive. Andrew Downes considered him open to new ideas and "a wonderful teacher at post-graduate level". Michael Christie says that Howells would point out "the things which worked well as well as bits that were not so good, always in the most charming and elegant fashion, never making one feel bad about one's infelicities or mistakes...When one had achieved a really good piece of work, he was quick to praise it, especially if it represented an important stage in one's development". Robert Spearing says Howells was "not strict at the time I studied with him [starting in 1969], though insistent on musicality in all one's judgments. Earlier he had been stricter, by reputation". (Canadian composer Lloyd Burritt, who had studied with him in the early sixties, found Howells to

be encouraging, but fastidious enough not to be pleased when Burritt "missed parallel fifths or octaves" in his compositions.) Adrian Partington (mid-1970s) says of his harmony lessons that Howells "didn't seem to be very interested in teaching me stylistics; he used to correct my harmony exercises, but my memory is that he just went through the motions", often preferring to talk animatedly about other musical topics.

Alan Bullard (1965) remembers that Howells "rarely set me an exercise, simply leaving me to do what I wished from one of the text-books I had or to compose whatever piece of music I wished". When Bullard brought in his piece, Howells would ask him to "play it to him after he had looked at it silently, usually with a cigarette in his mouth and ash dropping on the floor! He did make changes/suggestions – not many – usually in pencil and erasing my MS" (an approach unlikely to be popular today.) Apparently it was not uncommon for Howells to write even longer snippets of music in his students' notebooks, or, on occasion, to subtly encourage compositional "Howellsisms". Indeed, both Peter Naylor (1958) and Alan Bullard had almost identical experiences involving being assigned to set Shelley's A Widow Bird to music, and returning to the next class to find that Howells had more than usually specific suggestions for improvement. In both cases, it was only later in their lives that the men realized that Howells had recommended musical solutions similar to his own 1915 composition.

Barry Ferguson says that "every lesson was different...he discussed my work, usually a song, [and] discussed the text: what feature of the poem did I think should be present in the piano part? Could it be shortened to make it more focused? In choral works, did I give each part some rests?" Edwin Roxburgh, who studied with Howells in the late 1950s, also remembers that questions were central to Howells's teaching style: generally, rather than advise or correct, he would ask, "What do you think?" According to Kevin Walters (early 1970s), the composer "rarely spoke of his own music and made rather a lot of saying how important it is for a composer to 'find his own voice'". So his approach varied, over time, with each student, and it depended on whether the focus was harmony or composition. One factor seems to have remained constant, and that is Howells's lack of real interest in serial or twelve-tone music, which he was evidently quite open about. If a student's musical and compositional "voice" was modern, it sounds as if the two musicians would, over the course of the term, find a way to work together. Robert Spearing says that Howells's more "traditional yardstick" has, over time, given him a firm foundation, which remains deep in his work to this day.

Michael Christie remembers that Howells "was very keen on making sure that one's manuscript should be clear and legible. He insisted that one join up the stems to the note heads, for instance, that stems should be vertical, note heads should be the correct shape (and not just a diagonal dash!) and that spacings and alignments were correctly observed...I have had cause to thank him for his emphasis...as I very rarely have to puzzle over something I have written! It is also something I try to pass on to those of my students who still use pencil and paper". Howells's clear hand was not reserved only for music scores. Several students and musicians who were adjudicated by Howells made a point of sending me examples of his extraordinary calligraphic handwriting (in notes and on grading sheets and adjudication results). In later years, he seemed to switch to using a ballpoint rather than fountain pen, but the elegance of his writing hand never faltered. Almost as striking as the handwriting itself is his writing style, which perhaps matched his verbal one: he was exquisitely articulate, honest (about both strengths and weaknesses) and precise, with the final litmus test being musicality.

I asked respondents whether Howells had spoken at length with them about his childhood, the period at Gloucester, or spiritual issues, and for the most part, it appears that the answer to that is, "no". Howells seemed to open up to few of his students on those topics. However, Gordon Chapman (not an RCM alumnus), who turned pages for Howells at St. John's College, Cambridge during World War II, says he was surprised when Howells asked him whether he had ever thought about death. He recounts that "by the time I met Dr. H, however, I was a callow youth of 17 and I'm afraid my instant reaction to his question was to deny the fact...we passed on easily to more mundane affairs, but I think his question was not unconnected with the tragic early death of his son

Michael, and I fear I must have been a disappointment to him. But I have always regretted that I did not feel able to [discuss the subject] at the time – it might have resulted in a fascinating conversation..." (Many of these ex-students now understandably wish they had thought to ask "HH" more questions, on a whole range of topics.) Michael's death was one of the few keyholes allowing young people a glimpse into Howells's inner life. In Barry Ferguson's words, "anything to do with Michael was central to his psyche". Paul Spicer (early 1970s) observes, "Michael's death was just as vivid all those years later as it was when he first died". Spicer remembers encountering Howells after a rehearsal of the Hymnus Paradisi; the composer said, "I wish to God, Paul, that I had never had to write that work."

Sometimes Howells would take his students to the library at the end of a class, or the student would encounter him in another setting, which gave him a different view of the man. Michael Christie was surprised upon seeing him lecture publicly in the Main Hall, "with a verve and stylish energy quite different from his usual private manner...I remember him telling me he used to lecture on music history in the Main Hall years before, and that these lectures became very popular, the audience often filling the Hall".

Alan Bullard went to the first performance of Howells's *Stabat Mater* and encountered the composer outside afterward. Howells was delighted with the Bach Choir's performance, under Sir David Willcocks; interestingly, Bullard recalls Howells smoking, but, upon seeing "someone of importance" approaching, thrusting the cigarette into someone else's hand so that he would not be **seen** smoking. Others remember him being not entirely unappreciative when a pretty girl walked by on the street – even when he was well into his eighties! Howells took pains to support many of his students by attending their lunchtime concerts, encouraging them in their careers, and keeping in touch with some long after their studies at the College were over. Several students indicated that they have continued to "learn" composition from Howells: every time they hear, sing, or play one of his pieces, new insights and nuances emerge for consideration.

Kevin Walters recalls how his last lesson with Howells took place after the regular RCM term had ended. He was astonished to find out that Howells was expected to move all the furniture into the hallway because the room was to be painted! Walters gladly helped the elderly man move. "Everything he touched had a story that went with it and he told each and every story. If only I'd taken a tape recorder with me!" Then, after shaking hands with his teacher at the front door of the RCM, Walters crossed the street. When he looked back, Howells, who had warmly greeted the security guard, was still chatting with the man.

One element of Howells's wardrobe has not yet been mentioned, and that is Sir Charles Villiers Stanford's signet ring, which Peter Naylor remembers Howells showing him. According to Paul Spicer, "Stanford himself wore it for more than fifty years, and Guy Stanford (the composer's son) placed it on Howells's finger at the Memorial service in Westminster Abbey on what would have been Stanford's hundredth birthday" (Spicer, p. 152). Students who did not see the ring were at least likely to hear about it. The notion of history as a succession of "great men" has appropriately gone by the wayside, but it is almost tempting to revive it in this situation. Whether they knew it or not, these young composers, organists and future teachers were becoming part of the flow of music history. Howells himself had showed up at the RCM in 1912 as a young man from a humble background, and at that moment, his future musical success was by no means assured. Yet how privileged he was that his Royal College of Music mentors were among the greatest British composers of the late 19th and early 20th century: Stanford, Sir C. Hubert H. Parry, Charles Wood, Sir Walter Parratt and Sir Walford Davies. Now, many of Howells's own students have gone on to become some of the leading musicians of the late 20th and early 21st century, and are, themselves, teaching a new generation.

It is clear from the warmth with which students referred to Howells that he had a profound impact, even if his teaching methods were less than formal in his later years, even if he represented an archaic era to students in a tumultuous time, and even if there were countless days when Howells would rather have stayed home and composed. His passion for music, his gentle encouragement, and his musical integrity pulled through and inspired these young people.

Andrew Downes writes: "He was an absolutely delightful man whose music was strongly influenced by the genuineness and inner spiritual strength of his nature and character". Barry Ferguson sums it up this way: "He somehow, not verbally but subliminally, gave me self-belief – the most precious gift a teacher can give". Sir David Willcocks, who was the school's director during Howells's last years there, is quoted as saying that the composer was "a beautiful craftsman and one of the best teachers we ever had at the Royal College of Music" (Owen, p. 227). Now, Howells's teaching continues to reverberate as his music and that of his pupils finds appreciative new audiences worldwide.

© Elizabeth Leighton Wilson BA (Smith College), MMus (Royal Holloway, London), November 2012

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Wilson, Jeffery. Composer. Letter, 18 June 2012. (First met Howells in 1976.)

I would welcome submissions from Howells's other students or colleagues at my email, <u>lizleightonw@hotmail.com</u>

Chairman's Message

John Gibbons writes...

2013 promises to be a fascinating year, not least to see the impact the centenary of the birth of Benjamin Britten has on global music events. Major European bicentenaries – Richard Wagner and Giuseppe Verdi – will feature heavily in opera house schedules whilst the *Rite of Spring* will no doubt feature in more than a couple of concerts this year. So I, for one, will be intrigued as to whether these major celebrations obscure attempts to give other composer anniversaries a fair hearing, in particular, George Lloyd – whose reputation seems in need of considered re-appraisal from both performers and audiences. Reaction to his music seems equivocal and I am looking forward to getting hold of audience reactions to the various performances taking place this year – in particular the St Albans performance of the Requiem on the 19th January. This will be the second time I have conducted the work and it has been fascinating to reappraise my performance views, aided in this instance by the knowledge that I have a wonderful young organist, Tom Winpenny, providing the accompaniment on the superb organ of St Peter's Church, St Albans.

The summer of 2012 has seen a number of notable British music occasions. The performance of *The Canterbury Tales* by George Dyson at the Three Choirs and subsequently broadcast on Radio 3, stands out for me but I was also fortunate to be able to attend the Lake District Summer Music Festival performance of the complete *Hiawatha* by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor at the Coronation Hall, Ulverston. This was a hugely enjoyable performance with great commitment from the Festival Chorus and super orchestral playing from the Northern Chamber Orchestra under the passionate baton of Ian Jones.

The Proms brought us lots of Delius and a night of Vaughan Williams symphonies conducted by Andrew Manze. The latter concert was undoubtedly popular with most British music fans but personally I am always disappointed by the 'ghetto' treatment of British music – an increasing trend as promoters aim for a target market. There is no doubt a significant number of major British works are fully worthy to be billed alongside the popular European mainstream thereby introducing them to listeners reluctant to step outside their musical comfort zone. How else can we force a reappraisal of long-held opinions? On Christmas Day on Radio 4's excellent programme Great Lives we again had to hear one of our staunchest advocates, Em Marshall, knock down Philip Heseltine's clichéd comment "like a cow looking over a gate" in reference to Vaughan Williams's war inspired Pastoral Symphony. Re-reading Peter J. Pirie (The English Musical Renaissance 1979) I am struck by his comments about the period 1913 – "Arnold Bax, whose music was not more radical than that of other late Romantics, was considered an incomprehensible modern until 1945: when he suddenly became an outdated survival." This statement matches comments about the Bax Symphonies I heard whilst a teenager and I wonder how much our thinking on Bax's music has matured over the last thirty years. This process of re-evaluation extends to all composers and with our open minds who knows what re-discoveries await us in 2013.

As I muse on the turning of the year, it is good to see how much British music is now recorded, often many times, and ponder whether our 2013 goal should be to see more 'live' performances of neglected British works. The recent world premiere of the Alwyn Violin Concerto in June proved how a live performance, in this case with stunning playing by Lorraine McAslan, enables us all to get inside the music in a way that we rarely achieve through recorded mediums. Many BMS members confessed that they possessed a recording of the violin concerto but had not rated it on listening to the CD – Lorraine's live performance changed their minds!

The 2013 AGM has been scheduled for Saturday 18th May in St Barnabas Church, Pitshanger Lane, Ealing, London W5. A whole day of events are planned including an organ recital on the recently installed Hill Organ (previously at St Jude's, Southsea), a chamber music recital and, in the evening, the world premiere of the Robert Still Violin Concerto with Efi Christodoulou as soloist. I hope as many members as possible will be able to put the date in their diary.

We are also organising a memorial day for Raphael Terroni, probably in March so details will be circulated by email. Committee member Wendy Hiscocks is dealing with Membership Liaison – acting as a channel for information to be quickly sent to members who are on email and also as the person who can raise members' questions and comments and bring them to the attention of the committee. So please send her an email on: wendyhiscocks@btinternet.com.

Finally I would like to thank all the hard working members of the committee. We have a wonderful blend of youth (Shea Lolin) and experience (Stephen Trowell) with many fresh faces to the BMS who are actively promoting BMS to all and sundry. The last couple of months have seen a number of mentions of the BMS on Radio 3 and we hope this trend continues in 2013.

Composer News

David Jennings

The complete piano music to date of BMS composermember David Jennings (b 1972) has been recorded by pianist James Willshire and released on Divine Art DDA25110. The works recorded are:

Piano Sonata Op. 1; Sonatina No. 1, Op. 2 No. 1; Sonatina No. 2 Op. 2 No. 2; Sonatina No. 3, Op. 2 No. 3; Prelude and Fugue Op. 6; Three Lyrical Pieces Op. 17; Miniature Suite Op. 18; Harvest Moon Suite Op. 19 The following further information was provided in the Divine Art Press Release:

"David Jennings was born in Sheffield in 1972. He started to compose music at the age of twelve. He read Music at Durham University with the distinguished composer John Casken and went on to Manchester University to study composition at postgraduate level, again with John Casken. His works are in a variety of musical genres from piano miniatures to large orchestral pieces. They have been successfully performed by professionals of the highest calibre, such as members of the Northern Sinfonia. Early exposure to the works of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Moeran, Bridge and Bax helped to give his music its distinctive warm, glowing quality, further enhanced by his admiration for Gershwin and Medieval music. An appreciation for the landscape of the North of England has also left a positive mark on Jennings's music, which aims to recreate its sense of timelessness. The composer is strongly influenced by poetry and the visual arts, particularly English Nineteenth Century watercolours, which he feels are an inspiring marriage of technique and expression. David Jennings is a member of the Lakeland Composers. Future projects include a series of substantial chamber works."

Gary Higginson

Music by BMS composer-member Gary Higginson (b 1952) has been issued on Regent REGCD381 – the CD is titled *Songs of Innocence and Experience*. The works recorded are:

Seven Songs of William Blake (Set 1), Op 33 (1977); Motet: Et omnes eandem escam spiritualem ederunt, Op 130 (1996); Six Birds, Op 161 (2009); Two Studies for solo harp, Op 132; Songs with harp: Miri it is, Op 53 no. 2, How beautiful is the rain, Op 53 no. 3 (1983); Ceres' Song from The Tempest, Op 154 no. 8; Fairies' Song, Op 154 No. 7 (1999); Over Hill, Over Dale Op 154 no. 9 (1999); Lead kindly light (from Requiem), Op 111 (1991); A song of joy, Op 165 no. 2 (2011); A last confession, Op 137 no. 2; Seven Songs of William Blake (Set 2), Op 55 (1979-1982)

This is the first disc of music by Herefordshire-based composer Gary Higginson. Born in West Bromwich in 1952, he studied under the great English symphonist Edmund Rubbra and, later on, with Patric Standford,

Buxton Orr and John Joubert. The influence of Rubbra is occasionally apparent, as is also that of Britten.

The essential aspects of Higginson's style are a powerful sense of musical space, where even the smallest gesture tells effectively and a strong underlying lyricism, which links his music to the great tradition of English church music. It is interesting that Higginson has chosen to eschew the use of extended contemporary vocal techniques, making a decision to pare his music down to essentials. The glorious *A Song of Joy* triumphantly proves that a contemporary piece can sound modern and fresh without the use of these gimmicks.

The Seven Songs of William Blake [Set 1] open the disc most effectively. Structurally, the set is laid out as a theme and variations, with the original melody being of Fourteenth Century Catalan provenance. The motet Et omnes eandem is very strong indeed, with its bold and powerful harmonies. The brief but enjoyable Six Birds have Brittenesque touches, yet remain very individual. Britten's influence is also detectable in How Beautiful is the rain, which is in the tradition of A Ceremony of Carols. In my opinion, Higginson has a lyrical gift that easily outclasses the often obsessively narrow range of Britten's thematic ideas. Over hill, over dale is equally attractive and would make a superb introduction to Higginson's work if it was aired on Classic FM.

Higginson's *Requiem* was written in memory of his father but has remained unperformed since its composition in 1991. The central movement, *Lead kindly light*, is extraordinarily heartfelt as performed on this CD and makes the present reviewer eager to hear the rest of this piece.

A song of joy is, in many ways, the most remarkable and affecting work on the disc. All the strengths of Higginson's compositional style are on display here; harmonic warmth, textural clarity and masterly deployment of musical space. The ending is most moving and this work must surely take a place in the regular repertory.

A last confession is a touching realisation of a poem by Rossetti, unusually written in Italian. The Seven Songs of William Blake [Set 2] are arguably even finer than the first set and familiar texts such as Tyger, tyger, burning bright are invested with notable intensity. This second set is a double theme and variations based (like Set 1) on Fourteenth Century Catalan material.

The performances are truly sensitive and perceptive. Sarah MacDonald ensures crisply unanimous choral textures from the wonderful Ely Cathedral Girls' Choir and the superb Selwyn College Chapel Choir, who clearly revel in this highly communicative music. Charlotte de Rothschild, the distinguished soprano, gives an inspired performance, her voice encompassing the highest notes with marvellous ease. The harpist, Danielle Perrett, is equally effective and gives a touching reading of the *Two Studies*.

The recorded sound is excellent, achieving an ideal blend of clarity and acoustical warmth. The booklet notes by the composer himself are both interesting and informative. This splendid disc is recommended with the greatest enthusiasm.

© David Jennings, November 2012

Nicholas Marshall

A very successful and stimulating concert was given to a packed audience in the Temple Church, Budleigh Salterton, on the afternoon of 29 September 2012. The concert celebrated the work of the Devon composer and BMS member Nicholas Marshall on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. Six composers were also represented, all of whom have strong connections with him. The concert featured several works for the recorder, expertly played by the virtuoso recorder player John Turner, together with an ensemble consisting of the soprano Lesley-Jane Rogers, cellist Heather Bills, harpsichordist Ian Thompson and pianists Nicholas Marshall and Roger Fordham.

There were several premieres during the afternoon, including Philip Wood's *Five Vernal Bagatelles* (based on bird-song), David Dubery's *Gavotte and Sarabande*, Julian Marshall's *Lines Written in Early Spring*, and Roger Fordham's *The Eight-handed Clock*, which was played by four performers at one piano. Finally came John Turner's *Three Salutes* for recorder and piano (The second performance was scheduled the next day – in Tokyo!)

The concert contained a feast of words as well as music; poets represented included Ted Hughes, G. K. Chesterton, W.B. Yeats and William Wordsworth, their words being sung with great distinction by Lesley-Jane Rogers. Nicholas Marshall's own works included a substantial song-cycle, *The Falling of the Leaves, Four Haiku* for solo recorder (demonstrating John Turner's technique to the full), a suite *The Garden of Eden, Work and Play, Three Short Songs* and *Plaint* for cello and piano, beautifully played by Heather Bills. There were two compositions by the late Timothy Moore, who was Nicholas Marshall's teacher – *Autumn Morning at Cambridge* (incorporating the Westminster Chimes) and *Reciprocal Rumbas* for two pianos. The concert ended with four of Nicholas Marshall's folk-song arrangements.

This programme of 20th and 21st century music was greatly enjoyed by the audience, and all the music deserves much wider performance.

© Roger Fordham, November 2012

Societies News

Robin Milford Trust

We have received the latest newsletter from the Robin Milford Trust, containing much information about their activities in the promotion of the music of Robin Milford. Among the Trust's plan for 2013 are:

- promoting Robin in the 2013 Ludlow and other Music Festivals
- promoting Robin's music further amongst professionals
- promoting the oratorios and larger-scale choral works amongst Choral Societies, with samples sections being printed in the *Milford Friends* Newsletter and on the website
- categorising the appropriate Milford output into seasons for choirs (Advent, Christmas, Lent Easter) and advertising in this manner
- targeting further the children's area of advertising and performance (*The Shoemaker* for Christmas, the *Children's Mass* at prep-schools and further inclusion in National Festivals)
- having Robin's organ music played at future EMS and other Festivals
- advertising Robin more with the RCO, other music colleges and Alumni Newsletters
- pursuing the various prospective recording artists
- creating a London 2013 concert/recital
- final arrangement of the organ music for publication

The Trust has invested considerable effort in producing *Sibelius* format versions of Milford's unpublished works. Available so far are:

Suite for Chamber Orchestra Op. 5

The Darkling Thrush Op. 17

Mr John Peel Passes By

Go Little Book for Flute and Strings (with optional Soprano voice) Op. 18

Mr Ben Jonson's Pleasure Op. 19f

First Symphony Op. 34

Miniature String Quartet (or Miniature Concerto for String Orchestra) Op. 35

Fishing by Moonlight for Piano/harpsichord and orchestra Op. 96

Festival Suite for string orchestra Op. 97

Fantasia in B Minor for string quartet Op. 74

Prelude for violin, cello and piano Op. 92

Four Pieces for Viola and Piano Op. 42 Air only

Threne for cello Op. 81

Sir Walter's Overture Op. 27

In September, 2012, the *Mass for Five Voices* was released on CD by Somerville College Oxford (Directed by David Crown), coupled with the Duruflé *Requiem*. Of the making of this CD, David Crown writes,

"It seems a long time ago that I was researching composers in the Bodleian music library and stumbled upon Robin Milford. I was looking for works that I felt deserved a wider appreciation amongst the multitude of choral followers around the world for the first commercial CD by The Choir of Somerville College, Oxford where I am music director. I took over the choir at Somerville five years ago when it was very much in the doldrums and it has taken time and effort to bring it to the stage where a CD was a possibility. Somerville is unique (we believe) in that the Chapel is nondenominational, being part of a college that was founded among other things to get away from the all-pervasive influence of the church within the university. This means we also do not have a Chaplain but have different and often fascinating speakers each week, with a mixture of services (Evensong, Communion et al) and 'Faith Events' with visits from people of different faith and of none. The music similarly is wide-ranging and sometimes eclectic. From what I have read of Robin Milford, I think he would have enjoyed visiting our chapel!

Robin's Mass ticked many boxes for me: it is a fine work that is relatively unknown and had not been recorded. I wanted to couple it with another work that would ensure that it would be heard and settled on the Duruflé 'Requiem', with the serendipity of having been composed in the same year (1947) and both as a response to the terrible tragedies of WWII. Despite the degree of sadness in his life and of those dark times, I found the Mass to be uplifting and full of spirit and joy. There are exquisite moments that waltz along with not a care in the world and the darker passages never lack for light. It also has grand and almost operatic sections with the choir at full belt and the voices spread over a huge range. It is undoubtedly a hard piece for choir technically. He puts some serious demands on his singers both vocally and harmonically and it took us time to find our way to its heart. My favourite passages include the opening of the *Kyrie which I love; the Sanctus and Benedictus are* haunting and the Agnus Dei beautiful. The Gloria is a lot of fun if perhaps the sections don't merge that easily. And there would be the criticism of the work if I had one. There is perhaps not a totally consistent voice and this may be why it has been so overlooked. That and how hard it is to bring off! We recorded it in the chapel at Somerville and having sung and performed it many times, we managed to get it down in the time we had. It is very tough, but gratifyingly the work you put in to it pays back many times over, unlike some oft-performed contemporary composers I could name!! I really hope that this piece will now be taken up by some other choirs. It is vastly superior to a number of regularly performed Masses at cathedrals and it is so worth the time. My thanks go also to the Milford Trust for all their support in this exciting project and to Mark Stone and Stone

Records for believing in the choir and the project to bring it to this splendid conclusion. I have already had many messages from people saying how much they love the piece. I really hope that Robin is looking down with a smile at his music being taken up with such gusto by these young singers."

Further details of the Trust's activities are available at the trust website www.robinmilfordtrust.org.uk

Elgar Society Release of Commemorative Recordings

Jill O'Sullivan writes:

Just released on the Somm Recordings label is *The* Longed-For Light – Elgar's Music in Wartime. Supported by the Elgar Society, the CD comprises a commemorative selection of works by Sir Edward Elgar recorded in association with BBC Radio 3 by the BBC Concert Orchestra under conductor John Wilson. Featured soloists are Susan Gritton (soprano) and Simon Callow (speaker). Composed or completed between 1914 and 1918, the works selected reflect Elgar's empathy for the wave of patriotism which swept the country during the years of The Great War. The disc opens with Elgar's first two major war works: the symphonic prelude *Polonia* (Op.76) is followed by the powerful Carillon (Op. 75) for speaker and orchestra, continuing through Sospiri (Op. 70) for string orchestra with harp and organ and the poignant recitation *Une Voix Dans le Desert* (Op. 77) featuring speaker, soprano and orchestra. Other works include the recitation Le Drapeau Belge (Op. 79), the charming smaller pieces Carissima and Rosemary and Elgar's large-scale orchestral version of his ballet music for *The* Sanguine Fan (Op. 81). The CD closes with the ceremonial Sursum Corda (Op. 11) for strings, brass and organ.

"Although a life-long admirer of the music of Edward Elgar, many of the works on this CD were unknown to me until I began studying the scores in preparation for this recording," says John Wilson. "The three days of sessions were a delightful voyage of discovery for us all and I had several members of the orchestra commenting on how sad it was that these genuinely charming works were rarely heard in the concert hall. Alas, charm is rather an underrated commodity these days but I hope that this new CD might bring about a renewed appreciation of these somewhat unjustly-neglected compositions."

In addition to subsidising the recording, the Elgar Society advised on sourcing some of the scores and parts for the 67 musicians. "We were delighted to support this project, which captures a hauntingly beautiful part of our musical heritage," says Steven Halls, Elgar Society Chairman. "The outbreak of war affected Elgar profoundly, producing an emotional depth in his music of the time. We hope that musical groups in the professional and amateur arenas alike will look afresh at this repertoire and draw upon it when creating programmes leading up to the First World War centenary commemorations in 2014. Financial support for such events is available

through our Elgar in Performance scheme and applications are encouraged."

The release of *The Longed-For Light* marks John Wilson's debut on the Somm label and is the first recording of Carillon, Une Voix Dans le Desert and Le Drapeau Belge with a professional orchestra. The CD is available direct from Somm Recordings (http://www.somm-recordings.com/), through the Elgar Birthplace Museum (http://www.elgarmuseum.org/) and all good record shops.

For information on Elgar Society membership, events and resources, log-on to http://www.elgar.org/, visit the Elgar Society Facebook page, follow @elgarsocietyweb on Twitter or e-mail info@elgar.org

Obituaries

Raphael Terroni

As might be expected, tributes to former BMS Chairman and Vice-Chairman Raphael Terroni continue to come in from his friends and colleagues and we will publish as many of these as space permits.



BMS President John McCabe writes:

"The BMS has sadly lost some stalwart supporters in recent times, people who have strengthened our work by their deep commitment and immense knowledge. One such was Raphael Terroni, with whom I had a friendship and working relationship over many years, which meant a great deal to me.

"We first met when he performed in an invaluable series of concerts presented in the 1970s by the ISM, to showcase artists who might have missed out on pursuing early career opportunities for various reasons but who deserved a chance. There were, I remember, three seasons of a few concerts each, and Ray was one of the successful artists to perform at the Wigmore Hall – indeed, I think it would be interesting to look at the final list, because I suspect quite a few really successful performers came through this process. I can always remember his performance of Ronald Stevenson's Peter Grimes Fantasy, which remained a favourite piece in his

repertoire, and his performance was generally very well received.

"When in the 1980s I took over the London College of Music, Ray was one of the main piano teachers, respected and admired by all, and during the reorganisation of the College I was able to make him my Head of Piano. One of the best appointments I could have made. He was calm and unflappable, in an often highly flappable situation, wise and patient, with immense reserves of pastoral commitment to the Department, his colleagues and, of course, the students. He was a fund of ideas, quietly expressed but always thought through – one of his great achievements was a splendid Piano Week, with recitals, lectures and masterclasses, covering an immense range of repertoire and technical questions.

"Ray's contribution to the BMS was, of course, enormous, and has already been well-rehearsed in these columns – I don't need to add to that except to say that the people who are prepared to be so involved and who believe in what we are doing are beyond price. But I can point to his splendid series of BMS (and other) recordings, from the early Lennox Berkeley piano music (he was a truly outstanding interpreter of this subtle and elusive music) to his most recent ones. He introduced us to a vast amount of repertoire that we would, to our own loss, not have known before – another cause for gratitude. And he persuaded his pupils to look around and find repertoire for themselves - wisdom indeed, and rather rare among piano pedagogues.

"I shall miss him very much, from conversations about music to talking about cricket. This morning I was listening to the commentary on an absorbing day's Test cricket from Nagpur – a slow, gripping, fascinating day. How he would have loved it!"

Photographer and pianist Gary Italiaander writes:

"When I recently received a call from my friend Peter Hunter (who I met at the London College of Music in 1971) to inform me of the death of Raphael, I was both shocked and saddened to hear this terrible news.

"I was extremely fortunate to have met Raphael Terroni while I was studying at the LCM on the Performers Course from 1971-74. Raphael, or Ray as he was known to those closest to him, was a delight to be taught by. His whole approach was completely different to anybody that I had previously been taught by and I quickly progressed to attain the Licentiate teaching qualification. In total Ray taught me for nearly two years, right through to the end of my time at the College and helped immensely in my own development as a piano teacher. I was delighted when Ray visited my home to meet my family and where I had a Steinway grand piano. We had the chance to listen to him play, showing us how it should really be done!

"I remember with gratitude how interesting his lessons always were and when I left the LCM I continued to study with him, visiting his home many times, until I

moved in a totally new direction into the world of Photography.

"Unfortunately, we then lost contact for many years until a little over two years ago while visiting Steinway Hall in London. While working on a project, I wanted to illustrate why it is so important to learn on a quality instrument and there was no question that Ray would be the ideal person to provide the answer. When I contacted him he immediately agreed to help. Consequently, in June 2011 I visited Ray and Pam at home and for the first time for many years, we were able to 'catch up' over a lovely lunch. During this visit I was also able to create a series of portraits of him with his beloved Steinway and interview him on film discussing the merits of learning on a fine instrument. This may have been the last film with him and I am delighted that I was able to capture this true gentleman who I so admired, talking passionately about that for which he had such great ability.

"There are others who are far more able to speak of his musicianship and all that he did to promote music that would otherwise have been forgotten, but there is no doubt that he will be greatly missed, not only by his family and friends, but also by the musical world as a whole."

The film with Raphael can be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2g0yabVm3A Additional images of Raphael can be viewed at: http://www.italiaander.co.uk/raphael-terroni.html

Concert & Recital Reviews

Ian Kemp – A Celebration

Ad Solem (University of Manchester Chamber Choir) directed by David Young, with Ben Ferguson (piano); Lesley-Jane Rogers (soprano); John Turner (recorder); Laura Robinson, Emily Davies, Berdel efe Gulsen (recorders); Robin Ireland (violin and viola); Heather Bills (cello); Ian Thompson (harpsichord); Davis Fanning (piano); Geoffrey Poole (piano). Cosmo Rodewald Concert Hall, Manchester University, Saturday 10 November 2012

Throughout his career, and particularly during his professorships at Leeds and Manchester Universities, Ian Kemp earned considerable respect and affection in equal measure. This was reflected in the concert to celebrate his life and work given at Manchester University last November, and in the many warm tributes from friends and former colleagues printed in the programme.

The music was inspired by Ian's particular interests and passions – Berlioz was a must, and the University Chamber Choir performed four of his songs for chorus and piano. Robin Ireland and Geoffrey Poole played Berlioz's only chamber work, the *Rêverie et Caprice* for violin and piano. Music by Tippett was also an essential inclusion – Ian's definitive *Tippett: The Composer and his Music* remains indispensible reading (Tippett's Fourth

Symphony is dedicated to him). David Fanning gave a powerful performance of Tippets highly concentrated *Piano Sonata No. 2* in one movement. In complete contrast the University Chamber Choir with Laura Robinson, Emily Davies and Berdel efe Gulsen performed Tippett's *Bonny at Morn*, a setting of a Northumbrian folk song for unison voices and three recorders. A performance of Hindemith's early Op. 11 Sonata for Viola and piano reminded of Ian's enthusiasm for German music.

Among Ian's own compositions is the unusually scored *Fantasia* for four treble recorders, a performance of which opened the second half of the concert. The work was begun at the suggestion of Walter Bergmann, but put to one side in the mid 1950s. However, with John Turner's encouragement, it was eventually completed in 1994. Ian himself noted that the title is a reference to the fantasies for viols by Purcell, a composer Bergmann worshipped.

The remainder of the programme was made up of works composed in memory of Ian, all of which were receiving their first performance. In the first half, Lesley Jane Rogers, John Turner and Ian Thompson performed Raymond Warren's At the Hawk's Well, a dramatic cantata setting choruses from the play by W B Yeats, whose vivid imagery was captured in music that drew much drama from the small forces employed. *Merlin* by Hugh Wood and Placing Art by Anthony Gilbert were both scored for voice accompanied by recorder alone. Merlin sets a poem by Edwin Muir and is evocatively delicate. *Placing Art* takes words from the final paragraph of Ian's Tippett biography that concludes "A vitally important message imperfectly transmitted is greater than an important one perfectly transmitted." A profound statement set with suitably declamatory seriousness. A group of four further songs for soprano with various scorings of recorder, harpsichord and cello was included in the second half. Raymond Dodd's In the Highlands sets a poem from Robert Louis Stevenson's Songs of Travel and Other Verses and captures its atmospheric descriptiveness. A little Aria for Ian by Philip Wilby sets with warm harmonies a poem by Sappho that ends with the words "Prosperity that the golden Muses gave me was no delusion: Dead, I won't be forgotten." In An Elegy, Geraint Lewis sets words by William Wordsworth; a work of simplicity, stillness and beauty. Geoffrey Poole's poetic source for *Utopia* was the Nobel prize-winning Polish poet Wislawa Szymborska. The disillusion in her ironic lines is expressed in uneasy but telling music.

Assistance towards the costs of this event, which included a most enjoyable post-concert buffet, was provided by the Ida Carroll Trust. In addition, and as part of the celebrations of Ian's life and achievements, it is intended to establish the Ian Kemp Students' Opportunity Fund, which will be used to assist students in aspects of their studies while at Manchester – a most appropriate initiative.

© Andrew Mayes, December 2012

The Pleyel Ensemble

Benedict Holland (violin); Heather Bills (cello); Harvey Davies (harpsichord/piano); with John Turner (recorder)

St Bartholomew's Church, Wilmslow, Cheshire, 15 September 2012

In a recital dedicated mostly to the music of the baroque it is inevitably rewarding when imaginative programming introduces contemporary works also. This was certainly the case when recorder player John Turner joined members of the Pleyel Ensemble for a recital in their recent series given in Wilmslow Parish Church.

Telemann's *D minor Trio Sonata* for recorder, violin and continuo, Handel's *F major Recorder Sonata* and J S Bach's *E major Sonata for Violin and Harpsichord* (interestingly with cello doubling the harpsichordist's left hand, as Bach himself indicated these sonatas could be played) received stylish performances. Heather Bills's performance of Bach's *G major Cello Suite* was outstanding, and the entire ensemble excelled in Vivaldi's *D major Chamber Concerto* for recorder, violin and continuo in which the continuo players have as much of a virtuoso roll as the soloists.

Dick Blackford's Sonata alla Danza for recorder and piano received its first performance, particularly appropriate in context, as its three movements; Alla Bourée, Alla Sarabande and Alla Jig, clearly reflect baroque dance forms. However, Blackford's harmonic style ensures there is no hint of pastiche, particularly the whole-tone melodic inflections in Alla Sarabande. The Alla Bourée has very effective slow introductory and concluding sections framing the lively heart of the movement. Impressive is his use of bass recorder in the Alla Sarabande, where balance with the piano, notoriously difficult to achieve, was perfectly accomplished. The Alla Jig finale makes use of descant, sopranino and treble recorders and the slower interludes where the changes of instrument are made, though providing contrast, perhaps detract slightly from the overall unity. Nevertheless, this is a fine and substantial work in which the composer has successfully captured the stylistic character of the recorder in music of great subtlety and charm.

The other contemporary work, Arnold Cooke's *Quartet* for recorder, violin, cello and harpsichord, dates from 1964 and in which baroque influence is also very evident (additionally reflected in the title *Sonata* which Cooke would have preferred). The first movement, with its slow introductory and concluding sections making use of strong dotted rhythms, and flanking a quicker fugato, is in all but name a French overture. In the central Andante, the textures are unmistakably those of a baroque trio sonata, while the third movement Allegro, a rondo in 6/8, concludes the work with Telemann-like energy. Premiere by Carl Dolmetsch at his Wigmore Hall recital in 1965, Cooke's *Quartet* deserves to be more frequently played. It is among his most accomplished chamber works, in

which the influence of Hindemith and his own distinctive style are combined in music of considerable mastery and elegance.

© Andrew Mayes, December 2012

Ealing Symphony Orchestra

Fenella Humphries (Violin); Michael Solomon-Williams (Tenor); Ealing Symphony Orchestra, Conductor John Gibbons
St. Barnabas Church, Ealing, London, W5, Saturday

17 November 2012

John Gibbons and the Ealing Symphony Orchestra are building a reputation similar to that achieved by Leonold

building a reputation similar to that achieved by Leopold Stokowski in Philadelphia in the 1930's. At that time Stokowski placed many premiere performances in his programmes and lots of other contemporary pieces as well. Gibbons is doing the same with his fine orchestra in London. This concert under review is a prime example of his commitment to recent English music placed alongside a proven masterpiece from an earlier era. Would that our top notch professional orchestras showed the same fervour for our country's national music but that seems as far away as ever what with too many foreign maestros in charge showing little interest in our native music and overly cautious management forever chasing that elusive extra financial reward to allow yet another performance of a proven international classic chosen from a very narrow list of composers.

At this exceptional concert the audience heard two modern works full of life, vitality and real feeling. Edward Gregson's sparkling *Blazon* opened the concert in fine style. The heraldic fanfares heard at the beginning and the end frame a middle section that has the same limpid sounds as we hear in Tippett's dance music from his The Midsummer Marriage opera. Blazon could be described as a mini concerto for orchestra as it contains considerable virtuosic passages for each section of the ensemble not least making demands on three trumpets, spread around the arena for spacial effect. A sizeable array of percussion is also used together with piano and harp. On all grounds the players acquitted themselves admirably, so much so that it was difficult not to feel the orchestra is made up of professionals capable of holding their own with any heard in the London South Bank halls.

A more withdrawn sonority was needed for Christopher Wright's moving and eloquent *Violin Concerto*, written in memory of (and I suspect in sincere tribute for) his late wife, herself a violinist. Perhaps an unwitting role model may be heard in the Karl Amadeus Hartmann's *Violin Concerto* (1939), entitled *Concerto Funèbre* (*Music of Mourning*), a work that sets out with a clear mission on its mind. Another example of the form Wright has chosen in his three movements, slow, fast, slow, is the Walton concerto but, in the finale, he adds an entirely original dimension with a tenor singing six lines of Christina Rossetti's poem *Echo* beginning with "*Come to me in the silence of the night*". This interjection allows the violin soloist to take an almost obligato role before ending alone

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with only memories to recount. The soloist of firm and clear voice was the tenor Michael Solomon-Williams.

Fenella Humphries has already recorded this concerto on the Dutton Epoch label but this was the first public performance, indeed the first time she had played it through without stopping! She was entirely into the idiom of reflection and sadness that permeates the whole work, although the more technically demanding middle movement was dispatched with effortless style and grace. The sound world heard in the concerto is powerfully connected to the English heritage of past masters ranging from Butterworth, Vaughan Williams, Walton and Britten. Wright conjures up his own sense of artistic feeling that can be expected from such a powerful seed as his profound personal loss. Humphries was ably supported by Gibbons and his sensitive players who provided the frame work for her to project the various moods of joy, happiness and sorrow that are heard in a work that deserves to join the relatively short list of fine modern English violin concertos.

Elgar's Second Symphony also projects a sense of disquiet and loss that caused consternation at the time of its premiere in 1911. This, after all was at the apogee of British national pride in its Empire, a time of affluence and confidence in the future. Elgar's contemporary reputation never recovered after this first performance. He "lost" his audience who expected more pomp and circumstance suited to the times. The prophecy of war and national destitution contained in this most magical score was not welcomed even when it became apparent a few years later. How then, today, to perform a work of such ambiguity and depth of feeling?

By not adopting the sometimes excitable tempi we hear from other conductors Gibbons was able to stress the symphonic credentials that Elgar is often accused of lacking in a work that can easily ramble and become disjointed. The very opening captured the epic sweep that announces a big statement of serious intent, designed to establish the composer once and for all as a continental European composer. This performance allowed the music to speak for itself; unforced, eloquent and organic in its desire for unity of purpose. The ability of the orchestra to obey the conductor's demands was paramount to allow the audience to savour not only a great piece of music but one which stirred the emotions such as Elgar intended. The gravitas of the elegiac slow movement offered much reflection of loss beyond that of the usual grief for the departed King Edward VII. The scherzo was made a bigger movement than usual by not being rushed. Details were heard in the undergrowth normally obscured by a faster tempo. The glorious finale avoided triumphalism and ended with more of a roar than normally heard before descending into peace and tranquillity.

As Elgar so appositely headed the score with words from Shelley; "Rarely, rarely, comest thou, Spirit of Delight".

© Edward Clark, November 2012

Dora Bright

Samantha Ward (piano); Morley College Chamber Orchestra, Conductor Charles Peebles Morley College, 11 October 2012

As part of the centennial celebration of the founder of London's Morley College – Emma Cons (1838-1912) – on 11 October, Samantha Ward was the soloist with the Morley Chamber Orchestra conductor Charles Peebles, in a revival of Dora Bright's *Piano Concerto in A minor* – her first – in possibly its first performance for a century.

Dora Bright was born in 1862 and lived until 1951. However she came to a short-lived fame in her twenties and thirties and so to all intents and purposes we must think of her as a Victorian composer. She studied at the Royal Academy of Music in the 1880s and was a pianist as well as composer. She played this concerto at the RAM and later at Dresden, Cologne and Leipzig, when the conductor was Carl Reinecke. She achieved some recognition with London audiences when it was played at a Saturday Concert at Crystal Palace in March 1891, but then it seems to have faded when it was not taken up by other pianists. She produced further works for piano and orchestra for herself to play and she thus became the first woman to be played by the Philharmonic Society at St James's Hall when she was commissioned to write a work for piano and orchestra and produced her Fantasia in G given there in 1892.

Dora Bright (later Mrs Knatchbull) is a fascinating figure but not all her music survives and nothing is recorded. At Bournemouth, Dan Godfrey, that barometer of new music in the first quarter of the twentieth century, played two orchestral works (*Suite de Ballet*, 1916 and *Vienna*, 1927) but only one of her several scores for piano and orchestra (the *Suite of Old Time Dances*, when, in 1928, the composer was soloist).

But to return to the First Concerto, I will be found once to have under-estimated this lively score, for years ago I looked at the opening and the dancing tarantella finale and characterised it as 'Mendelssohnian'. It is a lot more than that and the very substantial first movement is lyrical and virtuosic by turns, a lovely romantic score. An extended cadenza, nicely characterised by Samantha Ward, leads to the brief and quietly stated slow movement which the programme note effectively described as rising to 'a radiant poetic intensity'. The 12/8 Allegro finale is soon marked 'Alla Tarantella' and maintains an intoxicating energy. Throughout Samantha Ward projected the solo piano part with poise, though the balance in the acoustic of the Emma Cons Hall does not do the soloist any favours, and the orchestra gave us the flavour of a worthwhile score we will surely hear again.

© Lewis Foreman, October 2012

The Village Coquettes

University of Southampton Music Department and the Nuffield Theatre Nuffield Theatre, University of Southampton, 26 October 2012

The Village Coquettes was first performed at the St James's Theatre on 6 December 1836. It is rare to find such English operas of this vintage exhumed and one assumes that it was probably down to the bicentenary of Charles Dickens, who wrote the libretto but later bitterly regretted the fact. Apparently, when asked if he had a copy of the libretto he replied that "if I knew it was in my house, and if I could not get rid of it in any other way, I would burn the wing of the house where it was". John Hullah wrote the music. He had been introduced to Dickens through Dickens' sister, Fanny, a fellow student at the Royal Academy of Music.

This Southampton University Music Department/Nuffield Theatre production was entitled *Dickens and the Great* Operatic Disaster and used the conceit that it was Dickens directing the final rehearsal of the opera. Fortunately, this extraneous spin hardly interfered with the opera proper. In fact, the opera (or strictly speaking the operatic burletta) achieved a moderate success running for 16 performances according to Eric White in his History of English Opera and later ran in Edinburgh, where some of the music seems to have been lost in a fire. Although the *Theatrical Examiner* panned it, the *Morning Post* and *The Standard* were both quite positive. Generally speaking, Hullah seems to have emerged out of it better than Dickens but after the unsuccessful The Barbers of Bassora he gave up opera for choral composition and education. Dickens never tried his hand at a libretto again.

The plot is dire, as with so many of these English operas. Lucy Benson, flattered by the attention of Squire Norton, has thrown over George Edmonds, while her cousin, Rose, has done the same to John Maddox in favour of Mr Sparkins Flam, a friend of the squire. Flam abducts Lucy, hoping to gain favour with the squire and so get his gambling debts paid off. Meanwhile, the squire realises the problems his attentions have caused and, with the arrest of Flam, all is restored and the two couples go off to be married.

The performance at the Nuffield highlighted one of the major problems of this type of English dialogue opera: do you choose actors who can make best sense of the dialogue but are possibly indifferent singers or singers who are happy in the music but perhaps wooden in the dialogue? The Nuffield, probably because Dickens was the focus, chose the former for the major parts with, I assume, the music department providing the more minor parts and the chorus. They also dispensed with all ensembles so that we were left with solos, but not all of those, and choruses. Part of this might be down to the lost music, but one suspects that it was in order to reduce rehearsal time for what was just a single night's

performance and to restrict the singing to a handful of the company. Matt Devereaux as Squire Norton had the largest part and while fine as an actor was, unfortunately, probably the least successful of the singers, particularly when one remembers that the part had originally been sung by John Braham, the leading English tenor of the time.

The *Standard* thought that Hullah's music sounded a little antiquated in the manner of Shield while the *Theatrical Examiner* criticised it for being in the manner of a foreign school, presumably Italian, the worst insult one could throw at an English composer. In this performance, the music came over as a mixture of styles, as would be expected from a young composer; Hullah was 24 at the time. One could detect echoes of Arne and Dibdin as well as more Italianate sounds. Overall though it was, perhaps unexpectedly, very pleasant with the song 'Autumn Leaves', here sung by a female chorus rather than by George Edmonds, being particularly noteworthy. I also rather liked Rose's song with its verse

"Some folks who have grown old and sour Say love does nothing but annoy. The fact is, they have had their hour, So envy what they can't enjoy"

In general, much of the music was sentimental rather than jolly or comic leaving the comic business to the dialogue, although this might have been a result of the cuts they made.

David Owen Norris accompanied on an 1828 Stodart Patent Compensating Grand Piano. From the furious tuning that was going on before the performance, one had to wonder about the likely quality but in the end both piano and pianist stood up well to the test. Although professional singers might have found more in the music, it was a competent and enjoyable performance all round and a very interesting one for the light it shone on this rare slice of operatic history.

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Coleridge-Taylor: The complete Hiawatha

David Kempster, Lesley-Jane Rogers, Nicholas Hundall Smith, New Millennium Chorus, Northern Chamber Orchestra, Conductor Ian Jones Coronation Hall, Ulverston, 28 July 2012

Performances of the complete Hiawatha are extremely rare so it is great to be able to report on a vibrant opening concert of the 2012 Lake District Summer Music Festival. Conductor Ian Jones had done a remarkable job preparing the enthusiastic New Millennium Chorus of the Cumbrian Choral Initiative so that they produced a well-blended choral tone full of vitality and legato line and with words clearly audible. Cumbrian musicians have long known that the sound of choral groups placed behind the Coro's Proscenium arch struggles to project into the auditorium and the solution in this case proved admirable. Woodwind, brass and percussion were placed on the stage

with the choir and strings on the floor with the singers placed on both sides at 90 degrees to the audience.

The Northern Chamber Orchestra, admirably led by Nicholas Ward, showed their professional qualities with tight ensemble mixed with a richness of orchestral colour and blend that really highlighted Coleridge-Taylor's skilful orchestration. A trio of excellent soloists included David Kempster in a quality performance of the title role ably supported by Lesley Jane Rogers and Nicholas Hundall Smith.

The opportunity to hear the complete Hiawatha was enhanced by the decision to place the complete text on everyone's seat – a wise and welcome move. Whilst one hopes to hear the complete Hiawatha, it is perhaps more likely that choral societies can be encouraged to sing at least one of the parts of the work in a programme that also includes a popular work that will attract a new audience to hear this cornerstone of early twentieth century choral music.

© John Gibbons, December 2012

Central England Ensemble

Ondrej Vrabec (Horn), Conductor Ian Jones Birmingham Town Hall, 21 October 2012

Some months ago, the Midlands media carried a story about the composer Andrew Downes (whose opera Far From the Madding Crowd was reviewed in BMS a few years ago). He had become a paraplegic owing to a NHS mis-diagnosis after a fall and who now has to spend the rest of his life (he is now 62) in a wheelchair. Fortunately he can still compose with the aid of his computer and the most recent result is his Horn Concerto – the main item in a concert from Birmingham's Town Hall on Sunday 21 October. This event was a celebration of the first ten years of the Central England Ensemble (who specialise in performing living composers alongside the classical repertoire) and was given in aid of Paraplegic Sports and sponsored by Irwin Mitchell, Solicitors who specialise in personal injury claims.

The programme started with Walton's Crown Imperial – Anthony Bradbury setting a good pace for this piece. making a grand start to the concert (except that I missed the additional organ part at the end, in which the Town Hall's fine Hill organ would have come into its own). The Ensemble was joined by the brilliant young principal horn of the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Ondrej Vrabec, for the Downes Concerto. Andrew has for many years enjoyed a close and rewarding connection with the Czech Philharmonic, whose horn department has played his Sonatas for 4 and 8 Horns. The Concerto is in three movements: (1) Allegro Vivace started immediately in B flat major with the soloist pitting his opening in dialogue with the orchestral horns. But there is a lot of dialogue throughout the entire work as Downes is fond of using orchestral groups in a chamber-music-like manner. The movement ended in E flat major, but the emotional core of the work is undoubtedly the F minor second movement (Adagio leggiero e religioso). Downes' style in general is very modal in harmonic language and he is fond of quite short motifs which are nevertheless thoroughly developed and the movement, while centred in F minor, surprised us by closing in B flat major. The lively Finale (Allegro e leggiero) is in E flat major and kept the soloist and orchestra (particularly the strings) on their rhythmic toes as there were a lot of subtle time-changes, but Ondrej Vrabec, professional to the core, took it all in his stride. This was a very well received work and the composer acknowledged the applause from this wheelchair in the auditorium. The concert ended with Brahms Second Symphony and I hope that the Central England Ensemble will enjoy another ten years of presenting really approachable and worthwhile contemporary British composers to the public. In addition to performing various works of Andrew Downes over the last ten years, the Ensemble has also championed: Nathan Rose, David Fanshawe, James Langley, David Bradbury, Michael Whitcroft, Gareth Jones, William Southworth, Louis Clark, Guy Woolfenden, Simon Lesley, Stephen Williams, Ivor McGregor, Simon Pratt, Tony Bridgewater, John Robson, Geoff. Cummings-Knight and Richard Francis. Long may this enterprise continue!

© Michael Jones, November 2012

British Orchestral Music in Doncaster

Doncaster has long been renowned for its Schools' Music Services, at least since the days of William Appleby (1910-1973), choir trainer, conductor, speaker on musical topics, broadcaster and Schools' Music organiser. The Service has, down the years, contributed to the volume of British music performance. In recent years it has been going through a torrid time, partly owing to the need of Doncaster Council to saved money, partly for other reasons but it was still giving concerts around Christmas 2012.

One of these was by the Beechfield Youth Orchestra – Doncaster's main student orchestra and, being still Jubilee year, its programme was all English and was ambitious. This was especially true of the first item – Bax's *Tintagel*, that elaborately scored and often stormy seascape. This sounded a carefully rehearsed account under David Tonkin's baton, realising much of the complex orchestral writing. I cannot recall a previous Doncaster performance.

It was followed by George Butterworth's *Banks of Green Willow*, a pastoral contrast to the Bax and, in triumphal acclamation of the Jubilee or perhaps of the Music Service's triumph over adversity, Walton's *Crown Imperial*. These items were conducted by Mr Tonkin's co-conductor Charlotte Pinder and exemplified the same virtues of careful preparation. A short concert at barely thirty-five minutes – but, as my tailor used to remark, "Never mind the length, feel the quality!"

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CD & Book Reviews

Divine Art: DDA21217 (2.CD Set) Antony Hopkins – A Portrait: Music by Antony Hopkins, Andrew Plant, David Matthews, David Dubery, Anthony Gilbert, Gordon Crosse, David Ellis, Joseph Phibbs and Elis Pehkonen; Various Artists

"I am not beginning this programme [about Alban Berg's Violin Concerto] talking about a 12-note-row, but about the death of a girl". Thus started one of Antony Hopkins many Talking About Music programmes. No doubt he wound up many a more academically-minded school music-master in the process, but of course he was right—it was the picture of the music that mattered to Antony Hopkins more than what mere technical analysis could convey. It was this individual and imaginative approach which made Talking about Music appeal to so many listeners; but this was only a small part of Antony Hopkins' life, which embraced the theatre, radio drama and documentary and musical education in so many forms.

In celebration of such a multi-faceted life, Divine Art has produced this superb 2-CD tribute to Antony Hopkins for his 90th Birthday. CD l is largely given over to Antony's serious works: his Sonata for Viola and Piano of 1945. I think this to be the finest piece on the first disc – striking and dramatic in its mood and thematically well worked and developed, with a beautiful slow second movement (Ground). It was written for Jean Stewart, (a friend of Vaughan Williams who had also had a sonata written for her by Julius Harrison). Hopkins wrote three Piano Sonatas, of which only 1 and 3 were published (by Chester's) and we hear no.3 complete, played by Philip Fowke, and the Rondo from Sonata no.2 played by Michael Hampton. In both works one can hear echoes of Michael Tippett (in the Rondo) and Hindemith in Sonata 3. More individual, perhaps is Hopkins' 'Partita' for solo violin, played by Paul Barritt and the disc ends with some light and humorous French Folksongs for soprano, recorder and piano, sung by Lesley-Jane Rogers, with John Turner (recorder) and Janet Simpson at the piano.

CD 2 features *Eight Tributes to Antony Hopkins* (2011) which is a group of short pieces by Andrew Plant, David Matthews, David Dubery, Anthony Gilbert, Gordon Crosse, David Ellis, Joseph Phibbs and Elis Pehkonen, all for recorder, with some also including soprano and piano. Songs were also such a substantial part of Antony Hopkins' creative life and we have a sizeable selection here, mostly sung by Lesley-Jane Rogers, but James Gilchrist contributes 4 songs to the Cantata 'A Humble Song to the Birds' of 1945.

There are additional bonuses: Antony himself reads three of his own poems: *Good Luck Jack Nicklaus* is a spoof on *Good King Wenceslas* and golfing; *String Quartet* is amusing for its description of the relationship between

players in a long-standing ensemble. But the prize must go to *Charlie's Revenge*, the story of the embittered front-desk principal cello and his practical joke on an unfortunate contralto – ladies had better watch their dress-trains in future! A real surprise, however are excerpts from the 1953 recording of *Three's Company*, and two excerpts from the 1960 recording of *Johnny the Priest*. During the late 1970's I played the piano for several performances of *Three's Company*, and so to hear the interview scene ("*Take a letter, Miss Honey*") brought back instant memories! Also beautifully sung are the two excerpts from the 1960 recording of *Johnny the Priest*. Surely it is time to see again modern productions of so many these more intimate opera works which enjoyed such a vogue in the 1950's and 60's.

This 2-CD tribute is a wonderful celebration of Antony Hopkins's life and music. Special thanks must go to John Turner for masterminding the project, and to 300 individuals and organisations who are listed as subscribers (magnifying glass useful here!). This shows the great range of admiration for such an accomplished all-round musical personality – perhaps with that lingering thought that he was <u>not</u> properly treated by the BBC all those years ago. But it is Hopkins' music which is being celebrated here and which deserves to be heard more frequently in the concert hall. As Antony himself said in an interview in 1992: "If there's hope for Parry now, maybe there's hope for the Hopkins Sonatas!"

© Michael Jones, October 2012

Toccata Classics: TOCC 0145 Percy Sherwood: Complete Works for Cello and Piano Joseph Spooner (Cello), David Owen Norris (Piano)

Back in 1990, during a paper I delivered at the London conference organised by BMS called *Lost and Only Sometimes Found*, I referred to Percy Sherwood in the context of having acquired some unpublished MSS from a private collection; little thinking that 22 years later Percy Sherwood's name and music would re-surface again. Dutton have recently released Sherwood's *Second Piano Concerto*, and now there is also this excellently-presented CD from Toccata Classics (champions extraordinaire of the neglected composer) of all Sherwood's Cello works – 2 Sonatas and sets of *Drei Stücke* Op.14 and *5 Kleine Stücke für Cello und Pianoforte*, all not surprisingly receiving their premiere recording.

The German titles give a clue to Sherwood's background: he was Anglo-German, born in Dresden in 1866 to an English father (a lecturing at the University) and a German mother, Auguste Koch. Percy studied with Felix Draeseke at Dresden's Königlisches Conservatorium, graduating in 1889 and becoming a Professor there in 1893. During this period Dresden was to prove a very popular place for English students of sufficient means and it has now been established that Sherwood was a very popular and much-admired teacher, particularly with English female students, one of which, Edith Hempseed

was the recipient of the MSS to which I referred earlier. With Sherwood's many English connections his family visited England regularly, and it was during a holiday in the summer of 1914 that World War I was declared and they had to remain here for the duration. After 1918, however, they opted to remain, selling up their imposing mansion Villa Sherwood in Dresden. Percy Sherwood died in London in 1939, which was fortuitous for posterity as his entire library of MSS and published works (all with German publishers) had travelled with him and thus escaped the destruction of Dresden in 1945. Since 1978 this archive has been kept at the Bodleian Library in Oxford. For Sherwood, however, his stay in England cannot be said to be that fortuitous, in that his late-19th century Germanic style was, to all intents and purposes, obsolete alongside Holst, Vaughan Williams, Bliss and Walton – one wonders what Percy must have thought of Walton's Facade and the works of Constant Lambert and Bernard Van Dieren et al!

Time, however, cleans out prejudices and we can now explore Sherwood's music for what it is – not just very well-written, but so full of fire and character and with individuality all its own. Music of this kind needs such a cellist of character to bring it to life and here we are particularly fortunate that Joseph Spooner responds to this music with total dedication and passionate commitment, combined with a distinctive cello sound and personality which brings out all the inherent qualities. He is partnered by the ever-supportive and imaginative David Owen Norris in the fine acoustics of Southampton University, using a vintage (if occasionally slightly overworked) Mason and Hamlin grand of the period. A particular bonus is the fulsome booklet note from Joseph, which amounts to a mini-biography in itself (I have never seen so many footnotes - 55!). An excellent bargain and a brilliant introduction to Percy Sherwood's rediscovery.

Postlude: So what happened to the six Sherwood MSS that came into my possession in 1989? They now reside with their siblings in the Bodleian collection!

© Michael Jones, October 2012

Somm: SOMMCD 247

Elgar: The Longed-for Light – Music in Wartime

Somm: SOMMCD 0117 In London Town Somm: SOMMCD 0119

Part-songs by Delius & Ireland

Somm: SOMMCD 0115

Piano Music by John Ireland Vo. 4

Various Artists

These four Somm CDs all display some of the many byways, as opposed to the highways, of their respective English composers. Elgar's *Music in Wartime* deserves the attention of listeners because it covers an important era in our history and shows Elgar's reaction to it. There is no major work here. The late chamber works came at the end of this period as did, even later, the sorrowful Cello Concerto. Instead we hear Elgar in inspiriting form, supporting the war effort in practical ways. Perhaps the

most personal work is *Sospiri* for strings, harp and organ, the most outward is probably *Carillon*, and the most serious is *Sursum Corda*. With a total time of 75 minutes these largely occasional pieces give much pleasure under the direction of John Wilson conducting the BBC Concert Orchestra with the support of Simon Callow, speaker and Susan Gritton, soprano and also give an insight into Elgar's public manner, beyond the famous *Pomp and Circumstance Marches*.

Somm commemorates the polar opposite of the Great War with a new CD *In London Town* to celebrate the London 2012 Olympics. This is a collection of familiar (*Knightsbridge March* by Eric Coates) and unfamiliar (*London Fantasia* by Clive Richardson) works by, mainly, English composers illustrating aspects of our capital city. The experienced Iain Sutherland conducts the Philharmonic Concert Orchestra with style and panache. The fifteen works embrace all moods and scenes of London life and give a lot of pleasure.

The last two CD's are of a more specialist kind and will offer interest to listeners who enjoy the more important works by the two represented composers, Delius and Ireland. A CD of *Partsongs* by both composers may sound a little focused for everyday listening but they show both composers capable of commanding our attention; Delius by his usual mixture of sweet sounds and Ireland through his serious display of choral expertise. The two songs without words by Delius are close to the atmospheric equivalent orchestral works and gorgeous they sound too. Ireland's fifteen pieces combine the serious (*Twilight Night*) with the more extravert (*Laughing Song*). All are sung with dedication and poise by the Birmingham Conservatoire Chamber choir under Paul Spicer.

Mark Bebbington's piano recital on my last Somm CD, Volume 4 of the Piano Music by John Ireland, is for specialist listeners really. Most jog along in moderato time, miniatures in form and substance, with not much distinction, despite coming from throughout the composer's career. This CD lacks a big work that reminds us of Ireland's genius for a special kind of English sound. I am afraid the longest piece, *The Epic March*, arranged for piano by the composer soon after its Prom premiere in 1942 sounds as silly on the piano as does *Finlandia* by Sibelius.

© Edward Clark, October 2012

British Music Society: BMS438CD The Complete Folksongs arranged by E.J. Moeran Adrian Thompson (tenor), Marcus Farnsworth (baritone), John Talbot (piano)

At the Aldeburgh Festival in June 1948, a song recital was given by members of the English Opera Group, which included folksong arrangements by Britten, Moeran & Vaughan Williams; plus songs by Ethel Smythe and Roger Quilter. Most of VW's hundred or so folksongs are arranged for choirs (which would sell more copies than solo versions!), with exception of the *Six*

English Folksongs for voice and piano of 1935, so it was probably these that were performed in the concert. In fact most British composers chose the choral option, so Moeran and Britten were an exception to the general rule – along with Charles Stanford's and Herbert Hughes' settings of Irish songs.

The families of Britten (Suffolk) and Moeran (Norfolk) were friendly in the mid-30s – there is a photo of both sunbathing on the beach at Lowestoft in 1934; and Moeran and his mother were at the premiere of Britten's Our Hunting Fathers at Norwich in 1936, where they were joined for lunch by VW and the composer. It may even have been Moeran's suggestion that Britten should study at the Royal College of Music with his old teacher, John Ireland; and Britten turned to Moeran for advice about folksongs used in the film, Around the Village Green in 1936. Moeran also sprang to Britten's defence when he left England for the USA during the world war, after an attack on him in the Musical Times by the editor, Harvey Grace, in 1941, writing: "Provided that he keeps his artistic integrity, I consider that he is doing his duty by remaining where he is. The death of Butterworth in 1915 was a tragedy, the nature of which no country with any pretensions to the preservation of culture and a respect for art can afford a recurrence". Moeran's nobility in this is shown by the fact that he did not like much of Britten's music by then!

His collecting of folksongs started in 1915, just before he embarked for France as a Lieutenant to serve as a despatch rider in the Great War. This seems to have been triggered by being unable to get into St Paul's Cathedral for a concert of one of Bach's Passions early in1914; whereupon he went down reluctantly to Queen's Hall for a concert of British music, and heard VW's Norfolk *Rhapsody* – based on folk music from the area where Moeran had spent most of his life. He said that VW's music "seemed to breathe the very spirit of the English countryside" and the next day went to buy a copy of Cecil Sharp's Folk Songs from Somerset. He resumed collecting in 1921, while studying with John Ireland, and published his first set of Six Folksongs from Norfolk in 1924. Two of these songs were used in subsequent compositions: Lonely Waters for small orchestra, and The Shooting of his Dear, which formed the main theme of the first movement of his symphony in G minor. The Norfolk set begins with a song in 5/4 time, Down by the Riverside, and Moeran evokes the mood of a calm June day perfectly in his piano introduction as a prelude to this love story. Lonely Waters is a variant of the song VW put into his Penguin Book of English Folksongs, though here the modal tune starts in the minor, and ends in the major. The third slow song, The Shooting of his Dear is in the Dorian mode, and tells the sad tale of a young fowler who accidentally shoots his sweetheart, mistaking her for a swan. Three fast songs alternate with these, and are set more ruggedly, befitting topics such as naval warfare.

The next group of seven songs is a collection of individual ones written at various times, starting with

what is one of his earliest compositions (dated April 1915), written in the style of a folksong but to a poem by Fox Smith about minesweepers, The North Sea Ground. This group includes the well-known *High Germany*. though with a less familiar tune; plus a couple of gentle love-stories and three songs with choruses joined by the Weybridge Male Voice Choir. Moeran's next designated set was the Six Suffolk Folksongs, published in 1932, which he dedicated to Roger Quilter, whose family home was at Bawdsey Hall in the county. The set begins with, Nutting Time, a teasing tale of a fair young maiden, and a brisk young farmer, in the county of Kent (the home of cob-nuts), which also usefully rhymes with went! All the songs but one are about love in various aspects, and Moeran is faithful to the modality of the melodies, which sometimes appear to begin in one key and end in another; and also to the metre of the song, so that bar-lengths often change, as in *Cupid's Garden*, which has a few 5/4 bars. In *The Isle of Cloy*, we have a tragic tale of disappointed love, bringing some of Moeran's darkest chromatic harmonies. The set concludes with a lightweight song, A Seaman's Life.

After the war, Moeran spent more time in Ireland, where his father was born and his final collection, Songs from County Kerry, was published only after his sudden death in 1950 at Kenmare. What is striking about these is the increase of decoration in the vocal lines, and the flexibility of metre, so that the time signature can change in almost every bar – even varying between simple and compound time. This is especially true in the first song, The Dawning of the Day, whose unusual subject is the cold and dark of winter for one who has to be at work before dawn. Those who know Ivor Gurney's songs will notice that the second song, My Love Passed Me By, opens with a nearly identical figure to The Penny Whistle, from his Lights Out set. Then follows the most dramatic song, The Murder of Father Hanratty, which Moeran sets in an Aeolian C minor, although it could easily have been done in E flat major, containing, as it does, some typical Irish plagal cadences. The Roving Dingle Boy is the only song in the major mode, telling the story of a sailor who returns home to marry his sweetheart; while *The Lost* Lover, whose melody switches between the Dorian and Aeolian modes tells of another sailor, who is drowned, and lamented by his sweetheart. The Tinker's Daughter is a light-hearted romp in the Dorian mode, with a nonsense chorus of "with my gumshilla an a goushilla an me gashilla like a Leary O" and a nice musical joke in verse 5, where the piano goes into 2/4, while the singer stays in 6/8. The final song, Kitty, I am in Love with You, is also a happy Jig in the minor, though, as the 6th note of the scale is not used in the melody, one cannot tell exactly which mode is suitable.

Moeran always takes care to vary the harmonies to match changing moods in the verses and these are done in subtle colours, compared with those of Britten, who prefers the bolder shades of a showman. The prevailing minor modes of the Kerry songs match Moeran's later works, such as the sonata, and the concerto for cello. The two singers,

Marcus Farnsworth and Adrian Thompson are crystal clear in their diction and bring constantly varied expression, giving vitality to the songs; and we owe a great debt to the pianist, John Talbot, who not only plays the piano superbly, but has rescued from near oblivion many fine works of Moeran through publication and recording, which had fallen out of print; thus reminding us of the sterling worth of this under-appreciated composer.

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<u>Britten in Pictures</u> ed. Lucy Walker, Boydell & Brewer (Woodbridge, 2012). 288 pp., 80 colour & 320 b&w illustrations

In 1978, Donald Mitchell and John Evans published *Benjamin Britten – Pictures from a Life 1913–1976* (Faber & Faber), a most important pictorial documentary, assessing in 440 mostly b/w illustrations Britten and his times in a most lively way. Today the book (long out of print) still is a comprehensive accompaniment to the biographical and documentary publications issued by both Faber and Boydell.

Now, on the occasion of Britten's centenary, a new publication is due. Complementary to the 1978 publication, it not only offers much hitherto unpublished details but also supplies more up-to-date insights into Britten's biography, personality and context than any usual pictorial volume would do. Chris Grogan, Director of Collections and Heritage of the Britten-Pears Foundation, offers an enlightening introduction to both Britten and his relationship to others. Of course it is not intended to present too many details – since the pictures convey their own story. There are portraits and snapshots from 1915 to Britten's death, including a delightful miniature painting of him as a young child, photographs of a young and relaxed Britten in the US in 1939-40 and later portraits by George Rodger, Brian Seed and Nigel Luckhurst. There are rich occasional glimpses of Britten bathing, playing tennis, and enjoying the company of family and friends. In particular, the family photographs are an important addition to the better known pictures taken while preparing opera productions or concert performances but also there are collected splendid new pictures (e.g. a photograph from the founding of the English Opera Group around Christmas 1946 at 3 Oxford Square, London, or beautiful shots taken by Erich Auerbach on the occasion of rehearsals of the War Requiem at Coventry Cathedral). Sometimes the captions to the illustrations are somewhat brief (especially in comparison to the 1978 publication), with the aim not to overload the pages with information; though in the introduction the decision to avoid any kind of caption proves to be maybe not the very best of approaches. Editor Lucy Walker, Director of Learning and Development at the Britten-Pears Foundation and designer Simon Loxley have found the right combination of content and space to present the illustrations to their best advantage; in some other places the amount of information presented is more "condensed", sometimes in simple tables stating the important events of a period, sometimes by compiling up to seven illustrations on one page with no accompanying text. The overall layout is occasionally not entirely balanced and the size of illustrations varies in part considerably – some of them required some damage-repair – but the general impression is one of being close on perfection. For anyone interested in Britten an essential buy, with much to discover.

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<u>Lutyens, Maconchy, Williams and Twentieth-Century</u> British Music: A Blest Trio of Sirens

Rhiannon Mathias, Ashgate (Farnham/Burlington (Vt) 2012), 311 pp., music exx.

One wouldn't immediately call Elisabeth Lutyens, Elizabeth Maconchy or Grace Williams a "Blest Trio of Sirens", referring of course to Milton's famous Ode set to music by Hubert Parry. Particularly because Milton refers to "Sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse" and neither Williams's nor Maconchy's best known compositions are vocal music. The book's subtitle rather refers to the qualities these three composers have in common, compositional abilities of the highest degree, though in somewhat different areas (and, of course, it is not surprising that the first music example in the book is from Maconchy's Sirens' Song). In fact, Rhiannon Mathias, daughter of composer William Mathias and Director of the William Mathias Music Centre and a Visiting Fellow in Music at Bangor University, offers much more.

Crucial to the success of the three composers was their works being performed at the Macnaughten-Lemare Concerts in 1931-7 – this important institution which long deserves a publication of its own (Britten's *Sinfonietta*, Op. 1 and Tippett's *First String Quartet* were premiered there, too). All three of them had studied at the Royal College of Music and abroad, in Prague, Vienna and Paris respectively and it is a pity that Mathias doesn't put more emphasis on these early formative years. For the composers' biographies, this book would not be the first choice (try Malcolm Boyd's *Grace Williams*, 1980, or Harries & Harries' A *Pilgrim Soul: The Life and Work of Elisabeth Lutyens*, 1989 – for Elizabeth Maconchy we are still waiting for a biography).

In the following years and decades all three composers achieved success where previous generations of women composers not been – they became noted for their advanced and highly prolific style. Mathias here separates the storylines on the single composers and explores several of their works individually, for each composer in two large chapters. It is interesting to see that she succeeds in giving equal space to all three of the composers' oeuvres, and the insight she gives on both the individual works and their creators is impressive. This is a most important book for the understanding of the achievements of Lutyens, Maconchy and Williams and Mathias doesn't exaggerate when she writes in her introduction that "this book forms an essential part of any reading of twentieth-century British music" (p. 6). And

although some of the works referred to necessarily receive only brief treatment, it is important to have an assessment of the three composers' pivotal works, in a readable and accessible presentation, with close on a hundred music examples by way of illustration. Wherever the book opens, one finds important aspects of either of the composers, often offering deep insights into the creations.

The result is a most impressive array of information, both on Twentieth Century music in Britain and on the three composers themselves. That illustrations are missing is a bit disappointing (the portraits of the three ladies on the dust-jacket being the only pictorial hint as to with whom we are dealing here), here it would have been good if Ashgate had encouraged the author or provided this material themselves. Otherwise the book is flawless, with important and helpful appendices and a full index.

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Festival Reports

William Alwyn Festival

4-7 October 2012

Festivals devoted to composers come in various forms. Some festivals, mainly abroad, have single composer themes; for instance, Wagner, Sibelius and Puccini. Here in the UK composer festivals generally share music of the named composer with works from relevant eras. So we enjoy Britten (at Aldeburgh), Arnold (at Northampton) and, most recently, Alwyn (also sharing Aldeburgh with nearby locations including Blythburgh, his home in later life) to name three. The Second William Alwyn Festival was held in early October with a subtitle *Celebrating the musical legacy of William Alwyn 1905-1985*. There were, indeed, plenty of fellow British composers played alongside Alwyn, many of whom he knew.

I attended four events, the first of which drew attention to one of Alwyn's finest overall achievements that of writing film music. For twenty or so years Alwyn followed two distinct paths in composition; he wrote dozens of film scores alongside serious concert works. He eventually forsook the former for the latter in the early 1960's and continued to build a reputation for being one of the most important and certainly enjoyable 20th century British composers.

There were two films screened at Aldeburgh's lovely, delightfully old fashioned cinema; the war-time (1941) *Green Girdle* with a through composed twelve minute score (with a memorable tune) and the now famous *The History of Mr Polly* (1948), produced and staring John Mills. Ian Johnson, author of *William Alwyn, The Art of Film Music* gave an introductory talk and left the audience with a full understanding of Alwyn's genius for character portrayal in music. In post-war British film music only Malcolm Arnold rivals Alwyn for such mastery of the film medium.

In the evening came a gloriously eclectic concert *A* Suffolk Garland – vocal and instrumental music with Suffolk connections. The now veteran (but still in good voice) James Bowman, countertenor, shared the stage with John Turner, doyen of the recorder family, in lots of interesting works with piano (Andrew Plant) or lute (Dorothy Linell) accompaniment. Music ranging from the late English Renaissance to today, introduced works by the earliest, John Dowland (b. 1563) to the youngest, Joseph Phibbs (b.1974). All were beautifully performed with great care for the appropriate settings, the highlights being those by Dowland and Britten. Of the modern settings, that by John Le Grove, *Insectarium* deserves mention for its combination of a poetic and moving response to the various texts.

Saturday bought forth two concerts; an afternoon piano recital by the young Ashley Wass whose reputation for playing neglected 20th century British piano repertoire is growing apace, and the evening orchestral concert featuring two world premieres. Wass's programme featured Alwyn - Prelude and Fugue Formed on an *Indian Scale*, followed by four short works ranging from 1928 to 1951 and his last big solo work for piano, Movements (1961). This last work displayed different moods, shades, colours and emotions from the pen of a master. Other works were by Bax (an early, chromatic Dream in Exile) (1916), mature but rare Delius, Three Preludes (1922-23); condensed and well-wrought complexities from Rawsthorne in his *Sonatina* (1949); Bridge's late and distinctly modernist, *In Autumn*, (1924) and, for me, the find of the concert, William Baines, (whose dates sadly speak for themselves – 1899-1922), writing his exploratory, exciting Seven Preludes (1919). What contribution to our national culture would Baines have made if he had lived a normal span of life? A huge one I venture to guess. Wass guided us in this disparate repertoire, tenderly at times though playing with real force when needed. He is strongly committed to the music of the Elgar-inspired English musical revival and his superb technique allows the audience to also take full note of the quality that still lies more than half hidden from our ears in most concert recitals. Bravo.

My last concert was at Blythburgh Church; at its peak during the great wool-exporting era it became known as "The Cathedral of the Marshes". Alwyn lived nearby and is buried in the church graveyard. The Prometheus Orchestra, under very experienced guidance of founder Edmond Fivet, performed works by Alwyn, David Matthews, Christopher Wright, Elis Pehkonen and that great composer of Scottish folk songs, Beethoven! Alwyn's *Suite of Scottish Dances* rivals Arnold's much better known *Scottish Dances* and his beautiful *Pastoral Fantasia* for Viola and Strings was performed by Sarah-Jane Bradley who knows this work intimately through playing and recording it over many years.

The (brand new) world premiere was *Romanza* Op 119 for violin and string Orchestra by David Matthews. This was commissioned and played by Madeleine Mitchell in her inimitable and utterly musical way. Despite its

"warm" title Matthews does not seek nostalgia in his sound world. It seems to me there is more kinship with Ravel's *La Valse* than, say, Vaughan Williams' *The Lark Ascending* in portraying a darker, less ethereal vision of our modern landscape whether it be a literal one or in the mind. By introducing a waltz melody in the middle section he evokes a moment of happiness before returning to the deeper feelings heard at the opening. This new *Romanza* can be judged a vibrant and beautiful addition to the very surprisingly small repertoire for violin and strings in English music.

For a contrasted view we heard, to quote the composer, Christopher Wright's own words "A shameless piece of old fashioned Englishness, understated, reserved and pastoral" in his short but effective Idyll. Despite it s backward glance at seemingly happier times this contained legitimate sentiment rather than sentimentality. The other, belated world premiere was the incidental music Alwyn wrote for the film Green Girdle (shown earlier in the Festival). It would have been nice to have seen the film with this live performance, as the old soundtrack was poor. But we heard that gorgeous tune again!

Twilight and Evening Bell by Elis Pehkonen has a quasi religious tone supported by the addition of medieval bells and various recorders, played by John Turner. It is, perhaps, a kindred work to Cantus in memory of Benjamin Britten by Arvo Pärt. It made a fine impression in this setting. Beethoven's Eighth Symphony was dispatched with urgency and some panache by Fivet and his lively orchestra.

Onwards, in the future, I hope, to the beautiful Maltings at Snape where, with continued dedication and financial support, we may look forward to hearing Alwyn's biggest and best contributions to our national musical catalogue, his symphonies and concertos.

© Edward Clark, October 2012

London Song Festival 2012

Robert Hugill and Wendy Hiscocks report on four of the concerts from this year's festival at St. Paul's Church, Convent Garden:

"Comedy Songs"

Laura Wolk-Lenwanowicz (soprano); Grant Doyle (baritone); Nigel Foster (piano)

Lighter, comic songs are frequently tricky for trained singers to bring off. Many were written for actors, rather than highly developed voices and need careful and special handling. So Nigel Foster was giving his singers a challenge by launching this year's London Song Festival with a programme of English and American Comedy Songs. His programme mixed English and American songs from the 20th and 21st centuries in thematic groups. Both singers sang the entire programme from memory and neither wore conventional formal concert gear. Both are Australian though living in the UK. The concert opened with a duet, *Comedy Tonight* from Sondheim's *A*

Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, each singer displayed a good feel for the words. Doyle in particular had a nice way of singing on the edge of his voice which works just right in this style of music; vocal over production can spoil things.

Throughout the programme both Doyle and Wolk-Lenwanowicz showed that they knew when to sing and when not to sing. We didn't have copies of the words in the programme and thankfully, didn't need them, both singers had excellent diction. But more than that, both knew how to use the words impressively and vividly. The singers, and sometimes Foster, provided short linking introductions to the songs, creating a nice feeling of intimacy with the audience. A church is not an ideal venue for such a programme, but they made it work well.

Wolk-Lenwanowicz sang Sheldon Hannick's *The Shape of Things* from his 1956 Off-Broadway production, *The Littlest Review*. This was a quite conventionally written song but one where the sting was in the words. Wolk-Lenwanowicz delivered it nicely dead-pan and got things just right. Tom Lehrer's work is something I've been familiar with and loved since the 1970's, well before he became well known in this country. Doyle proved something of a natural in *I got it from Agnes;* Lehrer's words count for the most and the songs need just the simplest hint of melody. Ado Annie's song *I cain't say no* from Rogers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* is far more familiar, but still a delight. In this style of music Wolk-Lenwanowicz is very much a soubrette rather than a belter and she was delightfully entertaining in this song.

Doyle returned with more Tom Lehrer, The Masochism Tango, this time singing the song far more than I had heard before and making it work very well indeed, complete with a very RP English accent. The two joined together for The Saga of Jenny from Kurt Weill and Ira Gershwin's *Lady in the Dark*. This was nicely done, rather straight and suitably funny. But I can't help feeling that this song goes better if you give it something. If you listen to Gertrude Lawrence's live recording of the song you realise that it needs an element of 'bump and grind' to come off really well. Next came a pair of rather "nearer the edge" English songs. Doyle got the suggestiveness and camp just right in Jeremy Nicholas's Camping Out. There was certainly no suggestiveness in Dillie Keane's *Dogging*, everything was uproariously direct, and Wolk-Lenwanowicz was brilliantly outrageous here.

Wolk-Lenwanowicz was subtler in Donald Swann's *The Passionate Trencherwoman*, a delightful re-working of a 17th century style English song. And Doyle combined beautiful singing with brilliant story telling in Cole Porter's *The Tale of the Oyster* from *Fifty Million Frenchmen*. Part one ended with Wolk-Lenwanowicz giving a brilliant rendition of William Bolcom's *Lime Jello Marshmallo Cottage Cheese Surprise*. Written, I think, for his wife Joan Morris and more recently taken up by Sarah Walker. It is hardly a song, more a recitation,

and Wolk-Lenwanowicz got things just right and brought the house down.

Part two opened with the prologue to Act 2 of Noel Coward's *Operetta*. I have to confess that I don't know this piece and the performance, as a duet, didn't quite convince me of the naturalness of the performance but then Coward is notoriously difficult to bring off. Wolk-Lenwanowicz was enjoyably back in Broadway territory for *Dance: Ten; Looks: Three* from *A Chorus Line*, a song which I know better by its tag line, *Tits and Ass*. Then joined by Doyle for a well judged, and not too over the top, rendition of *Anything you can do* from Irving Berlin's *Annie get Your Gun*.

I'm afraid that I remain uncertain about Flanders and Swann's Guide to Britten. There was something a little too smugly clever about the song, and there is a nasty undercurrent with jokes about Peter Pears and piles. But I can't fault Grant Doyle, whose performance captured the brilliance of what satire and wit the song has. Foster clearly relished the opportunity to gallop through quotation from many of Britten's works, and do fog horn impressions! Another Jeremy Nicholas Song, this time sung by Wolk-Lenwanowicz with nice comic timing but perhaps the singer needed to sound a little more careworn (and may be just a tad more common)? Janine Tesori's The Girl in 14G was entirely new to me. Tesori is one of the current writers in American musical theatre; her credits include Shrek The Musical. This song turns on the singer having two noisy neighbours one an opera singer. the other a jazz singer. This gave Wolk-Lenwanowicz the chance to display some gloriously bad opera singing and be brilliantly split personality, flipping from one style to the other. A complete tour de force.

Doyle's consummate performance in Where is the life that late I led? from Cole Porter's Kiss me Kate, made me long for someone to snap him up for a full stage performance of this lovely piece. Beautifully sung, with just the right combination of words and music and a good feel for the shape and rhythms of the piece. Zina Goldrich's *Taylor the Latte Boy* and *Taylor's Response* is a pair of songs about a young woman who falls in love with a boy from the coffee shop and his response when she turns into a stalker. Goldrich writes a song which sounds generically familiar, evoking the work of female singer songwriters. But by writing a pair of songs and developing the second, sung by Doyle, where the girl's behaviour is seen is scary; they produced something which was both entertaining and surprising. A lovely find. Finally we had John Du Prez and Eric Idle's *The* Song that Goes Like This from Spamalot, the brilliant send-up of all the big finish songs in shows, brilliantly realised.

Throughout the programme Nigel Foster accompanied with subtlety and brilliance. The songs all varied in style enormously and he was adept at capturing the essence of what was needed. Both singers showed that they really understood how to put over this style of song and gave us a brilliant and entertaining evening.

Ruby Hughes; Jonathan McGovern; Nigel Foster (piano)

Admittedly there was no flag waving or "Land of Hope and Glory" but nevertheless this was an evening the London Song Festival could be proud of. Now in its 6th year, the London Song Festival, founded by Nigel Foster aims to "halt the decline of the song recital". A mixture of showcase concerts and masterclasses run throughout October and November. The showcase concerts feature young professional singers and the workshops are aimed at GCSE and A level students as well as singers from Music College.

The concert was billed as being built around the theme of "Songs of Wandering and of the Night", but both "wandering" and "night" were very inventively interpreted. The singers were Ruby Hughes and Jonathan McGovern. Ruby studied at Chetham's, Guildhall and Munich and is currently a New Generation Artist at BBC Radio 3. Jonathan studied at King's College London, the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal Academy Opera and is a Britten-Pears Young artist and an Associate artist with Classical Opera. Both have shining credentials, having won prizes galore before settling into recital and opera, and both have sung with the ENO and the BBC Philharmonic. The accompanist was Nigel Foster himself.

But the Festival is not just about music – it aims to give the poet "equal prominence to the composer" – and in this tonight's performance excelled. The libretto were clearly available (with translation) in the programme. However this was unnecessary because both soloists had very clear diction and never once sacrificed pronunciation for the sake of hitting a note. Also because they were both dramatic singers, even without the translations the sentiment and emotion were perfectly clear.

That said, the programme notes were delightful, with little asides describing the circumstances under which the songs where written, who loved and lost whom, and squabbles between composer and poet. The evening entertainment began with four songs by Schubert (1797-1828). Der Wanderer an den Mond sung by Ruby was delightful and possibly the only song about travel. With An Den Mond, we had the start of darker themes. Sung by Jonathan it was delicately controlled and underpowered at the start moving into dramatic tension perfectly controlled by singer and accompanist together. Wanderers Nachtlied continued the mournful themes but Auf Der Brücke returned to a sprightlier tune, although turning to loss at the end.

Ruby sang the next set – *Cinq Poèmes de Baudelaire* by Debussy (1862-1918). The programme notes explain that because of the volume these poems are taken from Baudelaire was "*prosecuted for offending public decency*". Debussy wrote these romantic songs a mere twenty years after Baudelaire's death and when he was

most influenced by Wagner. It may be compositional preference creeping in, but I felt that these songs suited Ruby's voice better than the Schubert - there was more scope for her to play with the words and melody.

The sexual tension of Baudelaire became briefly bawdier with Ireland's (1879-1962) *Songs of a Wayfarer* sung by Jonathan. There were some lovely compositional touches, the bird trill for 'linnet' in *Memory* for example. But the mood became more mournful again with *English May*, and the rainy accompaniment and poignant silences in *I Was Not Sorrowful*. These were all very well done and impassioned. However the final piece in the set did not seem to fit. It was clunky and hymn-like. A quick look in the programme notes soon explained why – Ireland had been forced to write it by his publisher, and the words were by James Vila Blake, a pastor of the American Unitarian Church of Quincy.

The second half began with more Schubert. *Die Junge Nonne* was perfectly performed by Ruby with the right amount of passion and contrition all underscored by the storm and bells on the piano and *Erlkönig* sung by Jonathan dramatically rising above the storm. I was not sure how to place the *Three Songs to Words by Trevor Blakemore* composed by William Alwyn (1905-1985). This was presumably the modern, lesser known composer, twist to the evening, but these songs were written in 1940. However while *Nocturne* had pretty English Art Song accompaniment it had none of the atmosphere, and *Harvest* did not quite work, with the melody sounding more like a TV theme tune.

The evening ended on safer ground with Mahler (1861-1911) and *Lieder Eines Fahrenden Gesellen* (Songs of a Wayfarer) – words also by Mahler. But it was also a return to sadness, sorrowful sleeping, passionate romantic rejection, and death. Although again beautifully performed. *Die Zwei Blauen Augen* was a dejected choice to end on. It begins in a funereal way but even though it picks up a little in the last verse, and clears emotionally with 'All was well again', this seemed not to be enough to lift the mood of the audience.

St Pauls, Covent Garden, also known as the Actor's Church, was a perfect venue for the festival, small enough to be filled but not so small that the singers overpowered the space. Christmas was already in attendance with the crib in one corner and the lights from Covent Garden shining through the stained glass window. The festival ethos of 'accessibility' also shone through - the evening had the friendliness of an amateur concert but with the music of a professional event. I know it was the end of this year's 'journey' but I was left wishing that there had been more of a celebration ending – maybe not the flag waving, but a cheery encore, rather than misery and broken hearts. So broken hearted we have to wait for next year – maybe waving a little flag inside for the song.

© Robert Hugill, November 2012

"Delius and his World"

Yvonne Kenny (soprano); Nigel Foster (piano)

The appearance of Australian soprano Yvonne Kenny, for the recital 'Delius and his World' on November 21, 2012 was a good draw for the Festival and it was encouraging to see the church comfortably full. Foster presented a carefully researched programme that highlighted the range of international influences shaping Delius's music. This was supplemented by a beautifully presented programme giving details of not only the composers but the writers of the texts as well which was most welcome. Kenny's voice was in fine form throughout the recital with every register a treat to listen to. Her low notes have a rich velvety quality and the high notes resonate with brilliant overtones. Her command of rhythm was music to my ears. It was both expressive and alive with a wonderful springiness that is so rare to find in interpreters of art song. Many have such a flat sound and a limited range of vocal colour. Kenny's voice served her sound dramatic sense and ability to tell a story which I consider essential elements for a first-class song recital. Foster is a fine accompanist with a sensitive touch that is never harsh and is always supportive of the singer. A bolder approach to the longer musical line and to contrasting sections that shape the dramatic architecture of the song accompaniments are well within his ability and I would like to encourage him to explore these to an even greater degree.

Songs that stay in the memory once the recital is over are always a subjective selection and will differ depending on the listener, but I appreciated the opportunity to compare Delius and Debussy songs side by side and could observe in more detail just how close Delius's affinity was with the French composer. It is always fascinating to hear how two composers approach the same text and Foster's choice of Delius and Fauré settings of Verlaine's poem Prison (Le ciel est, par-dessus le toit) revealed their different dramatic sense. I have to admit that I personally preferred the Fauré (it was one of the song highlights in the overall programme) but that is because I like clear architecture and dramatic pacing in music and I find these qualities in Fauré. (I confess I am a great admirer of his songs.) My favourite Delius song in the programme was Love's Philosophy which closed the recital, and Kenny's and Foster's combined artistry soared to new heights in a beautiful and inspired performance of Quilter's Fair House of Joy.

"John Ireland and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor"

Sylvie Bedouelle (mezzo-soprano); Jeremy Huw Williams (baritone); Nigel Foster (piano)

The second recital I attended on November 23 was devoted to music by John Ireland and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. It takes courage to programme lesser known composers and I admire Nigel Foster's decision to do so, especially when it usually results in a dwindling of audience numbers. This was not helped by a clash with

another John Ireland event the same evening elsewhere. Those who attended were treated to some rarely heard music sung by French mezzo-soprano Sylvie Bedouelle and baritone Jeremy Huw Williams. I know very little about Coleridge-Taylor's music and am aware that followers of Ireland and Coleridge-Taylor may not merge in personal taste. I merely see these composers as two very different people who naturally produce very different music. I could appreciate a sense of beauty and simplicity in Coleridge-Taylor's work, and at the same time enjoy exploring the complexity of Ireland's music. I will admit that Ireland has a superior touch with form and I did find Coleridge-Taylor's tendency to repeat a line of text at the end of a stanza or section too predictable after a couple of songs.

Both singers captured the lyrical qualities of Coleridge-Taylor and admirably navigated the challenging twists of Ireland's daringly modern melodies and harmonies. Bedouelle is a young singer with an attractive voice that is totally assured in its pitching of the notes but it was Huw Williams's maturity as an artist that brought an even greater intimacy and insight to the text and the music. I know Huw Williams is perfectly able to deliver even more having heard him sing in the Festival in a previous year but his performance on Friday night with Foster was still truly impressive knowing that he had stepped in at a few days' notice to replace the original singer and had barely any time for rehearsal.

Nigel Foster's decision to relocate the Festival this year to St. Paul's in Covent Garden was advantageous in terms of location but the noise from the market square and the underpowered sound of the small-model Young Chang piano need some addressing. Raising the piano lid from half stick in the first recital to full-stick in the second recital definitely helped but I can't help feeling Foster's efforts deserve better still. Wouldn't it be wonderful if a company such as Steinway would offer sponsorship by loaning a grand piano for next year's Festival?

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Session Reports

Arnell's Symphonies Without Numbers

Lewis Foreman reports from a Dutton Epoch recording session in Glasgow where Martin Yates and the RSNO recorded Richard Arnell's Sinfonia, Dagenham Symphony, Landscape and Figures and Overture '1940'

On 20 and 21 August 2012 the Dutton Epoch recording team with conductor Martin Yates were in Glasgow with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra at the Royal Concert Hall to record another Richard Arnell programme. The success of the Dutton series of Arnell orchestral music has been remarkable and I have been proud to be associated with it. From time to time a significant composer is re-established by a recording series, and that has certainly happened with Arnell. Shortly before he died the composer said to me on the

telephone that he was delighted with the Dutton recordings and said "When Dutton bring them out as a boxed set I will know that I have made it". Well, he died before we reached the boxed set, but Martin Yates and Dutton have not yet finished with Arnell's orchestral music.

Arnell studied at the Royal College of Music between 1935 and 1939, where his composition teacher was the composer John Ireland, to whom he dedicated an early (and as yet unplayed) violin concerto. He married very young, in December 1938, and with his wife in the summer of 1939 he visited New York, ostensibly for the World Fair. They arrived on 1 June 1939 with £300 each and were given six month visitor's visas. Like many other British tourists, he did not anticipate the outbreak of war, and in September they found there were no return passages. The British Consul in New York recommended not returning unless there was an overriding reason to do so, and so, in the early 1940s Arnell's career as a composer unexpectedly took off in the USA, and a lot more successfully than it might have done in England. It is a curious paradox that while the general attitude of

It is a curious paradox that while the general attitude of young composers in the late 1930s was to reject the concept of symphony, most of that generation went on to write them. Arnell himself remembered his "very strongly held musical beliefs in 1939 . . . that symphonies were archaic. Orchestral works should be short, preferably in one movement. They should not contain untuned percussion." The reality was very different. From the beginning Arnell was constantly preoccupied by the symphony as a form. Arnell confessed: "I enjoy thinking architecturally. Musicians all do although they might not understand if you put it to them just like that. Music is a sound within a space, so the space and its shape and texture is an intimate part of the sound."

Although Arnell's symphonies 1-6 have been issued by Dutton, Martin Yates also reconstructed (from the composer's verbal instructions) the fragments that Arnell left of the Seventh, the *Mandela Symphony*, which turned out to be a rewarding and triumphally successful coupling for Dutton's recording of Stanley Bates's *Fourth Symphony*. However, there are still various other Arnell works that he counted as symphonic that are not part of the numbered canon and we have yet to explore. We were in Glasgow to start this process.

We need to remember that soon after the *Fifth Symphony* in the mid-1950s, came the symphonic score for the ballet *The Angels* of 1957 (recorded by the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Martin Yates on Dutton Epoch CDLX 7208), surely Arnell's greatest ballet score, and a work to be considered beside his symphonies. It is, as the composer remarked, "in fact, a symphony". At the beginning of the score Arnell has written: "The Angels is an abstract, symphonically structured work. The form is intricate and is as carefully considered as if the work had been designed for the concert hall. It is, in fact, a symphony." At the sessions for the Dutton recording, in the control room we were soon jokingly referring to it as "Symphony No.5½", but this underlines the fact it is a

powerful score squarely in the idiom of Symphonies Nos.4 and 5. The middle movement, the *Roundelay*, once familiar from a Pye EP conducted by the composer, is in fact the quasi-symphonic middle movement of a three-movement work.

With these thoughts in mind we were intrigued by what was long thought a might-have-been, the lost score of his student Sinfonia completed at the RCM in 1938, probably his most significant student work. Although the Sinfonia appeared to be lost, in 2009 when Jessie Page, Arnell's first daughter, arrived from the USA to attend his funeral she announced that she had the score, which had come to light on the death of her mother in Lincoln City, Nebraska, the previous year. She soon passed it to Martin Yates seeking a performance, which, edited by Martin, took place on 21 August. Martin Yates points out: "The date of the work would have made Arnell 21 years old at the time of writing it. It was almost definitely one of the handful of works he took with him to New York in 1939. There are no conductor's markings on the score and there is no record of it ever having been played."

The original ink-written full score is dedicated to 'A.A.', Arnell's first wife, Charlotte Augusta Cronin-Lowe ('Arlie Arnell'). Its concern with contemporary events becomes apparent when we find it prefaced with a verse from W. H. Auden's only recently written 'Spain 1937':

"Yesterday the belief in the absolute value of Greek, The fall of the curtain upon the death of a hero; Yesterday the prayer to the sunset And the adoration of madmen but today the struggle."

Martin Yates was, of course, a pupil of Arnell, and he comments: "Arnell misquotes Auden's word Greek as Greece, which implies that he was quoting this piece of the poem from memory. His knowledge and memory of poetry was legendary to those who knew him."

The *Sinfonia* is in four movements. The score is dated July 5 – Dec 5 [1938] and it is signed 'R.A.S. Arnell'. It takes the form of a substantial first movement followed by two deeply felt shorter meditations, returning to the big canvas in the shadowed but ultimately striving finale. So what is it like? It is a terrific piece, but not quite in the stylistic idiom of the later symphonies – though the bold treatment of instrumental lines and the evolving melodies are clearly by Arnell. The *Sinfonia* is prefaced by a slow introduction (Lento) in which we immediately find that the student Arnell was primarily in thrall to the music and orchestral textures of Sibelius, rather than Hindemith who soon would become his stylistic departing-point. The use of the orchestra in blocks of colour – strings, brass, woodwind, the colour emphasised by soft tympani rolls, often sustained through crescendo and decrescendo and with the build-up of repeated patterns or slowly evolving motifs into wide-spanning themes. A brief pause and the Allegro Vivace of the music proper is launched, Arnell quickly evolving an aspiring lyrical theme. In the 1930s it was impossible to ignore the influence of Walton's then new Symphony in B-flat minor on his contemporaries and Arnell succumbed, most notably at the climax of his first

movement. All this was thrilling to hear when rehearsed and performed over the span of a day by such a fine orchestra. It was a quite wonderful teach-in on the *Sinfonia*, which is gripping and enchanting by turns, powerful climaxes, lovely woodwind solos.

Arnell's middle movements are essentially two slow

mediations, the first without the heavy brass, the second scored for just oboe and strings. In the first, Lento, Arnell's intense, at times tortured contrapuntal writing for the strings and the singing woodwind lines are articulated by gradually increasing punctuation of running semiquavers for unison woodwind. The delightful third movement *Andante sostenuto* is a pastoral interlude for oboe and strings running some 4½ minutes. Here the shifting counterpoint of the strings – divisi throughout – provides a constant shadowy chromatic tapestry from which the oboe's song constantly takes motifs. In a brief climactic section the violins soar above the stave, before the music returns to the opening music and the violas counterpoint with the oboe at the close. Here Alun Darbyshire, the RSNO's Guest Principal Oboe was superb, providing a quiet highlight of the whole score. In the Finale, *Allegro vivace*, the full orchestra returns. This is a more elusive evocation than the first movement but at the end (Tempo più animato) Arnell sets in motion repeated notes (A) in the strings and leaves us with a brief coda of restless incident and punchy climactic fortissimo chords. At the recording session the RSNO's principal timpanist, Martin Gibson, asked if the timpani part in the last movement was authentic, because he felt it was not idiomatic. He was assured it is what Arnell wrote but as he explained afterwards – "I must have played more Arnell timpani parts than anyone in the country – and it is clear that in this work Arnell was developing his technique and the requirement for pedal timps in the finale would have been outside the resources of anyone at the RCM in the 1930s."

In America, the Arnells first stayed with friends, and then rented a succession of apartments. They had sufficient funds to last for several months but eventually they had to support themselves. Making a living from music in New York was at first difficult, but he found a variety of casual musical jobs, and was later employed by the BBC North American service. Eventually Arnell found himself part of the Greenwich Village scene and, now with a wife and child, he remained in New York throughout the War. Arnell composed voluminously while in New York. The celebrated Galimir String Quartet gave his First String Quartet at the New York Public Library, and his music was heard at Carnegie Hall and elsewhere. His Divertimento No 2 was broadcast by Columbia in November 1940 and his Classical Variations in C for strings was broadcast in December 1941 from station WQXR, New York. Another champion, Leon Barzin, conducted his overture *The New Age* at Carnegie Hall, and later his Violin Concerto in One Movement, Op. 9. Some of these have already been explored in the Dutton series.

During January 1940 Arnell worked on a powerful and extended symphonic movement which he designated Overture 1940, Op 6, and dedicated it to the psychiatrist Dr Jule Eisenbud, celebrated for his interest in parapsychology, whom Arnell had presumably met at Columbia University. Needing a filler for Dutton's programme (a CD can run up to 79-minutes) I had noticed that a set of parts for this otherwise forgotten score in the Fleisher Library, Philadelphia, and they agreed to hire them for the session. It turns out to be a big-boned symphonic score (Maestoso – Adagio – Lento *non troppo* – Tempo I – *Broad* – *Accel* – Tempo I – *Meno* mosso) running some 13 minutes – although not a symphony I am sure that if Arnell had announced it as 'symphony in one movement' in an age when such things were all the rage he would probably have had more success with what turns out to be a striking but until now unplayed score.

Arnell followed the *Sinfonia* with a still unheard *Symphony for Strings*, written in 1939, and during his early American years Arnell tried various ways of addressing the symphonic imperative under another name, and he wrote the *Sinfonia Quasi Variazione* (1941), *Fantasia for orchestra* (1941), Sonata for chamber orchestra (1941), and the *Symphonic Suite – six episodes for orchestra*, finally completed in 1943. However, none of these found a champion and only the first achieved a performance. Soon followed his First Symphony which was quickly taken up by Bernard Herrmann, where in contrast to the *Sinfonia*, he embraced the neo-classical climate of the times and had some success.

The conductor Sir Thomas Beecham, then touring in the USA, played three of Arnell's wartime works, giving the first performances of others after the war. First came the *Sinfonia quasi variazioni*, Op. 13, by the New York City Symphony Orchestra in March 1942. Arnell responded by dedicating his First Symphony to Beecham, who gave its first public performance at Town Hall, New York, in May 1944. Before that, Beecham had conducted Arnell's *Divertimento No.2* at the Museum of Modern Art, but it would only be after Arnell returned to London in 1947 that Beecham took him up in a whole-hearted way, with many performances.

Arnell returned to the UK in 1947 and quickly became established as a leading composer of the day. In 1952 came the *Dagenham Symphony*, actually the precomposed soundtrack for a film. The film is *Opus 65*, a documentary commissioned by the Ford motor company celebrating their Dagenham works, and variously referred to as 'Symphonic Study', and, on the score, a 'Suite'. Similarly to Beecham's then recent film-recording of Brian Easdale's ballet music *The Red Shoes*, the music was written and recorded first and the film shot to it. The resulting 'Symphonic Study' was announced as in three movements.

A viewing of the film by the Dutton team early on quickly established it should be added to the list of works awaiting recording. Although the film underlined how

integrated the music seems to be with the images on the screen, the music was immediately engaging on its own account. Readers may be interested to know that what we see on screen celebrates the Ford motor industry, from the arrival of coal at the company's Thames-side wharf to the export of finished cars. 'Fashioning raw material', 'Machinery components' and 'Final assembly' are in fact the three sections into which the film divides and in the recorded suite from the film they are subdivided. At the outset of each, come glimpses of the London Symphony Orchestra playing the music, drawing an analogy between a great orchestra at work and skilled technicians at work on a new car.

The surviving suite is in six movements: *Prelude*, followed by The Furnace, The Hook, Conflict, Monorail, and ending with the Assembly March, a triumphal quick march celebrating in the same way as Bliss in *Things to Come* style the triumphant newness of repeated factory processes, in gorgeously sharp focus black and white. Arnell gives us two march tunes which we might now hear as more reminiscent of Malcolm Arnold than the composer himself. The march subsequently found independent existence when Arnell needed a piece for the National Youth Orchestra in 1953. The complete score had a public performance in Helsinki in 1954, but otherwise never caught on, and when the film faded Arnell's score did so too. The suite gives us an excellent idea of what went on. Arnell uses short piano solos, played on screen by himself (a matinee-idol in Saville Row double breasted suit) to introduce the sequences. The film is striking for its lack of spoken commentary on the processes in the factory and for the quasiphilosophical ideas the combination of image and music suggests about aspiration and conflict.

Arnell's first four numbered symphonies were written in the space of five years between 1943 and 1948. The Fourth was very well received by contemporary audiences in the late 1940s, though it did not reach London until 1953. It was in this climate that he produced both the Dagenham Symphony film music and three years later Landscape and Figures, Op 78. The latter was commissioned for Beecham and the Edinburgh Festival (the score is actually headed 'To Sir Thomas Beecham'). Dated 25 June 1956, it was first performed by Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra at the Edinburgh Festival in August 1956 and at London's Royal Festival Hall on 24 Nov 1956. Despite a favourable reception, it had few subsequent performances, and probably most of us came to know it from a broadcast by the BBC Northern Orchestra conducted by Stanford Robinson, with Vincent Billington as linking pianist (Catherine Edwards was the RSNO's pianist), when the BBC producer chose to compromise its musical unity by naming each section before it was played (for example: "the fourth is a bleak portrait in stone – the Quarry").

Landscape consists of eight short pieces with enigmatic titles, each with a short piano introduction. One critic referred to it as 'a set of variations on two themes'. In his own programme notes Arnell pointed out that the music

had its origins in visual imagery. Arnell kept regular notebooks about his works in progress and in one he jots down: "Landscapes with Figures . . . a symphonic poem . . . several imagined and unpainted pictures in contemporary but not abstract style". At one stage he envisaged commissioning actual pictures (quickly rejected) and actually persuaded Stephen Spender to write a linking text, presumably never completed. Reviewing the first two performances the critics equated it with Mussorsky's Pictures from an Exhibition, one writing "with a poet's visions and hallucinations in place of Hartman's pictures and with connecting interludes from a solo piano in place of Mussorgsky's promenades".

The first piece, *The City* was originally conceived as *Escape from the City*, Arnell noting Francis Bacon as a possible artist to illustrate it. There followed *The Plains* (the jottings envisaging "*Plains*... *fields*... *farms*... *no people*") where we are back in the world of *The Land*. The music of these first two movements is notable for its lyricism, positive character and descriptive power, indeed each could reasonably become the title music for a film.

The third movement, *Gargoyle*, is a mercurial scherzo, the timpani much in evidence. The spooky fourth movement is *The Quarry* notable for its use of muted brass. Among Arnell's notes for this work there is a movement title Forest and Lovers which he didn't use. With Ivon Hitchens as the envisaged artist, it seems possible that this actually materialised as the fifth movement Flower-Piece, a sunny world of lightly drawn woodwind. In contrast the extended sixth movement, a combative Self Portrait, is announced by a vigorous piano cadenza. Quite what Arnell might have been intending in the seventh movement, *Heirloom*, is difficult to say. It has a thoughtful piano introduction and presents a delicately drawn tune presented by the woodwind in the manner of the lightest and most charming of pas-de-deux. In his notes Arnell wrote at the end "Return to Warmth" and this movement certainly achieves that. The final Apotheosis which is subtitled "a primitive" is a vigorous knock-about orchestral picture with a delicious off-thebeat tune, ending affirmatively.

"Landscape and Figures should soon find a home in the ballet theatre" wrote one critic after the first London performance and one can only agree that there such lyrical and immediately communicative music would indeed have been (indeed still might be) supremely effective.

This was a fascinating recording session, delightful music given life by an enthusiastic and sympathetic conductor and a top-line orchestra on good form. It is good to know that there is still more Arnell to explore on a subsequent occasion, but in the meantime I strongly recommend these otherwise forgotten scores.

© Lewis Foreman, November 2012

On The Horizon

Concerts

Saturday 19 January 2013 at 7.30pm

St Peter's Church, St Albans, AL1 3HG

St Albans Chamber Choir conducted by John Gibbons

with Tom Winpenny (organ)

Michael Solomon Williams (tenor) with the Wigram

Quartet and Susie Arbeid (piano)

"Benjamin Britten - Centenary Celebrations"

Britten: *Rejoice in the Lamb* George Lloyd: *Requiem*

Vaughan Williams: On Wenlock Edge

Tickets £13 (**£1** child/student); Tel **07570 454744** or email <u>tickets@stalbanschamberchoir.org.uk</u> or online at

www.allaboutstalbans.com

Thursday 28 February 2013 St. John's, Smith Square, London

Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin)

Orchestra of St. Paul's conducted by Ben Palmer Stanford: Second Violin Concerto (London Première)

Moeran: Sinfonietta
Britten: Plymouth Town
Bridge: Vignettes de Danse
For tickets see www.sjss.org.uk

Sunday 10 March 2013 at 2.45pm

Assembly Hall – Worthing, West Sussex, BN11 1HQ Worthing Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Gibbons

Vaughan Williams: Symphony No. 5 in D major

(works by Rossini and Dvorak)

Saturday 6 April 2013 at 7.30pm

New Concert Hall - Worms, Germany

Wormser Kantorei, St Albans Chamber Choir, Ealing Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Gibbons

Vaughan Williams: Sea Symphony

Saturday 18 May 2013 at 7.30pm

St Barnabas Church, Pitshanger Lane, Ealing

Ealing Orchestra conducted by John Gibbons and Efi

Christodoulou (violin)

Pirates of the Caribbean, Out of Africa

Robert Still: Violin Concerto - World Premiere

Tchaikovsky: Symphony No. 6

Saturday 13 July 2013 at 7.30pm

St Barnabas Church, Pitshanger Lane, Ealing

Ealing Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Gibbons

George Lloyd: *Symphony No. 9*Gershwin: *Piano Concerto*

Mussorgsky/Ravel: Pictures at an Exhibition

Festivals

2013 LEAMINGTON MUSIC FESTIVAL WEEKEND

Royal Pump Rooms Learnington Spa 3-7 May British Music in the Britten Centenary Year

Friday 3 May

7:30: Sacconi String Quartet and David Campbell (clarinet); Bridge *Three Noveletten*, Britten *String Quartet No 2*, Bliss *Clarinet Quintet*

Saturday 4 May

12 noon: Coull String Quartet and Anna Tilbrook (piano); Simpson String Quartet No 10 "For Peace", Bridge Piano Quintet

2:30: County Music Service concert; British music played by students

7:30: London Soloists Ensemble, Lorraine McAslan, Sarah-Jane Bradley, Karine Georgian, Anthony Pike, John Lenehan; Bridge *Phantasie for Piano Quartet in F# minor*, Bax *Legend* for viola and piano, Walton Two Pieces, Ireland *Clarinet Trio in D*, Moeran *Bank Holiday*, Vaughan Williams *Six Studies in English Folk Song*, Bliss *Pastoral for clarinet and piano*, Stanford *Piano Quartet No 2* (Concert supported by Hugh Beale)

Sunday 5 May

12 noon: Mark Bebbington (piano); Ireland *London Pieces, Amberley Wild Brooks*, Bridge *Dramatic Fantasia*, Richard Causton *Non mi comporto male*, Britten *Holiday Diary*

3:00: "Talk on Britten and Ireland" – Howard Skempton and Bruce Phillips

7:30: Fitzwilliam String Quartet, Anna Tilbrook (piano), Nicholas Mulroy (tenor); Britten String Quartet No 3, Gurney Ludlow and Teme, Vaughan Williams On Wenlock Edge

Monday 6 May

11:00: Organ Recital at All Saints Church – Greg Morris (Temple Church London); British music to be programmed

12:30: Roderick Williams (baritone), Joseph Middleton (piano); Vaughan Williams *Three Whitman Songs*, Finzi Four Songs from *Before and After Summer*, Ireland Three Songs from *The Land of Lost Content*, Quilter Four Songs from *Seven Elizabethan Lyrics*, Bridge *Sonnet 43* and *We went a'riding*, Britten Folksong arrangements

7:30: Carducci String Quartet, Nicholas Daniels (oboe), Roderick Williams (baritone); Britten *Phantasy Quartet*, Finzi *On Footpath and Stile*, Bliss *Oboe Quintet*

Tuesday 7 May

12 noon: Hepplewhite Piano Trio, Jack McNeill (clarinet), David Quigley (piano); Howells *Clarinet Sonata*, Howard Skempton *duos*, Ireland *Piano Trio No 3*

7:30: Leonore Piano Trio plus friends Thomas Dunn and Laura Samuel (tbc); Vaughan Williams *The Lark*

Ascending, Elgar Cello Concerto (composer's version for piano and cello), Elgar Piano Quintet
Concert supported by Presto Classical and Kay Pechal

CD Releases

RED PRIEST RE-RELEASES "SHINE AND SHADE" – 20TH-CENTURY ENGLISH RECORDER MUSIC

Norman Fulton: Scottish Suite; Edmund Rubbra: Meditazione Sopra Coeurs Désolés; York Bowen: Sonata opus 121; Lennox Berkeley: Sonatina; Edward Gregson: Three Matisse Impressions; Stephen Dodgson: Shine and Shade; Donald Swann: Rhapsody from Within; Piers Adams (recorder); Julian Rhodes (piano)

Sheet Music

E.J. Moeran – Lonely Waters

Fand Music Press is delighted to present John Mitchell's highly idiomatic piano solo arrangement of E. J. Moeran's *Lonely Waters*: a 'must' for lovers of Moeran's distinctive music. *Lonely Waters* is one of a pair of short orchestral pieces (the other being *Whythorne's Shadow*) that Moeran published in 1931 as *Two Pieces for Small Orchestra*. Both pieces are based on existing melodies: *Lonely Waters* on a folksong and *Whythorne's Shadow* on an Elizabethan tune.

Unusually, *Lonely Waters* has a choice of endings, one of which involves a singer providing a sung motto to the piece. The new piano arrangement preserves this pair of alternative endings. Indeed, since the vocal line is mostly unaccompanied, it might even be performed by the pianist.

E. J. Moeran wrote of the piece: "This work is based on a fragment of song still frequently to be heard on Saturday nights at certain inns in the Broads district of East Norfolk. Whenever possible, it is preferable to perform the piece in the version with a voice part; but it should be understood that the singer need not be a professional one, in fact anybody with a clear and natural manner of singing may sing the verse."

Lonely Waters is presented as a substantial booklet with a full-colour cover, and is available for £9.95 from Fand Music Press (www.fandmusic.com tel. 01730 267341).

Moeran Centenary Edition Revised

John Talbot has edited for Thames Publishing, in thirteen volumes, the collected Solo Piano Music, Solo Songs, Solo Folksong Arrangements, and Choral Music of the Anglo-Irish composer **E.J. Moeran (1894-1950)**. First published between 1994 and 2003, the Centenary Edition has now been reissued in a revised version dated December 2011. Comprehensive Editorial Notes, containing much background information not readily available elsewhere, are included throughout. All volumes are distributed in the UK by Music Sales. Full

details, including Contents List and Order Numbers, are available on his website: www.john-talbot.co.uk

E.J. Moeran - The North Sea Ground

An early and previously unpublished song by E.J. Moeran *The North Sea Ground* has been edited by Ian Maxwell and published by Novello. Like the Moeran Centenary Edition above, it is distributed in the UK by Music Sales through their online store Music Room:

http://www.musicroom.com/se/id_no/01063075/details.html
.html
.The story of the discovery and investigation of this manuscript is still available at Musicweb-International:

http://www.musicweb-

<u>international.com/classrev/2010/Feb10/North_Sea_Ground.htm</u>

More Moeran News!

Barry Marsh writes:

There is a good deal of news to share.

Friday 9 November: BBC RADIO 4 gave a repeat broadcast of Martyn Wade's play *Moeran's Last Symphony*

Sunday 9 December: The Brighton Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Martin Yates gave the second public performance of Martin's realisation of the Second Symphony, at the Dome, Brighton

Guy Johnston performed the Cello Concerto at Cadogan Hall with the English Schools Orchestra on 4 November. Read the review

http://www.classicalsource.com/db control/db concert r eview.php?id=10594. Guy recorded the concerto for NAXOS last February with the Ulster Orchestra conducted by JoAnn Falletta. Release early 2013.

News from Naxos – JoAnn Falletta and the Ulster Orchestra have set down the First and Second Rhapsodies, In the Mountain Country and the Piano Rhapsody, for release in early 2013.

The Sonata for Two Violins has recently been performed, to great acclaim, at the Presteigne Festival and subsequently on tour by Retorica duo Harriet Mackenzie and Philippa Mo. NMC Records has released their recording. http://www.nmcrec.co.uk/recording/retorica-english-violin-duos

Duncan Honeybourne tells me that his two CD set of the complete Piano Music will be released early next year. Duncan now has his own website at http://www.duncanhoneybourne.com/

And news from Em Marshall-Luck of a performance of the Sinfonietta:

"We are delighted and proud to announce another forthcoming and very special St John's Smith Square event – on 28 February 2013 the EMF will present the London première of Stanford's Second Violin Concerto. The Orchestra of St Paul's and conductor Ben Palmer will be joined by soloist Rupert Marshall-Luck (who gave the world première performance of the work earlier this year) in a programme that also features Moeran's *Sinfonietta*,

Britten's *Plymouth Town* and Bridge's *Vignettes de danse*. Tickets will be on sale from 26th November from http://www.sjss.org.uk/. I do hope to see you at this immensely exciting evening."

I am trying to set up a new Moeran Facebook page but am still learning the ropes! Do please try and visit it. I will update it with news as and when it becomes available.

https://www.facebook.com/pages/Ernest-John-Jack-Moeran/156830111061781?ref=hl

Composer Anniversaries

During 2013, the following composers have anniversaries. Any BMS member with an interest in one of more of these is invited to write something for publication in *BMS News* later in the year:

Benjamin Britten – Centenary of birth in 1913 Ronald Center – Centenary of birth in 1913 Cedric Thorpe Davie – Centenary of birth in 1913 Kenneth Leighton – 25th Anniversary of death in 1988 George Lloyd – Centenary of birth in 1913 George A. Macfarren – 200th Anniversary of birth in 1813 Thomas Merritt – 150th Anniversary of birth in 1863 Henry Thomas Smart – 200th Anniversary of birth in 1863 Arthur Somervell – 150th Anniversary of birth in 1863 Richard R. Terry – 75th Anniversary of death in 1938

Correspondence Received

from Mr Thomas Rookes: (edited)

Philip Scowcroft [in *News 135*] gave an interesting perspective of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor in regard to other British composers who straddle the line between serious and light music. I have the ClassicO recording of his Symphony in A Minor which I suspect was inspired by the Dvorak New World Symphony. While being very tuneful it lacks the sense of form I would expect from a Dvorak work although this may be due to a lack of maturity as Coleridge-Taylor was no more than 21 when he wrote it. However I was very impressed by his Violin Concerto which was recently broadcast on Radio 3 when he was Composer of the Week. This was the last piece he wrote. It probably helped that he was a violinist but to my mind it has more to say than some other such works in the repertoire.

Yours sincerely

Thomas E Rookes

Help Sought

If anybody is able to help regarding the following enquiries, please contact the requester directly:

From Andrew King andrewking@chethams.com

I am trying to locate copies of the following scores by Sir Granville Bantock: Vocal Score & Full Score of: The Pearl of Iran - A Dramatic Opera in One Act; Vocal Score and Full Score of: The Seal Woman - A Celtic Folk Opera in One Act; Vocal Score and Full Score of: Sweet Brier - Musical Comedy-Drama in Three Acts (Published by Willcocks, c. 1898?). (VS of the Pearl of Iran and the Seal Woman are in libraries but I am prepared to purchase reasonably priced second-hand copies.) Also if anyone has details of any performances/recordings of these works, I should be very grateful to know.

Chetham's School of Music Long Millgate Manchester, M3 1SB, Tel: 0161 834 9644

From Sylvia Junge sylviajunge@hotmail.com

Allan Gray was a composer who wrote several film scores for the films of Powell and Pressburger, notably 'The Life and Death of Colonel Blimp' recently restored and rereleased. There is some information about Allan Gray on the web, even a short interview with his wife. His archive however is missing. One of the curators at the BFI is anxious to trace it for their and other Archives' records. My interest is that my father-in-law, Alfred Junge was the set designer for Powell's films and I am a musician myself.

From Pamela Blevins pblevins@erols.com

In 1886 Elgar arranged the /Petite Reine/ by "Victor Béraud" for violin and piano. "Béraud" was actually G. Frank Blackbourne who was apparently from Worcestershire and born around 1840. Can anyone provide more information about him? I am writing notes for a CD that includes the Elgar arrangement of the /Petite Reine/ and would appreciate any help.

From Ann Gregory ann_gregory@hotmail.co.uk

I am a member of our local village History Group and we know that Ethel Harraden, married to Frank Glover lived in our village. We also know that she and her brother were composers. Can you enlighten me how I can obtain a recording of her music.

From Peter Brien Petebrien@care4free.net

I'm a cellist & writer of programme notes in Belper, Derbyshire and have to write some notes about Bax's Suite for Piano of 1945 *On the name of Gabriel Faure.* I can write about the man himself but I'm really struggling to find out much (anything, actually!) about the piece. He is too recent for free scores from IMSLP, there is no commercial recording of it and no-one seems to have recorded it on You-tube. I could buy the sheet music, but it costs £20 & my piano playing isn't up to it! Can you suggest where I can find out about it? Why did he write it? Who for? What was his fascination with Faure? How does the music relate to Faure?

110 Marsh Lane, Belper, Derbyshire tel: 01773 821768.

From Niki Bland kapitolpromotion@btconnect.com

Tel: 00 44 (0) 1423 712544, Mobile: 07976 908546.

I'm hoping that you may be able to help me to source photos of Percy Fletcher and Cyril Jenkins, or to point me in the direction of those who might be able to let me publish them in the next edition of our magazine. If so, perhaps you would be kind enough to email or contact me. *Brass Band World* - the leading monthly magazine in the international brass market

In Brief

John Ella

Update on the Leicester-born musician John Ella (1802-1888) & family.

http://www.leicestershirevillages.com/leicester/gallery.html?user=11653&scope=leicestershire

Competitions

The English Poetry & Song Society Diamond Jubilee Competition 2012

The EPSS recently announced the results of its Diamond Jubilee Competition. Two of the selected songs were by BMS members Brian Daubney and Robert Hugill and the committee sends its congratulations to them:

We had a total of 21 songs for our Diamond Jubilee Competition, which brought the highest degree of agreement between our judges – Sarah Leonard, Stephen Varcoe and Raymond Warren – than ever before, who decided to award the honours as follows: in 1st place is *North Ship* (Larkin) by Jolyon Laycock; and 2nd prize (in a close finish) goes to *Bee Dance* (Carol Ann Duffy) by Janet Oates. In 3rd place is *The Fox* by Brian Daubney; and in 4th place is *For David on his Birthday* by Robert Hugill.

The four songs were included in the EPSS Diamond Jubilee Concert that took place in the Colston Hall, Bristol on Friday, 12 October 2012. The concert also featured songs by the most recent Masters of the Royal Music, folk-song arrangements by EJ Moeran and Benjamin Britten, together with popular songs by Ivor Novello and Noel Coward.

Books

British Composer Profiles, 3rd Edition, by Gerald Leach, revised and edited by Ian Graham-Jones, ISBN 978-1-8705-3699-8, 250pp (British Music Society, 2012)

British Composer Profiles is priced £10/US\$16.50 to BMS members and £12.50 to non members plus p&p (within the UK £2.50, Europe airmail £6 – other destinations by airmail £10/US\$16.50. Please send your order with cheque/payment in £ Sterling on a UK account in favour of 'The British Music Society', US\$ cheques are also acceptable in favour of 'S. C. Trowell', at 7 Tudor Gardens, Upminster, Essex, RM14 3DE, UK. Telephone +44 (0) 1708 224795 or e-mail sct.bms1943@eldy.org

Payment by credit card is possible by ordering the book through www.amazon.co.uk. For payment in other currencies, please contact the Treasurer.

Lennox Berkeley and Friends: Writings, Letters and Interviews, edited by PETER DICKINSON

This book is a major source of information about one of the most influential British composers of the mid-twentieth century and the musicians he knew. Berkeley was an elegant writer and it is fascinating to read his first-hand memories of composers such as Ravel, Poulenc, Stravinsky and Britten. The book also contains interviews with Berkeley's colleagues, friends and family. These include performers such as Julian Bream and Norman Del Mar; composers Nicholas Maw and Malcolm Williamson; the composer's eldest son Michael, the composer and broadcaster, and Lady Berkeley.

£,45.00, October 2012, 978 1 84383 785 5, 32 b/w illus.; 344pp, 23.4 x 15.6 cm, HB, Boydell Press

The following two publications are due to high demand now available in paperback:

The British Piano Sonata, 1870-1945, by LISA HARDY

British composers were preoccupied with Germanic principles of sonata writing, despite also being influenced by late romantic music, French impressionism, Russian nationalism, Scriabin, British folk music, African-American music and neo-classicism. This study offers detailed commentary on key works, revealing influences and techniques and demonstrating attitudes towards the genre; the reception history of the piano sonata is also discussed. Interviews, including one with Tippett; Catalogue of sonatas; Discography.

£,19.99, December 2012 (first published in 2001), 978 1 84383 798 5, 276pp, 23.4 × 15.6 cm, PB, Boydell Press

Lionel Tertis: The First Great Virtuoso of the Viola, by JOHN WHITE

This updated paperback edition tells how Tertis rose from humble beginnings to become 'the father of the modern viola'. It explores in detail his long and distinguished career, persuading composers to write works for the viola, arranging existing works for the instrument, editing and performing, and teaching and coaching, notably at the Royal Academy of Music.

£,16.99, December 2012(first published in 2006), 978 1 84383 790 9, 40 b/w illus.; 456pp, 23.4 x 15.6 cm, PB, Boydell Press

Members Discount Offers

NOTE! Following increases in postal charges and other price adjustments, there has been a general alteration to the prices

MEMBERS' DISCOUNT OFFERS - Other label CDs Offer 1) DUTTON - LYRITA - NIMBUS etc.

We are able to offer members -

Nimbus 5000 series/Lyrita/Saydisc/Amon Ra £11-50

Nimbus 7000 series/Quartz £8-75

Dutton CDLX £9-25 Dutton CDLF £5-35

FOR THESE OFFERS ONLY THE MINIMUM ORDER IS 2 (Two) CDs. ALSO THIS IS AN OPEN OFFER. HOWEVER, PLEASE ALLOW 21 DAYS FOR DELIVERY (to allow for my possible absence, other delays etc.). Delivery should be within a week or so however.

Offer 2) Usual Labels Offer. <u>CLOSING DATE FOR</u> <u>THIS OFFER:</u> 14 February 2013 (Should you wish to

order a minimum of 10 CDs from the Select list of labels, or 4 CDs from the Priory list this deadline does not apply).

Best known labels currently available are as follows:-

Select: Naxos, Chandos, BIS, Hyperion, APR, BBC Legends, Cello Classics, Clarinet Classics, Collegium, CPO, Da Capo, Gimell, LPO, Opera Rara, Proprius (Sweden), Bridge (USA), Michael Nyman, Ondine (Finland), Profil (Germany)

Priory: Albany-TROY, Altarus, Guild, Meridian, Priory, Amphion, Dynamic, Sterling (Sweden)

Pricing has become more varied, with at least one label (CPO) having differing prices but using one label code and number system for them all. As a standard price please use £11-75 for Select labels and £11 for Priory labels. Specific exceptions: APR £8-25; BBC Legends £10-25; LPO £8-50; Marco Polo £10 and Naxos £5-75.

These labels have a variety of different prefixes and prices. Those quoted are probably the main ones. Orders for other categories will be priced appropriately on delivery. If specific items come in under standard price the cost to members will be suitably adjusted. This can be catered for by an open cheque.

Some other labels are available and a complete list can be provided on request. We cannot assume all discs on all labels will always be available, but we are happy to try to obtain them. We can make requests for catalogues but these may not necessarily be available.

Prices include postage inland. Members requiring overseas shipment or payment other than in f sterling should contact the Hon. Treasurer for appropriate prices.

Please send all orders in writing to the Hon. Treasurer together with payment by OPEN cheque with maximum value indicated. Cheques in favour of 'The British Music Society'.

Once ordered discs must be paid for if supplied. Should you wish to cancel anything already ordered please contact the Hon. Treasurer as soon as possible and he will endeavour to assist. Members must understand that delivery times may be extended depending on order levels, minimum order requirements of the suppliers etc. and cannot necessarily expect delivery by return (we hold no stocks). *Hon. Treasurer*

Ashgate Books Offer

Ashgate Publishing has a web page especially put together for the British Music Society. You will be able to reach this page via the BMS Website or using the URL www.ashgate.com/bms and find titles of interest to you here with a special Society discount. The book selections will be regularly updated and the discount will be 25%, so now is your chance to get some of those titles you've missed in the past!

To order books and claim your discount, simply select the books you wish to purchase and add them to your shopping basket, type your discount code into the field marked "Promotional Code" and the website will calculate your order to reflect the Society's discount. The code that you need is H9CHH50. If for any reason you would prefer to order by telephone, please call our distributors, Bookprint

Ltd, on +44 (0) 1235 827730 and quote the discount code when placing the order.

Boydell & Brewer Offer

Boydell & Brewer is delighted to offer *Letters from a Life Vol 6* and *Britten in Pictures* at a discount of 25% to BMS Members. To see all Britten publications available from Boydell & Brewer, visit our Britten centenary page at: www.boydellandbrewer.com/britten100.asp

Britten in Pictures, Edited by LUCY WALKER £19.99, Special Offer Price £14.99

November 2012 978 1 84383 749 7, 80 colour illus.; 320 b/w illus.; 288pp, 22 x 22, PB, Boydell Press

Letters from a Life: the Selected Letters of Benjamin Britten, 1913-1976, Volume Six: 1966-1976, Edited by PHILIP REED & Edited by MERVYN COOKE £45.00, Special Offer Price £33.75

November 2012 978 1 84383 725 1, 50 b/w illus.; 880pp, 23.4 x 15.6, HB, Boydell Press

To order from Boydell & Brewer:

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Postage: Please add £3.00 for the UK, for Europe £6.50 per book (up to a maximum of £26.00), international £10.00 per book; in all instances please be sure to quote reference **12331**. Offer ends 28 February 2013.

Michael Hurd

We have now reached the fifth release including music by Michael Hurd funded by the Michael Hurd Bequest through the Charitable Trust. This release on Dutton CDLX 7280 combines his major choral/orchestral work *The Shepherd's Calendar* with Ronald Corp's *And All the Trumpets Sounded*. The performers are Roderick Williams (Mark Stone in the Corp) (baritone), The London Chorus, Bournemouth SO conducted by Ronald Corp.

A stock of copies is available to members through the Hon. Treasurer at the special price of £6 (£6-50 Europe £7 elsewhere) postage included. Cheques favour The British Music Society or US\$12-50 (favour S.C. Trowell) whilst stocks last.

Copies of the previous releases for details of which see *BMS News* 133 Page 32, *BMS News* 130 Page 425 and *BMS News* 129 Page 378 may be ordered through the Hon. Treasurer

Announcements

INCREASE IN POSTAGE RATES

Everybody will be aware of the swingeing increase in postage rates which was effective from 30 April. I am certain you can all appreciate that whilst some increase was expected, at this level it blows a very large hole in the Society's finances. By my estimate this could be of the order of £500 pa. Being in the course of already administering a

subscription rise the Committee are minded not to make a further overall change. However, I do ask those members who might be prepared to take their NEWS electronically to make an active decision to do so now, to assist us in dealing with this situation. Full details follow. Thank you, Stephen Trowell Hon. Treasurer

Electronic BMS News

Any Member may take News electronically. You may find an electronic copy both quicker and more convenient and it will save the Society postage! Please email Christopher Johns at christopher@johns.uk.com and copy Stephen Trowell at sct.bms1943@eldy.org and Rob Barnett at rob.barnett@btinternet.com if you would like to change to this option.

Members who take *News* by this method will no longer be sent the printed version but will received an email with a PDF attached of *News* as soon as each issue is published. Membership subscription fees will remain unchanged and issues of the journal *British Music* will continue to be published in printed form only. However, Overseas Members who choose to receive *BMS News* by electronic delivery will only be required to pay the equivalent UK subscription rate in future years, rather than the appropriate overseas rate that includes higher postal costs.

New Members

We welcome the following new member who joined the society during the past few months: John Ormerod, London

Financial Bequests to the Society

If any member has already arranged a bequest to the Society or is so considering doing, would they please note the following:

given the formation of the Charitable Trust, if their bequest has conditions for its use attached to it and/or particularly if it is of a more substantial amount (£5,000 or more), would the benefactor kindly arrange for the bequest to be made to The British Music Society Charitable Trust (Registered No. 1122597) rather than directly to the Society. If the wish is that the monies are used only be the Society this can be made a condition for any bequest. If any bequests have already been included in wills, as far as is conveniently possible, would the benefactor take any opportunity to revise their bequest to take account of these remarks.

Stephen Trowell, Hon. Treasurer

Index to British Music; Journal Vols. 21 - 30

Copies of the latest instalment of the Journal Index are now available on request to the Hon. Treasurer. UK members please send a self-addressed A5 size envelope stamped at minimum rate. Indices (two) covering the previous editions are also available. If required in addition, UK members please stamp envelope at minimum of Large Letter rate. Overseas members - US please send \$3 and add \$1 per additional index required (Cheques favour S.C. Trowell). European and other members contact the Hon. Treasurer to discuss means of payment.

