bms

NEWS
140
January 2014

THE BRITISH MUSIC SOCIETY

"…promoting and preserving British Music"

Editor: Ian Maxwell
11 Elm Walk, Retford, Nottinghamshire, DN22 7DY
☎ 01777-949107
email: ian.maxwell79@aberdeen.ac.uk
website: www.britishmusicsociety.com

Chairman's Message

The world has changed much since 1979 when this society was formed to counter the neglect and indifference to British music of the last two centuries. After thirty years it is clear that the Society has helped foster a far more enthusiastic approach to British music with such a plethora of recordings available that some works given a premiere recording by the BMS are now available in multiple versions. Now we face new challenges brought about by such rapid changes in technology that it is hard to predict where future young musicians will access and explore the ever-expanding musical horizon.

It is in the light of these challenges that the Executive Committee has made a number of strategic decisions which we believe will better use our limited resources in carrying forward the great work of the Society. The website has been given a major make-over enabling us to reach out to the world in a more dynamic way. The main pages, especially the News section, are regularly updated with new items and we aim to have a comprehensive British concerts listing section offering members a far more up-to-date notification service. Too often in the past we were advised of British music concerts after print deadlines for BMS News had passed. Listing forthcoming events on our website means we are not constrained by print deadlines though obviously we hope promoters will let us know of events well in advance of the concert date.

Our journal – British Music – has always been the mainstay of our publications and we are aiming to expand the journal to provide members with more in-depth articles. In order to achieve this we have decided to transfer news items to electronic formats so allowing our resources (both volunteer time and financial resources) to be concentrated on expanding and improving the journal as well as development of ideas for British music conferences, talks and lecture-recitals.

Due consideration has been made for members unconnected with the digital age (my father for instance) but we believe the society has to change with the times and husband our resources with due diligence. Post Office charges have increased dramatically over the last couple of years whilst new website platforms are a mere fraction of the cost of those available only five years ago.

I urge all members to 'bookmark' the society website page (www.britishmusicsociety.com), and to visit it regularly in order to keep up-to-date with Society promotions. Keep us informed of your preferred email address and contact us on our main email address: britishmusicsociety@gmail.com.

John Gibbons – Chairman

British Music Society Annual Lecture

Saturday 10 May 2014 at 2.30pm
The British Library
96 Euston Rd
London NW1 2DB

The British Music Society presents '*Sir John Barbirolli: British Music's Cockney Emissary*', an afternoon lecture at the British Library. Dr Raymond Holden, The Sir John Barbirolli Lecturer in Music at the Royal Academy of Music, will use recordings, marked scores and other performance artefacts to chart the role of Sir John Barbirolli as British music's leading international advocate.

Material from both the Royal Academy of Music and the British Library will be on display.

The lecture will start at 2.30pm and will be presented in two 50 minute halves with a short break – approximate finish time: 4.30pm.
See www.britishmusicsociety.com for further details

Editorial

This is the concluding edition of *BMS News*, and, as the final editor, on behalf of the previous editors and the many committee members over the thirty-six year history of the British Music Society, I would like to convey my thanks to the many past and present members of the society who have contributed to the newsletter and made it an essential resource – alongside its sister publication *British Music*.

One hundred and forty issues of any periodical publication is a remarkable achievement and this issue includes a brief potted history of *News*, from the perspective of our Honorary Treasurer, who has, of course, been with the society since its inauguration.

However, the passing of *News* should not be regarded as a loss, rather as a transformation that will, we believe, lead the society onwards. *eNews* will be launched shortly, under the editorship of Honorary Secretary Shea Lolin, and I am sure that it will continue to provide indispensable information to society members.

My editorial watch coved ten issues of *News* and I am proud to have continued the traditions established over the years by my distinguished predecessors. It is impossible to select highlights – either from 'my' issues, or indeed from the others – simply because there are so many. I hope that the items featured in *News 140* are an appropriate 'send-off' for our celebrated publication.

Lewis Foreman initiates the BMS First World War commemoration programme with a personal selection of those works by British composers that he believes are appropriate for revival in the context of the war remembrances. The society has ambitious plans for the next four or five years, and these feature a number of events to mark the centenary of the Great War and these will be explained to members over the course of the next few months.

William Hannam presents an absorbing consideration of Bax's *The Garden of Fand* in the contexts both of the legend that inspired it and Bax's own, somewhat complicated, life.

Lewis Foreman then gives us two previews of works that will be receiving their *premières* during the course of the next few months. His enthusiastic description of Sir George Dyson's *Choral Symphony* should be sufficient to ensure the presence of numerous BMS members at St. John's, Smith Square on 13 March, while his equally fascinating account of Bax's *Variations for Orchestra* makes the opening concert of this year's *English Music Festival* on 23 May essential listening.

Finding appropriate words to conclude not only my tenure as editor of this newsletter but also its long and illustrious history is difficult. Perhaps there are no appropriate words – all that need be said is that I have enjoyed my time as editor and I look forward both to receiving *eNews* as a reader and to the production of the new *British Music* as it takes its place as the leading contributor to the appreciation and knowledge of the music we all love.

Ian Maxwell - Editor

Making Contact

Chairman: **John Gibbons**
Home Farm, 139 Buckingham Rd,
Old Bletchley
Tel 01908 367748
johngibbonsmusician@googlemail.com

Vice-Chairman: **(Vacant)**

Hon. Secretary: **Shea Lolin**
40 Roding Court, Mill Road,
Ilford, Essex,
IG1 2FH
Tel 020-8553-4973
britishmusicsociety@gmail.com

Hon. Treasurer: **Stephen Trowell**
7 Tudor Gardens, Upminster, Essex,
RM14 3DE
Tel 01708 224795
sct.bms1943@eldy.org
(Sales, Special Offers, Membership Leaflets, Publications & Recordings Catalogue)

Editor (*eNews*): **Shea Lolin**
(as above)

Editor (*British Music*): **Ian Maxwell**
11 Elm Walk, Retford
Nottinghamshire, DN22 7DY
Tel +01777 949107
ian.maxwell79@aberdeen.ac.uk

Overseas Representatives:

Australia: **Hector Walker**
11 Thompson Street, Ormond,
Victoria, Australia 3204
hwormond@connexus.net.au

Germany: **Dr. Jürgen Schaarwächter**
Amthausstraße 16, D-76227
Karlsruhe-Durlach, Germany
Tel +49 721-9474530
j.schaarwaechter@t-online.de

USA: **Bill Marsh Jr**
12 Farmington Place, Newtown,
PA18940, USA
Tel +1 215-968-5979.

The British Music Society

ISSN 1462-9860. Registered Charity No. 1043838.

Current Membership: 566 (August 2013)

Annual Subscription Rates for UK Residents:

Ordinary Member £25 (£22 if paid by Standing Order);

Young Member £10 (first year's membership is free);

Patron: £40;

Life Member: £450;

The British Music Society maintains membership records on a personal computer. These records comprise name, address, phone/fax/e-mail, and number and type of membership. These are used for various purposes such as putting members in touch with each other and with other persons with an interest in British music, preparing statistics, addressing envelopes, recording payments and preparing claims for tax refund on covenants etc. If any member objects to the holding or disclosure of such personal data in this form about themselves by the Society please inform the Editor and their personal data will be removed from the computer records. Information about concerts, recordings and other matters is given in good faith. The Society cannot guarantee the accuracy of the information given.

Contents of *BMS News 140*

New BMS Publications

As all members will now be aware, *BMS News* ceases publication in its current form from this issue, and is replaced by an extended bi-annual edition of *British Music*, and an online newsletter to be called *eNews*. Members may request to receive *eNews* as a traditional printed newsletter, but should be aware that this will not necessarily deliver the timely and regular information for which the new publication is designed.

The editor of *eNews* will be BMS Secretary Shea Lolin, who is also responsible for the content of the BMS website www.britishmusicsociety.com, and the website and *eNews* will gradually become tightly integrated – together providing an essential and comprehensive resource for information about British Music.

eNews will contain timely information of forthcoming concerts and other events around the country. It will also feature society and other announcements – such as discounts on purchases, membership information and forthcoming meetings. Those items presently in the Miscellaneous News section of *BMS News* will also be transferred to *eNews*.

Items included under the Feature Articles, Reviews, Reports and Obituaries sections of *BMS News* will be moved to the re-launched journal *British Music*. Both *eNews* and *British Music* will feature correspondence sections, and members who feel moved to write to the BMS may direct their letters and emails to either publication. In the case of letters, please address them to the appropriate editor. In the case of emails, please use the society's email address britishmusicsociety@gmail.com and indicate in the subject line which publication is the destination.

The first mid-year issue of the new *British Music* will be published in July 2014. This will be followed by the end of year edition in December 2014. From 2015 onwards, we intend to publish in June and November each year. Members might like to note the following composer anniversaries in 2014, and submissions on these or any other British Music topic are invited.

George Dyson died 1964; Andrzej Panufnik born 1914; Harold Truscott born 1914; Humphrey Searle born 1914

Ian Maxwell - Editor

British composers and the First World War:

Some works for revival during Centenary events

It is remarkable how musical responses to the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 seem to be underway already, with many events announced, including a major conference at the British Library at the end of August. Over the years I have published a number of studies concerning music in the First World War (list at the end), and here it seems useful to summarise some repertoire that might be explored by choirs and music societies wanting to mark the occasion between 2014 and 2018. I hope readers may find it useful.

In the autumn of 1914 a number of pre-war works found an immediate place in the concert hall as patriotic numbers. While Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No 1* and *Land of Hope and Glory* were certainly very frequently performed, and Mackenzie's overture *Britannia* also appeared on programmes throughout the country, other scores were given a war-time spin because of their title. A good example is Somervell's *Thalassa Symphony* which was represented by the slow movement *Killed in Action* a nine-minute threnody actually celebrating Captain Scott's death in Antarctica in 1912. All too soon *Farewell* from Stanford's *Songs of the Fleet* became appropriate:

Mother with unbowed head
Hear thou across the sea,
The farewell of the dead
The dead who died for thee.

Similar, too, was Henry Walford Davies's *Solemn Melody*. Choral music also featured, including Elgar's *The Banner of St George*, Arnold Bax's *Fatherland* and Sir Frederick Bridge's *The Flag of England*.

When we compare musical responses by British composers to the First and Second World Wars, the most striking difference between the two is the role of the symphony to express the mood of times. During the First World War only three symphonies were written by British composers – Bantock's *Hebridean Symphony* (1915); Thomas Dunhill's *Symphony in A minor* (1916); and William Baines *Symphony in C minor* (1917). Only one of them even remotely suggested any connection with the war (the Dunhill). But in the Second War more than a dozen examples by British composers appeared which openly displayed concerns with war issues.

I have written elsewhere of the musical activities of those many musicians and composers who were interned in Germany. The list of those held at the civilian camp on the Ruhleben racecourse gives us a useful snapshot of the British musical community in Germany before the war. Composers included Edgar Bainton, Ernest MacMillan, Quentin Morvaren, composition pupil of Max Reger later known as Quentin Maclean, Roland Bocquet, Frederick Keel, Leigh Henry, Benjamin J. Dale, Bryceson Treharne. Among the music they wrote were string quartets from Bainton and MacMillan, incidental music for camp dramatic productions (Benjamin Dale, Edgar Bainton) and many songs, especially by Treharne, who during his two years in the camp wrote two hundred songs, orchestral works and one act of an opera. Frederick Keel also wrote songs, as did Leigh Henry and Roland Bocquet. Ernest MacMillan, later to be the doyen of Canadian composers, set Swinburne's *Ode to England* for soli, chorus and orchestra and successfully submitted it to Oxford for his D Mus.

The Royal Philharmonic Society's London concerts continued during the war thanks to the financial intervention of Thomas Beecham. It is notable that these wartime programmes completely avoided the music of Beethoven (with whom the society had enjoyed an historic association), Brahms and Wagner. Between November 1914 and December 1918 the repertoire focused on British, French and Russian music. However after an early acknowledgement of the

war only occasional concerts included war-related music. There were six (out of 26) relevant RPS concerts when music of interest to us in the context of the war was heard:

24 November 1914: [aria] 'God Breaketh the Battle' (Sir Hubert Parry) and *Fatherland* (Arnold Bax)
18 March 1915: *Carillon* (Elgar); *Songs of the Sea* (Stanford); *From Death to Life* (Parry)
14 February 1916: Overture *Patrie* (Bizet)
13 March 1916: Elegy for 24 violins and organ (Frederick Corder)
26 February 1917: [song] *Have You News of My Boy Jack?* (Edward German)
5 December 1918: [scena] *The Soldier's Tent* (Parry)

After the war Holst's suite *The Planets* (at first without *Neptune*) with *Mars* as its first movement appeared to remember the war and it was first given by the RPS in February 1919. Later, in 1922 came Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony* and Delius's *Requiem*, but the significance of neither in relation to the war was immediately widely apparent.

It is worth just remembering how we came to recognise Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony* as a war-related work. It was written immediately after the war and first performed in January 1922. According to the composer at the time it was characterised as 'almost entirely quiet and contemplative'. It is unusual for the distant vocalising soprano voice which frames the finale. During the war Vaughan Williams enlisted as a private and was a wagon orderly in the Royal Army Medical Corps. It was only when Ursula Vaughan Williams's biography of her husband was published in 1964 that it began to be clear that the roots of the music were to be found on the Western Front. In a letter to Ursula dating from 1938 her future husband came clean about the *Pastoral Symphony* in a way he had not done previously: 'It is really wartime music – a great deal of it originated when I used to go up night after night in the ambulance wagon at Ecoivres & we went up a steep hill & there was a wonderful Corot-like landscape in the sunset – its not really lambkins frisking'. There is a suspicion of army bugle calls about the writing for horns and trumpets and a trumpet cadenza in the slow movement. Here Vaughan Williams notes in the full score: 'It is important that this passage should be played on a true E flat trumpet (preferably a cavalry trumpet) so that only natural notes may be played and that the B flat (7th partial) and D (9th partial) should have their true intonation …'. In another letter Vaughan Williams reminisced: 'When I was in the army … every morning in the woods about half a mile off I used to hear a young trumpeter practicing – and he was always (by accident of course) landing on that natural note …'. The distant vocalising soprano in the last movement is very affecting, the voice a symbol of desolation with a visionary aura that he would use again in *Riders to the Sea* and the *Sinfonia Antarctica*. If well handled this has a quite visionary mystical quality. Vaughan Williams's alternative of a clarinet in the absence of the soprano does not have the same magic. As Michael Kennedy wrote: 'beneath the symphony's tranquillity lies sadness: it is Vaughan Williams's war requiem'.

Specific wartime events tended to trigger musical responses among British composers, of which the first and possibly the best-known is Elgar's setting of words by Emile Cammaerts, *Carillon*, Op 75 for orator and orchestra. The plight of Belgium in the face of German occupation found an enormous response from a wide British public. Without a knowledge of the background this is a minor work in Elgar's output, but at the time Elgar found his audience responded with huge enthusiasm. The work was widely performed by a varied range of speakers of both sexes. It was first given – in French – on 7 December 1914 by the poet's wife. A critic wrote: 'the music moves on a broad stream of manly emotion to a series of noble climaxes.' After a notably histrionic performance by the French actress Réjane in April 1915 'the combined effect of words and music became almost unbearable … many persons were sobbing'.

In the autumn of 2005 I was very fortunate to be asked to assemble a supporting First World War programme to couple with Elgar's heart-felt choral work *The Spirit of England*, setting words by Laurence Binyon. This was to be recorded by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Symphony Chorus conducted by David Lloyd-Jones for Dutton Epoch (still available on CDLX 7172). I chose four short works long admired by me but then unknown to most commentators and it was a remarkable success. The music was Parry's *The Chivalry of the Sea* (1916), F. S. Kelly's *Elegy in*

memory of Rupert Brooke (1915), Ivor Gurney's then newly discovered *War Elegy* (1920) and Lilian Elkington's *Out of the Mist* (1921). Choral societies looking for shorter works with a First World War context to place in a more general programme would find these of interest, preceding, say, *Gerontius* or *A Sea Symphony*.

The celebrated poet Rupert Brooke died on the French hospital ship *Dugay-Trouin* during the voyage to Gallipoli, which he never saw. This was on 23 April 1915 and, in fact, Brooke died of blood poisoning following an insect bite. Brooke had been a junior officer on HMT Grantully Castle where he served with two young composers, the Australian Frederick Septimus Kelly and William Denis-Browne. Kelly evoked Brooke's burial on the Greek island of Skyros in his short *Elegy* for strings and harp in memory of the poet (it is out of copyright and the score and parts can be downloaded, free, from the web).

The sinking of the passenger liner SS Lusitania by a German submarine on 7 May 1915 created a shocked reaction in the UK and in America. It was marked in New York by Charles Ives's orchestral piece *From Hanover Square North at the end of a Tragic Day (1915) the Voice of the People again Arose*, now the third movement of his *Second Orchestral Set*, although that was not performed for many years. In London on a much smaller scale Frank Bridge's response was more immediate, completing his *Lament for Strings* on 14 June. According to Bridge's dedication it was written in memory of 'Catherine, aged nine', the daughter of a friend, both lost in the disaster. It was subsequently published in a version for piano.

The execution of Edith Cavell in Brussels on 12 October 1915 caused an outcry in England, and while it was not marked with orchestral music two songs were published soon afterwards: *I Will Repay (In memory of Edith Cavell)* by F. V. St Clair appeared in London, *The Bravest Heart of All* by F. Henri Clique appeared in the USA.

Viewed objectively Elgar's second recitation based on words by Emile Cammaerts was *Une Voix dans le Désert* ('A Voice in the Desert') which he completed during July 1915. It was first performed, in French, at the Shaftesbury Theatre on 29 January 1916 in costume. It was a patriotic interlude between 'Cav' and 'Pag'. Here Elgar writes a genuine dramatic and atmospheric piece running maybe 11½ minutes. Its setting is eloquently set out in Alfred Craven's cover illustration, and, again, its impact at the time is difficult to recapture today. The emotional heart of the piece comes after the narrator has described 'A hundred yards from the trenches/ close to the battle front/ there stands a little house/ Lonely and desolate . . . the roof torn by a shell.' After some four and a half minutes of this the impact of the peasant girl's song from the house must have been devastating at the time.

When the spring comes round again …
In our peaceful meadows
The scythe will never rest.

But then she sings of the places that in 1915 would have a special emotional significance – Antwerp, Ypres, Nieuport, Dixmude, Ramscappelle.

Among the many songs written during the war setting wartime verses, we remember *Have You News of My Boy Jack?* by Edward German because of the celebrity of its author, Rudyard Kipling. Kipling had used his influence to get his son John a commission in the Irish Guards when he was seventeen and unsuited for his role. The inevitable happened and the boy was killed at the Battle of Loos on 27 September 1915, though in circumstances that failed to allow Kipling firm intelligence of his death. Kipling responded with his poem *Have you news of my boy Jack?* which was set by Edward German and recorded by Louise Kirkby Lunn for HMV.[1]

Three notable battles were the subject of London memorial concerts during the war – Verdun and Mons and the naval battle of Jutland, all of which had resulted in massive casualties. The Mons Memorial Concert was on 17 December 1917 and the programme included Herbert Howells's *Elegy* for his friend 'Bunny' Warren – Francis Purcell Warren – viola player and

[1] GHMV 03572; a transcription of that recording appears on the CD with *Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great War* op cit.

composer. Clearly taking Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis* as his model, Howells scored his music for string orchestra with string quartet and solo viola – the latter effectively the voice of the dead comrade. Howells wrote, in a programme note, it is 'entirely dominated (in my mind) by the personality of my friend'.

Sir Charles Villiers Stanford is a special case among British composers responding to the First World War, and he wrote a variety of scores all of which deserve a hearing over the next four years. Stanford was unfortunate in his response to two concurrent disasters that affecting him particularly closely – the War and the loss of his close musical ties and friendships in Germany, the outcome of a lifetime of regular visits and correspondence with Germany, as well as troubles in Ireland, the land of his birth. Thus his two spiritual homes were simultaneously lost to him at the same time as a new musical generation appeared that repudiated him and his artistic ideals.

During the war Stanford, still professor of composition at the Royal College of Music, was a most vocal and vituperative commentator on matters to do with the conflict. In 1917, he wrote his second organ sonata, *Eroica*, inscribed to the French composer Charles-Marie Widor. It was a tribute to the French army in recognition of their losses at Verdun. The first movement is called *Rheims* (based on the tune *O filii et filiae*) followed by a funeral march and a finale entitled *Verdun*. Stanford orchestrated the last two movements under the title *Verdun: Heroic March and Heroic Epilogue* and it was heard at the Royal Albert Hall on 20 January 1918. It was also heard at Bournemouth on 22 May 1918.

A number of Stanford's earlier choral works found a resonance with wartime audiences. Stanford's choral ballad *The Revenge* continued its earlier popularity and his Boer War choral work *The Last Post* found a place, doubtless for its use of the familiar bugle call. (Incidentally this bugle call also appears in the second part of Ethel Smyth's visionary choral work *The Prison* which reflects Smyth's sense of loss at the devastation of the First World War.) Perhaps the most promising Stanford choral work in this context is the *Elegiac Ode* for soprano and baritone soli, chorus and orchestra of 1884, one of the first choral and orchestral settings of Walt Whitman by a British composer. Here Stanford takes words from *President Lincoln's Burial Hymn* by the American poet, and sets them in four movements. It is also worth remembering that Stanford's *Requiem*, Op 63 is a remarkably engaging large-scale score which could easily replace the major works of Elgar in any season where a Requiem is appropriate. It was first heard at Birmingham in 1897 but there has not been a London performance for many years.

After the armistice Stanford produced five substantial works reflecting the conflict: *Via Victrix*, *Merlin and the Gleam*, *At the Abbey Gate*, *A Song of Agincourt* and the *Third Piano Trio*. Stanford clearly anticipated a major choral and orchestral work would be required to celebrate the victory, but he and his publisher, Boosey & Hawkes, misjudged the mood of the times, and his triumphant and large-scale mass setting, the *Via Victrix* for SATB soli, chorus and orchestra, appears to have failed to find a performance, and we must conclude that it has never been heard. *Merlin and the Gleam* almost suffered a similar fate. This late half-hour narrative cantata, setting Tennyson's poem, only survives as a printed vocal score – and it only achieved a very few provincial performances in 1920 before the full score went missing. It had remained unperformed until Jeremy Dibble's orchestration of 2003. Conducted by Garry Humphreys it appeared in the Broadheath Singers' final concert that year, before they disbanded. The idiom of *Merlin and the Gleam* is certainly backward-looking, and it could have been written at any time in the previous thirty years. All concerned with the 2003 performance were somewhat mystified as to the music's exact meaning (Jeremy Dibble suggested, in his programme note 'its significance is one characteristic of the author's constant search for an ideal vision of life'). But the choir were struck by the nature of the choral *Epilogue*, whereby Stanford had tacked on the *Hymn* from Tennyson's *Akbar's Dream*, and as we sang Stanford's triumphal setting ('Once again thou flamest heavenward, once again we see thee rise') one could not help but feel that in a work completed in August 1919 we were again hymning, through complex allusions, another First World War memorial piece.

Stanford was also unsuccessful in catching the public mood with his short choral funeral march setting words by Judge Darling, called *At the Abbey Gate*. In this music for baritone, chorus and orchestra we hear the Unknown Warrior at the gate of Westminster Abbey asking for admission. It must have seemed very topical at the time but it achieved very few performances; the moment passed and it was then forgotten. I can imagine it being performed preceded by Lilian Elkington's *Out of the Mist*, her short orchestral tone poem evoking the emergence out of the channel fog of the warship carrying the coffin of the Unknown Warrior as it neared Dover.

Stanford's *A Song of Agincourt*, Op 168, is an orchestral work based on the *Agincourt Song*, then less well-known than now, which Stanford clearly took as a useful victory anthem on which to base an orchestral work commemorating those members of the RCM who had 'fought, worked and died' during the war. It was performed at the RCM on 25 March 1919. But it had few performances after that.

Stanford's *Third Piano Trio* is more overtly of an 'In memoriam' character. It celebrates members of the Royal Flying Corps who were lost and the score is headed with the RAF motto *Per aspera ad astra* and on a dedication page Stanford writes:

In memoriam
EU AT AK EJG MG
Sempiternam patria laudem
Funere cumulantium

It has not been possible to identify all of these though Jeremy Dibble has traced MG as Maurice Gray and EJG as his brother Edward Jasper Gray. They were the sons of Stanford's colleague the composer Alan Gray, both being killed in the closing months of the war. I discussed these initials with Jeremy, and he is convinced that they all combined a Cambridge University music and a Royal Flying Corps identity. It seems probable that EU might have been Ernest Unwin, a major in the RFC, and AT could have been Thomas Atkins Tillard, an aeroplane officer.

Other scores naming specific members of the forces includes Howard Carr's orchestral suite *Three Heroes* (1. O'Leary VC; 2. Captain Oates; 3. Warneford VC). Thus we have music celebrating two holders of the Victoria Cross: the Irish Lance-Corporal Michael O'Leary and Lieutenant Warneford VC, the first British pilot to bring down a Zeppelin (in 1915). It was not the first piece to conflate wartime memorial with Scott's expedition to the South Pole, remembering in the middle movement the ill-fated Captain Oates. Bantock's short *Coronach* for organ, harp and strings remembers Lieutenant John Kennedy, Vicar of St John's, Boscombe, and was written for Dan Godfrey's concerts at nearby Bournemouth.

Perhaps the most emotive of memorial concerts was held on 12 December 1916 in memory of those who were lost on the battle cruiser HMS Invincible which exploded on 31 May 1916 at the Battle of Jutland. Parry's memorial, the choral setting *The Chivalry of the Sea* has rather stilted words by the Poet Laureate, Robert Bridges, which celebrated Charles Fisher, an Oxford friend lost with over a thousand others on the Invincible. The concert consisted of what Parry designated his *Naval Ode*, Stanford's *Songs of the Fleet* and Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*. Parry's music is among his most effective and at the end Parry is almost beyond words; the return of the deep swelling opening theme, throat-catching in its sudden inflection, as with a sense of the infinite, we find Parry musing on lost friends, sailing ever on 'under starry skies'.

There are a number of other works by Parry appropriate for a First World War context, starting with *Jerusalem* and its companion unison song for massed voices and orchestra, *England*. Possibly the best-known of the larger scale works is the unaccompanied choral cycle *Songs of Farewell*. The tone-poem *From Death to Life* falls into two connected movements, *Via Mortis* and *Via Vite*, and was certainly heard at least once during the War. It makes a suitable 16 minute orchestral piece in a mixed programme. On the other hand, his scena for baritone and orchestra *The Soldier's Tent*, though it was delightfully set by Parry, encompasses imagery of a noble military sensibility no longer credible in the reality of modern warfare.

During the conflict two major choral works by British composers were written, each having direct relevance to the war, though in a sense both could now be seen as the sunset on a romantic art. These were Elgar's *The Spirit of England*, already mentioned, setting poems by Laurence Binyon and Frederick Delius's pagan *Requiem*.

At the time of its first performance in 1922 Delius's *Requiem* failed to find a sympathetic audience on account of its non-Christian sentiments and language: 'I honour the man who can love life, yet without base fear can die. He has attained the heights and won the crown of life.' This was not the message that a grieving nominally Christian population wanted to hear.

The composer Frank Bridge, teacher at the Royal College of Music and a non-combatant, was profoundly depressed by wartime events. The first personal blow for him came, as we have seen, with the sinking of the Lusitania in June 1915. Increasingly the war appeared like a thread through his music, and in 1916 he made his setting of Thomas á Kempis's *A Prayer*, a meditation on inner peace as a commentary on the war. However, the words might well have appeared frankly pacifist during the conflict, and although the vocal score is dated March 1916, Bridge did not orchestrate it until October 1918. Published and performed almost immediately in 1919, it became a work of consolation, its intense hymn-like sentiments seeming a memorial for those lost in the War.

A number of substantial scores aimed to purge wartime experiences, often written years after. In 1929, first performed in 1930, Arthur Bliss's *Morning Heroes* attempted to set the events and pain of the war in a timeless context. Bliss had been both wounded and gassed and his brother Kennard had been killed so it was very real for him. Indeed Bliss's wife told the present author years after Arthur Bliss himself had died that even fifteen years after the war he would wake at night tormented by dreaming terrible wartime images. But in *Morning Heroes*, in setting words from a wide variety of sources both classical and modern, he attempts to make the tragedy universal. Thus we have *Hector's Farewell to Andromache* from *The Iliad* for speaker and orchestra, followed by *The City Arming* from Walt Whitman's *Drum-Taps* and then *Vigil* from the Tang dynasty (eighth century) poet Li-Tai-Po. A return to *Drum-Taps* for *The Bivouac's Flame*, then *The Iliad* again, now set for chorus before Wilfred Owen's *Spring Offensive* for speaker and timpani and ending with the chorus singing Robert Nichols poem *Dawn on the Somme*. This makes for a remarkably powerful setting, a symphony more on heroism than war, and one for which I have never found a parallel in the music of the other combatant nations.

However, perhaps the most interesting talking point concerning major post war memorial works is John Foulds's (1880-1939) *A World Requiem*. That massive choral work in memory of the dead of the First World War was performed by enormous choirs and had vast audiences in tears at the Royal Albert Hall on Armistice night from 1923 to 1926. But it then remained unheard until 2007. In 1983 five movements were given a small-scale performance at St John's Smith Square, a tantalising taste of the long-unheard music, but it seemed to be all one would ever hear. We have to thank Roger Wright, Controller Radio 3, and the BBC pulling together an interest by *The Daily Telegraph* and the Festival of Remembrance for a full scale performance at the Royal Albert Hall in 2007, subsequently issued on CD by Chandos (CHSA 5058).

There are striking moments in the first half, often the result of having such large forces disposed before us, underpinned by the Albert Hall organ, and ending strongly with *Blest are the dead that die in the Lord*, a shivers-up-the-spine moment. But in fact generally the first part is fairly sombre and serious as befits its subject, and I can imagine for smaller choral societies part Two being a more manageable and viable concert work in its own right – *Laudamus*, *Elysium*, *In Pace*, *Angeli*, *Vox Dei*, *Adventus*, *Vigilate*, *Promissio et Invocatio*, *Benedictio*, and *Consummatus*. It is launched by the *Laudamus*, possibly the most memorable passage in the whole work, which grips in a dramatic way. This is a spellbinding and epic vision.

I have only touched the surface in this account. As far as British music is concerned, between 1914 and 1918 and after, there was a significant involvement from composers in providing music required by the conflict and by reacting to the reality of war when the tragedy became immediate

in terms of personal loss. The response in the United Kingdom has a character of its own, and public interest in it has persisted, indeed grown over time. For those choral societies and performing groups seeking something new here are a variety of options from one work to complete programmes. I look forward to some fascinating revivals during the Centenary events.

BOOKS AND ARTICLES ON THE FIRST WORLD WAR BY LEWIS FOREMAN —

Oh, My Horses! Elgar and the Great War. Elgar Editions, 2001; corrected reprint 2014

'Battle Songs & Elegies: Elgar, Vaughan Williams and British Music 1914-18' IN *A Special Flame* edited by John Norris and Andrew Neill. Elgar Editions, 2003, pp 42-69

'In Ruhleben Camp' *First World War Studies* Vol 2 No 1 March 2011 pp. 27-40

'The Demon of the Times: British composers responding to the events of 1914-1918.' In *Musik bezieht Stellung: Funktionalisierungen der Musik im Ersten Weltkrieg* edited by Stefan Hanheide et al. Universitätsverlag Osnabrück, 2013 pp. 345-368

The Garden of Fand is the Sea – but it is also a Tone Poem by Sir Arnold Bax

The Garden of Fand is the sea. So Arnold Bax tells us in the opening of his program note to the orchestral tone poem, *The Garden of Fand*. The work was sketched in 1913, mostly in Dublin with the completion taking place in London, and then waited until late 1915 and early 1916 to be orchestrated, also in London. It is the first of Bax's mature tone poems, and set the composer on the path that took him to what many consider his masterwork in the form, *November Woods*, and then to his best known work, *Tintagel*. Not only is *The Garden of Fand* sea music in the same overall style as *Tintagel*, but it is also music of heroic legend, and Bax told Eamonn Andrews in a brief interview broadcast on Irish radio in 1947 that this was his favourite amongst his works.[2] As the first in a trio of important tone poems from this composer and as a precursor to the better known *Tintagel*, perhaps it will be of some value to examine the seeds planted in this Garden before we at some later time consider the growth of the *November Woods*.

It would seem that Bax had little trouble creating the work in piano score and that inspiration carried him through the compositional stage. Only the orchestration gave him any difficulty. Graham Parlett cites passages in two letters from the composer relevant to this point. In October of 1915, Bax wrote to his friend Arthur Alexander, a young pianist and emerging composer from New Zealand, saying, 'I am now going gently crazy in an attempt to orchestrate the *Garden of Fand*.' Later, he wrote to Anne Crowley, a friend in Ireland, that, 'I can't remember any work connected with it at all except the orchestration … I remember feeling how almost uncanny it was; I did it partly in Dublin and partly in London but there was no break in continuity.'[3] Bax biographer Lewis Foreman suggests that Fand represented an unusual struggle for Bax, whose standard practice was to compose orchestral works with the orchestration fully in mind as he wrote the short scores, thus rendering the orchestration mere busywork. In this work, however, Bax achieved a significant advancement in his technique, and his struggle seems the obvious reason for the delay between composition and orchestration.[4]

As a side note, I should describe how Bax usually treated the chore of writing out his orchestrations. This was something to be taken fairly lightly. Bax was very interested in literature, and read constantly when he wasn't composing. He generally 'multitasked' when orchestrating, lightening the chore as Foreman describes it 'by having his women-folk – particularly his mother, and later Mary Gleaves – read to him as he was doing it.'[5] It would have been much like working with the television on, as some of us do today.

From the evidence of Bax's letters, we can conclude that *The Garden of Fand* was conceived, much as *Tintagel* was, at the height of emotional passion. He describes in a letter to a friend how he 'wept in his Dublin room' as he composed the theme for the central section. Foreman points out that a grown man of thirty years does not weep at the composition of a tune, no matter how

[2] Graham Parlett, *A Catalogue of the Works of Sir Arnold Bax,* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 120.
[3] *Ibid*., p. 118.
[4] Lewis Foreman, *Bax, A Composer and his Times,* 3rd rev. and exp. ed. (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2007), p. 119.
[5] *Ibid*.

beautiful, unless there is an extra-musical association. In Bax's case, that association was most certainly a woman,[6] and most likely she was the eighteen year old pianist Harriet Cohen, to whom the later *Tintagel* is dedicated, though he was not above considering *Fand* again years later in relation to Mary Gleaves. Foreman cites a letter by Bax regarding a performance of *Fand* in 1933, where, enthralled with this later lover, Bax writes, 'Why do you make me feel such lovely and passionate things? I wish you had heard *The Garden of Fand* as a whole last night because I think it is rather like you – or anyway the mood my delicate passionate little lover brings to me.'[7] Clearly, this piece represented romance and romantic escape for the composer, concepts found just as easily in the later *Tintagel*.

Another aspect of *Fand* to consider is its mystical, pantheistic leanings, elements not surprisingly found as part of Bax's personal philosophy. Bax believed strongly in the juxtaposed and conflicting aspects of the forces of Nature. This conflict of elements brings to his scores pages of jagged torment that ultimately dissolve into more pages of tranquil loveliness.[8] There was no stronger mystical affinity for Bax in this pantheism than with the sea. At Easter 1915, he wrote to Philip Heseltine (Peter Warlock) in regard to his recent work,

> 'There is certainly plenty of scope in this direction, as until Debussy's period the treatment of nature in music was almost wholly objective when touched at all. At least, so I feel it. I suppose one of my own most characteristic things is a long orchestral work called *The Garden of Fand* which is entirely enveloped in the atmosphere of the calm Atlantic off the western shores of Ireland and the enchanted islands of which some of the country people still dream.'[9]

It was constantly the subject of a strange fascination for him, and he often vacationed in places near the water as, for example, he did in the late summer of 1917 on the coast of Cornwall, when he was inspired to write *Tintagel*. Pages of his notebooks are covered with oceanographic data, noted in meticulous detail.[10]

The world premiere of *The Garden of Fand* was at Orchestra Hall in Chicago, with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra playing under Frederick Stock on October 29, 1920. The British premiere was some six weeks later, with the British Symphony Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult performing in Kingsway Hall on December 11. Writing about the Chicago performance for *The North American Review* in the spring of 1921, Lawrence Gilman described Bax as 'one of the younger and more adventurous clan of British music-makers.'11 Note the use of the word 'clan' in the critic's remark, as the Chicagoan thinks in terms of the Irish with Bax rather than of the English. Gilman goes on, calling Bax 'a modernist,' but also 'a poet, a dreamer, a spinner of shining tonal webs.' You will recognize again that this is a review written in a city with a large Irish background when you learn that 'best of all, (Bax) is, spiritually viewed, a musical Celt, despite his London origin.'[12] Clearly, the writer is an admirer. He praises Bax even further, telling his readers of Bax's time spent with the greats of the Celtic Renaissance and explaining that 'he has composed much music of Irish content and colouring, of which we know only *The Garden of Fand*,' - which would suggest that Gilman has made up his mind about Bax based solely upon the one work. One might question just how entangled this writer may have become in the mystical tonal webs Bax has spun, but for a review in America in the early 1920s, his enthusiasm is probably not so unusual.

The score to *The Garden of Fand* might well be seen as the first fully crystallized example of a mature Bax orchestral work. We find here not only the very full scoring, but also the contrapuntal elaborations on what is otherwise a harmonically conceived work. The music is presented in three or four separate bands of ideas and orchestral colours, each moving against the others. Within each of these broad bands of sound there are further examples of contrapuntal movement,

[6] *Ibid*., p. 118.
[7] *Ibid*.
[8] Colin Scott-Sutherland, *Arnold Bax* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1973), p. 70.
[9] Foreman, p. 139.
[10] *Ibid*.
[11] Lawrence Gilman, "Music of the Month: Some Celtic Music, Old and New," *The North American Review* 213, No. 786 (May, 1921), p. 702.
[12] *Ibid*., p. 703.

the overall effect being kaleidoscopic. Finally, if any section is rehearsed individually, it will exhibit a remarkable musical sense of its own.[13] In *Fand*, Bax builds and grows his piece not through forward momentum or even through the development of themes, but instead by successive layers of colour and texture. This same compositional methodology will be seen again a few short years later in *Tintagel*.

The beautifully evocative opening can only be music of a calm, still sea. The shimmering of the harp and the figures in the violin portray the soothing, ceaseless motion of the water. Foreman suggests convincingly that Bax may have had the sea music of the opening of his former teacher Frederick Corder's festival cantata *The Sword of Argantyr* somewhere in mind when he started writing *The Garden of Fand*.[14] We know that Bax heard Corder's work in its London premiere in November, 1900, not long after he had begun study with Corder, so while connections have occasionally been drawn between Bax and Debussy, and those connections may well exist, they are not the only path that Bax likely took to get to the sea.

Let us now examine more closely Bax's combination of mystical pantheism and his love of the sea by considering the program note for the work. Bax begins by explaining that the ancient saga called 'The sick-bed of Cuchulain' tells how that hero (which Bax describes as 'the Achilles of the Gael') was lured away from the world of deeds and battles by the Lady Fand, daughter of Manannan, lord of the ocean, and how in the time of his country's most desperate need he forgot all but the charms of this immortal woman. Bax tells us that the tale goes on, as Cuchulain's wife, Emer, pursued him to that wonderland to plead with the goddess for her husband's return. The story concludes, as Bax explains it, with Fand's pitying renunciation of her human love, and Manannan shaking his 'Cloak of Forgetfulness' between Cuchulain and Fand, thus blotting out the memory of each in the mind of the other.[15]

Having related this whole tale to the reader of his program note, Bax then goes on to tell the reader that 'This tone-poem has no special relation to the events of the above legend.' Now, Bax explains that in the first part of the work, he seeks to create the atmosphere of an enchanted Atlantic, completely calm under the spell of the 'Other World.' He describes a small ship floating on that smooth surface from the shores of Eirinn toward the sunset, 'as St. Brendan and the sons of O'Corra are said to have sailed in later times.' Eventually the little ship is caught by a great wave that tosses it onto the shore of Fand's magical island, and the voyagers are drawn into a celebratory dance. At a pause in the reveries, Fand sings her song of immortal love, enchanting all those who hear her before the dancing and feasting begin again. The sea rises up and suddenly overwhelms the entirety of the island, and while the immortals ride the waves in their rapture, laughing carelessly, the mortal voyagers are lost to the depths of the sea. Twilight falls over the water, the sea subsides, and Fand's garden fades out of sight.[16]

Bax's claim that his tone-poem had no special relation to the legend of Cuchulain and Fand seems more than a little far-fetched. In all likelihood, the music and the legend were completely connected. With Bax, though, there is always a degree of duality involved. There is his public life as the proper, upper-class English gentleman composer, and his more romanticized private life as the Irish poet. *The Garden of Fand* was composed at the height of Bax's time spent also writing poetry under the pseudonym Dermot O'Byrne, and Fand was, as Bax claimed, the last of his Gaelic works. It seems likely that the legend that Bax relates to begin his program note had everything to do with the tone-poem, but that that aspect was intended only for himself and for his secret love and inspiration, Harriet. The other description was meant for general consumption. There is little difference between Bax's process and programmatic claim in this work than in *Tintagel*, where the legend of Tristan and Isolde becomes the hidden program, and the generally descriptive concept of the location of the ruined castle on the shoreline of northern Cornwall is what Bax emphasizes to the reader. In both notes, Bax wants it both ways. He wants to broadcast his love, but he also needs to keep his affair a secret. In the grip of this fresh, new love, Bax became utterly unable to

[13] Foreman, p. 113.
[14] *Ibid*., p. 120.
[15] Parlett, p. 119.
[16] *Ibid*.

keep his own secret as it is depicted in his music, and so he shares it with everyone only to then deny it. The music becomes a sensuous, romantic love letter to his young muse, but Bax wants to make it clear to her – and even, perhaps, to a few close friends – while telling the general public that they should ignore what he has just put in front of them, that the music is more Impressionist than Romantic.

Let us also consider the moment of highest drama in the legend. Cuchulain's wife, Emer, comes to confront the goddess Fand, to fight for his love and for his safe return. Could Bax have imagined this as a corollary to a potential fight over himself between Harriet and his wife, Elsita? It is certainly possible, if not likely.

Peter Pirie notes that Julius Harrison first put forth the notion that Bax's music was 'non-sensuous,' and suggests that this could not be further from the truth. Pirie claims that several other writers have followed this description without reasonable consideration, piously regurgitating what seems to be a thoughtful evaluation by Harrison. Speaking of *The Garden of Fand*, Pirie states that the piece is 'not only the most sensuously written orchestral music by an Englishman, it is explicitly erotic.' He goes on, noting that 'the title should be enough for any Freudian', but when we consider that the garden of Fand is also the sea, that Fand lured Cuchulain from war to 'the arms of an immortal woman,' and that the poem itself describes the seduction of sailors by Fand's women, who are then sunk in the midst of the sea, the idea of the music 'lacking a sensuous quality', as Pirie states it, 'becomes almost ridiculous.'[17]

Bax claimed that this work was the last of his Irish music, though critics and analysts disagreed. Certainly, this tale of Irish sailors and their fatal meeting with the supernatural was of Celtic origin, but the later *Tintagel* and its central characters demonstrate that the composer had not completely outgrown his Irish influences, as the story of Tristan and Isolde has the young knight retrieving the fair maiden from Ireland at its very heart. If *The Garden of Fand* was the last of Bax's Irish music, then *Tintagel* represents the composer turning back and waving fondly to that former source of inspiration.

The connections so far cited between *Fand* and *Tintagel* are not the only links between the works, as there was another entirely different kind of premiere relevant to the discussion. After the great success of Frederick Ashton's first ballet with the New York City Ballet (this was *Illuminations*, in 1950), the company immediately attempted to arrange for the distinguished British choreographer to return for a second collaboration. Commitments with the Sadler's Wells Ballet prevented such a return for two years, but this time was spent in part determining what story would be told. Ashton wanted to create a modern treatment of the tale of Tristan and Isolde.

Ashton and costume designer Cecil Beaton went to Tintagel to observe the remains of the castle, and Ashton decided that he wanted to use a score from Arnold Bax. Originally, this was to be a little known work called *Iseult at Tintagel*, which Bax had written in 1915. Ultimately, it was decided that this music was too short to fit Ashton's requirements, and Bax suggested an alternative. That work was, surprisingly, *The Garden of Fand*.[18] The ballet, though, was called *Picnic at Tintagel*. The premiere with the New York City Ballet took place at the New York Center on February 28, 1952. In the *New York Herald Tribune*, Walter Terry said that, '*Picnic at Tintagel* – musically, pictorially, choreographically, dramatically,' was a "theatre piece of which the New York City Ballet may be justly proud." The same troupe travelled to the Edinburgh Festival in August of that year, where the *New York Times* reported that the ballet was 'swift, exciting and dramatic, and is likely to occupy a permanent place in British ballet.'[19]

The ballet recalls the story of Tristan and Isolde, but it is set in 1916, the year *The Garden of Fand* was completed. The place is, of course, Tintagel. The first scene introduces the caretaker of the castle, and then a group of tourists arriving in what is called a motoring party. Two of the tourists are man and wife. Another man is apparently the wife's lover. As the married couple leaves to tour the castle, their servants lay out the blankets and baskets for the picnic. A bit later,

[17] Peter J. Pirie, "More Than a Brazen Romantic," *Music and Musicians* 19 (January 1971), p. 34.
[18] George Balanchine and Francis Mason, *Balanchine's Festival of Ballet* vol. 2 (London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1984), p. 62.
[19] *Ibid*.

through some magic of the caretaker involving a bottle of wine, the picnickers are transformed into the characters of the old legend of King Mark, Tristan, and Isolde, with the husband being King Mark, the second man being Tristan, and the wife taking the role of Isolde. In the second scene, as in the legend, our transformed King Mark discovers the infidelity of his wife and trusted friend, but as the two men duel with swords, Isolde is stabbed accidentally, and then Tristan is mortally wounded. The third scene returns to the more modern time, with the lovers about to drink the same wine that had transformed them previously. The husband pushes his friend away from his wife, now knowing of their affair. As the stage darkens, the caretaker comes forward holding the gleaming swords of Tristan's mortal combat for Isolde. The curtain falls to the same music that had begun the ballet, suggesting that all this might happen again to other lovers.[20] One has to smile at the notion of Bax suggesting music he wrote at the beginning of an affair be used for a ballet set around the exposing of an affair. At the end of his life, had he found yet another device to allow him to have things both ways – to proclaim his affair and yet to deny it?

In the early 1930s, Bax sympathizer Sir Thomas Beecham gave several performances of Bax's music. The composer is said to have been enthusiastic toward each of these performances, as he heard a great deal of compassion and refinement in the playing Beecham elicited from his orchestra. Beecham is most associated with *The Garden of Fand*, having given several performances and having recorded it in the 1940s. A November, 1931 performance at Queen's Hall found Bax so appreciative that he wrote to Harriet Cohen in Cincinnati, telling her that 'last night's performance was the most beautiful orchestral experience of my life – as far as my own works are concerned. It seemed to me that the moulding of every phrase in *Fand* could not be surpassed.'[21] At the end of his praise of Beecham's performance, he writes, 'There was an enormous audience, and… I had rather an ovation.' Not long after, Beecham took *Fand* to New York, giving two successful performances on the 9th and 10th of April, 1932.[22]

On February 3, 1942, it was announced that Bax had been appointed Master of the King's Music after Sir Henry Walford Davies had passed away. As most of the English musical public had expected this honour to go to Ralph Vaughan Williams, the appointment was a bit of a surprise. Criticism of his work, and indeed, his style of music, was growing, and Bax was increasingly seen as old-fashioned. Composition of new music slowed considerably, until 1950 saw him fail to write any music at all. In 1952, his health beginning to fail, Bax was called upon to administer to the musical activities surrounding the death of King George VI, whose funeral he attended on the 15th of February. The coronation of Elizabeth required music, and Bax composed his final orchestral work, the *Coronation March*, completed on the 29th of November, 1952. It is generally believe that the rush to finish this work contributed to the decline in Bax's health.

Once these duties had been completed, Bax determined that he would leave England and public life and settle in Cork, Ireland, in the land he had come to love quite deeply. Parting ways with Harriet Cohen, he left for Ireland while she travelled to Venice to perform his new *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand* at a festival there. For a number of years, Bax had made an annual sojourn to Dublin to participate in the student examinations at the National University of Ireland, and also at the University of Cork. His involvement in these exams in September of 1953 proved to be sufficiently draining on his energies, and he waited quietly for Cohen to join him with news of the concerto performance. He confided to his Dublin host, a Dr Larchet, that he was tired and unwell, and was unable to take part in any social gathering.[23]

On September 29, Bax and the recently arrived Cohen attended a concert of Bax's works scheduled to coincide with the examinations at the National University. The principal work on this program was the *Left Hand Concerto* with Cohen as the soloist. The final work was *The Garden of Fand*. This, the work he identified as his favourite among his many compositions, was the last music that Bax heard.

[20] *Ibid*., pp. 59-62.
[21] Foreman, p. 307.
[22] *Ibid*.
[23] Scott-Sutherland, p. 186.

Bax and long-time friend Aloys Fleischman went on to Cork without Cohen, whom a chill prevented from traveling. After the exams in Cork concluded, Bax had a day-long outing in the country, a routine event on these trips upon which he insisted and enjoyed immensely. He spent part of the day looking out from the Old Head in Kinsale toward the sea, seemingly content and happy. Late in the day, though, he complained of being cold, and was quickly taken back to his room at the Fleischman's home, where he died of a pulmonary embolism shortly after 9:30 pm on October 3, 1953. He was interred at St. Finbarr's Cemetery, Cork, on October 6. One might find a poetic beauty in the thought that Bax spent part of his last day looking out to the sea, having last heard his musical tale of Cuchulain setting out for the world beyond that same sea.

During the 1960s, Bax's reputation was at its lowest. The broadcasting regime at the BBC was less sympathetic, and was far more interested in introducing the European avant-garde into Britain's musical life. There was little room for Bax and composers like him on the radio or in concerts at the Proms, despite regular letters of protest in the press from Bax enthusiasts.[24] Many in the press were equally unsympathetic. After a January 1962 performance at Festival Hall of *The Garden of Fand* conducted by Sir Adrian Boult, one critic wrote that the work 'attempts to disguise the banality of its material behind a screen of purple chromatics,' and also claimed that it 'offered a most embarrassing glimpse of one aspect of English musical culture.'[25]

In 1965, Harriet Cohen wrote a passionate letter to the Daily Telegraph in which she eloquently pleaded the cause for Bax's music. 'Might I beg,' she concludes, 'that while the fashionable Schoenberg and other "Serialists" are performed as much as they are, a great Englishman (late Master of the Musick) should not be kicked down in his grave.'[26] While nothing immediate or quantifiable came of this letter, Cohen's efforts attracted the attention of a number of Bax sympathizers, and the tide began to shift. Today, most of the composer's catalogue of works has been recorded, and performances are far less rare than they once were.

To conclude, a small quote from the conductor Vernon Handley might be appropriate, as he made the enlightened observation, 'A true Bax enthusiast is like all enthusiasts incensed at the failure of others to appreciate their man's true genius.'[27] After his death, many thought that Bax's music was to be forever lost at sea, his genius unappreciated, but much like the hero Cuchulain, perhaps our man still has victories yet to win.

---

[24] Foreman, p. 408.
[25] *Ibid*.
[26] *Ibid*., p. 409.
[27] Vernon Handley, "Back to Bax," *The Musical Times* 133, No. 1794 (August, 1992) p. 377.

An Unknown Major Choral Work by Dyson

On 13 March at St John's, Smith Square, London, the London Chorus and Durham University Choir with the New London Orchestra conducted by Ronald Corp will present the world premiere of Dyson's Choral Symphony "O Give Thanks Unto the Lord".

Not least the achievements of Paul Spicer's research into the life and music of Sir George Dyson (1883-1964) is the realisation that Dyson's Doctoral composition for Oxford University is a major work that has never been heard. This is Dyson's four movement setting of Psalm 107, *O Give Thanks Unto the Lord*, as a significant *Choral Symphony*, set for SATB soli, double chorus and orchestra. This forgotten major score was Dyson's Oxford DMus submission, composed in 1910, and it has been preserved in the Bodleian Library ever since Dyson submitted it and had been successfully awarded the degree in 1917. It has remained unheard for a century. The world première performance will take place at St John's, Smith Square on 13 March and should be well worth investigating. Before it is programmed Stanford's twenty-minute *Concert Piece for organ and orchestra* and Sir Thomas Allen will sing Vaughan Williams *Five Mystical Songs* with the choir.

Readers may remember that Dyson is of particular note for the way, coming from an industrial working-class background, he successfully reinvented himself and went on to be the voice of public school music and, in 1937, Director of the Royal College of Music, the first alumnus of the College to do so. In fact George Dyson was born in Halifax, West Yorkshire, and became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists at the amazingly early age of sixteen. Winning an open scholarship to the Royal College of Music in 1900, Dyson became a pupil of Sir Charles Villiers Stanford, then at the height of his influence as a composition teacher. In 1904 Dyson won the Mendelssohn Scholarship, and went to Italy, later journeying on to Vienna, Dresden and Berlin, where he met many of the leading musicians of the day. In London Nikisch conducted his early tone-poem *Siena*, which after several hearings is unfortunately now lost.

In his pioneering four-movement choral symphony (it just precedes Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony*) Dyson sets words taken from Psalm 107 with an extended orchestral introduction (the first half of the first movement) which Dyson refers to as an 'Overture'. The movements are:

I *Adagio – Allegro energico – Adagio e tranquillo*: "*O Give Thanks Unto the Lord"*
II *Allegro agitato ma non troppo – Quasi adagio e molto tranquillo – Allegretto cantabile*: "*They went astray in the wilderness"*
III *Largo – Un poco Andante*: "*Such as sit in darkness*"
IV *Allegro molto* "*They that go down to the sea in ships*"

Here we find scene painting writ large (of the Jews' seventy year exile at the hands of the Babylonians and their eventual return), reminding us of the circumstances of the story. It establishes the two contrasted moods of the work – the lamenting slow opening and the contrasted extended dramatic *Allegro energico* which follows. The music quietens and slows to the *Adagio e tranquillo* of the choral second half of the movement which is a surprising *pianissimo* setting of *O give thanks unto the Lord*, which with a large choir in eight parts is set in the manner of a fervent prayer, much as Benjamin Britten did in his much later arrangement of the National Anthem.

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is gracious,
and his mercy endureth for ever.
Let them give thanks whom the LORD hath redeemed,
and delivered from the hand of the enemy;
and gathered them out of the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.
O give thanks etc

The volume increases with 'Let them give thanks' rounded with a *fortissimo* statement from the orchestra before subsiding the returning *pianissimo* entry, at first sung by the women. The movement closes with complex choral counterpoint, characterised by different words in different

voices, before the *pianissimo* orchestral postlude. By and large I am writing about this from the vocal score and it is clear that in Dyson's orchestral treatment we have a work of enormous confidence and vivid orchestral imagination underlined by the varied textural treatment of the chorus, difficult to imagine at the piano.

The second movement is the *Scherzo*, *Allegro agitato ma non troppo* launched by the orchestra. The mood changes dramatically, the tonality being strikingly different – moving from four sharps to three flats (C minor). The choir is introduced gradually – at first by the basses singing 'They went astray in the wilderness'.

They went astray in the wilderness,
out of the way.
And found no city to dwell in,
Hungry and thirsty,
their soul fainted n them.
So they cried unto the Lord in their trouble,
and he delivered them from their distress.
He led them forth by the right way
that they might go to the city where they dwelt.

We have to thank Paul Spicer for pointing out that here Dyson quotes Reubke's organ *Sonata on the 94th Psalm*. (Psalm 94 *O Lord God, to whom vengeance belongeth* was perhaps Dyson's commentary on his text in a pre-First World War setting.) The tenors now repeat it before the choir enters a voice at a time starting with the women and an extended choral setting follows, notable for the textural contrast between sections. Eventually on a climax a sudden orchestral *pianissimo* heralds a quiet slow setting of 'and he delivered them from their distress'. An expressive orchestral presentation of the Reubke theme now heralds the soprano solo (Allegretto cantabile) 'O that men would therefore praise the Lord'.

The slow movement opens with a quiet twenty bar chromatic unison melody for the strings. Here the choral writing is much simpler, the choir's chordal statements of 'Such as sit in darkness' punctuated by orchestral links, the first repeating the Reubke theme. Eventually on a key-change we reach a faster middle section where, unaccompanied, the choir sing 'He delivered them out of their distress'. The orchestra powerfully introduces the solo quartet for the only time in the work. They are soon joined by the choir. The soloists only have seventeen bars – the bizarre scoring a requirement for Doctoral submissions which demanded candidates write soli in four parts in the third movement. Dyson is surely making clear his views on this by only treating the solo soprano at length.

The celebratory *Allegro molto* finale sets the familiar words 'They that go down to the sea in ships'. Dyson, writing in a world where Vaughan Williams's *A Sea Symphony* has not yet been performed and Debussy's *La Mer* had been first heard as recently as February 1908, is a strikingly fresh voice in depicting the sea in a familiar harmonic idiom. Here we have a breezy opening orchestral evocation underpinning the chorus now in four parts.

They that go down to the sea in ships,
and occupy their business in great waters;
These men see the works of the Lord,
and his wonders in the deep.
For at his word a stormy wind riseth,
which lifted up the waves of the sea.
They are carried up to the Heaven and down again to the deep;
their soul melted away in their trouble;
They reel to and fro and staggered like a drunken man.
and are at their wit's end.
So when they cry unto the Lord in their trouble,
he delivereth them from their distress.

Dyson is in his element in his orchestral depiction of the storm. An orchestral interlude leads us to the soprano solo (*Andante tranquillo*) 'For he maketh the storm to cease'. In the second half of the movement ('and declare the wonders he doeth') Dyson generates his fugal climax to the whole work, his choir now in eight parts. In a closing setting of 'Who is so wise', the soprano solo soars over the *pianissimo* choir with 'the loving kindness of the Lord'. This has the character of an epilogue, and the orchestra soon thunder out 16 glorious bars and a final gesture of dismissal.

This looks to be a very special occasion. For me it is un-missable; I hope you feel the same.

(Paul Spicer's book on Dyson is due to be published by The Boydell Press in May)

Bax: *Variations for Orchestra*

Planning the opening concert of this year's English Music Festival (announced for 23 May), conductor Martin Yates has opted to end the programme with the world première of Arnold Bax's very early orchestral *Variations (Improvisations) for Orchestra*. During the 1970s, when I was researching my book on Arnold Bax I was very fortunate in being able to visit Bax's sister Evelyn, then in her late eighties, and in fact I was able to give her a copy of the book when it was first published, in 1983. In fact she died the following year at the age of 97. Evelyn Bax had remarkable recall of events over seventy years before, and not only was she a mine of information about the early family life of her brother, but she gave me a variety of family photographs and the manuscripts of several very early unplayed works of Bax, then considered only of antiquarian interest. Among them was the full score, in Bax's hand, of his early *Symphonic Variations* which on closer inspection turns out to be a delightful and tuneful score, albeit not entirely in Bax's mature style. It has been on my shelves ever since and we have to thank Graham Parlett for inputting the score to Sibelius software and producing the orchestral parts so that it can be performed in May. This introductory article is based on listening to a synthesised computer 'performance' with Bax's manuscript in hand!

The manuscript is dated 10 June 1904, and in February 1905 Bax's composition professor, Frederick Corder, submitted it along with other scores by Royal Academy of Music composers when the Royal College asked for worthy scores by young composers to be considered for the Patron's Fund rehearsal in May 1905. Bax's score was selected for play-through, though composer Edward German, one of the examiners, commented 'Eccentric, very!'. How exciting to think that the manuscript I have in my hand was also handled by Edward German and Stanford, and Bax actually conducted from it.

The play-through at the RCM was an occasion which caused the over-sensitive Bax considerable discomfort and is vividly described in his autobiography *Farewell, My Youth*. Bax wrote:

> '… a letter arrived from the Royal College charging me to present myself there on a certain day in May for the rehearsal of my work … The day came round (that sort of day always does!) and with it the beginning of a blistering heat-wave.
>
> Now, hitherto I had never been near the R.C.M., and I had no idea of its manners and customs, though I always had a vague notion that it was a more aristocratic and pompous place than our old Academy. Quite likely, baronets and others of high degree abounded there. How, I asked myself, should one be dressed in the presence of Sir Hubert Parry? After careful deliberation I decided to be on the safe side and to array myself in my seldom worn frock-coat and tall hat.
>
> The heat was intense during my journey to Kensington Gore, and I arrived at the intimidating portals of the R.C.M. already perspiring not a little. Shyly entering the concert hall, I started back, appalled at finding the place crammed with students and visitors. It appeared that I had come in the nick of time, for Sir Charles Stanford approached me at once, and said brusquely, "So here ye are, you're Bax, aren't you? Well now, ye can go up there and work your wicked will on the orchestra."

> At these dreadful words my knees knocked together and I stammered out in a very small voice, "But I have never conducted in my life". "Never mind that", retorted the ruthless Stanford. "You've got to begin some time, my bhoy. Go on with ye." There was nothing for it but to obey.
>
> Over-harrowing it would be to resuscitate in any detail the pity and terror of that scene. I would naturally conduct with my left hand, and I probably did so then. But I really don't know, and from these words the perspicacious reader will have foreseen that in all my life I have never consented to handle the baton again. The embarrassment, the horror I endured on that sweltering after-noon! The orchestra players, I must admit, were stoically long-suffering, and only once did a politely ironic voice query, "Excuse me, but are you beating in twos or threes?" After some forty-five minutes of mental and physical misery Stanford applied the closure, and I stumbled off the platform, not far from collapse. "Ye look warm, young man", observed C.V.S., and taking me aside chatted very amiably for some time, incidentally giving me no doubt excellent advice on the subject of conductor's technique. But I remember nothing of that discourse, nor would it have served me in after life, for as I have said, in that hour I made my firm resolve, "Never again!" To crown it all I had donned the detested garb of bourgeois respectability to no purpose except to make myself as hot and uncomfortable as I have ever been in all my days. For Parry was not there.'

Bax kept his promise to himself and always refused to conduct his own music after this. The *Variations* were not heard at the concert and have never been performed. (I am grateful to Graham Parlett for researching London temperatures in May 1905 which would seem to indicate this was on Friday 26 or Monday 29 May.)

The music occupies 115 pages of full score manuscript and the binding is gold tooled on the front with the date of Bax's 21st birthday, 8 November 1904. It is the only manuscript. Best estimates indicate it should run around 25 or 26 minutes. The score falls into eight sections:

Moderato Allegro [the statement and initial; elaboration of the theme] 3½pages
Variation I: *Allegro moderato*; 9½ pages
Variation 2: *L'istesso tempo*; 7½ pages
Variation 3: *Andante con moto*; 11½ pages
Variation 4: *Tempo di Valsero*; 21½ pages
Variation 5: *Burlesque* (*Allegretto scherzando*); 17½ pages
Variation 6: *Allegretto e simplice*; 10 pages
Finale: *Allegro vivace*. 34 pages

There are moments of stage Irishry – Bax was not yet complete sure how to evoke his newly discovered love of Ireland in music that is personal to him. But in his woodwind writing he is remarkably successful in finding much of his mature orchestral style and the work is full of good tunes including the extended 8½-minute Finale which is crowned by an organ solo.

Now that we have Bax's 1907 *Symphony in F*, thanks to Martin Yates's masterly orchestral realization of the surviving short score, we have heard the symphony's third movement, an extended waltz-time piece. This was a tempo Bax only rarely used in his later serious works, yet here in the fourth of these early variations we have another delightful waltz from Bax's pen, and clearly the precursor of the more elaborate use of waltz-time in the symphony.

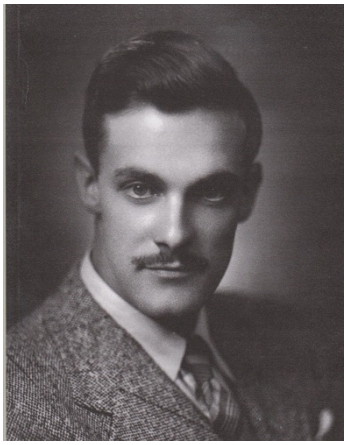
When the Patron's Fund Concert took place at Queen's Hall on 29 June 1905 Bax was not one of the seven composers included and so it will be of great interest (to me at least) to actually hear this first extended orchestral score by Bax when it is given its World première performance by the BBC Concert Orchestra, albeit 110 years after it was written!

(The extract from *Farewell, My Youth* is reproduced by permission of the Bax Estate, to whom many thanks)

Obituaries

John Whitworth

The countertenor John Whitworth, who has died aged 91, was second only to Alfred Deller in prominence during the countertenor revival that took place in the late 1940s and 1950s. Based in London as an alto lay-vicar in the Westminster Abbey choir, he was conveniently on hand for concerts, recitals, broadcasts and recordings, not only as a singer but also as a choir director.



John Anthony Whitworth was born in Ely, Cambridgeshire, where his father was a potato merchant. The Second World War intervened between school (Kimbolton) and university and John volunteered for the RAF as a flight mechanic – in Canada from 1941, but returning to Europe in time to celebrate VE Day in Paris. Following demobilization in 1946 he became a choral scholar in the choir of King's College Cambridge under the director of music Boris Ord. Whitworth was a new arrival, but many of his colleagues had been there before the War and were now returning from the Services to finish their courses, older, wiser and more mature, musically as well as personally; as the then organ scholar David Willcocks recalls, "we all got on well together; it was a happy team". Ord described this time as "the golden age of the choir".

Whitworth was appointed to Westminster Abbey in 1949 and stayed for 22 years, initially supplementing his income by teaching music at St Mary's School Reigate. But the vocal demands on a schoolmaster were not conducive to mellifluous daily singing and, after a spell at the Abbey choir school teaching mathematics, he worked with other professional choirs and ensembles – such as the Golden Age Singers and the Well-Tempered Singers – and became increasingly in demand as a soloist. Concurrently with his time at Westminster Abbey, he was also organist of Christ Church Chelsea (1964-5) and St Paul's Covent Garden (1965-70), and from 1965-71 a professor at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

In the early 1950s he met Michael Howard, eventually to become organist of Ely Cathedral, who in 1944 founded the Renaissance Singers "to promote a proper liturgical revival of the music of the great masters of the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Restoration Schools". Howard began with contraltos taking the alto line but "try what I might, this was never truly acceptable" and soon he made the momentous decision to use male altos, triumphantly justified by "the sheer virtuosity of John Whitworth's singing". When in 1953 Michael Howard did go to Ely, it was to Whitworth that he turned for advice on developing the boys' voices. One of them, the head boy Howard Thomas, remarked: "We used to sing like girls. Now it is going in the right direction".

Michael Howard in his memoirs describes Whitworth as "the greatest eminence (not gris but for good) in the progress of my life", while John himself acknowledged a particular debt of gratitude to the inspirational Henry Washington, director of music at the Brompton Oratory, from whom he learnt so much. When in 1965 Howard for personal reasons resigned the conductorship of the Renaissance Singers, he was succeeded (until 1971) by Whitworth, who also sang in Howard's new ensemble, Cantores in Ecclesia – similar to the original group but with a wider remit.

In these various guises – and in addition to his daily duties at Westminster Abbey – there were concerts, over 100 broadcasts and many recordings. In the recordings his artistry lives on, perhaps most famously in Purcell's ode *Come, ye sons of art*, in the duet *Sound the trumpet!*, with Alfred Deller, where two somewhat different countertenor voices both complement and contrast with each other to thrilling effect. Another, less well known perhaps, is Whitworth's superb singing of *This is the record of John*, by Orlando Gibbons, on the 1958 LP Music for the Feast of Christmas.

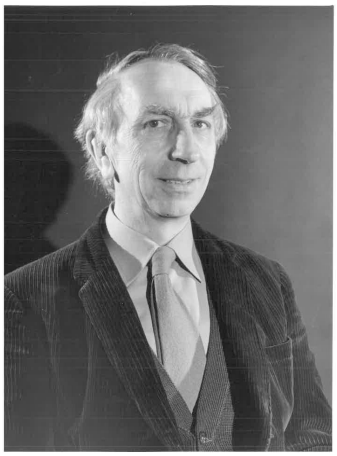
If all of this sounds unremittingly highfalutin, it must be recorded that John had the most wonderful deadpan sense of humour, not least in two of his party pieces: his imitation of Clara Butt singing *Land of Hope and Glory* and of a cinema organ playing *Love's Old Sweet Song* (*Just a Song at Twilight*). At a Stratford-upon-Avon Festival production of *The Fairy Queen* in March 1964 he and Robert Tear gave "a delightfully comic rendering of the travesty love-scene for Corydon and Mopsa". He also composed some catches for travellers, whose words, taken from notices then to be found in various forms of public transport, admonished passengers not to spit, or lean out of the window, in various European languages. His brilliant setting of *The Mermaid*, for the King's Singers, he self-deprecatingly dismisses as "a piece of nautical nonsense". More seriously, he made many performing editions of music from the Middle Ages onwards, from manuscripts in the British Library, and contributed articles to scholarly journals.

In 1971 he left London to become assistant music adviser to Leicestershire Education Authority, where he "made a crucial contribution to the development of amateur music making in the county" and was still involved in local music as a teacher and performer after his formal retirement, while still finding time to indulge his passion for aircraft and vintage cars.

(Originally published in *The Independent*, 16 September 2013)

Antony Roper

The composer Antony Roper died on 27th May 2013. He was born in Cambridge on 18th January 1921, his father being a GP whose medical practice was in Lensfield Road in the city. He was educated at The Leys School in Cambridge and St. John's College Cambridge, where he read music and English and was taught by Robin Orr. His university studies were interrupted by the war, as he was called up in 1941, joining the Royal Navy, where he worked on high frequency direction finding.



He completed his studies at Cambridge after the war, before attending the Royal College of Music, where he studied under Herbert Howells. He worked for some years as a freelance music critic, continuing to live in Cambridge, but subsequently moved into teaching in respectively Leek, Birmingham and finally Stafford, where he taught both English and music at the Stafford College of Further Education until his retirement at the age of 63, when he was able to compose full time.

His works include concertos for violin and cello, an orchestral *Overture for a Celebration*, sonatas with piano for euphonium (which entered the Associated Board examination lists), clarinet, violin and recorder, as well as a quantity of songs and chamber music (the latter including *Serenata Variata*, written for the ensemble Jeux, and a Trio for clarinet viola and piano). Several of his works have been published and commercially recorded.

His wife Corina was a singer whom he met at the Cambridge Philharmonic Society. She died in 2011. Both of them were ardent cat lovers, and his friends were intrigued frequently to receive correspondence with a sticker "from Puss Roper"!

Antony Roper left two children, Catherine Cammock (who will look after his musical legacy) and Simon Roper.

Concert & Recital Reviews

The Songs I Had..

Jeremy Gibson's theatrical portrait of Ivor Gurney *The Songs I Had..* was performed in Bath at the Mission Theatre in May 2012. It is a remarkable piece of work, which plunges us instantly into Gurney's world from the fractured perspective of the asylum years. Jeremy Gibson, who writes and directs the play, has found a fascinating and truly exploratory way of introducing a wide range of Gurney's songs, poems and letters, which one can only describe as Brechtian; that is to say, with a minimum of scenic suggestions (often introduced by the characters as they appear), a clothes rail with some costumes and props on it, a bed, a chair etc. The bed in the asylum can also change into the bed in the army barracks while he is waiting to go to the Front, or horrifyingly, into the barbed wire on which one of his friends hangs, having been shot by rifle fire.

The text as a whole could almost work equally well as a radio play, a form that Gibson is well used to. This somewhat alienating technique works wonderfully with the neo-romantic nature of the material, that quality which draws Gurney close to Housman, Butterworth and Finzi, and which can sometimes feel rather insular and cut off from the European Modernism of the same period, as found in the work of Apollinaire, Trakl, Aragon, Tzara or Berg.

Sometimes the songs are introduced as part of Gurney's memories, or seem to come from a concert performance of them on the radio, and the singer advances onto the stage, heartlessly, into the Asylum bedroom, and proceeds to sing directly to the audience.

There are visits from Gurney's great friend and promoter, Marion Scott, as well as, towards the end of the play, from his brother Ronald. The section set in the Great War, using mainly work written at the time, is particularly poignant, (after his army training and drill with a broom!), especially those letters which describe his dream of an ideal Cotswold cottage with a large music room where he could compose and write. His budding infatuation for Annie Drummond, a nurse at the Scottish hospital where he is recuperating after being gassed in the trenches, is very touchingly evoked with the poems, songs and letters he wrote to, and about her; similarly moving is the description of the onset of his madness, as he tries to explain it to Marion Scott, in the face of his somewhat unfeeling brother Ronald. The whole piece works by post-impressionist touches, with constantly intelligent pacing of dramatic moments and opportunities for allowing Gurney's own words and notes to speak for themselves.

Matt Nation, an actor who looks uncannily like the poet/composer, plays Gurney brilliantly, and makes us shudder as he writes to Vaughan Williams at the start of the play: 'get me Death, for Death I long for...'. He is admirably accompanied by Andrew Fletcher, who plays a

variety of roles (an asylum nurse, a private at the Front, Gurney's brother etc.), and Richard Frewer is the Singer, whose stylish, slightly old-fashioned singing is admirably suited to the period atmosphere and the dramatic intention of the piece. Louise Wallace plays Gurney's friend Marion Scott and Annie Drummond is played by Harriet Pocock.

Gurney's is a considerable talent, and he continues to attract and draw attention as one of the few poets who also composed his own songs, like the great Elizabethans Campion and Dowland, as well as offering a very distinctive picture and testimony of the horrors of the Great War.

(A DVD of the play is now available from Mynstrallsy Press, 76 Lower Oldfield Park, Bath BA2 3HP for £11 inc. postage)

© Ian Burton, November 2013

Anthony Burgess – *The Man and his Music*

A gathering to celebrate the launch of two CDs on the Métier label by Divine Art (*Mixed Doubles* – Double Concertos by Gordon Crosse and John Manduell / Anthony Burgess – *The Man and his Music*) at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation, Manchester, 15 September 2013

Though Anthony Burgess's reputation in the literary world is considerable, his musical activities as a composer are far less well known. Yet Burgess himself considered his compositions of more significance than his writing. The International Anthony Burgess Foundation was set up by his widow Liana in 2003, and its central Manchester base is in The Engine House in one of the city's oldest mill buildings. It contains an extensive library, study centre, cafe and performance space. Paintings, furniture and musical instruments that belonged to Burgess can be seen throughout the building, and the collections hold books, papers and manuscripts relating to his life, writing and music. It was an ideal venue for an event celebrating the launch of two double CDs on the Métier label by Divine Art, one of which includes premier recordings of works by Burgess. The other features double concertos by Gordon Crosse and John Manduell.

After a warm welcome by Will Carr, the Foundation's Deputy Director, there was a brief introductory talk by David Wordsworth, musical advisor to the Burgess Foundation, in which he noted the quantity of Burgess's music that remains in manuscript, but which is gradually being examined and edited for performance. Stephen Sutton, the founder of Divine Art, explained the label's continuing dedication to the recording of significant but unfamiliar repertoire to bring it to a wider audience.

A short programme of music followed. Matthew Jones gave the first performance of Gordon Crosse's *A Wee Study* for solo viola, a work in which energy and lyricism alternate, and containing hints of thematic material shared with the viola concerto (played by Matthew Jones on one of the CDs being launched). Another Gordon Crosse premiere, *A Ground* for recorder and harp, was given by John Turner and Anna Christensen. The delicacy of this appealing scoring unfolded over a ground that seemed familiar yet somehow elusive – a particular skill of Crosse! John Manduell's *Prayers from the Ark* for solo clarinet, is founded on poems by Carmen Bernos de Gasztold, which the composer has also set for voice, recorder and guitar. However, in this work, in which the essence of the prayers of the animals is captured in purely instrumental terms, the recitation of the poems as a prelude to each is indispensable, and it was a great delight that Sir John himself was present to do so. The prayers of goldfish, ox, glow worm, elephant and giraffe are offered in colourful music, compellingly played by Linda Merrick, the bass clarinet giving particular character to those of ox and elephant. In imagining the prayers of the animals in human terms Bernos de Gasztold has perhaps revealed something of our own frailties! Among Anthony Burgess's compositions is a significant number for recorder, these having been written for his son Andrew Burgess Wilson. It is apparent that Burgess sometimes did not always consider the practical range of the recorder, and a certain amount of editing is required to enable performance. Nevertheless, the exercise provides its reward in very individual and creative music, and this was revealed in John Turner and Harvey Davies's performance of Burgess's *Sonatina for recorder and piano*, written in about 1990. The work is contained in two separate portions of manuscript and in which the slow movement is incomplete. However, Burgess later used it as the slow movement of his second sonata for great bass recorder, and this enabled David Beck to make a convincing reconstruction using descant recorder, onto which it fits comfortably.

Welcome refreshments were then served and enjoyed amidst convivial conversation in this unique and inspiring venue. It is to be hoped that the event (supported by funding from the Ida Carroll Trust) will, in addition to launching two significant CDs, stimulate further interest and, importantly, performance of Anthony Burgess's music.

© Andrew Mayes, October 2013

Death in Venice

Opera North; Leeds Grand Theatre.

'It's the best or worst music I've ever written.' So wrote a physically weakened Benjamin Britten about his final opera, *Death in Venice*. This powerful moving production from Opera North totally dispels any lingering doubts the composer might first have wrongly had. This is mature Britten at his very best. A highly-charged reception from an appreciative Leeds Grand audience, including many Britten devotees, heavily endorses this view. Opera North is England's national opera company of the North, based in Leeds, and shines out a dazzling beam in support of the region's thriving provincial culture.

Opera North's 2013 Festival of Britten toured Britain to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth. Here is overwhelming proof that astounding arts

creativity is alive and thriving, north of Watford Gap. A simple decking set, subtle lighting and clever background film combine to illustrate how finely-tuned minimalism can set live opera alight with a stunning affect. Precise, finely-timed, accompaniment from a swaggering percussion-led orchestra, partnered by near-perfect solo and choral contributions, make up a heady cocktail of potent music, drama and dance.

The moving impact of Britten's final opera and the composer's own emotional struggles partly answers that persistent question: How much did the ailing composer identify with Gustav von Aschenbach, the central tenor in this opera based on the 1912 novella written by author Thomas Mann?

In this production, directed by Japan's Yoshi Oida, Aschenbach is convincingly portrayed by the experienced Alan Oke. His assured and robust tenor voice shows great stamina and commitment as he negotiates his way faultlessly through Britten's demanding score. *Death in Venice* is a vintage Britten music-dramatic achievement, with specific passages referencing his earlier operas. There are flashes of them all here: *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, *Albert Herring*, *Our Hunting Fathers* and *Gloriana*. Britten also adapts techniques perfected in this work's immediate predecessor, *Owen Redgrave*. *Death in Venice* is arguably illustrates Britten's inner-monologue, almost certainly his own auto-biography inspired by Mann's novella. This deeply thought-provoking opera follows Aschenbach's struggle to capture real love and provide the answer to writers' block. Brass snarls, violins scream and percussion hammers home his fateful search for eternal youth and beauty.

The multi-talented Peter Savidge (baritone) boasts one of the most versatile voices to have ever played the key parts demanded by this opera. Whether a barber or gondolier, his audio-acting never waivers as he confidently delivers seven different dramatic demands. He shows great confidence in painting a colourful spectrum of menacing characters, all harbingers of doom. Well-toned and well-disciplined choruses are a harmonic delight. The dancing and balletic, indeed athletic, movements provided a welcome glimpse of lightness amid Britten's dark relentless message. Tadzio, the Polish boy representing Aschenbach's desire for beauty, however intangible, was seductively played a female (Emily Mezieres). Her mute role had a pertinent sweet impact.

Britten, when writing this piece, deteriorated in health. Racked by depression and self-doubt, he succinctly shows how vulnerable innocence can descend into tragedy in this brilliantly-staged model of music and movement. His life-long love, Peter Pears once was heard to say of *Death in Venice*: 'Ben is writing an evil opera and its killing him.' And sadly it did in the end. Britten died shortly after finishing this work.

How lucky we are to have the chance to witness such compelling productions like this which eternalise Britten. A British-born genius for the whole world to enjoy.

© Chris Bye, October 2013

CD & Book Reviews

The Man and his Music **Metier-msv 77202**
Recorder music by Anthony Burgess and his contemporaries
John Turner (recorder), Harvey Davies (piano)

Everyone knows that the author Anthony Burgess wrote the novel *A Clockwork Orange*, made into a cult film by Stanley Kubrick, as well as numerous other novels and writings. But most people do not realise that he was also a prolific composer. In the later part of his life he wrote several recorder works for his only son Andrew Burgess Wilson, who played both oboe and recorder, and I have recorded several of these for the first time, with Harvey Davies (piano), on a new double CD release on the Metier label, in collaboration with the International Anthony Burgess Centre in Manchester. Other works on the disc are in the main unknown or very rarely played, and I thought that readers might be interested in some of the sleeve material for the discs, including the note about Burgess as a composer by the Foundation's musical adviser David Wordsworth, which is as follows:

'There are littered through musical history several examples of composers who also turned their hand to writing. Berlioz and Schumann are perhaps the most famous examples, Virgil Thomson nearer our own time – all elegant and brilliant writers on the subject of music. Thinking of writers who also turned their hand to musical composition, even dabbling in the art of putting notes on paper in the way others might collect stamps or coins is more difficult. In this respect Anthony Burgess is almost unique at least in terms of his vast musical output. More than once Burgess expressed the hope that he might be remembered as much for his music as for his writing – 'I'm really a composer, you know' he was often heard to say. The determination and single-mindedness that Burgess showed is nothing short of remarkable. His father refused to pay for piano lessons and having been turned down to study music at Manchester University and teaching himself, alongside his voluminous literary output, Burgess also managed to find the time to write over 250 musical works. These range from piano music and songs to concerti, 3 symphonies, a huge setting of Gerard Manley Hopkins's *The Wreck of the Deutschland*; works for the stage, including an operetta *Blooms of Dublin* based on Joyce's *Ulysses* and an interest in writing music for some of the more neglected instruments such as the guitar, recorder and tuba.

Burgess described his music as 'post tonal' – perhaps 'neo-romantic' might be a more accurate description in an age when attaching labels to a composer is as important as the music itself. A turning point was hearing Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* as a child, an experience that opened up a whole new world and left him with a life-long love of Debussy and Ravel. The other choices Burgess made when he was a guest on the iconic radio programme *Desert Island Discs* might help to describe the aesthetic of Burgess the composer –

alongside Debussy's masterpiece was music by Purcell, Bach, Wagner and perhaps more interestingly from the point of view of Burgess' own music, Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Constant Lambert and William Walton. Much to the frustration of the composer, very little of his music was heard in his lifetime, but this is slowly changing thanks to the encouragement of the International Anthony Burgess Foundation. The music is slowly seeing the light of day and this remarkable polymath must be looking down on this renewed activity with much satisfaction.'

There are four Burgess recorder works on the discs:

Sonatina (?1990 – reconstruction of the 2nd movement by David Beck)

Anthony Burgess's only son, Andrew Burgess Wilson, was born (as Paolo-Andrea Macellari) to his mistress Liliana Macellari (later his second wife) in 1964. Andrew began playing the oboe and cor anglais in his teens, and his father wrote many works for him, including a *Rhapsody for oboe and piano*, a *Quartet for oboe and strings*, and concertos for both oboe and cor anglais. In the late 1980s Andrew gave up the oboe, and turned to the recorder, resulting in his father writing a plethora of music for that instrument, which continued until his death, mid-flow in a recorder sonata, in 1993. Andrew himself died in 2002. The first recorder work of any consequence composed for Andrew was this *Sonatina*. The manuscript is undated but it was probably composed in or about 1990, in all likelihood written in emulation of the sonatinas for recorder by Lennox Berkeley and others, dating from around 1939, which form the cornerstone of the twentieth century repertoire for the instrument. The first movement was published in facsimile in 2000 by the American Recorder Society, and at that time it was thought that movement was the only extant part of the *Sonatina*. However in the archives at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Centre at the University of Texas in Austin there is a manuscript of the finale and the third and final page of the slow movement. This slow movement was however later used as the basis for the middle movement of the second sonata for great bass recorder, which is dated 18th September 1992 (the tune itself originally came from Burgess's *Piano Concerto*), and so it was possible for David Beck to reconstruct the missing portion with some degree of confidence. The first complete performance of the *Sonatina* was given by John Turner and Harvey Davies at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester on 16th September 2012.

Tre Pezzetti

The second and third of these short pieces were published by Saga Music in 1994, but the whereabouts of the manuscript is unknown. The separate manuscript of the first piece is at Austin, and since it shares its melodic material and comparatively simple style with the third piece it has been here added to them to make a short suite.

Sonata No. 1 (1990)

This work, dated Good Friday 1990, was published by Da Capo Music at the instigation of Andrew Burgess Wilson in 1992. The published score contains the following 'composer's note' – 'This piece was written in 1990 for my son Andrew, one of the few great bass recorder players. There seemed to be no existing compositions for this instrument, and this brief sonata is meant to be the first of a possible repertoire. It may also be played on other recorders in C, or on a bassoon.' In fact Burgess went on to write another three sonatas for great bass recorder and piano, a sonata for great bass recorder violin and piano, and two sonatas for treble recorder and piano (he was working on a third when he died). By all accounts Andrew was not a virtuoso player of either the oboe or the recorder, and one feels that the composer wrote these late works purely for his own inner ear, as there is a frequent disregard for matters of balance, technique, instrumental character, and, even more fundamentally, range (both upper and lower limits are frequently ignored). So in this recording the outer movements are played on a descant recorder (a C instrument and so presumably acceptable to the composer) whereas the gentle slow movement is played on the treble recorder, to which the music is in character. To quote from Paul Phillips' study *A Clockwork Counterpoint* (University of Manchester Press, 2010) – 'Given the fact that many of Burgess's works for …. recorder ignore practical performance considerations, and are ill-suited to [the instrument], one is forced to wonder what he could have meant by writing such unplayable pieces for his son … Did he scorn the boy's limitations by dedicating works to him that he knew Andrew would never be able to play?' Be that as it may, the musical material of this sonata is strong, memorable, and entirely suited to the instruments here used.

Siciliano

This short but beguiling piece for tenor recorder is to be found among the composer's manuscripts at the University of Texas in Austin. The manuscript is undated, and the circumstances of its composition, or whether it was intended to form part of a larger work, are unknown.

The other works on the discs will also be of interest to recorder players, as all are first recordings. The works by Pope and Seiber are published by Schott (the Seiber *Pastorale* is currently in the press), and several of the other works are available in my series with Peacock Press.

Sonata (2005) Nicholas Marshall

Blithe Spirit (2000) Alan Gibbs

The Thing with Feathers (2010) Gordon Crosse

Sonatine, Op. 4 (1953) Wilfred Josephs

The Untamed has a Language but no words (2012) Barry Ferguson

Sonata (2011) David Dubery

Interludes from Hamlet Alan Rawsthorne, arr. David Ellis

Alan Rawsthorne was one of the most distinguished British composers of the twentieth century. Born in Haslingden, Lancashire, in 1905, he attempted

unsuccessfully to study first dentistry and secondly architecture, but eventually followed his natural inclination towards music and enrolled as a student at the Royal Manchester College of Music in 1928 to study cello, piano and composition. He subsequently studied piano under Egon Petri in Zakopane. As a composer, he came to public attention in 1938 when his *Theme and Variations for two violins* was performed in the London Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music, and international success followed in 1939 when his masterly *Symphonic Studies* were performed in Warsaw as part of the ISCM Festival in that city. His list of compositions includes three symphonies, two piano concertos, two violin concertos, concertos for clarinet, oboe, cello and two pianos, as well as three string quartets and a quantity of other chamber music for both string and wind instruments. In addition there is a comparatively small but rich harvest of piano works, and a few songs and other vocal music. His film scores, including *The Captive Heart*, *The Cruel Sea*, *Pandora* and the *Flying Dutchman*, *Uncle Silas*, *West of Zanzibar*, and *Where No Vultures Fly* are regarded as classics of the genre. Alan Rawsthorne died in Cambridge in 1971.

Rawsthorne was, along with Lennox Berkeley, Franz Reizenstein, Walter Leigh and others, one of the composers whose compositions for the recorder were instigated in 1938/9 by Manuel Jacobs, and the *Suite for recorder and piano*, rediscovered and identified in 1992, has now entered the instrument's standard repertoire. However this *Suite* was not the only work of the composer featuring the recorder. Rawsthorne also used the instrument in the incidental music that he composed for the 1961 Stratford-upon-Avon production of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and the present arrangement allows this other recorder music to be heard after more than forty years in obscurity. The remainder of the incidental music to the drama was performed by a wind band conducted by Brian Priestman, and many of the items composed for the wind band are quite short, sometimes merely a few bars in duration, to accommodate the dramatic action.

The edition for recorder and piano, by the composer David Ellis, which includes the recorder music, draws from the more substantial elements of the score, linked by a fanfare which immediately reflects the emotional conflict central to Shakespeare's drama with its clash of close tonalities.

The sequence begins with the *Danish March*, incorporating one of the songs for Ophelia – sad and wistful; then some on-stage music for lute and recorder, melodic and decorative. The most substantial section in Rawsthorne's score is the *Dumb Show*; Hamlet's reconstruction of his uncle's infamy – the seduction of his mother and the murder of his father. Finally, there is a reprise of the *Danish March* still dominated by unresolved harmony.

Interludes from Hamlet was first performed at the Purcell Room, London, on 3rd May 2005, by John Turner (recorder) and John McCabe (piano), in a Park Lane Group concert celebrating the centenaries of the composers Alan Rawsthorne, Constant Lambert and William Alwyn.

Sonatina alla Fantasia (1951) Roy Heaton Smith

Sarabande (?1950) Herbert Murrill

Herbert Murrill was born in 1909 in London, and studied at the Royal Academy of Music under York Bowen and Alan Bush. He became Head of Music for the BBC and professor of composition at the Royal Academy. He is principally remembered today for the evening service popularly known as *Murrill in E*, but his slender output included two cello concertos, a string quartet, an opera, various songs, and a small quantity of piano and chamber music (particularly with cello, his wife's instrument).

Murrill's recorder sonata is one of the best loved and most frequently played twentieth century repertoire works for they instrument. It was written for Carl Dolmetsch in 1950. On 1st January in that year Murrill wrote to Dolmetsch asking 'if any particular sort of piece suits your purpose best', and gave three alternatives – (1) a sort of slow (pastoral) thing, (2) a *Pavane* and *Galliard* (truly English form) and (3) a miniature three movement sonatina. Dolmetsch obviously plumped for the latter; although the work is described as a sonata, it is in fact a miniature one ('this very small ship of mine' as Murrill described it). Murrill died in 1952 and the present *Sarabande* was published posthumously the following year. On the cover page it is described as *Sarabande (A Christmas Greeting for Pau Casals) for cello and piano*. Instrumental parts for violin, viola and cello were published with the score, and were stated to be 'edited for [violin/viola/cello]' by Watson Forbes, the distinguished viola player.

Curiously the instrumental line in the score is in the treble clef and just marked 'violin', leading to the suspicion that the Sarabande was not originally a cello piece. There are no double stops and no bowings, which might have been expected in a work for a stringed instrument, and all three separate parts include some octave transpositions. When the writer acquired a copy of the piece and looked at the instrumental line in the score, it was apparent that this line, consistently transposed up an octave, fitted the treble recorder like a glove, being extremely idiomatic as well perfect in range (Murrill played the recorder, an instrument having been given to him by Dolmetsch). The writer surmised that in fact this was the 'slow (pastoral) thing' suggested to Dolmetsch by Murrill, and which he had possibly already then written. This conclusion is fortified by internal evidence of the music, including voice leading and balance. The first performance of what is probably the original version of the *Sarabande* was given by John Turner and David Dubery at Chetham's School on 23rd September 2012. Hopefully this little gem of a piece can now rightfully enter the repertoire of recorder players as well as cellists.

Sonatina (1939/48) Peter Pope

Peter Pope was born in 1917, and studied composition under John Ireland at the Royal College of Music, as well

as piano with Cyril Smith. In 1939 he won an Octavia Travelling Scholarship to study under Nadia Boulanger in Paris, and was one of her favoured students. When Paris was invaded in 1940 he escaped by crossing France and returned to England on a Spanish trawler. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps and saw service in North Africa. He started to develop a reputation for his works in Britain after the war (a piano quartet performed at the Wigmore Hall elicited glowing reviews) but he then joined an exclusive religious sect which prohibited involvement with the creative arts. When he left the sect in 1971 it was too late to re-launch his career, though he resumed composition prolifically (his later works do in fact include another recorder sonatina). His works include a *Clarinet Concerto*, a *Concertino for flute and string trio*, several piano sonatas, sonatas for flute, clarinet, saxophone, violin, viola, and cello (all with piano) and for piano duet, as well as much chamber music and many songs. He died in 1991. The (first) *Recorder Sonatina* is his only commercially published work. It was one of the group of compositions energised by Manuel Jacobs in 1939 (with the encouragement of Carl Dolmetsch and Edgar Hunt) and which form the bedrock of the modern British recorder repertoire. It was first performed in 17th June 1939 at a studio meeting at the home of Sir Robert Mayerin St. John's Wood, by Edgar Hunt and Joseph Saxby. Other works in the concert were the *Sonatina* by Lennox Berkeley (a personal friend of Pope) and the (now lost) *Suite* by Christian Darnton. It was revised by the composer for publication in 1948.

The fleet first movement is in 7/4 throughout, though the rhythmic groupings vary constantly and frequently between the two instruments. Two fluid themes are alternated, the first being treated fugally after the exposition. The second movement is marked *teneramente*, and the simple but constantly evolving melody is accompanied throughout by a sophisticated tissue of harmony. The final is a speedy but extremely delicate dance in rondo form.

Sonata all Danza (2011/12) Dick Blackford

Sonata (2007) Christopher Wright

Pastorale (1941) Mátyás Seiber

Mátyás Seiber was born in Budapest in 1905 and died in South Africa in 1960. He studied under Kodaly at the Budapest Academy of Music, and established a ground breaking course in jazz at the Frankfurt Hoch Conservatory, while making a name for himself as both conductor and cellist. He settled in England in 1935, and his contribution to the musical life of his adopted country was immense, as teacher, administrator, and composer. His works range from pop songs and film scores, via folk music arrangements for amateur choirs, to arresting and listenable dodecaphonic scores. His cantatas *Ulysses* and *Three Fragments from A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* are particularly highly regarded.

The present piece was originally composed for recorder and string trio in 1941. In the following year Seiber made a version for flute adding an extra movement at the instigation of Walter Goehr, to create for the flautist Gareth Morris *Pastorale and Burlesque for flute and strings*, and for the publication of that he made a piano version of the accompaniment to both pieces. The circumstances in which the original recorder version of the *Pastorale* came to be written are not clear (there is no dedicatee), though it is probably an accurate speculation that it was written at the instigation of Walter Bergmann for the Schott recorder catalogue which was being substantially developed at that time. The work has echoes of the folk music of the composer's native Hungary. The first performance of this version was given by John Turner and Janet Simpson, in a concert given under the auspices of the Seiber Trust at Fitzwilliam College Cambridge on 14th April 2010.

Joie de Vivre (2009) John Sullivan

Vaughan Williams; Edmund Rubbra - 'Rune of Hospitality', Songs sung by Mark Chambers, counter-tenor; David Mason, piano (Deux-Elles DXL 1012)

Anthony Payne's new orchestral version of Vaughan Williams' *Four Last Songs* was one of the real highlights at this year's Promenade Concerts. No doubt a CD version of this thoroughly engaging 2013 Proms premiere will eventually find its way onto the CD recording market.

While Payne undoubtedly stimulated a welcome breath of fresh air by orchestrating this work, he also triggered an irresistible inspiration to seek out the best of the original piano performances. And what a fascinating journey this is.

Indeed there is available a veritable dearth of archetypal piano-accompaniment recordings of VW's *Four Last Songs*. However, this particular release on the Deux-Elles label is attractively mixed with several pieces by one of Ralph's brilliant contemporaries, Edmund Rubbra, and must rank among the best. It comprises 77 minutes of the very best of British which makes it excellent value.

These emotive VW songs, unfinished at the composer's death and grouped together posthumously, are wonderfully captured here. Powerful lyrics from poems by VW's second wife, Ursula, offer so much more than that the age-old obsession with love and death. Chambers' beautifully lofty counter-tenor voice and Mason's sympathetically poised accompaniment show a great understanding and intensity in these captivating songs.

Vaughan Williams' *Four Last Songs* make perfect partners with equally effective and highly-charged accounts of the Edmund Rubbra pieces. This keenly-priced Rubbra and Vaughan Williams CD is a must for any self-respecting British music enthusiast.

Rubbra comes top of the bill with his lilting song *The Runes of Hospitality* which entitles this fascinating 20th century English collection. There are some striking Rubbra solo piano *Preludes* as well as his inimitable take on some hackneyed religious pieces like the well-known

psalm, *The King of Love My Shepherd Is* and *Praise Ye the Lord*.

This Payne orchestration comes on the heels of his admirable completion of Elgar's *Third Symphony*, which was left only in remnant and sketch form after the composer's death. As Deryck Cooke did for Mahler's *Tenth Symphony* or Maurice Ravel did for Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* or what Martin Yates did for Jack Moeran's *Second Symphony*, Payne again shows a magnificent but rare skill for gathering up crucial crumbs and turning them into a new loaf.

How about Elgar's *Piano Quintet* now please, Dr Payne?

© Chris Bye, September 2013

BRITTEN: Piano Concerto, (including revised slow movement); Violin Concerto; Howard Shelley (piano); Tasmin Little (violin); BBC Philharmonic, Edward Gardney, conductor (CHANDOS Chan 10764).

Benjamin Britten roared through the classical music sound barrier last year as the musical world enthusiastically celebrated the 100th anniversary of the British composer's birth. Predictably, the CD market was flooded by the recording company's earnest intent to financially exploit this musical milestone for the billions it was worth.

And this superbly engineered release must easily be in the running to be one of the most treasured. In all concert hall disciplines – conducting, instrumental solos and orchestral playing and digital sound engineering – it stands head-and-shoulders above the rest.

Mix two highly accomplished soloists like Tasmin Little (violin) and Howard Shelley (piano), add the expertise and vigour of conductor, Edward Gardner, and the recipe's bound to be a sure-footed winner.

The aural senses are totally bewitched by both these Britten early works (opuses 13 and 15) which were both revised in later years – the generous inclusion of the originally penned piano concerto third movement makes this disc even more appealing. The technique and quality playing of piano and violin brilliantly wallows in the different moodiness on Britten's unforgettable scores. In the violin piece, Ms Little greatly excels in the emotive swings in Britten's distinctive formula – *toccata*, *waltz*, *impromptu* and *march* showing a softness and delicacy contrasting sharply with sheer energy and aggression.

Shelley – playing expressively with great vigour and bounce – is as equally impressive. The emotional stakes are high in some vibrant shimmering keyboard work. No wonder he describes in accompanying notes that a precocious young Britten had composed 'one of the greatest piano concertos of the 20th century.'

Agreed. This CD will satisfy the most demanding of Britten fans.

© Chris Bye, September 2013

(BRITTEN: War Requiem. Emily Magee, soprano; Mark Padmore, tenor; Christian Gerhaher, baritone; Max Hanft, organ; Bavarian Symphony Orchestra and choir; conductor, Mariss Jansons (BR KLASSIK 900120)

Death and destruction these days blazes across our TV news screens with a sad daily monotony. Modern technology instantly brings all the angst and suffering into our very homes. We regularly witness, in full digital colour, HD or even 3D, lurid, bloody, images from home and overseas.

It is a regrettable fact that human suffering is as prevalent as it ever was. Cyber-attacks, IEDs, chemical weapons, as well as more conventional arms, increasingly take a grim toll. No nation is immune from this continuing threat.

This deep suffering is no more potently expressed than by pacifist Benjamin Britten's in his plaintive *War Requiem*. This is a very dramatic audio message drawing on the powerful words of First World War poet, Wilfred Owen, who died at the tender age of 25.

Jansons and his Bavarians drive home a thunderous message, pulling listeners through all the extreme emotional hoops that emphasise the hopeless futility war. Britten's distinctive musical setting, fusing familiar Latin phrases with Owen's caustic words, come home here in a shattering way.

Jansons' emotive voices, whether solo or in unison, unfold to deliver a devastating sound. Ms Magee opens the Sanctus with an infectious, searing, soprano sound at the core of the work. Jansons' cleverly layers brass, organ and percussion makes a compelling build-up to one of the one of the most satisfying *Hosanna in Excelsis* renditions ever recorded.

Messrs Padmore (tenor) and Gerhaher (baritone) leave their indelible marks with wonderful solos or as a perfectly tonal duet.

Orchestra, soloists and choir go through a range of complex but very effective harmonies and reach an apocalyptic *Angus Dei* with brass, timpani, snare-drum and tubular bells making telling contributions.

Jansons and his huge forces really get to grips with this intricate maze-like score, amplifying a blistering anti-war stance before sinking into a blissfully fading diminuendo.

The valedictory phrase says it all:

Requiescant in pace.
Amen.

© Chris Bye, September 2013

BRITTEN: 'Before life and after'; Mark Padmore, tenor; Roger Vignoles, piano. (Harmonia Mundi, HMU 907443)

Britten here, Britten there, Britten everywhere! And still, I bet, more to come. It's been a great centenary anniversary year for the much-celebrated British master. The recording industry has predictably responded by churning out new compact discs surrounding the well-trodden path of this popular 20th Century composer.

But some of the very best Britten interpretations have been around well before this current marketing furore. And this song collection shines out as one of the best.

Messrs Padmore and Vignoles are a small chamber team but these atmospheric songs (25 in all) make a very big impact on the listener. These succinct works are a veritable triumph for up-to-the-minute record engineering technology. Well-balanced keyboard and tenor voice (a-la-Peter Pears) combine to give a wonderful presence. They are thrillingly captured by Air Studios, London, on this California-based label. It brings vintage Britten right into the room.

The *Holy Sonnets of John Donne* (England's best known metaphysical poet) are delivered with a compelling profundity. From the opening *Oh my blacke Soule!* to *Since she whom I loved and To Death, be not proud* and *What If this present*, range in deep thought covering highly-charged emotive subjects from love to the chilling end of the world. Haunting sounds indeed, certainly not recommended for pre-bed listening!

Britten's distinctive genius is clearly evident in complex arrangements recorded under the relatively simple cycle entitled Folksongs. Here some old gems are skilfully interpreted under a new Benjamin Britten distinct façade.

Old English folksongs like *Sail on, sail on*; *I Wonder as I Wander*; *The Miller of Dee* and *At the mid hour of night* appear in that inimitable Britten style and offer a welcome measure of light relief.

A reworked Henry Purcell and eight-song recital under the title *Winter Words* make up a CD of fascinating listening. 'Before life and after' is as deep as its title suggests.

© Chris Bye, September 2013

BAX: Symphony in F; Orchestrated and realised by Martin Yates; The Royal Scottish National Orchestra. (Dutton Epoch CDLX 7308)

Both ardent Baxians and late romantic art enthusiasts will welcome this well overdue release. It layers more irresistible icing on the already potent Bax symphonic cake. The British master's list of seven magnificent symphonies now expands into eight. This is an auspicious and historical achievement, indeed.

The archetypal roots of this work were created in 1907. Bax never viewed his skeletal piano score as suitable material for fleshing out into full orchestral treatment and given full symphony status. The score lay frustratingly, even exasperatingly, unexposed for decades. Now it shines brilliantly in all its distinctive glory for us all to savour. It comes hard on the heels of other English music's engaging symphonic reconstructions - notably Elgar's Third and Moeran's Second. They too are great examples of hard, explorative, work which introduce exciting new insights into the art-worlds of established composers.

This new Bax symphony finally appears in a full orchestrated manuscript like a ray of sunshine brightening up skies in the murky world of undiscovered classical music. It's an exciting development that certainly opens up a fresh angle on the development of the unfairly out-of-fashion British master. Here is an essential journey of discovery for any music lover.

Now we are privileged to hear a new Bax symphony delivered in pin-sharp, crystalline sound brought to listeners by Dutton record engineers. The work exposes compositional techniques which matured into Bax's later symphonies and tone poems that made him a great 20th century British artist. Bax's considerable poetic expressivity is loud and clear for all to hear.

Martin Yates gives an utterly convincing interpretation of that distinctive idiomatic Bax style. Brassy chorales and fanfares are emphasised by thudding timpani and percussion, contrasting with moods of delightful playfulness. Richly mellow, string, harp, and woodwind phrases capture a becalming serenity, only to be shattered by thunderous outbursts in that powerful Baxian way. This exceptional music mastery generated many distinctive compositions and earned Bax fulsome recognition. He grew in popularity and eventually became Master of the King's Music.

Bax's sumptuous symphonies were largely written in the little Scottish town of Morar, a hideaway idyll, where beguiling west coast scenery was an inspiration. International travels took him to Ireland where he found further inspiration and greatly admired the poetry of Yeats. Arnold Bax wrote his own literature under the pseudonym, Dermot O'Byrne. His artistic versatility is clearly evident in his poetry.

A huge vote of thanks to Martin Yates and to his well-disciplined RSNO players. This is truly another historic performance in every way. On the strength of this excellent release be assured: **Bax time will return**!

© Chris Bye, January 2014

THE BEST OF JOHN TAVENER – the London Symphony Orchestra; Winchester Cathedral Choir and Choir of King's College, Cambridge (Classics for Pleasure 5 85915 2 1)

The potent musical mysticism left by the late John Tavener haunts the world. His untimely death is bound to stimulate interest from the uninitiated. This budget-priced re-release will undoubtedly lead many to the delights of discovering his distinctive genius. Tavener's tremendous composing skill, inspired by his own obsessive Christian belief, captured a worldwide audience. His talent flourished with a devout interest in Christianity particularly in Britain, Russia and Greece. His work

reached a remarkable peak with the famous *Song for Athene*, a choral work played at the funeral of Princess Diana. Here Athene – in reality the deceased daughter of a close friend - is lusciously delivered under the sympathetic baton of David Hill, who coaxes a blissful sound from passionate Winchester singers.

Tavener's reputation grew. Even The Beatles were involved somewhere along the line. And this 70-minute compilation comprises some big classical music names, Rozhdestvensky, Isserlis, Cleobury and Backhouse, who render memorable examples of more spine-chilling moments in this 70-minute Tavener collection, which proves to be a glistening shop window for Tavener's key works. The 11-tracks expose typical Tavener. Growling bass lines sharply contrast with beautiful, all-consuming treble sounds, a seductive combination for voices, orchestral instruments or organ. This wonderful captivating sound will entice the darkest soul toward some sort of light.

Whatever your religious belief, whether atheist or agnostic, Tavener shows that the dramatic power of his music simply cannot be ignored. It shines an eternal light for morality in all humanity. This well-engineered CD provides a good cross-section of Tavener as an accomplished musical disciple.

Two Hymns to the Mother of God, *The Protecting Veil*, *Angels*, *The Lament of the Mother of God*, *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis* and *God is With us All*, in their very strong, but plaintive way, pose that age-old question.

Tavener sadly died at 69 after a cruel life plagued by personal and medical problems. He largely confined his work to an unshakeable belief in God and the afterlife mystery. He summed up his life in one memorable quote: 'In everything I do I aspire to the sacred. Music is a form of prayer, a mystery.'

Ironically, as well illustrated in this compilation, Tavener's impeccable art reaches far beyond religious boundaries. A certain popular Irish comedian once established a famous payoff-line in which he simply said: 'May your God go with you.' You too, John Tavener (1944-2013)

© Chris Bye, November 2013

ELGAR: Violin Sonata in E (1918); SAWYERS: Violin Sonatas 1(1969) and 2 (2011); STEINBERG DUO (Nimbus 6240)

Love and mutual understanding can often produce an overwhelming muscular musical force. And this man-and-wife team the Steinberg Duo combine to produce irresistible evidence of this, with committed performances of the key chamber works of Edward Elgar and the lesser known modern English composer, Philip Sawyers.

The undoubted talents of Louisa Stonehill (violin) and Nicholas Burns (piano) are clear as they admirably amplify Elgar's highly-charged and emotive score. The crisply recorded release also shines a well-deserved light on the Sawyers sonatas. A forceful performance oozes with sublime energy, the same energy that it must have taken to bring the Steinberg Duo together and convert a Greenwich High Street shop into a successful recording studio. What a worthwhile achievement.

Here is early, but moving Elgar. It was compiled in the pre-Edwardian pomp days when Elgar was profoundly disturbed by the inanities of the First World War and while, at the same time, suffering a personal illness. Raging turmoil, plaintiveness and guarded buoyancy: the Duo punches home a powerful Elgar three-movement message.

By comparison the two Sawyers sonatas span a 30-year period. The Steinbergs are equally at home here. There is totally committed playing, both on violin and piano. Some aggressive discords blend successfully with sweeping melodies. The first sits well with Elgarian and Vaughan Williams sounds while its successor is more akin to those memorable chamber works of Shostakovich and Prokofiev. The Stonehill-Burns partnership glides faultlessly through these dramatic scores with real characterful playing. The violin bowing certainly thrashes out a rare personality, almost talking and, at times, shouting out luscious lines.

Surely we'll be hearing more of Sawyers' masterful music. His *First Symphony* is already on CD. He's certainly won great ambassadors in Mr Burns and his partner, Ms Stonehill!

© Chris Bye, October 2013

DOWN BY THE SEA (A collection of British Folk Songs); Blossom Street; Hilary Campbell. (Naxos 8.573069)

The Blossom Street choir is out blooming again. The overall romantic title of this release, *Down by the Sea*, is totally apposite for a first class collection of British folk songs. It is the singers' latest release under the expert direction of Hilary Campbell and follows the deserved success of their past award-winning Christmas release entitled, *Sleep Holy Babe*.

This sublime, ear-caressing singing is blissfully made up engaging lyrics and includes world premiere recordings and arrangements which are bound to make the listener feel really proud of the British cultural roots. Some familiar names – Vaughan Williams, Holst, Warlock and Grainger – are delivered with a refreshing panache. Evergreen favourites, like *Blow the Wing Southerly*, *Skye*, and *Fare Thee Well*, get new leases of life in these charming arrangements. Six of these fifteen songs are fresh to the microphone. The choir handle contemporary scores and arrangements from modern composers like Scotland's James MacMillan with consummate ease.

This is highly-polished singing boasting superbly controlled harmony delivering a blissful combination of sounds and words. It's also a purse-conscious budget-buy disc recorded in the splendour of St. Philip's Church, Norbury, London. Sparkling diction and acoustics are perfectly complimented by some dreamy sound engineering.

Blossom Street singers are a tuneful, versatile, lot who seem to weld happily together. They have been around for almost a decade now – enjoying TV and radio channel notoriety. Judging by this release, fame will inevitably follow.

© Chris Bye, December 2013

BRITTEN: The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra; Suite on English Folk Tunes; Johnson over Jordan; Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes; Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra; Richard Hickox; classic Chandos, (CHAN10784 X)

Question: What exactly do Benjamin Britten, J. B. Priestley and The Rolling Stones all have in common? Answer: *The Spider and the Fly*.

Creepy I know, but *The Spider and the Fly* is the tuneful title at the very heart of Britten's suite *Johnson over Jordan*. It is based on an experimental play written by that talented Yorkshireman J.B. Priestley. And it also happens to be the title of a popular song by Mick Jagger!

The Britten version is irresistibly loveable and is part of a Chandos budget 2013 release in the 'Hickox Legacy' series. Tortuous frivolity apart, this compact disc pulls together a collection of four key works illustrating Britten's lighter side.

The wonderful, if hackneyed, *Young Person's Guide* sings out loud the inimitable sounds of an orchestra par excellence. Each section of the complex symphony orchestra is delightfully exposed before amalgamating into a grandiose finale. Hickox and the world renowned Bournemouth players combine to serve up an excellent musical lesson, to prove beyond doubt there's new life yet in this well-worn chestnut.

The five-part *English Folk Tunes Suite* is an accomplished orchestral tour-de-force in its own right. The opening, infectious timpani rhythms of *Cakes and Ale* and some sumptuous harp playing in *Bitter Withy*, is a delight. A skilful cor anglais in the haunting finale, *Lord Melbourne*, adds to this overall picturesque performance.

Not forgetting of course the delectable *Johnson over Jordan Suite* which captures the spirit of Priestley's ambitious stage directions. It concludes with the searing *End Music*, featuring a memorable, majestic theme.

The well-worn groove is recast again, with a refreshing version of the *Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes*. *Dawn*, *Sunday Morning*, *Moonlight* and *Storm* are given a new vivid interpretation with totally convincing playing from Bournemouth's vibrant strings, swirling woodwind, throaty brass and crashing percussion.

British music was undermined by Richard Hickox's tragic death at the age of 60. Triumphant recordings like these will ensure his name will remain engraved in classical music history, synonymous with the very best among British conductors.

© Chris Bye, October 2013

BENJAMIN BRITTEN, Peter Grimes; Britten-Pears Orchestra; Choruses of Opera North and Guildhall School of Music and Drama; Steuart Bedford, conductor. (Arthaus Music DVD 102179)

'All the world's a stage…' William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, Act 2. These perceptive words couldn't be more relevant in this exceptional DVD. The East Anglian weather-beaten coastline stirs the senses in this tumultuous open-air rendition. Born is a truly magnificent DVD performance of *Peter Grimes*, the world-renowned opera composed by Britain's famous son, Benjamin Britten.

Britten's inspiration – the sea – and the composer's romanticism, together with the inescapable fate of the tragic Grimes, are a potent mixture. This open-air drama is an unmitigated triumph in the highly competitive world of multi-media productions. The vivid and brutal actuality releases the viewer's imagination. Based on a section of George Crabbe's poem *The Borough*, sleepy seaside Aldeburgh is rudely brought to life by this revolutionary production. The invisible baton becomes the wand of a magician, delivering a thunderous menacing sea agitating beneath turbulent skies. Paint-peeled upturned herring boats, wind-swept reeds, wide sky horizons, all convey the instability of our central figure's state of mind with unrivalled dramatic impact. Indeed, this historic performance - in front of a live audience on the beach - may displace, or at the very least equal, the hitherto much-celebrated Covent Garden 1958 recording conducted by the composer himself with Peter Pears taking the leading role.

The fatalistic Peter Grimes (is he guilty or not guilty?) is movingly portrayed with some impeccable phrasing by tenor Alan Oke who is no stranger to Britten operas (He was well received in a 2013 nationwide tour of *Death in Venice*). There is quite remarkable drama-diction from Giselle Allen - a thoroughly convincing school-mistress Ellen Orford. Alongside is David Kempster (Balstrode) making his mark through a fine balance of acting and singing. Opera North and Guildford School choruses represent the community determined to hunt down Grimes, branding him a murderer. Catherine Wyn-Rogers is a delightfully impish Mrs Sedley and Christopher Gillent a salutary vicar. Up-to-the-minute multi-media engineering ensures the viewer is gripped throughout and shows how modern recording technology can vividly deliver a rare reality.

Penetrating orchestral sound is created by a clever combination of a Snape Maltings concert hall, a make-shift conductor's pit dug into the pebble beach and the vastly experienced Britten-Pears Orchestra, magnificently marshalled by the evergreen Steuart Bedford.

This extraordinary performance breaks new ground more than 50 years after it was written in the post-war period. Opera purists may have reservations but this DVD certainly brings a great British musical genius right into the lap of the armchair.

© Chris Bye, December 2013

The Aesthetic Life of Cyril Scott

Sarah Collins
The Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2013. xxxi + 248 pp. inc. Bibliography and Index + 22 illustrations + 8 music examples
ISBN 978 1 84383 807 4 £55 Hardback

(This review was first published in *Tempo* October 2013 and is included here with the kind permission of the editor)

In June 1992 (in British Music Society News 54) I reviewed Ian Parrott's *Cyril Scott and his Piano Music* (Thames Publishing), noting that the field was then still wide open for a serious reappraisal of Scott's life and work which might set out to examine in depth his musical and literary outputs. Going far to achieving this aim, particularly in regard to the latter aspect of the composer's career, is Sarah Collins's excellent study. Collins provides real insight into his complex personal and artistic life – insight of a kind notably missing not only from Scott's two official autobiographies (*My Years of Indiscretion* and *Bone of Contention*, published respectively early and late in his life), but from both his covert, fictional and unacknowledged autobiographies (represented particularly by the personally revealing, anonymously published Initiate series and *The Autobiography of a Child*), and his copious non-musical writings in areas of early-20th-century musical philosophy, spiritual occultism and alternative medicine.

The book is in two parts. The first, *Public Indiscretions, Private Confessions: Scott's Life and Influences*, incorporates a largely psycho-biographical approach to his published autobiographies and autobiographical fiction, leading in the first chapter to 'a discussion of his neurotic self-awareness and impression of his own "cosmic mission'', which came to define his life and work'. A further three chapters explore in turn: the first sixteen years of his life and his early experience of a middle-class upbringing and contacts with orthodox religion, the opposite sex and music; the period from 1896 up until the First World War – arguably the most successful and exciting years of Scott's life, when he 'began to shape his compositional ideal, make important and lasting friendships and encounter an aesthetic philosophy which was to inform his future spiritualism and define his public reputation (and self-conception) as an artist'; and a reconstruction of the first years of Scott's spiritualist conversion, together with an account of the succeeding period which saw a gradual decline in his public reputation, in which Collins considers 'how Scott bore the impact of his impending obscurity and the role his aesthetic thinking and spiritual development played in shielding him from public criticism'.

The second part, entitled *Artist, Priest, Prophet: Scott's Aesthetic Thinking*, outlines and contextualizes Scott's aesthetic thinking, 'ultimately positing a new interpretation of the intellectual genesis of Scott's aesthetics'. Chapter 5 outlines the development of Scott's occult theory of musical affect, from his earliest published prose writings of 1913 to the definitive statement contained in his *Music: Its Secret Influence Throughout the Ages* (1933). Chapter 6 deals with Scott's preoccupation with the idea of the 'immortal artist', and his own acceptance of the necessary fate of initial incomprehension and rejection of serious work which those aspiring to inclusion within a higher, inspirational tradition he termed the 'Deva Evolution' – as represented by the then comparatively recent music of Franck, Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Delius, Debussy, Ravel and Scriabin – must endure. Finally Chapter 7, entitled *Theory and Practice*, offers a four-part 'periodization' of his musical output over the whole of his career that attempts for the first time to analyse his compositional activities 'based on the seminal shifts in his spiritual outlook and aesthetic thought' as developed in Part I and the preceding chapters of Part II.

The first decade or so of the new century has proved very kind to Scott and his life's work, in that it has witnessed both the appearance of many excellent new recordings of his music – virtually all of his major chamber and orchestral works, and a complete survey (over nine CDs) of his solo piano music[1] – and the continued existence in print (mainly through republication in America) of much of his literary output. Only his music for the stage still remains unexplored by recording companies, along perhaps with a more extended coverage of his solo song output along the lines of Leslie De'Ath's recordings of the piano music. This resurgence of interest in Scott in the United Kingdom, Australia (by way of Melbourne's Grainger Museum and its holdings) and America, has no doubt fuelled the appearance of the present study. It may also well lead to the future appearance of a complementary volume of detailed appraisal and analysis of his entire musical output – a daunting area of research only lightly explored here. Scott's original literary work – his five books of verse (briefly discussed at the end of Chapter 7), translations of Baudelaire and George, and the librettos for his own four operas – should also receive, perhaps, more thorough investigation in the future.

The question that must ultimately be asked of Scott's work is whether it justifies the many positive claims of its admirers in a really objective sense: in other words, how good it actually is when appraised not only within the narrower boundaries of early-20th-century British music, but when placed and heard within the wider musical tradition of the late-Romantic/Impressionist styles of those European composers (Chopin, Wagner, Debussy and Scriabin, for instance) whom he admired – styles which, as Collins states, he found to be most effective in an occult sense and sought to reproduce in his own work. Collins's approach here is subtly drawn: without making definite pronouncements, her text is infused with remarks and clues that allow readers to draw their own

[1] Today, much recording activity by smaller classical-music labels is fuelled no doubt by their ever-ongoing financial need to provide fresh material for customers to purchase, particularly those who are keen to explore more fully the huge area of non-mainstream Western musical repertoire which still exists to be tapped into. Such often pioneering activity is very welcome, given that much of the material thus revived will never find its way into our major concert halls as they presently operate.

conclusions about where she stands in this regard, and also to form their own opinions.

This welcome, much-needed study is superbly argued and written. It is attractively produced and presented, and justifies its hardcover price above all in the quality of its content. Let us hope it also appears in due course in paperback!

© John Talbot, September 2013

[*The Aesthetic Life of Cyril Scott* may be purchased by members from the publishers at a 25% discount. As usual members should quote BMS13 whenever they order, whether online or by phone (01394 610600). They may also visit the special-offer page maintained on the publisher's website: http://www.boydellandbrewer.com/bms.asp, where other similar offers can be found.]

'Tales of two Organists'

Sydney Nicholson and his 'Musings of a Musician'
John Henderson and Trevor Jarvis
Royal School of Church Music 2013
ISBN 978 0 85402 226 7 £18-95

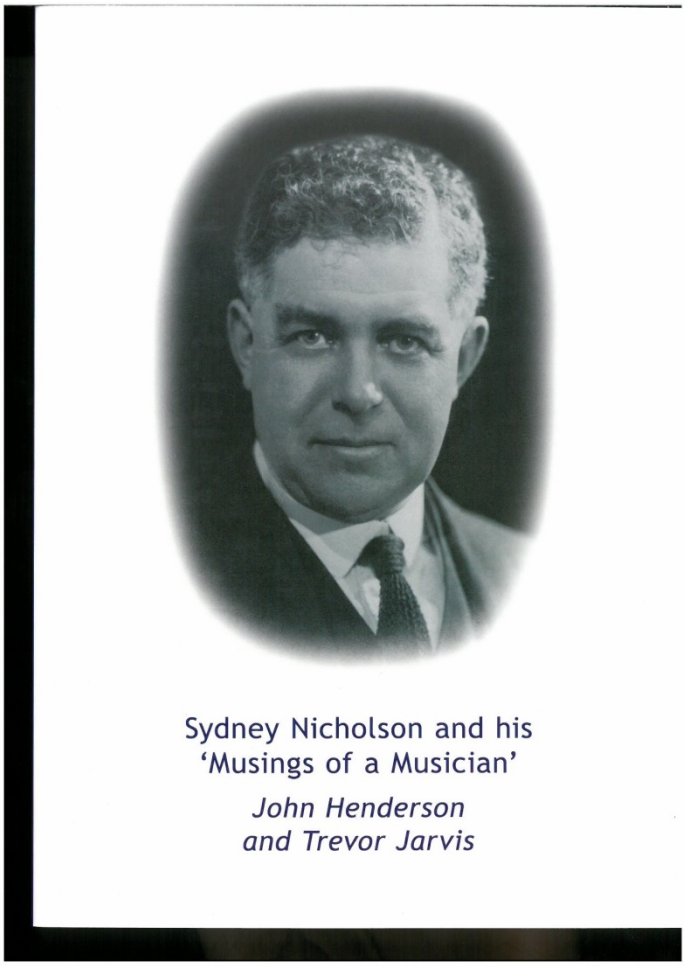
Music for a long while: the autobiography of Francis Jackson
York Publishing Services 2013
ISBN 978 0 95767 220 8 £17-95

Francis Jackson was a chorister at York Minster under Sir Edward Bairstow, and eventually he succeeded Bairstow and served as organist and master of the music at York for forty-five years, until 1982. He is now 96, still very much alive and has written a fascinating autobiography – cleverly called *Music for a long while* (adapting the title of Purcell's famous song, 'Music for a while') – just published by the author himself.

At the same time the memoirs of Sir Sydney Nicholson have appeared. He was the organist of Westminster Abbey, but resigned from this prestigious appointment in 1927 to found the School of English Church Music, known today as the Royal School of Church Music – the RSCM – to which Christ Church is affiliated.

Nicholson died in 1947, and his autobiography has remained in manuscript, tantalizingly unavailable. I have known about it for years and I remember in the late 1960s, as an attender at the RSCM's summer schools at Addington Palace, asking the then director (Nicholson's successor) Gerald Knight about it. 'Yes; I've got it in my room', he said, with such finality that I knew I wasn't going to get any further!

So it is very exciting that *Musings of a musician* (Nicholson's favoured title) can now be read. It is very well written, and given added value by the work of Dr John Henderson, the RSCM's Hon. Librarian, and his colleague Trevor Jarvis, Hon. Assistant Librarian, who have provided footnotes containing background and explanatory material and appendices reproducing seminal articles by Nicholson – including recollections of his father Sir Charles Nicholson, and his observations on the role of choristers and of cathedrals. Other appendices list Nicholson's compositions (published and unpublished, and not all 'sacred', by any means) and his hymn tunes (more than 30). There is also a recollection by Nicholson of the conductor Leslie Heward, who in 1943 died far too young at the age of 46, and was one of Nicholson's choristers at Manchester Cathedral. By general consent, Heward was destined, had he lived, to be one of the greatest conductors of his time.



One of the appendices is an account by Nicholson of his family history, but the editors' researches throw doubt on many of its assertions, the result of anecdotal rather than documentary evidence on Nicholson's part, one imagines. However, there are first-hand recollections of the family home at Totteridge (The Grange) and of his first appointment as organist of St Andrew's, Totteridge, and later at St John's, Chipping Barnet. Organophiles will be excited to know that specifications are given of the principal organs played by Nicholson, from St Andrew's (Brindley & Foster, 1881) to Westminster Abbey (Hill, 1848 and various rebuilds).

Among Nicholson's compositions is *1914*: sonnets written by Rupert Brooke set to music. It was published by Curwen in 1917 and the full score and parts are extant. Is it worthy of revival? If so, this year's centenary of the start of the First World War must surely be the time to resurrect it.

Meanwhile, his church music and especially his hymn tunes keep his memory alive. To have written *Bow Brickhill* (named after the site of Nicholson's scout/chorister camp), sung to 'We sing the praise of him who died', and *Crucifer* ('Lift high the cross') – my two

particular favourites – seems to me a fine achievement. As for the RSCM, this new book is a companion to Sydney Nicholson and the College of St Nicholas: the Chislehurst years, Henderson and Jarvis's earlier volume (2011) which recounts the formation and early years of the fledgling RSCM. Both books are exceptionally richly illustrated and the later book reproduces some of Nicholson's own watercolours. My only regret is that *Musings* doesn't have an index.

Francis Jackson was born 42 years after Sydney Nicholson, and yet their careers overlap chronologically, for when Nicholson died, Jackson was already organist and master of the music at York. *Music for a long while* is a most beautifully produced hardback book of more than 400 pages, including a list of compositions and a discography (but, again, no index). There are also some fascinating illustrations. Jackson had already proved himself to be a very accomplished writer with his book *Blessed city, a 'life and works'* of Sir Edward Bairstow published in 1997 and Bairstow features in the new book, but viewed from a more personal point of view. Becoming a chorister at York was an eye-opener for Jackson: 'My horizons widened and I learned that music was not an exercise merely to be got through but rather a natural expression of one's very being. … As a result, one was provided with a yardstick for the rest of one's life, making one intolerant of compositions and performances which lack the true spirit and stuff of music.'

Jackson chronicles his life in a lot of detail, and his fluent and engaging style makes for fascinating reading, for his life was interesting and the people he met and worked with are vividly brought to life. He was born, worked and still lives in Yorkshire and yet he has travelled extensively for work and pleasure at home and abroad, and descriptions of these visits comprise some of the most engaging sections of his narrative, my favourite being the description of his visit to Ravel's house at Montfort l'Amaury.

Jackson composes too, but his works are much more wide-ranging than Nicholson's – he has written songs, secular and sacred choral works and service settings, but also works for chorus and orchestra including a symphony, an organ concerto and an interesting piece, *Daniel in Babylon* – a monodrama with narrator – composed in 1962 for the dedication ceremonies of Coventry Cathedral. His iconic hymn tune is surely *East Acklam* (named after the Yorkshire village where he lived), written in 1957 for an Old Choristers' service at York Minster and intended to be sung to Fred Pratt Green's words, 'For the fruits of His creation'.

But one of his best compositions, by his own admission, is his setting of Robert Frost's poem, *Tree at my window*, written in 1942 while he was serving with the 9th Lancers, becalmed near Tobruk and with time on his hands. 'Alone in my DIY tent, at bedtime, the moment came. I wrote until the small hours, never looking back. My illumination was from diesel oil served by a wick of rope through a hole in the lid of a round cigarette tin. Having finished I blew it out and slept soundly despite the half gale still blowing that had accompanied my outpourings. It was an indescribable pleasure to behold, on waking, the final result of so much thought, all complete (but for the addition of one insignificant bar) and in need of no further attention.' I was so glad to be able to include this composition in volume 7 of *A Century of English Song*, (2002) of which I am joint editor.

'Looking back over the years', Jackson concludes; 'it has been a good innings, and far better than I could possibly have imagined.'

Indeed, these two books are far better than one could possibly have imagined; exceptionally interesting and hugely enjoyable, they deserve the widest possible circulation.

© Garry Humphreys, September 2013

THE BRITISH PIANO SONATA; 1870-1945

Lisa Hardy

The Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2012

This is a highly researched and very systematic appraisal of an important, but hitherto, neglected musical discussion. Copious musical examples, many from unpublished sources, are used to illustrate the many descriptive and analytical observations and the parallels drawn between these Sonatas. Particularly rewarding are the early chapters regarding the less familiar and less-readily available late 19th Century works, especially their comparisons with the styles of Haydn, Mendelssohn and Beethoven, much of which demonstrates great insight. Also, within these early chapters, the gradual fusion of the Germanic Romantic style and English lyricism is well underlined, allowing for a well-reasoned development into the later more individualistic styles of the 20th Century composers. Although not having been a student at either establishment I found the section comparing the contrasting compositional styles from within the RAM and RCM particularly enlightening and the strong advocacy for the revival of composers, such as Benjamin Dale, in contemporary recitals was very compelling.

The transcripts of the interviews with Alan Bush, Geoffrey Bush, Alan Franks, Anthony Hopkins, Howard Ferguson and Michael Tippett were, for me, especially revealing in terms of their conflicting views regarding structure, piano texture and working methods. Having known some of these distinguished musicians myself I can hear their voices saying the words!

There is a natural progression in the book as the style of musical writing develops from the solely Germanic construction and harmonic language to the later absorption of other styles and influences. It is also very stimulating to consider the latent discussions about what the word Sonata implies to each composer as each generation comes to grips with the many difficulties that arise from writing something original and suitably substantial for this challenging medium with its already vast repertoire.

The lengthy discography is not fully exhaustive – on a personal note it omits my own recording of the York Bowen *Short Sonata* on the Saga label – but it does offer

plenty of choice, in both interpretation and couplings, in the vast majority of works discussed in the book.

My only truly negative comment regarding this fascinating and exhaustive study is in regard to the writing style of the author. Overall, it could be more compelling and better structured: the regular length and rhythm of the sentences makes it a difficult read with regard to concentration. Almost every sentence begins with a predictable "The" and each sentence seems like a statement in itself. This I found disappointing because the subject matter and structured research is an exciting new addition to the musical and historical literature.

© Richard Deering, October 2013

Festival Reports

North Wales International Music Festival
St. Asaph, September 2013

The Festival ran from the 20th to the 28th September and gave British music, both past and present, a high proportion of its programme. Originally born out of a vision by William Mathias, the 2013 festival opened with a performance of *Noye's Fludde* by Benjamin Britten and closed with an all-British concert by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by Owain Arwel Hughes. In between these dates were performances of music by Paul Patterson, Grace Williams, Mathias, Britten, John Thomas, Paul Mealor and Guto Puw.

It was the final concert that I attended. The BBC NOW opened their concert with Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* and concluded with a particularly fine performance of Elgar's *Enigma Variations*. However, the real main work of the evening was the rarely heard *Violin Concerto* by William Matthias played by Matthew Trusler.

The Oxford Dictionary of Music describes the *Violin Concerto* as '… one of the composer's last works. It is a heady celebration of song and dance, in four movements which are strongly contrasted yet highly integrated'. It is also described as 'moderately difficult' to play. The concerto is around 36 minutes long and was inspired by a 1987 performance of Prokofiev's *1st Violin Concerto* played by György Pauk at the North Wales Music Festival. The work was originally commissioned by the Hallé Orchestra who gave its first performance with Pauk as dedicatee and Sir Charles Groves conducting.

From his *1st Piano Concerto*, completed in 1956, whilst still a student, Mathias returned many times to the form used in the *Violin Concerto*, one of his last works. The four movements are full of energy. Like many modern works, it is very difficult to remember something memorable at the end. However it grabs the attention whilst it is performed. The first movement defines it as a concerto with plenty of energy and tension. The second movement, again energetic, is dance-like, giving way to the lyrical warmth of the Celtic arts in the third movement. The exhilarating fourth movement has two cadenzas, giving the soloist an opportunity to revisit ideas from the preceding movements.

Owain Arwel Hughes demonstrated his understanding of the composer, one his father Arwel Hughes supported and promoted as a past Head of Music for BBC Radio Wales.

© Graham Musto, September 2013

2013 Malcolm Arnold Festival
Northampton, October 2013

The Malcolm Arnold Festival, the eighth of these annual events, was held on the weekend of the 19th and 20th October 2013 in the Royal & Derngate, Northampton (the composer's home town). A high standard of performance of the composer's works has been enjoyed over the years, mainly thanks to the efforts of the Festival organiser, Paul Harris. Each year he has taken care to programme some unfamiliar works which have had no or very few performances since their concert or broadcast premiere.

Examples this year were: *The Turtle Drum*, a commission from the BBC for music for a children's television play, probably not heard in its orchestral form since its broadcast in 1967, and all the known *Songs for solo voice and piano*. In *The Turtle Drum*, the spoken/acting parts, chorus, and instrumental ensemble were charmingly presented by pupils of the Malcolm Arnold Academy, Northampton. The *Songs for solo voice and piano* (excluding a small number written for films), were imbued with considerable character by soprano Claire Thompson, ably accompanied by Scott Mitchell and included settings of words by William Blake, John Donne, Sean O'Casey, the composer's sister Ruth, and the boisterous *Song of the Accounting Periods* (rather akin to setting the telephone directory).

The Festival was launched by special guest Dame Monica Mason, who had risen through the ranks of the Royal Ballet Company – Soloist in 1963, Principal in 1968, and Director of the Company in 2002. She reminisced about Arnold, having had some contact with him when dancing the role of Clytemnestra in the first performances of his ballet *Electra* in 1963, and praised the Festival for promoting Arnold's music and keeping it before the public. This was followed by a specially commissioned *Fanfare for Malcolm* by Toby Young, who won the Malcolm Arnold Composition Competition in 2011.

Following the triumphant presentation of all nine of Arnold's Symphonies in 2011, and the premiere of his opera *The Dancing Master* in 2012, Paul Harris has now turned his attention to the Concertos. Dr Timothy Bowers talked about them in introducing his new book, a detailed study of these pieces providing many insights. Twenty-two works are analysed, including fifteen for solo instrument and orchestra, and we heard fine performances of six of these during the Festival.

In the downstairs concert room called Underground 1 + 2, Michael Button and the Berkeley Ensemble gave lucid performances of Arnold's *Guitar Serenade* and *Guitar Concerto*. One string instrument per part provided perfect balance with the soloist in the restricted dimensions of

this room. The concert also included Michael Berkeley's *Clarion Call and Gallop* and Benjamin Britten's *Sinfonietta*.

For the Family Orchestral Concert on Saturday afternoon we were transported by coach to St Matthew's Church to hear Arnold's delicately-scored *Recorder Concerto*, beautifully played by Alison Baldwin, and the *Organ Concerto* in which the soloist was Stephen Moore, the Director of Music at the church. As Timothy Bowers pointed out in his book, this concerto is scored for a 'baroque' orchestra of three trumpets, timpani and strings, and the three movements employ 'baroque' forms of *ritornello – hymn – fugue*. Also noteworthy is Arnold's use of cyclical form (the only other example of this in his major works being the *Fifth Symphony*). Evidently he had a great deal of fun making the main theme from the first movement combine contrapuntally with the fugue theme of the finale, and this performance showed that it really works. This is a fine work, and such a pity that it has had so few performances since its Royal Festival Hall premiere in 1954. The Ealing Symphony Orchestra was conducted by John Gibbons and, perhaps in deference to the younger members of the audience, the concert included three pieces of story-telling with illustrative musical interludes, as in Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* – the final item in the concert. The others were Arnold's music for the ballet *Sweeney Todd*, the narration newly-commissioned, and Paul Harris's *The Unhappy Aardvark*. I wondered what the children made of the rather gruesome story-line of *Sweeney Todd* though this was tempered by Arnold's somewhat light-hearted view of it. The narrator was John Griff, who had provided useful publicity for the Festival on his Radio Northampton programme, and on the Sunday introduced extracts from five TV documentaries of Arnold, mostly with John Amis as the interviewer.

The Northampton County Youth Orchestra has impressed us every year with their highly proficient performances. This year the programme included Arnold's *Cornish Dances*, *Peterloo Overture* and the orchestra accompanied one of its former players Jennifer Dyson in the *Flute Concerto No 2*. We also had William Alwyn's *Crimson Pirate*, a lively film score, and Arnold's *Water Music* in its orchestrated version of 1965 – the original was for wind band and percussion.

Finally, in the Sunday evening Gala Concert in the Derngate Auditorium with the Worthing Symphony Orchestra, again conducted by John Gibbons, we heard the *Clarinet Concerto No 2* with inspired soloist Julian Bliss. He brought out the turbulence of the first movement, the warmth and tenderness of the Lento, and the brilliance of the 'Rag' finale. The rest of the concert concentrated largely on film music suites: two by Alwyn (*Odd Man Out* and *The True Glory*), *Schindler's List* by John Williams, and Arnold's *Inn of the Sixth Happiness*. The concert concluded with Ravel's *Bolero*.

Other fare: we had two talks by academics on aspects of Arnold's music and life. Jack Lambert discussed the composer's relationship with the BBC, with figures of broadcast and Prom performances, and the effect of decision-making at the BBC on the promotion of a generation of British composers. This, of course, brought up the thorny issue of William Glock. Even during Glock's fourteen-year tenure as Controller of Music, Arnold did quite well for broadcasts, although then, as now, Prom performances of his symphonies were very few. Darren Moore discussed the harm that can be done by categorising composers, well-illustrated by Arnold being put in the 'Film and Light Music' box, which disregards his tougher, more demanding works.

One of these is the *First String Quartet*, a gritty insistent work that despite its difficulties was excellently played by the Solem Quartet. They had been invited to the Festival on the back of strong recommendations, and these proved fully justified by this performance, and that of the more rewarding *Second String Quartet*. The other concert of chamber music was given by the Pizzetti Trio, who started with another of my favourite works, Arnold's *Piano Trio*, and also included the Trio arranged from the music of the film *Hobson's Choice*, and the *Five Pieces for Violin and Piano* written for Yehudi Menuhin. It was good to hear some Alan Bush, his *Three Concert Studies for Piano Trio*, and the concert concluded with Mendelssohn's *Trio in D minor*.

So, a great weekend, well-filled with a variety of events, and well-supported by a group of regular attendees including Katherine, the composer's daughter, and members of the Malcolm Arnold Society. Next year's Festival is already being planned by Paul Harris, is scheduled for the weekend of 18-19 October, and some new attendees would be most welcome.

Third William Alwyn Festival
Southwold, Suffolk, October 2013

The inspiration for this 3rd Festival to honour William Alwyn in and around his former home in Southwold, Suffolk, was stimulated by events focused in the year of the centenary of his birth, 2005. Some years before that, the William Alwyn Foundation had been established with the encouragement of his widow, Mary Alwyn, better known as the composer Doreen Carwithen, and in due course a Festival was proposed, and its committee established under the Artistic Direction of Andrew Knowles, and expertly managed by the composer Elis Pehkonen who is also a local resident. This year the Festival covered a generous weekend, with an opening recital by Julian Lloyd Webber on 10th October – an event that, though including British music by Ireland, Delius, Frank Bridge and Lloyd Webber, had to neglect the composer at the heart of the enterprise as his relatively modest instrumental output did not provide anything for cello and piano.

It is fortunate that many Suffolk churches are among the most attractive anywhere, offering ideal concert venues. St. Edmund's Church in Southwold is folded away behind the High Street on the edge of St. Bartholomew's Green, where once stood the old Guildhall and the former

smithy. It must be one of the great prides of Suffolk, a vast construction built in the late 15th century, and perhaps one of the few buildings to survive the fires of the 17th century which devastated this small seaside town, and left as its legacy many open spaces, and a wealth of new 18th and 19th century buildings. Many high windows light the vast interior of the church and the ceiling is lavishly decorated with carved angels, an easy distraction if needed for the inattentive listener.

In this setting did that inaugural recital take place, and the following morning Mark Bebbington gave an impressive piano recital, which included Alwyn's *Fantasy Waltzes*, an eleven-movement homage to Grieg, written in 1956 after a holiday in Norway. This recital also included short pieces by Grieg, *Masks* by Arthur Bliss and Britten's early *Holiday Diary*. The evening was devoted to a 70th birthday celebration, that of recorder virtuoso John Turner, whose three-part recital included many of the pieces written specifically for him over many years. He was joined by soprano Lesley-Jane Rogers, Harvey Davies playing both piano and harpsichord, cellist Heather Bills, and poet Bernard Saint who provided spoken texts.

Alwyn's *Seascapes*, a cycle of four songs to texts by Michael Armstrong for soprano, recorder and piano, began a long programme intriguing though not always interesting with often dutiful pieces by a host of composers who were all present with generous good wishes for the event: Peter Dickenson, Sebastian Forbes, Christopher Wright, Joseph Phibbs and Geraint Lewis provided music for the first part. The venerable John Joubert who, at the age of 87 has arrived at his opus 175, an attractive and poignant *Three Villanelles* for soprano and recorder, which he wrote specially for the occasion. Turner played music by three composers who are no longer with us, but who had helped to fill the ambitious repertoire for these now no longer neglected instruments. Kenneth Leighton's *Animal Heaven*, a Diptych for soprano, recorder, cello and harpsichord, Robin Orr's *Fugue* for recorder and virginals, and a little piano piece by Thomas Pitfield to honour Turner's one-time teacher.

After the special offering of birthday cake came the final part of the recital, music by Nicholas Marshall, David Dubery, David Matthews, Gordon Crosse, Anthony Gilbert, Karel Janovický, Peter Hope, Alan Bullard, Richard Rastall and Mervyn Burtch, all present for this extraordinary and warm presentation by and for a brilliant performer and long-time champion of the recorder.

The Festival continued the following day a few miles south in the village of Blythburgh, where the main road now cruelly divides what was once a much larger and busy centre, and where the old and much loved Holy Trinity Church now seems too big for its surrounds. Here the Cavaleri Quartet played William Alwyn's *String Quartet No 11* (in B minor), a beautiful but strangely unbalanced three-movement piece which left me wanting to effect some redesigning to enclose its long opening movement between its much shorter second (exquisite *Largo e cantabile*) and third. In the second half of the programme, we heard a 'world premier' performance of Gordon Crosse's *String Quartet No 3 "A View from Pendle"*, a very recent work inspired by Quaker issues, this in particular about the vision from the top of Pendle Hill that George Fox had of his life's mission. It was a moving work, introverted and quiet, in which both its movements make reference to the hymn *Come down O love divine*.

The afternoon recital was at St Peter's Church in Westleton, a beautiful quiet village in which two friendly hostelries, petrol pumps and even a second hand bookshop beside the large duck-pond are among the few amenities. The warm, white interior of the church has boxed pews still with little doors into the aisle. Here flautist Philippa Davies, Fenella Humphreys, violin, and harpist Suzanne Willison-Kawalec played a programme that included Alwyn's *Naiades for flute and harp*, *Divertimento for solo flute*, and *Crépescule for solo harp*, as well as Britten's *Suite for solo harp*. Gordon Crosse's *Studies in the Thracian Mode* for solo violin is a spectacular *tour de force* and was given a magnificent performance, and there were pieces by the Festival Manager Elis Pehkonen - *Athena's Flute* for flute and harp, a carefully structured piece, very effectively made – and a short final piece for solo violin by Cyril Scott, *Bumble Bees*, dating from 1928.

Back in Southwold, the London Soloists Ensemble's evening recital included Alwyn's *Rhapsody for piano quartet*, written in 1939, *Conversations* for violin, clarinet and piano which was a later work, originally called *Music for Three Players* and written in 1950, and a three-movement *Sonata Impromptu* for violin and viola, also written in 1939.

The closing concert of the Festival was in St Bartholomew's Church, Orford, a church more impressive inside than out. The Prometheus Orchestra, conducted by Edmond Fivet, played a mixed programme of Mozart and Holst and included Alwyn's concerto for harp and strings, *Lyra Angelica* for which we welcomed the return of harpist Suzanne Willison-Kawalec from the previous day's recital in Westleton.

One event not mentioned, and yet significant, was the showing of two films at the quaint reconditioned old Electric Picture Palace in Southwold, complete with old fashioned ice-cream sales and an organ that rose from in front of the screen for fifteen minutes of well-intentioned but rather inept entertainment in the interval. The films were *An East Anglian Holiday*, a short 1954 documentary for which Doreen Carwithen has provided the music, and a feature length adaptation of a grim and obsessive D.H. Lawrence story, *The Rocking Horse Winner*, made in 1949, starring John Howard Davies 'fresh from his role as Oliver Twist' in the David Lean film of the previous year, and starring John Mills who also directed the film. The score was by William Alwyn. The programme was introduced by Ian Johnson who has produced the book William Alwyn: *The Art of Film Music* (Boydell Press, reprinted 2006).

On The Horizon

Concerts

Saturday 9th March at 2.45pm
Assembly Hall, Worthing
Anthony Hewitt (piano), Worthing Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Gibbons
Malcolm Williamson, *Piano Concerto No. 2*

Thursday 13th March
St John's Smith Square
Sir Thomas Allen; The London Chorus; Durham University Choir; The New London Orchestra conducted by Ronald Corp
Sir George Dyson, *Choral Symphony: O Give Thanks Unto the Lord*
Vaughan Williams, *Five Mystical Songs*
Stanford, *Concert Piece for organ and orchestra*

Friday 28 March
Cheltenham Town Hall, Cheltenham
The Lark Ascending - Cheltenham Concert Series
Tamsin Waley-Cohen, Violin; Orchestra of the Swan conducted by David Curtis
Britten, *Simple Symphony (for strings)*, Op.4
Elgar, *Serenade in E minor for string orchestra*, Op.20
Vaughan Williams, *The Lark Ascending*
Vaughan Williams, *Concerto in D minor for violin and string orchestra*, *Concerto Academico*
Elgar, *Introduction and Allegro for string quartet and string orchestra*, Op.47

Saturday, 12 April 2014
Great Missenden Parish Church, Buckinghamshire
Great Missenden Choral Society, Josephine Goddard (soprano), Timothy Nelson (baritone), St. John's Chamber Orchestra, John Cotterill (conductor)
Faure: *Cantique de Jean Racine*
Vaughan Williams: *Dona nobis pacem*
Duruflé: *Ubi caritas*
Howard Goodall: *Eternal Light - a Requiem*
Tickets £12.50 from 01844 342566 or woodfield@risborough19.fsnet.co.uk

Saturday 17 May 2014 at 7.30pm
The Corn Exchange, King's Lynn, Norfolk
Norfolk Symphony Orchestra conducted by Philip Hesketh
Vaughan Williams: *Symphony No. 2 "London"*
Moeran: *Violin Concerto*
Malcolm Arnold: *Peterloo Overture*

Saturday 21 June at 7.30pm
St. Barnabas Church, Pitshanger Lane, Ealing
Arta Aenicane (piano), Ealling Symphony Orchestra conducted by John Gibbons
William Alwyn: *Piano Concerto No. 2 (World Première Concert Performance)*

Events

Eighth English Music Festival

The eighth English Music Festival will be launched on Friday 23rd May, 2014, with a fanfare of orchestral music at Dorchester Abbey, Oxfordshire. Conductor, Martin Yates, will lead the BBC Concert Orchestra in no fewer than four world premières: hitherto undiscovered works by Rutland Boughton – his symphonic poem *Troilus and Cressida*; Sir Arnold Bax's impressive *Variations for Orchestra*; and lost landscapes by Ralph Vaughan Williams; *Burley Heath* and *Harnham Down*.

Also on the opening night, the fine British virtuoso, Rupert Marshall-Luck, will play the *Violin Concerto* by Moeran. The concert, to be broadcast on BBC Radio 3, will be preceded by the annual Festival lecture, which in this centenary year of the Great War will be devoted to the music and art of the years 1914-18.

Other Festival highlights include a recital by clarinettist, Robert Plane, who champions two important Bax works; a Sonata movement (another world première) and *Romance*, both dating from 1901; and – on the final night – an appearance by the Orchestra of St. Paul's, conducted by Ben Palmer. Dyson's *Concerto da Camera* and the magnificent and rarely-played *Music for Strings* by Bliss provide the mainstay of the programme.

The City of London Choir and Holst Orchestra also make an uplifting contribution, in the form of Finzi's moving and intense *Requiem da Camera*, alongside Butterworth's profoundly beautiful setting of A.E. Housman's *Loveliest of trees*. Meanwhile, a contemporary flavour is provided by composer John Pickard, when his *Quartet No. 5* receives a performance, sharing a concert with Vaughan Williams's *Quartet No. 1*.

The BBC Elstree Concert Band will make a star appearance in what promises to be a rousing evening; with Malcolm Arnold's *English Dances*, Eric Coates's *London Suite*, thrilling music from the classic film *Things to Come* by Bliss, and ending with the subtle shades of a work entitled *Dusk* by a less familiar name, Armstrong Gibbs. A major new biography of this composer, written by Angela Aries with contributions from Lewis Foreman, will be launched during the Festival week at a special seminar, organised by EM Publishing, the literary arm of the Festival.

The Festival's founder, Em Marshall-Luck, commented: "Our 2014 concerts provide a panoply of rare, unusual and previously undiscovered music. Our first-night conductor, Martin Yates, is undertaking what is probably one of the most remarkable concerts of the entire year, with world premières by Bax and Vaughan Williams. This is the equivalent of the National Gallery or Tate Britain finding new paintings by Constable and Turner. And I am also pleased to say that we haven't neglected the lighter side of our musical tradition, and will be welcoming back

the wonderful New Foxtrot Serenaders who, last year, provided us with such entertainment and delight, while the BBC Elstree Band will be making their EMF debut – ensuring there is something for everyone in our exciting and varied programme."

A number of informative talks complete the programme. A convenient mini-bus transfer is available to/from Didcot station, Dorchester-on-Thames and other Festival venues. For further information and to see the full programme, visit: www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk Tickets go on sale from 15th March via the Website, and will also be for sale on the door, subject to availability

Miscellaneous

Vale et Salve

Goodbye *News* and welcome *eNEWS*

A Short History of the BMS Newsletter (1978-2014)

Early on the Founding Committee knew that a periodical Newsletter would be necessary to communicate with the Society's members news of more imminent interest, record (LPs- remember them?) reviews and less 'high-flown' writings than might find their place in the annual Journal.

And so it was that one day, under the editorship of Richard Brookes, Issue Number One - Winter 1978 - a small A5 leaflet, 4 sides (only 3 printed) plopped onto members' doormats. Nicely printed in sepia ink. But not free of typographical errors, referring to our 'Honourary (sic) Secretary, John Dood (Dodd), who was seeking Committee members of various skills. An Honourary Legal Officer and a Campaigns Manager - we still need them. Most sadly, the opening item about an Inaugural Concert during 1978, to include Rutland Boughton's *Child of Earth* Cantata - to be a model of future activities - never happened. *Plus ca change.*

Now Newsletter No.2- Summer 1979- had changed quite dramatically. Still under Richard Brookes' editorship, it was much more utilitarian in print, standard black type, and the Society had acquired a logo which appeared on it - the letters BM sited within a set of five rectangles. The contents included a report on 'our sister body in the USA', the Society for British Music Inc. and an article (a first) by Richard Deering writing about his life as a concert pianist especially playing British music. All told, 16 sides of A5.

No.3- Autumn 1979- continued in a similar vein; adding a crossword. At this time Gerald Leach had taken over the editorship. No. 4 included another crossword and there were the answers to the two preceding ones – and so continued and prizes were sometimes offered, but we did not seem to say if anyone had won them. The content was developing a mixture of information about concerts and recordings, reviews, members' letters and sometimes small articles. No.7 gave us a short biography of Dr Ruth Gipps and a worklist at that point in time. No.9 contained an extended, and quite technical, review of a recording of song settings of A. E. Housman written by Dr Stephen Banfield. For some reason Newsletters Nos. 15 -17 were printed on A4 sheets but reverted to A5 again. The A5 editions were sometimes reaching 20 sides.

With Newsletter No.30 John Dodd took over the editorship. The general format and style did not really vary but it was now running to 24 or more pages. Alongside this the Society had also managed to produce its first six cassettes, which were being advertised.

Newsletter No.39, September 1988, Brian Blyth Daubney took over as Editor. The cover carried information about the programme for the first of the BMS Young Performer Awards in 1988. On some of its 40 pages, Philip Scowcroft regaled us with information about John Ansell, Percy Fletcher, Victor Rely-Hutchinson, Albert Ketèlby, Montague Phillips and Leslie Woodgate.

Newsletter No. 40 saw the appearance of *NEWS*, as it was now captioned, in what became its established format of A4. The initial, somewhat idiosyncratic 3 column layout inside soon gave way to a more natural 2 column one in No.42. Brian regularly contributed the music of a carol each year on the cover of the December issue. The principal content was reviews of various kinds, members' letters and Society information with a smattering of articles.

With *NEWS* 64 Brian bowed out of his editorship and Rob Barnett, then living on the Isle of Lewis, took his place to eventually steer the publication through until 2011. During that period, possibly the 'golden years', the issues grew larger in page numbers mainly averaging 36, up from 24. It may be said that the content became more varied over time and sometimes came to compete with the Journal with many articles, albeit usually of a lesser 'technical' nature. It is no reflection on editors both before and after Rob that they probably were unable to compete with the mass of material that seemed to come his way. This no doubt was because during this time he became increasingly involved with Music Web International the well-known website run by one of the Society's Life Members, Len Mullenger, so successfully. This undoubtedly brought Rob in contact with many more potential articles, which his predecessors and successor would have welcomed.

The growth of each issue of *NEWS* had brought with it problems generally in so much that there was a need to rein in its cost. Additionally, the use of colour from time to time added to this. In 2011, with *NEWS 130*, Ian Maxwell took over as editor, operating initially from the foreign shores of Germany, later Switzerland and finally now back in the UK. He was required to work within a more strict number of pages, and more recently took on the editorship of the Journal. Most recently he proposed a major change in the way the publications worked, in part reflecting the impact of the internet in recent years. These changes are set out in detail elsewhere, but the major part of the *NEWS*'s content will now find its way into the new format Journal.

NEWS, or as I will call it *eNEWS*, will now fall under the editorship of Shea Lolin and will aim to be a source (along with the revamped website) of more up to date information on concerts, events etc. It will also be the medium by which Society's members will learn what it is doing. Whilst this will principally be an epublication, those members who cannot, or prefer not, to receive it by that means have the option of continuing to receive it in print form.

Will members who have not told us of any email address that they may have, please let us know (contact - Shea

Lolin- britishmusicsociety@gmail.com), also telling us if they do NOT want it used for *eNEWS* in future. We will then only use it as a substitute for sending you written letters or specific communications, like me asking for your subscription. All in the name of saving the Society money to assist it to survive, and prosper.

Thanks must be given to all the editors, past and present, as well as all those who contributed in some way. (An index of the last issues of *NEWS* will be published in due course.)

To the future!

Stephen Trowell

Composer Anniversaries

During 2014, 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 *British Music* later in the year:

Andrzej Panufnik – Centenary of birth in 1914
Harold Truscott – Centenary of birth in 1914
Humphrey Searle – Centenary of birth in 1914
George Dyson – 50th Anniversary of death in 1964

Correspondence Received

from Fiona Richards:

Hello,
In case it's of use to the BMS readership, I've started a blog on John Ireland's music in order to post all those little snippets of new information that have nowhere else to go. Someone somewhere might be interested...
http://johnirelandmusicpeopleplaces.wordpress.com/
Fiona Richards, The Open University

from Russell Burdekin:

I was interested to see Philip Scowcroft's timely reminder of the many talents of George Alexander Macfarren in the latest Newsletter but disappointed that it gave the impression that Macfarren had been completely ignored since his death. There was no mention of two BMS Journal articles (1986 and 2010) or of the recordings of several of the works mentioned including Symphony no.4, the song *Pack Clouds Away* (on the BMS CD Sixty Glorious Years, excerpt on the BMS website), the *Chevy Chase* overture (Hyperion CDH 55088), the overture to *She Stoops to Conquer* (SOMM 0123) and the opera *Robin Hood* (Naxos 8.660306-07). A full list of sources and recordings can be found at www.victorianenglishopera.org/composers/macfarren.htm. Not a large sample perhaps but enough to give a good idea of his qualities. Unfortunately, there were some errors in the article: Macfarren's first performed opera was *The Devil's Opera* (1838) and *Robin Hood* (1860) followed *Charles II*. The song *My own my guiding star* was from *Robin Hood*.
Regards
Russell Burdekin

Members Discount Offers

MEMBERS' DISCOUNT OFFERS - Other label CDs

CARE! PRICE CHANGES

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 £10
Dutton CDLF £5-75
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. CLOSING DATE FOR THIS OFFER: 14 April 2014 (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 £12-25 for Select labels and £11-25 for Priory labels. Specific exceptions: APR £8-25; BBC Legends £10-25; LPO £8-50; Marco Polo £10 and Naxos £6-25.

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 £ sterling should contact the Hon. Treasurer for appropriate prices.

Please send all orders in writing to the 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 Books Offer

Boydell & Brewer is offering a 25% discount to BMS members on a selection of new music titles. These include:

"Inside Conducting" by Christopher Seaman, "Britten in Pictures" by Lucy Walker, "The Aesthetic Life of Cyril Scott" by Sarah Collins and "British Piano Sonata, 1870-1945" by Lisa Hardy.

These books and others available in the offer can be found on their website: http://www.boydellandbrewer.com/bms.asp together with details of how to order and the special offer code.

Michael Hurd

A sixth release appeared at the end of 2012 in the form of a double CD Dutton CDLX 7297. This brings together the talents of Lorraine McAslan (violin) and Nicholas Daniel (oboe) together with the New London Children's Choir and Orchestra all under Ronald Corp. The programme combines Michael's complete orchestral music coupled with four more of the *Pop Cantatas*.

We have a small stock of copies available to members through the Hon. Treasurer, whilst stocks last, at the special price of £7 (£8 Europe £8-50 Elsewhere) postage included. Cheques favour The British Music Society or US$14 (favour S C Trowell).

Copies of the previous releases (for details of which see *BMS News* 136 Page 35, *BMS News* 133 Page 32, *BMS News* 130 Page 425, and *BMS News* 129 Page 378) may be ordered through the Hon. Treasurer

Announcements

ALL CHANGE AT BMS RECORDINGS

On February 1st, distribution of BMS recordings moved from the Wyastone Estate to Select Music and Video Distribution Limited. At the same time, BMS CDs were reduced to mid-price. With Select's greater penetration of world markets, especially in the Far East, where there is a known appetite for British Music, the BMS Committee expects the overall visibility of BMS recordings to be enhanced, not only on CD, but also in the various online delivery methods.

A more radical step and one that will increase the BMS profile even more, is that all new BMS recordings will appear on the Naxos label, which already has a proven track record in British music. The first two of these issues will appear in June: one is a CD of instrumental and vocal music by Maurice Jacobson, with his son Julian Jacobson as pianist, joined by his regular piano duo partner Mariko Brown, mezzo-soprano Jennifer Johnston, and cellist Raphael Wallfisch. Raphael Wallfisch also features on the other June Naxos/BMS issue: a compilation of music for cello and piano, selected from three existing BMS CDs. In music by William Busch, Kenneth Leighton, William Wordsworth and Arnold Cooke, he is partnered by the sadly-missed Raphael Terroni.

Many existing BMS recordings will be reissued on the Naxos label over the next two years, as stocks of the originals become exhausted. Those that are more niche in appeal will continue to be available on the BMS label, as there is no intention to change the Society's policy of non-deletion.

Details of the current catalogue can be found on the BMS website.

Martin Cotton, Recordings Manager

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.