

Spring 2017  
No. 166  
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# Bulletin



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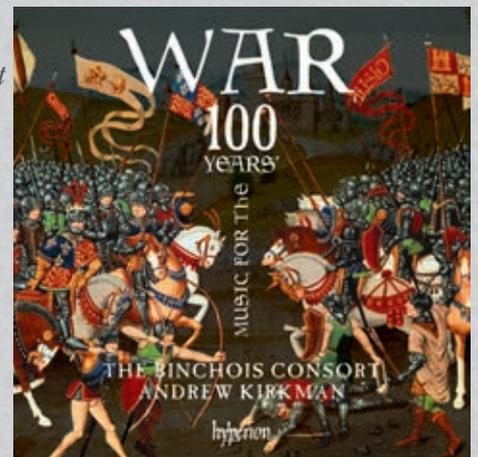
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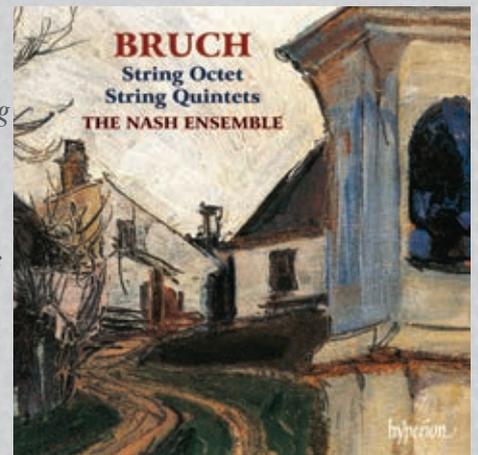
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# FRMS Annual General Meeting 2016

*Bournemouth RMS were hosts for the 2016 AGM held at the town's Elstead Hotel.*

*Photography: George Steele.*

Allan Child began his **Chairman's Annual Report** by recounting that, on a visit to Bournemouth some time ago, a friend had found the town full of cheerleaders who were holding some sort of a forum. He said that the FRMS AGM would certainly be a less flamboyant affair but he wondered if a few cheerleaders might not come amiss in the Federation to raise the profile of recorded music societies. He also noted that a number of familiar faces were absent this year; some absences were due to family circumstances.

Looking back, the past year had been fairly uneventful for the Federation, in contrast to the momentous events in the world around us. The main event of the year, other than the AGM, was the Music Weekend at Daventry, notable for the inclusion of a world premiere in the live recital, and a subsequent review posted on MusicWeb International's live review website. The financial result of the event was less satisfactory, but the committee were addressing that particular issue (see below). The booking procedure for future events was likely to have much tighter deadlines and the message to participants would be to book early.

The chairman had continued to make contact with societies, although his travels had not been quite so wide-ranging as previously. As secretary of his own society he had invited members of several neighbouring societies to a special event and had taken the opportunity to suggest that one or more of them might consider hosting the Federation AGM. He had been greatly encouraged by the response, with the result that the 2017 meeting will be in Nottingham, hosted by Wollaton RMS. Not only that, but two other societies had expressed an interest in hosting the AGM at some time.

Before that, of course, would come the Daventry weekend. Allan had taken an active part in planning for 2017, continuing an initiative which had come from Colin Dancer and Lyndon Jenkins. A sub-committee had met in Birmingham in June, and our President, Julian Lloyd Webber, had been able to take

a couple of hours out from his responsibilities as principal of the Birmingham Conservatoire to join the discussion. As a result he had subsequently recommended a performer for the live music recital. And following on from the *Bulletin* article by the Master of the Queen's Music, Judith Weir, the *Bulletin* editor had followed it up by suggesting that she should speak at Daventry, which she has agreed to do.

In conclusion the chairman thanked all his committee colleagues for their help and support through the year.

Paul Corfield Godfrey began his **Annual Accounts and Treasurer's Report** by recalling that last year he had expressed the hope that, following the transition period as new FRMS treasurer, the management of FRMS affairs would be easier in 2015-16 than in 2014-15. Despite

a computer hard-drive failure earlier this year, which robbed him of access to the accounting systems for some months, this has by and large been achieved. At the same time he has managed to simplify the accounting procedures. The annual accounts are now a straightforward record of income and expenditure, and exclude amounts due after the end of the financial year. Last year's accountants' fees and late payments to the Daventry hotel (detailed in last year's treasurer's report) were included by the accountants as

accruals in their figures, and the accounts now more accurately reflect the exact position at any given moment. Although economic indicators suggest that the rate of inflation for the year 2016-17 may show a sharp increase, that for 2015-16 did not change and it has therefore been possible for the second year in

succession to hold the rate of subscriptions to the 2014 level. Changes in taxation provisions for insurance have, however, necessitated an increase in the charges for those societies who take advantage of the FRMS arrangements in this area.

Furthermore, the change of ownership of our hotel for the Daventry weekend entailed a new contract, which obliged us to commit to full payment for



**Bournemouth GS's Alan Dyer welcomes delegates**



**The Federation's chairman and secretary get to work**

unoccupied rooms. This made a substantial addition to our costs, quite apart from the provision of a bus service (which was well received). For future years, therefore, we will have to insist on the firm commitment of those attending the Daventry weekend at an earlier date than heretofore, and late bookings will only be available if the hotel has accommodation. Planning is already under way for the 2017 Daventry weekend and it is hoped that members will find the programme continues to present good value for money. Many compliments were received relating to the 2016 weekend.

Apart from the one avoidable expense mentioned above – which the committee are already addressing – economies have generally continued to be made, such as the avoidance of the future need to pay accountants' fees. Indeed, Paul repeated his hope from last year's report that societies will find their subscriptions continue to be well spent. The provision of a free bus service will be repeated, and feedback from those attending the weekend continues to be highly favourable.

A change in printing arrangements for *Bulletin* magazine went very smoothly and indeed even resulted in some savings. Sales of advertising also increased, which is a very welcome development.

Introducing his fifth **Secretary's Report**, Jim Bostwick began by thanking all his committee colleagues and fellow officers for their support in helping him with his various duties. He was also grateful to all those present for taking the time to attend.

The astute readers of the Committee Report recently circulated to secretaries of affiliated societies will possibly have noted Jim's intention of retiring as secretary at the 2018 AGM, having reached the age of 70 during that year. This is a lengthy notice period in order for a successor to be found, or for someone to put themselves forward. Jim offered an open invitation to discuss with any member of any society what the post entails. Ideally, it would be very useful for someone to be co-opted onto the committee to shadow him. There will be details in his next 'View from Yorkshire' in *Bulletin*.

In his last AGM report, the secretary said he had been invited to give talks at Dundee and Carnoustie. He had been treated to a warm Scottish welcome by his hosts, Cath and John Maidment of Carnoustie, and he thoroughly enjoyed his visit.

The Daventry Music Weekend took place on 22<sup>nd</sup>-24<sup>th</sup> April and was rated, according to feedback from

attenders, to have been a successful and enjoyable weekend with a high standard of presentations. Organising the music weekend is central to the committee's function, with all members contributing ideas for whom we might invite to be presenters. The issues associated with transport to and from the hotel were significantly resolved by the provision of a free bus from Coventry railway station. We think that the take-up for this facility is likely to increase and it will be repeated for Daventry 2017, the dates of which are 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> April. Publicity material will be available soon.

Recruitment has been an issue for some years now. The chief reason that societies close, according to letters and emails received, is difficulty finding people willing to take up officer roles, when those who have given years of service have had to retire for one reason or another. It is difficult, from a distance, to know how to help with this problem, but we have to accept that with ageing memberships, this is one which will not go away. So the list of closures continues.

However, unusually, a firm of solicitors decided to set up their own recorded music society based at their Wolverhampton premises and it has been up and running since September. Of course, being fully cognisant of the law in relation to licences, etc., they approached the Federation for assistance. Perhaps we might get an update as to how they are doing for a possible *Bulletin* item.

Provision of information on the Federation's website continues to grow, thanks to the efforts of George Steele. As well as detailing societies'

programmes, it also provides access to documentation associated with Federation matters. All those interested can dip into [thefrms.co.uk](http://thefrms.co.uk) to keep abreast of what's going on.

The list of officers and committee for 2016-17 shows that we continue to have one vacancy. This is a situation which has persisted now for some time, and it was raised at last year's AGM when there were two vacancies. Stuart Sillitoe (Preston RMS) joined us then, thus reducing the deficit back to one. Since each committee

member carries out specific responsibilities, in addition to having a general oversight of the Federation's affairs, it limits any expansion of what could be offered to affiliated societies.

Having said that, the Federation's *raison d'être* is to provide licences and insurance at very competitive rates, with the added convenience of not having to deal directly with the authorities concerned. The treasurer, Paul Corfield Godfrey, solely handles the negotiations for this service.



Helen and Alan Dyer of Bournemouth GS

Jim repeated his plea for ordinary members of societies to attend as observers any of the four committee meetings held each year in November or December, February, May and August to see what goes on. The Federation committee also has the issue of an ageing group – hence Jim’s earlier comments about the next decade knocking on his door!

Finally, the secretary expressed his most grateful thanks to the day’s hosts, Bournemouth GS, and to Sylvia Giddens who has been the main contact for the AGM arrangements. Unfortunately, due to a recent fall, Sylvia wasn’t able to attend but Helen and Alan Dyer kindly deputised.

### Live music recital

Following a very pleasant dinner, musicians associated with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra formed a string quartet to entertain us for over an hour (writes Jim Bostwick). The Cleyndert String Quartet comprises Brian Howells and Brian Johnston (violins), Hugh Miller (viola), and Amanda de Jong Cleyndert (cello). They opened and closed the recital with full works. First, they played Haydn’s String Quartet, Op. 64, No. 5, ‘The Lark’. This was followed by a spirited performance of ‘Tango’, originally written by Albéniz for piano as part of the suite *España*, Op. 165. Perhaps too spirited, because Brian Howells (first violin) developed a serious cramp in his hand and had to stop playing. Mr Johnston was prevailed upon to entertain us with some humorous anecdotes about the life of an orchestral musician. Fortunately, Brian recovered sufficiently to continue, so the item was repeated. Elgar’s *Salut d’Amour* followed with some quietly hummed in-tune accompaniment from audience members seated close by. The Allegro from Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto No. 3 preceded more Elgar, this time *Chanson de Nuit*,

### Recorded music recital



The chairman, having declared the business meeting closed, introduced Brian Oakley of the Bournemouth society to entertain delegates with a most interesting illustrated talk on the history of recorded sound, which included examples of original 78 rpm records.

four pieces from the Suite No. 3 in D by Bach, and an arrangement for quartet of the ‘Flower Duet’ from *Lakmé* by Delibes. The penultimate item was the ever-popular *Humoresque*, Op. 101, No. 7 by Dvořák, and the evening’s finale was Mozart’s Divertimento No. 1, K. 136.

This was an appropriate recital to follow the dinner at the end of a busy day and was enjoyed enormously by the audience. ●

### The Cleyndert Quartet



## REGIONAL NEWS

## Yorkshire & Northwest Regional Group

*Yorkshire & Northwest Regional Group's music day on October 15<sup>th</sup> was held at the New North Road Baptist Church, Huddersfield. Reporter: Ron Cooper*

**G**ARY MIDGLEY OPENED proceedings with an intriguing, cleverly conceived programme entitled 'The Art of Losing', or, as he retitled it, 'The Losing of Art', in which he featured paintings as well as music from a wide variety of composers. However, as he explained, paintings once lost, destroyed, or just never seen again cannot be replaced, whereas musical scores can be rewritten (sometimes from memory), recreated from manuscripts or copies made by soloists or orchestral parts. In other cases composers have chosen to modify or rewrite pieces for inclusion in other of their works. Sir Arthur Sullivan's score for *The Pirates of Penzance* includes the chorus 'Climbing Over Rocky Mountain', originally written for *Thespis* (1871), a short-lived, long-lost piece. We heard the Orchestra and Chorus of Welsh National Opera, conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras. This was followed by the overture to *Les francs-juges*, the only surviving part of an opera composed by Berlioz in 1826, but one with which he was most unhappy, and consequently changed and eventually abandoned, keeping only the overture. Charles Dutoit conducting the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal rendered a lively performance.

In complete contrast, the score of Prokofiev's Piano Concerto No. 2 (1913), a fiendishly difficult piece, was destroyed during the Russian Revolution. It was eventually reconstructed some ten years later in 1923, following a complete rewrite. We heard Michel Béroff playing the Scherzo, accompanied by the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra under Kurt Masur. Janáček's Piano Sonata I.X.1905 'From the Street' (1906) has a melodramatic history. The composer was so dissatisfied with the work that he tore it up and threw the score into the River Vltava and watched it float away 'like a flock of swans'! Unknown to him, his pupil who premiered the sonata had made a copy which she secretly kept for 20 years, before presenting it to the composer a couple of years before his death. András Schiff was the soloist in Gary's recording.

The Norwegian composer, Geirr Tveitt (1908-81), a virtuoso pianist, suffered the devastating loss in a house fire of almost all his music manuscripts – a life's work all but lost. However, his published Piano Concerto No. 1 (1927), composed as a 19 year old, survived and we heard the opening movement *Tranquillo* played by Håvard Gimse, with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Bjarte Engeset in a Naxos recording of 2001. This was followed by Symphony No. 4, 'Sinfonia Lirica', composed in 1943 and revised in 1978 by the Estonian Eduard Tubin. This impressive work was a survivor of another catastrophe: a wartime bomb destroyed the building in which the manuscript was kept in a safe. In spite of the safe falling from top to bottom of the burning building, the precious cargo was found intact but heavily singed! The opening movement, *Molto*

*moderato*, was played by the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra, under Arvo Volmer.

On a lighter note, Gary concluded his presentation with an extract from Franz Reizenstein's popular *Variations on The Lambeth Walk*, this one in the style of Chopin. As a serious composer and virtuoso pianist, Reizenstein, a German Jew, fled Nazi rule along with many others, emigrating to the UK in 1934 to continue his studies and livelihood. Having studied in Berlin with Hindemith, in England he was taught by Vaughan Williams at the RCM, later becoming a professor at the RAM in London, and later at the Royal Northern College in Manchester. The *Variations* were never formally written down but, fortunately, were recorded and proved a delightful finale to Gary's programme. His was a most entertaining idea, showing his scholarship and depth of knowledge of subject, as well as introducing us to some little-known composers and their works.

**D**ONNING THE METAPHORICAL mantle of King Lear in his presentation 'Blow winds and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!', Derek Bacon made a plea that more great woodwind concertos be featured in live orchestral concerts. He illustrated the dearth of such works with a 'league table' showing the dominance of piano and string concertos generally on offer. As a wind player himself, however modest, he is a passionate supporter of the cause. He opened with the third movement 'Elegia', dedicated to the memory of James Bulger, of Christopher Rouse's Flute Concerto (1993), featuring Sharon Bezaly, with Alan Gilbert conducting the Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. Rouse, an American neo-Romantic composer of symphonies and wind concertos, and an academic at the Juilliard School since 1997, was greatly moved by the story of the abduction of James Bulger.

In contrast, the late 18<sup>th</sup>-century Oboe Concerto by Domenico Cimarosa (1749-1801) was a more familiar work. We heard all four movements played superbly by Evelyn Rothwell in a 1966 recording by the Pro Arte Orchestra, conducted by her husband, Sir John Barbirolli. The next offering was the Clarinet Concerto by Edward Gregson, the English composer known for his brass and wind band compositions, and a former principal of the Royal Northern College of Music. The concerto in two parts, commissioned by the BBC and completed in 1994, was premiered by Michael Collins, for whom it was specially written. His performance with the BBC Philharmonic under Martyn Brabbins was superb, particularly in the thrilling second movement.

Derek concluded his programme with the last movement of Mozart's Bassoon Concerto played energetically by Knut Sönstevold, accompanied by

the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra under Sergiu Comissiona, the Romanian-American conductor, in a 1990 recording. Composed by Mozart at the age of 18 in 1774, the concerto is the most often performed in the entire bassoon repertory, and with good reason as it is a brilliant example of the bassoon's range and versatility.

In a programme mixing old and new and featuring the main wind instruments, Derek pleaded a passionate and knowledgeable case for more wind concertos, particularly if they are played with such excellence.

**S**UE PARKER CONCLUDED THE DAY'S presentations with '**Boy with the Violin**', a wide-ranging audio-visual programme, featuring settings of Thomas Hardy's poems and music inspired by his novels, as well as folk songs and tunes that the author knew and played on his violin. Contributions from the Dorset folk group The Yetties, featuring both the spoken word and tunes played on Hardy's and his father's violins, were interspersed throughout the presentation. The Mellstock Band's rendition of two folk songs was followed by Richard Rodney Bennett's music score for *Far From the Maddening Crowd* (1967), played by the BBC Philharmonic under Rumon Gamba.

Gerald Finzi's settings of three poems for tenor or

baritone voice with piano, were greatly enjoyed, in particular 'To Lizbie Browne' sung superbly by Stephen Varcoe (baritone) and accompanied by Clifford Benson. These were followed by Holst's *Egdon Heath*, inspired by Hardy's Wessex and premiered in February 1928 at a memorial concert a month after the author's death. We heard Sir Adrian Boult conducting the LPO in a beautiful performance of a work which the composer regarded as his 'most perfectly realized composition'. Two further songs followed: the poignant ballad, 'The Banks of Allan Water', sung by Sally Dexter, which featured in *Madding Crowd*, and 'The Barley Mow', a drinking song lustily performed by the Mellstock Band and various singers. In sharp contrast, Britten's setting of *At the Railway Station, Upway*, sung by tenor Richard Edgar-Wilson with pianist Eugene Asti, and then John Ireland's setting of *Her Song*, with Janet Baker, accompanied by Martin Isepp on piano, both exemplified the beauty and depth of Hardy's poetic genius. The audience much appreciated being shown the words of the poems; our understanding and enjoyment were enhanced by being able to follow the various texts.

This thoroughly researched programme concluded with Robin Milford's orchestral suite *The Darkling Thrush* (1929), written in memory of Hardy, and here performed by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under David Lloyd Jones, with solo violin played by Philippe Graffin. Sue's presentation was a model of excellence. It had a fine balance of content, variety of genres, pacing and exposition – a fitting end to an enjoyable day. ●

## YORKSHIRE & NORTHWEST REGIONAL GROUP SPRING MUSICAL WEEKEND

March 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> 2017  
Craiglands Hotel  
Cowpasture Road, Ilkley LS29 8RQ  
01943 430001

### Programme

Ron Cooper	Otto Klemperer – The London Years
Gary Midgley	Desert Island Discs 1942
Nigel Simeone	Dvořák
Alan Sanders	Elisabeth Schwarzkopf
Gordon Drury	The Kingsway Hall Remembered (Part 2)
Kevin Paynes	A Musical Arboretum
Geoff Bateman	The Argo Story

All FRMS-affiliated members and friends welcome.

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or

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Second Speaker

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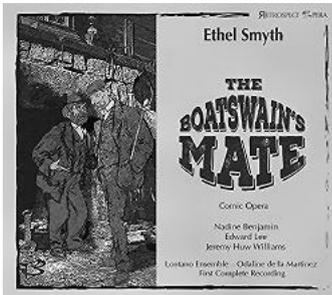
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Bookings accepted no later than April 22<sup>nd</sup>

# Retrospect Opera



Christopher Wiley on a new opera company that commemorates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ethel Smyth's opera *The Boatswain's Mate* with a first complete recording.



**DAME ETHEL SMYTH** (1858–1944) lived a fascinating if unconventional life. As a child, she fell under the spell of a musical governess and resolved to become a composer,

and when her father forbade her to enter the music profession, she embarked upon a campaign of disobedience until his mind was well and truly changed! She relocated to Germany in 1877 to train, and there she crossed paths with many of the leading lights of the world of music, including Brahms, Clara Schumann, Grieg, and Tchaikovsky. Moving back to her home country, the 1890s saw her achieve major success with large-scale orchestral and choral works, as well as the first of her six operas.

In 1910, Smyth heard Emmeline Pankhurst speak at a suffragette meeting, prompting her to pledge two years' service to the Votes for Women campaign. She even earned herself a jail sentence for smashing a cabinet minister's window! It was at this time that she wrote probably her most enduring work, the suffragette anthem *The March of the Women*. In later years she developed serious hearing problems that ultimately spelled the end for her musical activities. But rather than admit defeat, she turned increasingly to writing instead, publishing a total of ten books of memoirs, biographical sketches, and essays about the music profession.

Smyth's achievements in opera, as in other fields, are groundbreaking: she bridged a significant gap in British music between Gilbert & Sullivan and



Britten. Her most important score in this respect was *The Boatswain's Mate*, which she held to be a 'new departure in comic opera', in sharp contrast to the more serious works that had preceded it. It was composed in Egypt, where Smyth stayed for several months at the start of 1914 in order to

distance herself from politics closer to home.

Based on a short story by WW Jacobs, the opera tells the hilarious tale of a retired boatswain's devious plan to win the hand of a widowed landlady

– by having his accomplice break into her pub at night pretending to be a burglar! It certainly bears the hallmarks of Smyth's recent suffrage activity, nowhere more than in the Overture, which prominently quotes *The March of the Women*. Smyth is even said to have modelled her heroine on Emmeline Pankhurst.

*The Boatswain's Mate* reflects both Smyth's British origins and her German training. The first half is written in the comic opera tradition of Gilbert & Sullivan, with spoken dialogue interspersed with light-hearted songs. Conversely, the second half is much weightier, with uninterrupted music the whole way through, recalling the works of such operatic giants as Wagner. Smyth also weaves a tapestry of musical allusions into her score, ranging from British folk songs and nursery rhymes to the opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.



The composer was quick to promote her new opera using her German contacts – she had secured a two-week production in Frankfurt before she had even returned to British soil! Unfortunately the outbreak of World War I precluded those performances from taking place, so *The Boatswain's Mate* was not premiered until 1916, at Sadler's Wells, with Smyth herself at the conductor's podium. It became the most popular of her operas during her own lifetime, with productions in Birmingham,

Leeds, and Manchester as well as London's Drury Lane, the Old Vic, and Covent Garden.

It seems astonishing that 100 years passed before *The Boatswain's Mate* received its first complete recording, by Retrospect Opera. Retrospect Opera is a small company established in 2014 with the aim of recording neglected 19<sup>th</sup>- and early 20<sup>th</sup>-century British opera, financed by crowd sourcing. It brings together a group of academics with expertise in performing, teaching, editing, and researching music, so its recordings aspire to high professional standards of both performance and presentation.

Retrospect Opera's *The Boatswain's Mate* features singers Nadine Benjamin, Edward Lee, and Jeremy Huw Williams in the principal roles, accompanied by the Lontano Ensemble under the baton of renowned Smyth interpreter Odaline de la Martinez, who has the distinction of having been the first-ever female conductor at the BBC Proms. As an added bonus, the 2-CD set includes rare historical recordings of extracts from Smyth's operas conducted by the composer, originally released by His Master's Voice in 1916 and 1930, as well as an accompanying booklet containing the full libretto and three authoritative essays.

Following the success of its inaugural recording, Retrospect Opera is hard at work on a number of other projects. Scheduled for release in early 2017 is

Sir Francis Burnand and Edward Solomon's *Pickwick*, an entertaining musical theatre adaptation of a Dickens story, recorded in September 2016 along with George Grossmith's curtain-raiser *Cups and Saucers*. The company is also fund-raising for upcoming recordings of Edward Loder's *Raymond and Agnes* as well as another opera by Ethel Smyth, her charming *Fête Galante*.

© Christopher Wiley, 2016

Christopher Wiley is senior lecturer in music at the University of Surrey, and publicity officer for Retrospect Opera. He is the author of journal articles appearing in *The Musical Quarterly*, *Music and Letters*, and *Comparative Criticism*. He is also an acknowledged expert on Ethel Smyth.

To find out more about Retrospect Opera's current activities, or to order a CD or make a donation, please visit [www.retrospectopera.org.uk](http://www.retrospectopera.org.uk), or contact Dr Valerie Langfield: [contact@retrospectopera.org.uk](mailto:contact@retrospectopera.org.uk) or 82 Queens Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire SK8 5HH.

*Ed: Look out for Retrospect Opera's advert in the next issue, which will include news of their second release.*

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## A VIEW FROM YORKSHIRE Jim Bostwick, FRMS Secretary

**R**ecently, I went to Nelson Gramophone Society to give a presentation about the work of legendary record producer Walter Legge. It was a thoroughly enjoyable evening with a good attendance – five rows of six chairs, if memory serves, all occupied. During the interval, it was a pleasure to meet the members who were warm, welcoming and interesting. It was quite foggy returning back home over the border, but I was genuinely lifted by the experience which led me to thinking why many members of societies don't want to do a programme themselves.

Eight years ago, Tony Pook – then an FRMS committee member – prepared a useful mini guide called 'Presenting a Programme', specifically to encourage people to have a go. Its key points: choose a subject which might be about a particular piece, composer, performer, or type of music, or something of personal interest or significance. Then select musical items to support the subject and if you don't have a large collection to go at, ask around at one of your meetings – in my experience, people are always glad to help. Do tell your audience about the items chosen, perhaps speaking for about three to five minutes on each. Tony stresses that it should be more than just for example, 'Next is a song by Richard Strauss'. This tends to stress the DJ handling your CDs or even possibly lead to total collapse if it's on an LP, side 1, band 2!

What you say and how you say it matters. There are gifted presenters who carry what they want to say in their heads and there are grounded mortals like me, who need a script. But researching items is so much easier now with Google and the like. I find humour helps too. What I stress to nervous first-timers, unaccustomed to public speaking, is you are talking to friends and in my case at Nelson, making new ones. Everyone knows there is a lot of pleasure in giving and receiving. If you would like a copy of Tony Pook's 'Presenting a Programme', drop me a line or email. You can also download it from the FRMS website.

Finally, I would like readers to know of my announcement at a recent committee meeting that I will step down as FRMS secretary at the 2018 Annual General Meeting by which time I will have reached the age of 70. This is quite a period of notice, intentionally so, so that someone may come forward to take over. Should any reader be interested, please get in touch, or as has been said before, do come along to a committee meeting as an observer – expenses paid – to see us at first hand. ●





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**Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup>–Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May:**

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# SOCIETY NEWS

## Great Yarmouth hits 70

The 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting of the Great Yarmouth Recorded Music Circle took place on Monday November 14<sup>th</sup>. The evening was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress of Great Yarmouth, Cllr Malcolm Bird and Mrs Donna Bird, Keith Smith and Terry Hepworth from the Lowestoft Recorded Music Circle, past and current members, and friends. The evening started with a fish and chip supper and was enjoyed by all. The programme of music was chosen to be as close as possible to the inaugural meeting in 1946. During the interval, and after a few kind words from the Mayor, the anniversary cake was cut with great ceremony by the Mayoress who was presented with flowers by committee member Mrs Kathy Butler.

The first meeting of the Circle took place on November 18<sup>th</sup> 1946 at St Mark's Mission Hall in Great Yarmouth, with the object of helping people to appreciate good music. Mr F Hawkins was elected chairman, Mr R Packard Hon. secretary, and Mr E Goate Hon. treasurer. Subs were 3/6 and there were 44 members. The first LP was played on February 12<sup>th</sup> 1951. In 1955 the Circle moved to the Hall Quay library, and then in September 1961 to the present-day library. Other venues have included the Star Hotel, the Quaker Meeting House and our present home, Christchurch Methodist United Reform Church.

**Ian McEwen, secretary**

## Carshalton & Wallington RMS

We sadly have to report the death on May 26<sup>th</sup> 2016 of Roy Egan OBE. Roy had been vice-chairman and a committee member for ten years before being elected to the post of chairman in 1987. He was only the third chairman of our Society, which was formed on September 13<sup>th</sup> 1960, and he was the linchpin over three decades. Roy's sociability, diplomacy, good humour, and plain common sense were crucial factors in helping it navigate the many challenges that have faced groups like ours throughout that period. The Society's new chairman is Eric Pridham.

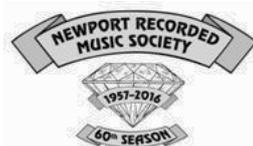


Roy Egan OBE pictured in 2010

**Tony Goring, Hon. secretary**

## Newport IoW's diamond celebrations

Newport, Isle of Wight, Recorded Music Society commenced its 60<sup>th</sup> season in October 2016 with the usual full programme of recorded music concerts for the coming season. These meetings take place every Monday evening, with a regular screening of



opera or ballet DVDs each November. We also enjoy several additional social events throughout the period up to Easter, after which the Society takes a break until the following October.

The Diamond Jubilee proved to be a memorable event and was celebrated appropriately on a date very close to the anniversary of the Society's inauguration on October 31<sup>st</sup> 1957. Many of the current members, as well as guests of the Society, gathered for drinks and canapés in an elegant hotel restaurant overlooking a lake bathed in warm autumn sunshine. This attractive setting was enhanced by the benevolence of the weather and provided the perfect venue for this very special occasion. After spirited conversation over drinks, a delicious and leisurely lunch was then served, followed by an hour-long live concert of light music perfectly performed by a string quartet from the Isle of Wight Symphony Orchestra. The celebration closed in style with the cutting of a suitably decorated jubilee cake served with champagne. Proceedings were captured on camera by long-standing member Paul Shutler.

In common with many other groups, membership has declined in recent years, but the Newport Society continues to thrive on a reduced scale and the regular meetings still attract an appreciative audience for most events.

**Tony Gower, Hon. press officer**

## Torbay Musical Weekend 2016

On Friday November 18<sup>th</sup>, after the traditional welcome reception in the Bishop's Suite of the Palace Hotel, Torquay, the Torbay Musical Weekend got under way. It proved to be yet another historic weekend in this gracious hotel, giving members many presentations and recitals across a broad and stimulating cross-section of musical genres and gems.

After dinner, many weekend attenders – some of whom had travelled some distance to be there – relaxed and enjoyed a presentation from Ted Pezarro entitled **Syncopating Ladies**, where he chose recordings from the early 1920s to illustrate the development of his subject up to more modern times. Ted's talk on these 'jazz ladies' was received with much appreciation.

Following this fascinating presentation more than 40 night owls stayed up late to hear John Isaac present the wonderful sound of **Jacqueline Du Pré** with a brief history of her short-lived genius.

Saturday opened with Dr Jonathan Maw playing **Notable Live Performances** from across the world. This was followed by the BBC Radio 3 presenter and editor-in-chief of *Gramophone* magazine, James Jolly. He gave us plenty to think about by showing how so many composers and musicians influenced each other's style and performance with most telling illustrations in his presentation **Six Degrees of Separation**.

Dr Lionel Carley delightfully demonstrated how surprisingly close **Grieg, Delius and Grainger** were in developing the European cultural tastes in music at

the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century. Next we were surprised to learn that Saverio Mercadante was toppled from the top opera ranking in his day by Verdi. So much of Mercadante's prolific output is now overlooked as a result. Andrew Borkowski gave us much of the melody, rhythm and full orchestration of his work – in fact much of Mercadante's music could be mistaken for Verdi's.

Our first live event of the weekend was a superb recital from internationally-renowned performers **Sebastian Comberti (cello) and Maggie Cole (fortepiano)**. They spoke about their instruments and the music they played. Their recital featured the following works:

- Hélène Liebmann (1795-c1835): the Grand Sonata in B flat, for cello and piano, Op. 11 (1806).
- Beethoven: Cello Sonata in F major, Op. 5 No. 1 (1796), and one Bagatelle from Op. 33.
- Schubert: Arpeggione Sonata in A minor, D. 821

The late-night Saturday presentation saw Maureen Greenhouse expose the fascinating life of **Elisabeth Schwarzkopf**, with many of her recordings demonstrating the soprano's versatile repertoire.

After the AGM on Sunday morning we were treated to an interesting review of the **Cheltenham Music Festival** which started, surprisingly, in 1945 with the LPO and Benjamin Britten. The Festival's artistic director Meurig Bowen inspired us with music and pictures from this ever more prestigious event.

A real insight to what makes the recorded music industry tick came from Patrick Garvey in **An Agent's Viewpoint**. A former professional musician turned agent, he knew about the workings, failings and pressures on musicians and how tough a musician's life can be. He gave us a good look behind the scenes into the agent's role, well illustrated by music, much of which was by artists on his agency's books.

One of our regulars, David Wherrell, echoed the experience of many of us by charting his own development in the appreciation of a broad range of music in **A Musical Biography of an Ordinary Man**. David had everybody enthralled with so many numbers that we could all relate to.

Our weekend closed when young professional musician Christopher Beaumont and his mentor Peter Rhodes performed with xylophone and piano to illustrate the music both written and performed by **Sir Patrick Moore**, perhaps more famous for his television programme *The Sky at Night*. A most unusual and different presentation, also featuring the late Sir Patrick's glockenspiel, was punctuated with many anecdotes, famous throwaway comments and most amusing lines, penned as an example of how to deal with errant utility company officials. Christopher had been very close to Sir Patrick for some years and is now cataloguing his music. It was a light and delightful way to close the 47<sup>th</sup> Musical Weekend.

*The dates for this year's event are: November 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> 2017.*

**John Isaac, chairman**

### **Special guest at Preston RMS**

On November 11<sup>th</sup> Preston Recorded Music Society had a special guest, Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines. She had been invited to talk to us about her life, and in particular about the circumstances of her escape from war-threatened Europe in 1939. Nicholas Winton had organised a series of trains (Kindertransport) onto which selfless parents put their children to be taken to safe destinations. In most cases the parents would never see their children again but would disappear into the concentration camps of Nazi Germany. With numbered labels around their necks, Milena (641) and her younger sister (639) were on the last train out. They came to England to a modest terrace in Ashton-under-Lyne and later moved to Llandrindod Wells. Eventually Milena would settle in Preston. The story of Sir Nicholas Winton would only emerge 50 years later when Esther Rantzen organised an episode of her programme, *That's Life*, around it in 1988. She showed a list of the children and pointed out one name – Vera Gissing – and in an emotional moment announced that she was in the audience and sitting next to Winton. Milena was on the other side.

These recollections were punctuated with meaningful musical interludes which included Dvořák's Slavonic Dance, Op. 72, No. 2, the Adagietto from Mahler's Symphony No. 5, 'The Sun and I' from *The Mikado*, the Prelude to Act 3 of Wagner's *Lohengrin*, and extracts from Carl Davis's work on the subject of the Kindertransport, *Last Train to Tomorrow*. We also had the pleasure of hearing a song from *The Bartered Bride* which Milena herself once sang in a school production.

Milena also showed a model of the Valediction Memorial being planned for the main station (Praha hlavní nádraží) in Prague from which most of the trains departed. Made of bronze and glass, it will feature representations of the hands of the children on one side and those of the parents on the other.

The event played out to a record audience of 50 people. To add extra poignancy to the evening, it just happened to coincide with Armistice Day, and also with Milena's 87<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was organised by family friends, the Jacksons: Graham did the introductions and acted as DJ, the vote of thanks was given by son Tim who was principal horn with the RLPO, and finally Marion wheeled in a specially baked birthday cake. We all sang 'Happy Birthday', before enjoying a splendid buffet supper.

### **Vince Smith, Preston RMS and chairman of Preston Poets**

Ed: This report first appeared in Issue 89 of *Preston Arts News*

### **West Wickham RMS – busy as usual**

The highlight of our musical year was the Society's visit in late July to the Ryedale Festival, with concerts and recitals staged in stately homes, abbeys and churches. We stayed in Pickering, which proved to be a useful central location. The party went to Ampleforth Abbey for a choral concert given by the

group Tenebrae, conducted by Nigel Short, with the Ryedale Festival Ensemble of trombones and solo trumpet. The programme consisted of motets and choral works by Brahms and Bruckner, performed in the fine acoustics of the abbey church. The high standard of concerts continued, with the Baroque group La Serenissima at St Martin-on-the Hill church in Scarborough playing works by Vivaldi, Albinoni and Torelli.

A coffee concert in the saloon at Duncombe Park featured the young Russian pianist Pavel Kolesnikov with a stunning programme of contrasting works by Beethoven, Debussy and Chopin. He is without doubt a great artist in the making.

As a complete change, members attended the afternoon garden party in the grounds of the Worsley Arms Hotel in Hovingham. One of the finest brass bands in the county, the Kirkbymoorside Town Brass Band, gave a very varied and enjoyable programme, including Elgar's *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 4*, as well as traditional brass band pieces and solos.

The final gala concert, given by the Royal Northern Sinfonia, was in Hovingham Hall, and featured two Haydn symphonies: Nos. 101, 'The Clock', and 104, 'The London'. Beethoven's *Coriolan Overture* started the concert and Sir James MacMillan, the artist in residence, conducted his own composition *From Ayrshire*. The Ryedale Festival was considered to be one of the most successful attended to date.

The very enjoyable musical day out in May started with a cruise on the River Thames. The day concluded with a concert in Barbican Hall, where the London Symphony Orchestra was conducted by Michael Tilson Thomas. In the first part we heard Leif Ove Andsnes play, in a finely realised performance, Schumann's Piano Concerto in A minor. This was followed after the interval by Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in D minor, 'Choral'.

The annual visit to Glyndebourne on Tour in October, this year to see *Don Giovanni* by Mozart, proved to be another successful and enjoyable occasion. The performance was generally a traditional one, fortunately without some of the excesses that certain producers introduce. It was very well sung, with good stage movement and a lively pace with the excellent Glyndebourne on Tour orchestra conducted by Pablo González. Don Giovanni was sung by Duncan Rock, Donna Anna by Ana Maria Labin, Anthony Gregory was Don Ottavio, and Brandon Cedel was Leporello.

The Society attended a Proms concert and were delighted to once again see Pavel Kolesnikov, whom we had heard at the Ryedale Festival. On this occasion he played Tchaikovsky's truly virtuosic Second Piano Concerto, and received a very enthusiastic reception. His encore was a movement from Tchaikovsky's *The Seasons*. After the interval, the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, under their conductor Ilan Volkov, performed the complete version of Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and proved what a fine young orchestra they are.

Our 33<sup>rd</sup> annual musical weekend was held in April at the Imperial Hotel, Eastbourne. The theme this year was 'Classical Music from all Directions', with four main sessions: North, South, East and West.

The first session, **East**, was given by Phillip Cox who began with Eric Coates's *By the Sleepy Lagoon*. Other works included were *In the Steppes of Central Asia* by Borodin; the *Yellow River Concerto*; 'Pagodes' from Debussy's *Estampes*, and reflecting India, the 'Bell Song' from *Lakmé* by Delibes. The Far East was represented by a dance from the Vietnam Highlands.

**North** was the next direction, presented by Marie Nasso, starting with the 'Cowkeeper's Tune and Country Dance' from Grieg's *Norwegian Melodies*, Op. 63. Halvorsen's *Entry March of the Boyars* was followed by *Novellette* for Strings No. 1 in F by Niels Gade. The session included the Andante from the Piano Trio in A minor by Sinding, and the overture to Nielsen's opera *Maskarade*.

**West** was in the hands of Audrey Percival with a movement from Elgar's Violin Concerto, 'Danse rustique' from the *Suite de Ballet*, Op. 10 by Holst, and the Rondeau from Purcell's *Abdelazer*. An excerpt from Handel's Organ Concerto in F major, 'Cuckoo and the Nightingale', and the Elegia from Benjamin Britten's Cello Sonata in C major, Op. 65 were a great contrast.

Finally **South**, presented by Katie Severs, brought a warmth to the weekend with Ravel's *Rapsodie espagnole*, *Beni Mora* by Holst, and Rodrigo's *Concierto de Aranjuez*, arranged for solo harp. A movement from Bizet's *Roma* Symphony and the 'Grand March' from Verdi's *Aida* were also included. A DVD presentation featured the rarely produced *Girl of the Golden West* by Puccini.

The annual buffet-supper was held in March and concluded with a concert. Members were entertained by the Cameo Opera Company: Judith Buckle (soprano); Matthew Craven (baritone), and Kenneth Roberts (piano). They performed excerpts from *My Fair Lady*, *The White Horse Inn*, *The Magic Flute* and the music of Gilbert and Sullivan, Mozart, Ivor Novello and Noel Coward. This was a light-hearted and tuneful conclusion to a successful evening.

The Society went to the Royal Festival Hall in December to hear the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Jac van Steen in an all-Tchaikovsky programme. The concert included excerpts from *Eugene Onegin*: the Polonaise and Waltz, Tatiana's 'Letter Scene' sung by Veronika Dzhioeva, and the final duet where Tatiana rejects him. Onegin was sung by Tommi Hakala. The programme ended with substantial excerpts from *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*.

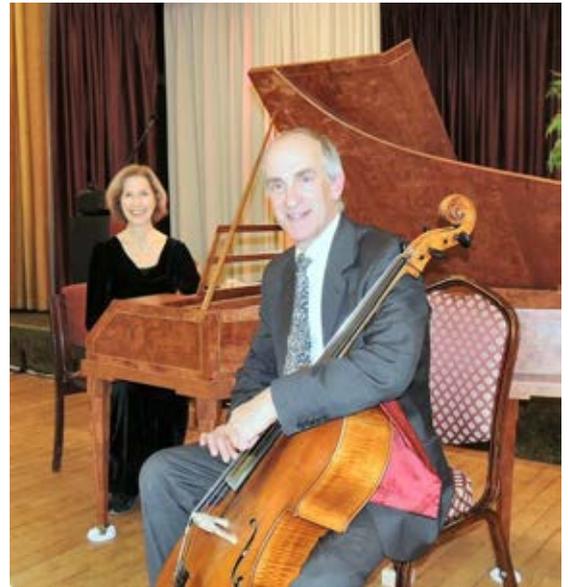
There were 26 meetings during the year with guest speakers Robert Matthew-Walker, Terry Barfoot and Peter Avis. Subjects covered included Opera A-Z, Vaughan Williams and his Life, Nationalism in Music, the Silver Screen, Music for St David's Day, and What Happened to Haydn?

**Phillip Cox, chairman**

# SOCIETY NEWS – PHOTO EXTRA



**Torbay Musical Weekend**  
 Above: Christopher Beaumont and Peter Rhodes perform the music of Sir Patrick Moore; Right: Sebastian Comberti and Maggie Cole  
 Photos: Paul Miller



**Great Yarmouth at 70**  
 Left: Mayor and Mayoress of Great Yarmouth, Cllr Malcolm Bird & Mrs Donna Bird

Right: Great Yarmouth committee member Mrs Kathy Butler makes the presentation to the Mayoress  
 Photos: Brett Butler



**Newport, Isle of Wight RMS Diamond Jubilee**  
 A recital by a string quartet from the Isle of Wight Symphony Orchestra  
 Photo: Paul Shutler



**Preston RMS's special guest, Lady Milena Grenfell-Baines, receives a vote of thanks from Tim Jackson**  
 Photo: Stuart Sillitoe

EMR CD037-38

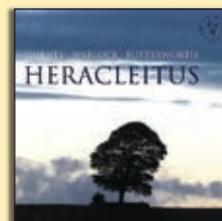


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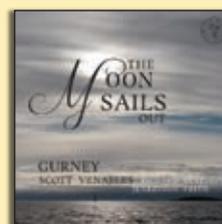


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For further information contact Festival Director Em Marshall-Luck at English Music Festival, Suite M0222, 265-269 Kingston Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 3NW or by email to: [em.marshall-luck@englishmusicfestival.org.uk](mailto:em.marshall-luck@englishmusicfestival.org.uk).

## 26-29 MAY 2017

DORCHESTER-ON-THAMES, OXFORDSHIRE  
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# FRMS Music Weekend

## Daventry

April 21<sup>st</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup>  
2017

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Hotel*



**Judith Weir**  
*Master of the Queen's Music*



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**Domonkos Csabay**  
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**Nigel Simeone**  
*freelance author and teacher*



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# MUSIC WEEKEND SEMINARS

**If you are looking for music weekends that are stimulating and rewarding, held in peaceful, comfortable, congenial surroundings, reasonably priced, and with the opportunity to meet likeminded people, please consider the following:**

Located in beautiful rural settings, weekend music courses begin on a Friday with an excellent meal, followed by the evening session. The course continues throughout the Saturday, time being allowed for music-lovers to get to know each other. The course concludes the next day after a substantial lunch. Organised by **Professor Gerald Seaman**, formerly Professor of Musicology at the University of Auckland and subsequently on the staff of Oxford University, the courses are informative and interesting, though fully comprehensible to the non-musician. The venues for the courses are Stanton House, a beautiful manor house near Oxford, situated in the village of Stanton St John, and Shallowford House near Stafford, which is easily accessible by train or by car. The cost for each weekend, including full board and comfortable accommodation, is £275.00. The courses are as follows:

## **7-9 April 2017: *Shostakovich and the State***

## **Shallowford House**

Based on Professor Seaman's personal recollections of Shostakovich in Russia, this course will provide a unique insight into the great Russian composer's work, having special reference to his stage works, including new materials which have only recently come to light. The course is beautifully illustrated with CDs and new DVDs.

## **11-13 August 2019: *Music in a New Found Land***

## **Shallowford House**

This entertaining and exciting course traces the development of music in the United States from the music of the Puritan settlers through to the lively world of Broadway, the great opera houses and symphony orchestras, the rise of radio, jazz and TV, and the music of Leonard Bernstein and Aaron Copland. The course is colourfully illustrated with CDs and DVDs including ballet, opera and interviews.

## **27-29 October: *Franz Schubert – the Great Romantic***

## **Stanton House**

Although Franz Schubert (1797-1828) died at a tragically early age, he left behind a heritage of some of the greatest music ever written. Writing in obscurity, battling with illness and poverty, he nevertheless composed symphonic, chamber, vocal and keyboard masterpieces which are unsurpassed. The course includes the *Unfinished* Symphony, the *Great C Major*, the *Trout* Quintet, piano sonatas and, of course, the great body of Lieder. Illustrated with DVDs and CDs.

**For further details and booking, please contact: Professor Gerald Seaman, 60 Woodstock Close, Oxford OX2 8DD; Tel: 01865 515114; email: [gerald.seaman@outlook.com](mailto:gerald.seaman@outlook.com)**

## **A Request to Society Secretaries**

Occasionally, members tell us that they rarely, or never, get to see the copy of *Bulletin* that is sent to their Society.

We would encourage all secretaries to kindly ensure their Society's copy is distributed as widely as possible among its membership. Even better, why not subscribe to additional copies? Please see contact details on page 30.

Also, does the Federation have full and up-to-date details of your Society? Do you have new officers, or does the secretary now have an email address, or has it changed? Is your FRMS website entry current and up to date? Please keep us informed.

*Has your Society an anniversary or special occasion to celebrate?*

*Do you have any burning issues you want to share with our readers?*

*Do you have something to say?*

*You may wish to submit an article relating to a special interest in a particular composer or musical genre.*

*We are keen to hear from you. Contact details can be found on page 30.*



# We need to do something...

by Alan Sanders

**N**OT LONG AGO I MOVED RESIDENCE, and engaged a young handyman who helped with various tasks about my new house. He told me he was a musician, who played in a group, and that he had a music degree arising from study at a college in Guildford. His course consisted of subjects such as song-writing and learning to play guitar and double bass. Of classical music he had acquired no knowledge whatsoever.

I'm sure that many who read these words will know people of the kind who used to be categorised as 'well-educated', who will attend theatrical productions, go to see an art film, or visit the latest art exhibition, but whose interest in music is confined to pop concerts and recordings.

Of course it's always been the case that so-called classical music has only interested a minority of the population, but even at my third-rate grammar school we had the opportunity to hear it. There were so-called music appreciation classes; we had visiting instrument teachers, a full orchestra that ploughed its way through arrangements of popular classics, and a senior orchestra that tackled more delicate fare, even on one occasion Schubert's Fifth Symphony. In a state school now such a situation will be very rare if it occurs at all, and any music instruction is likely to be orientated towards more popular genres.

I could continue choosing instances of the increased neglect of classical music in an article that would fill the rest of this magazine, but I now call a halt, since you already know all about the subject. So let us now consider the consequences. Again, there are no startling revelations to be made, since we all know what is happening in the case of our recorded music societies. They are all (there may be exceptions, of course, though I know of none) populated by members who won't see the age of 60 again, and many are enjoying the extra span of life beyond the biblical allocation of three score years and ten that modern living conditions have granted us. In their younger days they have grasped opportunities to experience and learn about music in a way that has not been possible for most members of more recent generations. Of course, our music colleges are full of the most talented youngsters, and from them emerge musicians of the highest calibre, but they are in a tiny minority.

I am sure that members of the FRMS understand the situation facing our recorded music societies, and are concerned about it, but do we simply accept that membership will continue to shrink? Do we bow to the seemingly inevitable denouement? Or is there anything we can do about it? Maybe there is. Many of us are used to addressing audiences and presenting and devising programmes. So why don't we, under the FRMS banner, individually or as societies, approach educational institutions – including the one

in Guildford! – with an offer of free lectures to students or pupils? We donate our services to our societies anyway, so a bit more giving might be in order. And if our offers are accepted then let's go in there with programmes that will catch the imagination of young people. I expect that most such volunteers would be happy if even one member of an audience was drawn to our kind of music, for as we know, once interest in it is caught, it's there for a lifetime. But hopefully there would be other converts.

Now for a variation on, or maybe an extension of, the above theme. Recently a correspondent told me that he had talked to an excited young piano student at an Evgeny Kissin recital. In the course of conversation he mentioned the name of Michelangeli. His listener had never heard of him. I think it's true to say that within that tiny minority of young people who like classical music most have no knowledge of older performing traditions.

It may be a bit pompous to suggest that we are guardians of a legacy of great recordings, but it is true. It is a living legacy, since thanks to historically aware record companies we have access to recordings by artists of long ago which we can easily play to members of the younger generation. Of course you wouldn't play a 1904 Caruso to those who are only familiar with the output of modern pop idols, but more sophisticated youngsters who go to hear Alina Ibragimova might just be intrigued by the playing of Heifetz or Kreisler.

Others might have better ideas than mine. If so, it doesn't matter. But we should take some kind of positive action now, so that more, younger people are given the chance to experience the great joys of exploring classical music. Their lives will be enriched for ever, as ours have been.

**Editor's note:** Alan Sanders is secretary of Putney Music. He was a chorister at Chapel Royal, Hampton Court and sang at the 1953 Coronation – which he says 'rather dates me!' He was assistant editor of *Gramophone* in 1978-79 after which he wrote the 'Looking back' column (later called 'Hindsight') for that magazine over several years before going on to write reviews (as AS). His Boult discography for *Gramophone* in 1979 led to an introduction to Elisabeth Schwarzkopf who commissioned him to compile a Walter Legge discography. He co-authored *Elisabeth Schwarzkopf – a Career on Record* and later put together a book of writings by and about Legge, called *Walter Legge – Words and Music*. He worked on and off for Schwarzkopf over a period of 26 years. He has written over 100 CD insert notes for EMI, Decca, Testament, BBC Legends, Dutton, Somm and others. For many years Alan has bought and sold LPs and CDs – it is the only cure he knows for the collecting disease! ●

## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT Allan Child

**I**F YOU ASK SOMEONE FOR A MEMORABLE QUOTATION from a Sherlock Holmes story, the answer may well be 'Elementary, my dear Watson!' But that line does not actually occur in any of the stories; it is just one example of a well-known misquotation. Others that come to mind include 'Beam me up, Scotty' (*Star Trek*), 'Play it again, Sam' (*Casablanca*) and 'Don't panic, Mr Mainwaring!' (*Dad's Army*). The correct version of the last example is simply 'Don't panic' and it might well be a motto for the FRMS at this time. Although a number of societies, including a few that appeared to be thriving, have either closed recently or intend to close soon, I do not think that we need say, to quote another *Dad's Army* catchphrase, 'We're doomed!' The other side of the coin is that there are societies which are thriving. Not only that, they are taking an active interest in the affairs of the Federation. If I may single out one society, Wollaton RMS, located on the outskirts of Nottingham, is one of the Federation's newer societies. Started in 1992, Wollaton announced their arrival at the Federation AGM that year, and this year they will celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary by hosting the AGM themselves.



We have also welcomed new societies into the Federation, one such being the newly-formed group for the staff of a firm of solicitors in the West Midlands. When I first encountered the FRMS (or NFGS as it was then) in the 1960s it was as a member of a workplace-based society. At one time, I believe, there were several such societies in the Federation but until this latest arrival, the Transport for London Recorded Music Club was a lone survivor. Maybe we should encourage the formation of more groups of this sort; given that the age profile in many societies tends towards the 'retired' category, it could be a way of bringing younger people into our ranks.

Mention of bringing in younger people reminds me that the Federation committee would welcome new members. There is currently one vacancy and some of the present members will be standing down in the not too distant future. But an immediate need is for someone to take on responsibility for distribution of *Bulletin*. At present the task is shared by two people – a less than satisfactory arrangement and for various reasons neither person is able to undertake the task alone. More details appear in the job advert below, and I would urge secretaries to ensure that all members of their societies are aware of it. ●

### **The FRMS is looking for a *BULLETIN* DISTRIBUTION MANAGER**

We require someone to undertake preparation of address labels and invoices for distribution of *Bulletin* upon publication twice a year, and to process payments received from societies and individual subscribers. The Distribution Manager will need to liaise with the *Bulletin* editor and the printers to ensure that copies of the magazine can be despatched promptly by the printers. In addition he or she should be willing to prepare and despatch invoices for advertising in *Bulletin*, and to assist the editor by collecting and collating information for the Presenters' Panel feature.

This is an important role as *Bulletin* is one of the principal means of communication between the Federation and its affiliated societies.

Good computer skills are essential and the person undertaking this responsibility should be familiar with mail merge procedures using WordPerfect/Quattro Pro or Word/Excel. Email is a necessity.

This is a committee responsibility and the vacancy would be filled initially by co-option, with the person co-opted expected to seek nomination for election at the next AGM. The committee meets four times a year (normally in February, May, August, and November or December), usually at the Brunswick Inn close to Derby railway station. Travelling expenses are reimbursed and lunch provided.

If you would like to contribute to the life of the Federation by taking on this responsibility please contact one of the following for more information and/or to arrange to attend a committee meeting as an observer – without obligation in either case.

Allan Child, FRMS chairman: Phone 01332 332649; email [chairman@thefrms.co.uk](mailto:chairman@thefrms.co.uk)  
Jim Bostwick, FRMS secretary: Phone 01484 717865; email [secretary@thefrms.co.uk](mailto:secretary@thefrms.co.uk)

## FRMS Presenters Panel

*Societies are invited to recommend successful presenters for inclusion in this section. Please note, there is a modest charge of £10 per entry per annum for presenters who charge a fee (as distinct from reasonable expenses). A free entry on the FRMS website is also offered. This supplement is intended to be a general guide to programme planning. Reasonable care is taken to ensure accuracy of the details given but neither the FRMS committee nor the editor can accept responsibility for any circumstances subsequent on the use of the supplement. Thanks go to Allan Child who maintains this list.*

**Officers and committee members of the FRMS are experienced presenters and – if not listed here – can be contacted at the addresses at the back of the Bulletin.**

### **TERRY BARFOOT**

25 Mulberry Lane, Cosham, Portsmouth PO6 2QU  
Tel: 0239 238 3356  
email: terrybarfoot@artsinresidence.co.uk  
Author, contributor to leading music periodicals and to the New Grove; presenter/lecturer at conferences and other musical events, many organised by his own company, *Arts in Residence*.  
Reviewer for the Musicweb International website.  
Regular presenter at societies in southern England.  
Recent presentations include studies of Dvořák, Elgar, Mozart and Richard Strauss.  
Repertoire list on request.  
Fee and expenses negotiable.

### **GEOFF BATEMAN ACIB Cefa**

'Eroica', 1 South Road, Bradford BD9 4SU  
Tel: 01274 783285  
email: geoffbateman@blueyonder.co.uk  
Wide variety of programmes including artist and composer profiles.  
Most programmes feature audiophile recordings.  
No fee, minimal travel expenses only.

### **BBC MIDLAND RADIO ORCHESTRA**

Paul Arden-Taylor, 11 Romsley Hill Grange, Romsley, Worcs, B62 0LN  
Tel: 01562 710801 mobile: 07778 016769  
email: paul@dinmore-records.co.uk  
An evening of light music presented by former MRO oboist Paul Arden-Taylor, who now works as a recording engineer and has compiled an extensive archive of surviving MRO recordings.  
Midlands area only. No fee, petrol costs requested.  
Selection of classical CDs for sale.

### **IAN RUTLAND BOUGHTON BA (Hons) DipMus**

25 Bearton Green, Hitchin, Herts SG5 1UN  
Tel 01462 434318 mobile 07703 584152  
email: Boughtontrust@btinternet.com  
website: www.rutlandboughtonmusictrust.org.uk  
Under the title 'Rutland Boughton: Beyond The Immortal Hour', Ian gives illustrated talks on the life and music of his once famous grandfather. Expenses only.

### **BRITISH MUSIC SOCIETY**

www.britishmusicsociety.com  
**Adrian Lucas**, chairman  
Mobile: 07719 446 014  
email: chairman@britishmusicsociety.com  
**John Gibbons**, vice-chairman  
Mobile: 07973 617 064  
vicechairman@britishmusicsociety.com

Discover a hidden world of music. The Society's aim is to bring together a broad range of opportunities and experiences for supporters of British music. Our growing catalogue of recordings, in collaboration with Naxos, continues to uncover and preserve often unknown repertoire. Expenses requested. CDs for sale.

### **MAGGIE COTTON**

57 Elmfield Crescent, Birmingham B13 9TL  
Tel; 0121 449 3196  
email: maggie.cottonbeat@hotmail.co.uk  
First professional female percussionist in a UK symphony orchestra. CBSO 40 years (18 with Simon Rattle). Author of: *Agogo Bells* – a friendly guide to schools percussion, and *Wrong Sex, Wrong Instrument* – an autobiography.  
Presentations offered: 'Orchestral Notes' (behind the scenes: lots of 'tales out of school' as Rattle remarked). 'Do Butterflies Sing?' – working with severely deaf youngsters in special schools. Life-changing. 'Red Light District' – lifts the lid off recording sessions - warts and all!  
Fee £60 plus negotiated travel expenses.

### **THE DELIUS SOCIETY**

Speakers from the Delius Society or Delius Trust are available to give presentations. No fee, expenses only. Contact one of the following or see the Society's website, www.delius.org.uk  
**Martin Lee-Browne**, Chester House, Fairford, Glos GL7 4AD. Tel 01285 712102;  
email: adviser@TheDeliusSociety.org.uk  
**Lionel Carley**, Old School House, Sheepscombe, Stroud, Glos. GL6 7RH Tel: 01452 812735;  
email: l.carley@yahoo.co.uk  
**Mike Green**, 4 Caxton Close, Beeston Regis, Sheringham, Norfolk NR26 8SY. Tel: 07833 300450  
email: michael.heather.green@gmail.com

### **THE DVOŘÁK SOCIETY**

Promotes the music of all Czech and Slovak composers. Members give talks and lectures to societies at various locations. Enquiries to: David Roberts, Hon Sec, The Dvořák Society, 13 Church Lane, Knutton, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffs ST5 6DU; Tel:01782 631274.  
email: secretary@dvorak-society.org;  
website: www.dvorak-society.org  
No fee but expenses might be requested.

### **THE ELGAR SOCIETY**

Branch Secretaries in several areas of the UK can arrange a speaker from the Society. In the first instance contact the General Secretary who will forward enquiries as necessary:

George Smart, Elgar Society Hon. Sec. 10 Cullinpark  
Grove, Strathaven, South Lanarkshire ML10 6EN  
Phone 01357 520314; email hon.sec@elgar.org

**DR DAVID FLIGG**

Email: david.fligg@mcm.ac.uk

Website: www.mcm.ac.uk/people/david-fligg/

Tutor in Academic Studies at the Royal Northern  
College of Music; Visiting Professor at the University of  
Chester; Project Consultant, Performing the Jewish  
Archive, School of Music, University of Leeds; Member  
of the Incorporated Society of Musicians.

Various and wide-ranging topics. Contact by email in  
the first instance to discuss availability, fees and your  
Society's requirements.

**JOHN HUMPHRIES**

10 Drovers, Bolney Street, Haywards Heath,  
West Sussex, RH17 5PT. Tel: 01444 881887

Subjects include: Charles Villiers Stanford - arguably  
Britain's greatest all-round musician; teacher of many  
early C20<sup>th</sup> British composers, and tireless promoter of  
British music. William Yeates Hurlstone - outstandingly  
gifted pupil of Stanford, who might have rivalled Purcell  
and Elgar had he lived longer. Unknown British - but  
still with a tune! Expenses: negotiable. Will travel  
anywhere.

**MIKE LUNAN**

15 Castle Gardens, Barrock Street, Thurso KW14 7GZ  
01847 890911 email: mikelunan@btinternet.com  
Membership Secretary of the Havergal Brian Society.  
Offers presentations on three subjects: Britten's music;  
James MacMillan's music; Havergal Brian's music.  
No fee. Travel and accommodation expenses negotiable.

**DR JOHN MALPASS**

4 Carlton Road, Kibworth Harcourt, Leics LE8 0LZ,  
email: jrm@le.ac.uk; Tel: 0116 279 2557  
Former Trustee and Membership Secretary of the  
Rachmaninoff Society. Currently one presentation is  
offered: 'Sergei Rachmaninoff - his life and music'. This  
is a Powerpoint-based presentation covering  
Rachmaninoff's personal and musical development and  
includes many historical photographs. The many  
musical examples concentrate on less well-known  
compositions and include significant recordings of his  
songs, choral music, chamber music, and piano works  
(some with the composer at the piano) together with  
selected orchestral excerpts. No fee; reasonable  
expenses.

**EM MARSHALL-LUCK MA (Oxon) MCIJ**

EM Records / English Music Festival  
Suite M0222, 265-269 Kingston Road,  
Wimbledon, London SW19 3NW Tel: 07808 473889  
email: em.marshall-luck@em-records.com or  
em.marshall-luck@englishmusicfestival.org.uk  
Director of EM Records and Founder-Director of the  
English Music Festival - can give talks on both subjects.  
In the EMF talk, illustrated with music and visuals, she  
covers the aims, objectives and achievements of the  
Festival - her mission to put English music back on the  
map. And with her husband, violinist Rupert Marshall-  
Luck, she delivers a presentation on EM Records,

covering the *raison d'être* of the record label, as well as  
topics such as how repertoire and venues are chosen,  
what takes place at recording sessions (exploding bows  
and mysterious noises), how works are edited for  
recording, and what is involved in the running of a label.  
With musical excerpts.

Reasonable expenses and a modest fee requested.

**CHRISTOPHER MORLEY**

16 Melbourn Road, Halesowen B63 3NB

Tel: 0121 550 4482.

email: cfmorley47@aol.com; mobile 07958 509391

Chief music critic of Birmingham Post; Midlands  
correspondent for Classical Music, Musical Opinion,  
Opera and other music publications.

Illustrated programmes include, among others:

Confessions of a music critic; Changing critical attitudes  
to Elgar; The Symphonies of Gustav Mahler; Composers  
on record; The problem of bespoke music; Rachmaninov  
and plainchant; Beethoven the Bounds-Breaker;  
European Composers in America; Did Mozart burn  
himself out? The Faust legend in music; The Orpheus  
legend in music; European visitors to the Birmingham  
Triennial Music Festival.

Fee negotiable

**JAMES MURRAY**

44 Victoria Road, St Austell, Cornwall, PL25 4QD

Tel: 01726 71714 / 07989 398782

email: james.murray47@tesco.net or

james.47murray@talktalk.net

Manager, Kernow Classics.

Subjects: Emmanuel Chabrier; Music in Germany 1918-  
45 (with emphasis on Werner Egk & Eduard and Evelyn  
Künneke); Jerome Kern; George Gershwin; Albert  
Lortzing; The post-war Vienna State Opera; The  
Mozart-da Ponte Operas; Evelyn Künneke; Music from  
1876. I would consider any operatic subject or evenings  
about historic singers (German, French or Austrian  
preferred).

Fee: usually £75 plus reasonable expenses over 50  
miles.

**NIMBUS RECORDS**

Wyastone Leys, Monmouth NP25 3SR.

Tel: 01600 890007 email: marketing@wyastone.co.uk

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difficult, so we have created a VIRTUAL

PRESENTATION introduced by Nimbus Directors  
Adrian Farmer and Antony Smith. They guide you  
through the company's history and introduce selections  
from the catalogue. Your pack is completely free and  
contains a pre-recorded programme with supporting  
information including vouchers and special offers.  
For more information or to order your pack please call  
Amy Verheyden on 01600 890 007.

**DR GEOFF OGRAM, Secretary, Stafford RMS**

6 Silverthorn Way, Wildwood, Stafford ST17 4PZ

Tel: 01785 663423 email: geoff.ogram@talktalk.net

A number of recital programmes, with a significant  
content of C20<sup>th</sup> British music. My specialist composer  
is Gordon Jacob, whose music I discovered in 1956.  
Over the years we met frequently and became friends. I  
now act as a consultant to help performers and others

with information about his music. Although I have completed a book on his music it remains unpublished. The recital on his work is entitled Seventh Son. No fee required, just minimal travel expenses.

**PROFESSOR ANTHONY OGUS, CBE, FBA**

Gowland Court, Ogleforth Mews, York YO1 7JG  
Tel: 01904 801804; email: anthony.ogus@gmail.com  
Website: <http://anthonyogus.co.uk/index.php>  
Critic for *Opera Now* and author of book *Travels With My Opera Glasses*. Talks on and around opera and opera composers, performers, productions, opera houses, audiences, 'calamities'.  
No fee. Travelling expenses negotiable.

**LYNNE PLUMMER**

52 Judkin Court, Century Wharf, Cardiff CF10 5AU.  
Tel: 02920 489332; email: lynne@lynneplummer.co.uk  
Professional career as a broadcaster with the BBC and other radio stations. Illustrated talks with interviews on various topics, such as 'Conductors: who needs 'em?' and 'The craft of instrument-making' - or maybe ask me to cover a subject of your choice.  
Will travel. Fees negotiable + expenses.

**DR JIM PRITCHARD**

15 David Avenue, Wickford, Essex SS11 7BG  
email: jimjprmusic@gmail.com; website:  
<http://seenandheard-international.com/tag/pritchard-jim/>  
Former chairperson of the Wagner Society and the Gustav Mahler Society UK ([www.mahlersociety.org](http://www.mahlersociety.org)), editor of 'The Wayfarer' and online music magazine reviewer. Many very successful previous presentations and now concentrating again on his Wagner talk - 'The Ring Road to Bayreuth' and a new talk about the great British tenor, Alberto Remedios, 'From the Mersey to the World'. No fee; reasonable expenses; date and travel never usually a problem.

**MISS JOY PURITZ**

149E Holland Rd, London W14 8AS  
Tel: 020 7602 4187; mobile 07867 698175  
email: jepuritz@btinternet.com  
Granddaughter of Elisabeth Schumann and translator of her biography (written by the singer's son, Gerd Puritz). Illustrated presentation entitled *A Portrait of the Soprano, Elisabeth Schumann* has been well received by the Friends of Covent Garden, the National Sound Archive and many recorded music societies. Fee negotiable.

**RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS SOCIETY**

[www.rvwsociety.com](http://www.rvwsociety.com)

**Simon Coombs**, chairman; 24 Wellsworth Lane, Rowlands Castle, Hampshire PO9 6BY  
02392 412837; email: [simonandlaura2004@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:simonandlaura2004@yahoo.co.uk)

**John Francis**, vice-chairman; The Vicarage, Corseley Road, Groombridge, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN3 9SE  
01892 864 265; email: [john@lffuk.com](mailto:john@lffuk.com)

**Graham Muncy**, Information Officer; Rose Cottage, 8 Belvoir Bank, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 4LY  
01684 578794; email: [g.muncy058@btinternet.com](mailto:g.muncy058@btinternet.com)  
Ralph Vaughan Williams is arguably Britain's greatest composer: his works include nine symphonies, operas, song cycles, music for film, ballet and choirs.  
Members of this flourishing society enjoy exclusive

events and RVW-related publications as well as recordings of lesser-known works by the composer through the Society's own recording label 'Albion Records'. In 2022 we will celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Vaughan Williams's birth. Expenses requested. CDs for sale.

**IAN VENABLES**

2 Turrall Street, Barbourne, Worcester WR3 8AJ  
01905 611570; Mobile: 07943 952 460  
email: [ianvenables@talktalk.net](mailto:ianvenables@talktalk.net)  
[www.ianvenables.com](http://www.ianvenables.com) (contains sound samples)  
Described as '...Britain's greatest living composer of art songs...' (*Musical Opinion*) and '...a song composer as fine as Finzi and Gurney...' (*BBC Music Magazine*). Ian Venables has written over 60 works in the genre of art-song, as well as many fine chamber works. Ian studied music with Professor Richard Arnell at Trinity College of Music, London and later with Andrew Downes, John Mayer and John Joubert at the Birmingham Conservatoire. Since 1986 he has lived in Worcester, and the surrounding landscape has often inspired his compositions. His works have been performed by national and internationally acclaimed artists, recorded on Somm, Signum, Regent, EM Records and Naxos, and published by Novello and Company Ltd (Music Sales International).  
Ian's talk, with musical examples, gives an overview of the history of art-song in England from the perspective of a 21<sup>st</sup>-century composer, as well as incorporating illuminating insights into his own works and composing process. Fee: £100 plus expenses.

**CLIVE WILKES**

70 Filching Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN20 8SD.  
Tel: 01323 724916.  
Programmes include: George Gershwin - Crazy for you; Sergei Prokofiev - the Prodigal Son; The Golden Age of Film Music; Aspects of opera in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; Dmitri Shostakovich – the great survivor; Rimsky-Korsakov and the Mighty Handful; The Golden Age of Russian Opera; Viva Verdi; Wagner and Liszt – an uneasy friendship.  
Further details on request. Expenses only.

**CATHERINE WILMERS**

The Brew House, Radwell, Baldock, Herts SG7 5ES.  
Tel: 01462 730490. email: [cwilmers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:cwilmers@hotmail.co.uk)  
website: [www.cwilmers.co.uk](http://www.cwilmers.co.uk)  
Professional cellist. Recorded award-winning CD.  
1. A Cello Century of British Women Composers 1884-1984 features composers' anecdotes and the making of the CD.  
2. The Not so Silent Minority: examples of late C19<sup>th</sup>/early C20<sup>th</sup> chamber music by women composers, including Fanny Mendelssohn, Rebecca Clarke, and Ethel Smyth.  
3. The Life of a Cellist in the London Philharmonic featuring Solti, Tennstedt and Haitink amongst others.  
Travels countrywide. Fees negotiable + expenses.

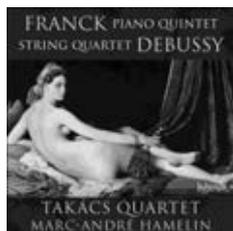
The above listings, subsequent updates, and much more can be found on the Federation's website: [www.thefrms.co.uk](http://www.thefrms.co.uk)

## REVIEWS

CDs reviewed by Tony Haywood

### FRANCK Piano Quintet; DEBUSSY String Quartet

Marc-André Hamelin (piano); Takács Quartet  
*Hyperion CDA68061 (62:24)*



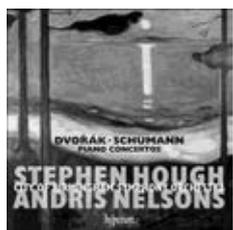
The partnership of Marc-André Hamelin and the Takács Quartet continues with another interesting quintet/quartet pairing. Here we get what one critic called ‘the king of piano quintets’ sitting alongside the first real masterpiece by the

leader of the new generation of French composers after Franck. The Debussy String Quartet is a real ‘cusp’ work, sharing many Franckian traits – not least the cyclic structure – but breathing a new air into a traditional genre. It’s long been a staple of the repertoire and gets a performance of great fluency, poise and nuanced subtlety from the Takács players. Their virtuosity is always in the service of the music, as in the wonderful pizzicato second movement, and the slow movement is as reflective and inwardly poised as any version I can think of.

If anything, the Franck is even finer. Here, the supposedly conservative composer ratchets up the post-Wagnerian musical language almost to fever pitch and the players seem to revel in the scale and symphonic dimensions of the work. It was interesting comparing this version with an established classic from Clifford Curzon and the Vienna Philharmonic Quartet on Decca. The playing on the older disc has perhaps more warmth and an appropriate melancholy, but the new disc has fire, urgency and, above all, passion; all characteristics that made this quintet something of a scandal at its 1880 premiere. It’s a glorious performance, piano and strings fully in accord, the whole thing captured in excellent sound and rounded off by informative notes by French music expert Roger Nichols.

### DVOŘÁK; SCHUMANN Piano Concertos

Stephen Hough (piano), City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Andris Nelsons (conductor)  
*Hyperion CDA68099 (73:10)*



The indefatigable Stephen Hough here gives us two Romantic concertos that have had very different fortunes, both on record and in the concert hall. The Schumann has always been a safe staple of the repertoire and boasts over 100 versions on

CD. The Dvořák is hardly ever programmed in concert and has only a fraction of that number of recordings.

When you listen to these two new versions, recorded live over various nights in Birmingham, it begins to be clear perhaps why this is. Hough’s

advocacy of the Dvořák couldn’t be stronger, and he’s helped immensely by very spirited accompaniment from Nelsons and the CBSO. Indeed, this performance has the sort of sweep and swagger that the work needs for the cracks to be papered over. The 20-minute first movement is just too unwieldy and episodic. It also has many Brahmsian echoes that Hough actually revels in, making light of the many difficulties that supposedly led to the concerto’s neglect. The second and third movements are more compact, and the work brims with great tunes – how could it not be so, with Dvořák?

But compared to the much more tightly structured Cello Concerto, or even the Violin Concerto, what is done with the material can’t sustain the interest for me. Hough and Nelsons, like Richter/Kleiber or Aimard/Harnoncourt before them, do really try to make a case for the piece. Repeated listening does reveal flashes of what the work might have been. Hough’s friend Steven Isserlis argues strongly for it in the liner note and there is indeed much to enjoy, especially the finale, but unlike some I’ve never felt it was a neglected masterpiece.

The Schumann is a very fine performance, with plenty of poetry when needed but with that all-important forward momentum that those Schumann *allegros* really need. It doesn’t displace Perahia/Colin Davis for me, or for that matter the vintage Lipatti/Karajan (a *Gramophone* classic) but if this coupling appeals, there is some very fine music-making here, captured well by the engineers and with no audience intrusion

### ETHEL SMYTH *The Boatswain’s Mate*

Nadine Benjamin, Edward Lee, Jeremy Huw Williams; Lontano Ensemble; Odaline de la Martinez (conductor)

*Retrospect Opera RO001 (2 discs 47:12; 73:44)*



Here is a classic example of a completely forgotten work being ‘rescued’ by a mixture of scholarship and recording. It’s the debut release from the appropriately named

Retrospect Opera, a body whose mission is to combine research, academic scholarship and performing expertise to give us a beautifully presented new recording of an operatic rarity. Ethel Smyth seems to have survived in the public domain largely because of her more well-known opera *The Wreckers* – and even then mainly for the overture – and her suffragette anthem *March of the Women*. Actually, both play a part in this new set for different reasons. The *March* ends up being used in the overture to *The Boatswain’s Mate*, which is a lively, rather jolly comic piece about a drunken ex-boatswain’s somewhat farcical attempts to woo a feisty widow who runs a country inn. It’s rather in the

manner of G&S in places, but there are plenty of memorable tunes, interspersed with genuine folk melodies, and the whole thing is very difficult not to like.

Some critics took issue with the structure and use of spoken dialogue, but no less a figure than Thomas Beecham championed the work. This edition has been expertly prepared by Valerie Langfield and uses a scaled-down chamber band superbly led by one of Smyth's modern advocates, Odaline de la Martinez. I can well imagine a fuller, richer orchestration, but this version is more intimate and really allows the excellent voices to come through. The three leads all perform to a high standard and clearly enjoy themselves, and other smaller parts are well taken by the company.

There are interesting historical items as fillers on the second disc. We get a selection from this very opera from the first ever 1916 recording conducted by the composer, which sounds surprisingly well after a hundred years, plus Smyth again conducting a beautifully shaped rendition of the overture to *The Wreckers*, this time from 1930. Superb packaging and notes complete a desirable new release and a valuable addition to the catalogue.

### **AUGUSTA READ THOMAS *Of Being is a Bird* Solo, chamber and vocal works; various artists**

*Nimbus NI 6323 (72:47)*



I really respond to the music of Augusta Read Thomas, and have already given a glowing review of her earlier disc of orchestral works for this magazine. She strikes me as being in that great tradition of American composers who valued sonority, rhythmic interest and what might be called a 'glittering' quality in their instrumental textures. Her discography is growing rapidly, thanks in no small part to the advocacy of Nimbus. The present disc is very enticing, mixing a variety of intimate genres but containing a lot of recent work. The most substantial piece is the 23-minute string quartet entitled *Helix Spirals* from 2015, but don't let the DNA inspiration put you off. Its three movements make up a texturally and structurally interesting piece, and it fully exploits the string quartet medium. The Parker Quartet gives a warm and fully committed rendition.

Another substantial work is the octet for the unusual combination of string quartet and percussion quartet, *Selene (Moon Chariot Rituals)*. Read likes her rather flowery titles, but taken objectively the work, as one would hope, is brimful of rhythmic variety and colour and would make an excellent dance-theatre piece. The CD's title is derived from the third main work here, her latest Emily Dickinson settings, comprising another triptych: *Of Being is a Bird; Flock of Birds* (Orchestral Interlude) and *The Most Triumphant Bird I Ever Knew or Met*. In a real sense, Read gives the soprano a musical 'airborne'

character, vocal lines weaving and soaring over the instrumental sonorities. The marvellous performance captured here is from the premiere at the Wigmore Hall in 2015 by Claire Booth and the Aurora Orchestra under Nicholas Collon. There are three witty little violin solos interspersed between the longer items, played by Nathan Cole and Nathan Giem and well worth hearing, and the disc ends with an unexpected tribute to another of Read's inspirations, Irving Berlin. This clever little encore is an Art Tatum-esque arrangement of *They Say it is Wonderful* which is retitled *Love Twitters* and is delightfully played by Nicola Melville, rounding off another worthwhile addition to the Read discography.

### **SCHUBERT Piano Sonatas Vol. 3**

#### **Sonata in E flat, D568; Sonata in C minor, D958**

Vladimir Feltsman (piano)

*Nimbus NI 6333 (66:58)*

Nimbus continues its long and generally fruitful association with the Russian-born New York-based pianist and conductor Vladimir Feltsman with this latest instalment of their Schubert sonata cycle, due to be completed during 2017. These two sonatas make interesting



bedfellows. The early E flat dates from around 1817, but was revised by Schubert later in life. The C minor comes from that late, great 1828 trilogy that mirrors Beethoven's achievement in the same genre.

On initial listening it's apparent that Feltsman belongs to what might be called the 'grand tradition' of piano playing. Tempos are on the slow side but a strong harmonic undercurrent is always discernible, as is a generous use of rubato. It's in the same vein as my benchmark 'older' version, the early 60s cycle from Wilhelm Kempff on DG, though side-by-side comparison is not particularly kind to Feltsman. Time and again, especially in the E flat, Kempff finds that bit more contrast in the dynamics, that bit more light and shade in the melodic contours, and there's a stronger momentum and feeling of inevitability that draws the listener in. Feltsman's phrasing is at times just a bit too four-square for my liking, especially in the minuets, which lose that all-important spring.

He's better in the turbulent, Beethovenian C minor Sonata, although I didn't care for his rather deliberate slowing for the lyrical second subject, and in this late sonata the competition is even fiercer. Both Maurizio Pollini and Mitsuko Uchida – among recent digital versions – play with more spontaneity and overall flair. Taken on its own terms, this Nimbus disc is satisfying enough, and is truthfully recorded, but I fear with the many rival versions in the catalogue, we need a bit more than that.

*Tony Haywood (Huddersfield RMS) is a retired University tutor and runs his own piano tuning and maintenance business. ●*

### **Schwarzkopf injustice?**

The 1958 radio programme containing Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's *Desert Island Discs*, referred to in Judith Weir's article in the Autumn *Bulletin* (page 13), has been the subject of a cordial exchange of email messages between the author and myself.

May I be permitted to give some background to this now infamous programme? It is commonly said that Schwarzkopf chose eight of her own recordings for the programme. As a point of detail it was in fact seven, the eighth being the Prelude to *Der Rosenkavalier*, conducted by Karajan. More importantly, Schwarzkopf was persuaded to choose almost all her own recordings by her husband Walter Legge, who thought it would be an amusing thing to do: neither he nor Schwarzkopf appreciated in fact how damaging it would be.

Ironically, Schwarzkopf was always very critical of her own recordings, and few gave her any satisfaction: on more than one occasion I heard her say that she didn't ever think she was "good enough", and she was also generous in her opinions of other artists. She said, for instance, that Irmgard Seefried instinctively reached heights as a Lieder singer that she herself could only aspire to after a great deal of hard work.

In the mid-1990s, with the singer's permission, I contacted the then producer of *Desert Island Discs*, and suggested that Schwarzkopf be invited back on the programme, so that she could choose what really would be her favourite discs; one that I remember was Günter Wand conducting Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*. Back came the reply that it was no longer policy to invite guests back on to the programme a second time – though several prominent personalities had in fact already appeared on it twice.

**Alan Sanders, secretary Putney Music**

### **More on the 'swindle'**

I'd like to respond to some of the points raised by Philip Ashton in his reply (*Bulletin* 164, page 25) to my article in *Bulletin* 163 (page 20) entitled 'The Great 30-Year Rock and Roll Swindle'.

Firstly I would like to correct Philip's assertion that I am only comparing CDs downloaded to my FiiO player. This is not the case. I mostly use it for listening to 24-bit files while on the move, for which it is ideal. I have, however, listened to CD tracks on some very high-end players, amps and speakers and I still find that they sound two-dimensional and underwhelming when compared to a good analogue recording, be it on vinyl, cassette, or better still, reel-to-reel tape. While it is true that good CDs have ambience, the analogue or hi-res FLAC versions of those recordings will have better ambience.

The best-sounding CDs will have been mastered from high-quality analogue or digital recordings. In such cases analogue or hi-res digital versions (including SACD) are well worth seeking out as they are often rather special. SACD is a very different recording format to CD, even though the two formats

co-exist on the same physical disc. The SACD recording is in Direct Stream Digital (DSD) format, which is equivalent to a high-resolution recording.

Generally an SACD will have been mastered from a high-quality recording, so the CD version will sound relatively good. When played on an SACD player which can process the DSD track, as opposed to a CD player which will only play the CD layer, the difference between the two formats becomes very apparent.

I'm sorry to hear that Philip has never heard a good recording from cassette. As he stated, to get the best from vinyl discs requires high-quality turntables, arms and cartridges and these need to be set up properly. The same is true with cassette decks.

Unfortunately a well set-up and maintained deck was a rare find. For example, few people knew how to adjust the head azimuth – a simple operation that makes a massive difference to the high frequency and phase of the output signal. This is why a cassette could sound fine on the deck on which it was recorded but sound dreadful when played on another deck.

If I had only ever listened to vinyl on poorly set-up and maintained turntables, then I would probably be just as dismissive of vinyl as a high-quality audio format. It is worth noting that two successful commercial albums were originally recorded on cassette: Bruce Springsteen's *Nebraska* and Michelle Shocked's *The Texas Campfire Tapes*.

For playback through my system, I prefer to burn 24-bit files to DVD or DVD-Audio format and play them using a 'universal' player rather than a laptop and Digital Audio Converter (DAC). Operation and selection of tracks is similar to playing a CD, but with much better sound. While there may be some element of second harmonic distortion in analogue equipment, this will be negligible on high-specification equipment. Of course, even if using a digital playback source, you will still encounter analogue circuitry in the output stage of the CD player, the amplifier and the crossover network within the speakers.

I quite agree with Philip that some downloads lack the accompanying booklet which is normally supplied with a CD, although many hi-res downloads come with a booklet in PDF format. There is no excuse, though, for omitting original sleeve notes from reissued vinyl LPs.

**Debbie Bilham, Loughborough RMS**

### **FM or DAB... or not?**

I always find Philip Ashton's technical comments and reviews to be of great interest and value. The review in the Autumn *Bulletin* (page 28) particularly caught my attention. Several of my hi-fi/musical friends have asked me 'why are there so few FM tuners available?' My answer is that I don't think manufacturers are going to commit any time, money and effort in developing an FM tuner because the long-term availability of FM remains uncertain.

Whilst I agree that DAB is fine for general listening, in my opinion it is not suitable in its present state for serious listening. The sampling rate is generally not even mp3 quality, it is nearer mp2. The bit rate for BBC Radio 3 is 160 Kbs, and for Classic FM is 128 Kbs; various other stations are only 80 Kbs. However, it's fine for general listening on, perhaps, a portable DAB radio (I use a Pure model), but not for serious listening. So, how do we listen to, say, Radio 3 though a high-quality hi-fi system? I am now leaning towards streaming from a laptop computer. Radio 3 is now streaming in what they call HD audio where the bit rate is 320 Kbs. HD sound uses the AAC-LC codec and has no audio signal processing applied. The encoding codec is of a high-quality music type. The amount of bandwidth reduction has been kept to a minimum by using a high bit rate in the encoder. Using a good DAC, the results are fantastic. I am hoping that others will follow this trend.

When it comes to listening to recorded music in the home, I find the amount of file types is just totally confusing and mind-blowing. I agree that CD/SACD, in the foreseeable future, will have a place, as will vinyl. I was intrigued to read in a recent hi-fi magazine that vinyl is being bought by people without any means of playing them! Apparently they are bought for their artwork, and that must tell us something, if only that the artwork and information provided with a vinyl record or CD is invaluable, whereas with downloads/streaming, artwork is not generally available.

Moving on to download/streaming formats, loss-free files such as FLAC (Free Lossless Audio Codec) now seem to be more readily available, in addition to the MQA format that Philip mentions. QUAD are promoting a system called DSD (Direct Stream Digital) developed by Sony and Philips. This is a similar format to SACD – more information is available at [nativesd.com](http://nativesd.com) – however, standalone DACs that will handle all the various bit rates are very expensive and a little thin on the ground. It is hardly surprising that many people will stick to CD and vinyl, if only to preserve their sanity!

**DH Lucas LCGI EngTech MIET (South Cheshire RMS)**

### **Tales of Howells**

It was good to see John Futter's article on the composer Herbert Howells in the Autumn *Bulletin* (page 29). Not only was it interesting but it evoked in me a personal memory from some forty years ago.

It was at the Royal College of Music in London on July 5<sup>th</sup> 1975 at a concert to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Gordon Jacob, whose music I had discovered in 1956. Collecting and studying his music became a specialist pursuit for me. Over the years, by virtue of correspondence and occasional meetings at concerts, we eventually became friends and I was delighted to be invited to that RCM concert.

When I arrived, Gordon immediately introduced me to George Thalben-Ball, whose lunchtime weekly organ recitals on Wednesdays in Birmingham Town

Hall I had attended regularly as a student in the mid-1950s. And, to my further surprise, Gordon then introduced me to Herbert Howells, who, like Thalben-Ball, had been one of Gordon's tutors at the RCM in the 1920s. Howells, as well as being a composer, had been an organist and a pianist of distinction. In contrast, my own keyboard playing was (and still is) in a very much lower league; I regard myself as no more than a semi-competent 'hack'. Nevertheless, turning to Herbert Howells I said that, coincidentally, I had in the previous week borrowed a copy of his Lambert's Clavichord, which is a work of individual pieces dedicated to composers, performers and other notables – De la Mare's *Pavane*, for example – and that I had been playing them. 'I wish I could', he replied!

Incidentally, also at the concert was a lady whose face seemed familiar to me. It was a few weeks afterwards that I realised she was the distinguished actress Ursula Howells, and it finally dawned on me that she was Herbert Howells's daughter. I had never linked the two and yet there was a distinct facial resemblance. Quite an interesting experience!

**Geoff Ogram, secretary Stafford RMS**

### **John Phillips**

I have the sad task of reporting the sudden death last December of former FRMS vice-chairman (and fellow record collector) John Phillips at the age of 73, following a fall at his home in Shilbottle, Northumberland (near Alnwick). John was my predecessor as secretary of the Newcastle upon Tyne Recorded Music Society and also ran a group from Alnwick which met in his home.

John was born in New Zealand but grew up in Sunderland, later attending Newcastle University before having a varied career in different countries. He was particularly fond of Czech music, and the Czech Republic/Czechoslovakia itself. He told me that after his travels it was always his intention to retire to north-east England, which he duly did and joined our group in Newcastle 15 years ago when I was secretary. He was a committed record collector and so particularly liked our policy of playing complete works, concentrating on performers and recordings.

Soon after he arrived I had to stand down as secretary due to ill health, so I was very glad that John agreed to take over and continue with our programming policy. We benefited very much from his great musical knowledge and his vast collection of top-quality classical CDs.

In recent years John had increasing health problems of his own and had to pass the baton back to me. It had been more than a year since he was able to come to our meetings in Newcastle. I have no idea what will become of his CD collection which occupied a whole bedroom in his house. His son and daughter may be preoccupied with this task for some time. Knowing John, he would have more likely been amused than alarmed by the prospect!

**Ted Shepherd, secretary Newcastle upon Tyne RMS**

### Brian Pack (1930-2017)

Brian Pack and his wife Jocé joined the Kettering and District Recorded Music Society after retiring from teaching in Corby. They became very active members with both of them being on the committee and Brian serving as chairman for twenty years. They were regular supporters of the FRMS Music Weekend from the Cambridge days through to Daventry. Only rarely was a meeting missed and if this was ever the case it was usually due to their other interest, the National Trust.

Brian had a deep passion for music and was an accomplished pianist from childhood, which proved to be a valuable skill during his teaching career. He later took up the recorder and played in a local group. For over 25 years Brian helped run the Kettering

Eisteddfod and tirelessly promoted young local musical talent. Sadly Jocé passed away in 2014 but Brian continued to attend the Society as long as his health permitted.

He will be remembered for his steadfast loyalty and generosity. He always welcomed new members warmly and ensured the Society ran smoothly. This was always his first priority. Brian presented many excellent musical programmes to Kettering and other local music societies. These were always well planned with fascinating musical insights. His votes of thanks were always well thought through and informed by his wide musical knowledge. He greatly enriched the musical life of the Society and the town.

**John Hart, treasurer Kettering and District RMS**

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## A History of the FRMS Website



**THE FRMS WEBSITE** has been in existence for over 15 years and is working very well as a source of information for affiliates, their members and the public in general. In 2010 it was chosen by the British Library as representing a typical UK organisational website. Nevertheless, to most members of societies its origins are probably lost in the mists of time. They are also possibly not aware of how useful it can be.

The original website was started by Reg Williamson, a former FRMS committee member. He reported on the subject in *Bulletin* of Spring 2000 by which time he had recruited 50 societies to submit their details and for future programmes to be included on the website. Eventually he managed to persuade over 100. His work was carried on for a few years by Bob Astill. Without this essential foundation work we would not have the useful website we now have. Some affiliates already had their own websites and these were linked to the FRMS website. In 2007 George Steele took over running the website and set about redesigning it to make the information more accessible. The Home Page in particular was reorganised to direct readers to the wide range of information already available.

Gradually the range of information was expanded to include biographies and photographs of officials and committee members. Photographs taken at Daventry, regional events and AGMs were also included. A Latest News section was added to highlight particular events or anniversaries. A monthly selection was made from the Links Page to introduce more readily some of our partner organisations.

Societies can have details of their programmes and meeting venues, including a map, displayed on their own web pages. The webmaster is available to help with the design and/or updating of information. There is a useful history of the FRMS and reasons why organisations should join. When an affiliated society closes or people move away from the district, individuals can join the Friends of FRMS and an application form can be downloaded. This allows them to maintain a relationship with the Federation. There is a useful link to FRMS policies and specialist services, such as technical, copyright, PRS/PPL licensing and insurance. A helpline was added, as was helpful advice on starting your own society, as well as Tony Pook's useful guide to preparing a presentation. There is a wide range of links to the websites of other music organisations and the FRMS Presenters' Panel is included and is updated annually.

Downloadable copies of important documents are now often included, reducing the need for them to be posted to members, thereby reducing costs. Back copies of *Bulletin* can also be accessed and read, or printed as required.

All in all we have an enormous asset which is freely available to anyone interested in recorded music or societies catering for that interest. Please use it! ●

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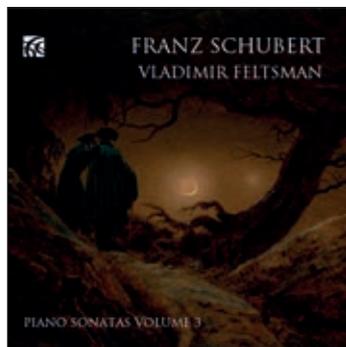
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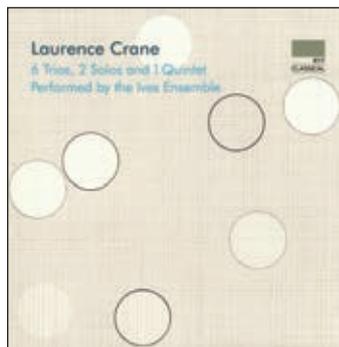
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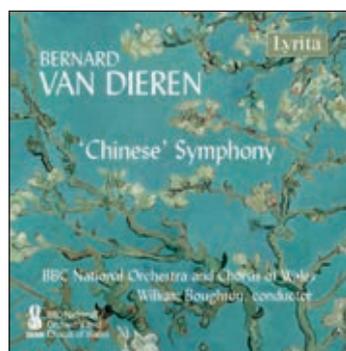
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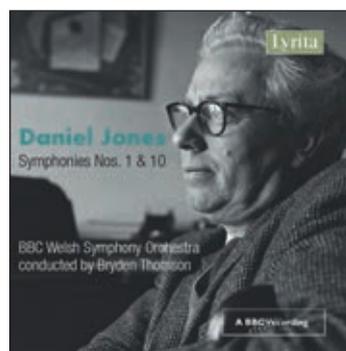
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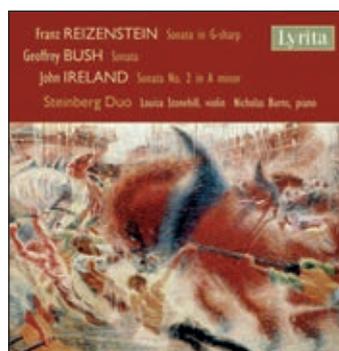
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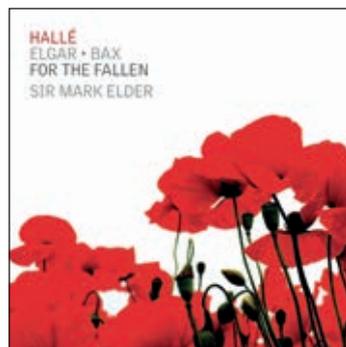
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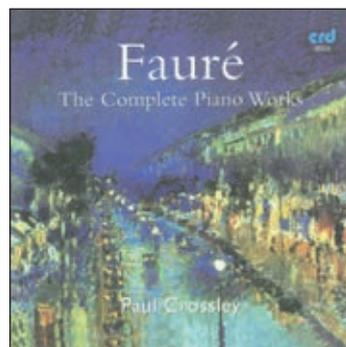
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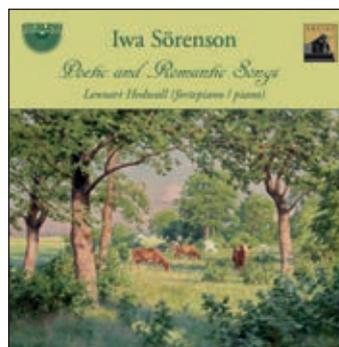
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