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## Guest Editorial from the Vice-Chairman

It is an honour and a pleasure to be invited to contribute an editorial for the Bulletin. It provides the opportunity to give thanks to those individuals who donate their time and significant abilities freely, apparently without limit to ensure that our various activities are carried out in a professional manner. It is a privilege to work with them.

You cannot fail to have noticed with our last issue, a radical change in format which coincided with substantial changes to our editorial and publishing policy. We have been heartened by written and verbal comments about these changes, all of which have been supportive and complimentary. We hope to improve your magazine further and as part of this process, we are pleased to announce the appointment of Arthur Baker of Bramhall RMS as our new Editor. His profile is shown elsewhere, and so I shall not steal his thunder here, except to say a very warm welcome to him from both the Committee and the Publishing Board.

Where now, you say. We also have a new Marketing Manager, so a warm welcome to Cathy Connolly from Putney Music. There is a profile of Cathy also elsewhere in the magazine. She will take over the responsibilities so ably handled by her predecessor, Dr John Hart to whom we offer our thanks for his hard work. This is a mammoth task so we are grateful to Cathy for accepting this important post.

While on the subject of changes, I also have to announce the withdrawal from the Committee of John Summers. John has been a very active member of the Committee over the past three years, but his attendance at our committee meetings had tailed off due to ill health. John decided in the best interests of the Federation that he should relinquish his position. He leaves us with all our best wishes for improved

health and prosperity and thanks for his contribution.

Our aim now is to make the Bulletin good value for money. "What is he talking about, we get it free," I hear some say! From our feedback, it is obvious that a large proportion of our affiliate members is totally unaware of it. I am sure it is often seen as a perk for the Secretary, being his or her own personal copy as part of the compensation for all of the undoubted hard work put in to the Office. However, I think that all members should at least know of its existence even though they may not enjoy all the content.

With the innovations in style introduced for us by Thelma Mills and now continued and built upon recently by Reg Williamson, it might perhaps be the time to introduce your members to the magazine. I apologise to those Secretaries who already do this. I know that many do, but there are also many that do not! If each affiliate were able to get only one or two of their members to buy their own copies, or buy extra copies for use within their society, the difference in viability of the magazine would be transformed. We could then improve the content even more.

So this is an urgent appeal to all Secretaries out there, who do not normally show the magazine to your members — could you please start doing this, and one hopes, stimulate the interest of more non-readers to become readers, possibly individual subscribers.

Remember that the magazine is yours. It is produced for you, so please let the Editor know of any subject you would like to see covered. Any ideas will be investigated and delivered subject only to our abilities, most certainly not our enthusiasm and intent.

With best wishes - *John Phillips.*

## Sackcloth and Ashes Corner....

Your acting Editor for the Spring issue, so hastily put together, missed some important errors. The first one was drawn to his attention by "Outraged" of Spalding. And quite rightly too...our affiliate there was left out of the list of towns with an RMS. And so was Hove. Oh, dear, Stockport and Southport as well. Gainsborough should have read Guisborough, but if there is one in the former, do let the Secretary know. And worst of

all, his own local Society at Stafford, is initiating impeachment proceedings. At least, you all read it and we gather it is proving useful! So humble apologies to all.

Our friends at CD & Video Selections, in Brian Bishop's advert on page 6 also suffered by the omission of the vital contact telephone number; and since there is more than one Dorchester in the UK, the lack of a postcode or the county did not help.

## The FRMS Musical Weekend 2000 April 14/16th

By common consent, the 1999 FRMS Musical Weekend at Corby this year was the most successful for many years. Yet, sadly, as in the previous year it made a deficit. The Committee established beyond doubt that it was not the programmes nor the high quality of service at the hotel. The geographical location of the hotel was the major deterrent. As a consequence, the Committee decided that radical measures were necessary before the planning of our Millennium Weekend even started. So, a decision was made to move to a luxury hotel in Stratford upon Avon and from the feedback we are getting already, along with the reaction of those that did attend Corby when announced, this is a popular choice. Along with a very attractive programme already in provisional form, we hope that this will entice back all of our regulars.

The Committee also decided to give everyone a little more time to themselves, so if they wished, the pleasures of Shakespeare's birthplace could be enjoyed as well. So, the programme will be a little shorter than usual, but at this stage will include a piano recital by Martin Roscoe, and Anthony Pollard of the Gramophone in conversation with our President Edward Greenfield. There will be equally attractive items, and the full details will be made available to Secretaries in good time, along with an advert in the Spring issue of the Bulletin.

## HISTORIC AWARDS 1999

At the invitation of Gramophone Publications Ltd, the President and Chairman of FRMS attended a cocktail party and awards presentation at the British Library — home of the National Sound Archive in London on 28th April.

There were eleven awards for historic reissues on CD, given under the headings respectively of "Compilation" to music by Poulenc, "Choral" to the St Matthew Passion of Bach, "Chamber" to Brahms and Schubert, "Instrumental" to Beethoven as performed by Frederic Lamond, "Opera" to the Beecham recording of Gounod's Faust, "Orchestral" to works by Debussy and Respighi conducted by Victor de Sabata and "Vocal" to the reissue of the famous Hugo Wolf Society Edition.

Distinguished guests such as Felix Aprahamian, Lionel Salter, Sir David Wilcocks and Lyndon Jenkins handed over the award discs and amongst the recipients were Lady Beecham and the son of Victor de Sabata. The companies so honoured were

Bidulph, the BBC, EMI, Millennium Classics, Preiser and Testament.

Continuity was provided by Tully Potter, Editor of "International Classical Record Collector" and the event was sponsored by CD Systems.

## From the Secretary...

Your new Committee's year began well with our first meeting in November, which was held as usual in Birmingham. Despite an unusually crowded Agenda, all business was despatched quickly and efficiently. The sudden loss of our Bulletin Editor was a temporary setback but with the appointment of a temporary Editor, the next issue was soon back on track and came out well on time. The many changes were generally well received. Some of the problems inherent in the production of our house magazine had already been identified, so the Committee appointed a two man Publishing Board to oversee its publication. Cathy Connolly of Putney Music was co-opted to handle the advertising, vitally necessary to increase the magazine's income.

It was also decided to introduce the measures proposed in the newly adopted Constitution to the Federation's financial management. Another widely accepted reason for the financial deficit in the previous Corby Weekend was not the hotel itself but its geographical location. A further loss was predicted this year, but to minimise that deficit as much as possible, some modification was made to the 1999 programme as planned by the previous Committee. In the long term, a radical measure was essential and so the decision was made to move to a new venue. As most people know by now, the new home for the Musical Weekend for the Millennium Year will be a luxury hotel in the historic town of Stratford upon Avon, a move which so far, has met with universal approval.

The second meeting in March of this year had a similarly crowded Agenda, also dealt with efficiently and with further measures agreed to consolidate those already made. As a consequence of an improved relationship with the "Gramophone" and an offered discount, it was agreed that our monthly coupon would be reinstated. Committee appointed our new Bulletin Editor, who came with impressive credentials that included considerable experience in the business, publishing and printing world. The results of his work will be seen in this issue.

A further radical step was taken by adopting a technique well known in industry, that of creating a Cost Centre for the sole production of the Bulletin.

Publication of the magazine is now self contained, managed by the Publishing Board and with its own internal financing. The fund manager will be Patrick Russell, who is not only a member of the Committee but a chartered accountant. Patrick had already taken responsibility for the financial management of our Musical Weekend. Sadly, due to persistent ill health, John Summers had offered to relinquish his Committee position; so Cathy Connolly was appointed a full Committee member at the same meeting.

On a personal note, it is my impression that the Federation is now especially fortunate in having at its core some highly motivated professionally qualified members. Demonstrably willing to grasp nettles and generate ideas, it will introduce the changes vitally necessary to develop your Federation and meet the challenges of the 21st century.

*Marjorie Williamson*

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

The 57th Annual General Meeting of the FRMS will be held at St Martin's College Lancaster on Saturday October 30th and our hosts will be the Lancaster Recorded Music Society.

After introductions at 2.00pm, the business meeting will begin at about 2.15p.m. with a break for tea at approx. 4.30p.m. There will be a three course dinner with waitress service at 6.00p.m. followed by a piano recital by John Clegg in the Princess Margaretha Hall.

Full details along with an Application form and the Agenda will be sent to Society Secretaries in good time. Any queries to Marjorie, the Secretary

## The Federation Website

Since it was tentatively established in January 1996, it consisted then of just two pages. (For those who have not yet explored the Internet, a is like a magazine which can be accessed via the internet and then read; not to be confused with e-mail which is a system of sending and receiving electronic letters). As a result of the willing help of Dr Len Mullenger, its home became the main frame computer of Coventry University.

Much water has passed under the bridge since then. Len is now on our Committee, and because of the spectacular growth of his Music site, had to move to a commercial server Force 9 that offered unlimited space. Those who have yet to "visit" the site, devoted primarily to British music, will find a fascinating source of information. Book and CD reviews, biographical details on composers and a special section devoted to film music. Our own pages have also grown steadily and now number 37, no less. Most of these are individual Society pages. The Federation has recognised our Website as a valuable asset by partially subsidising the rental and maintenance of the site. Hitherto, Len was financing it out of his own pocket.

It was envisaged back in 1996, that a computer connected to the Internet would become as common in the home as a television receiver; and this prediction is turning out to be true. The proliferation of "free" Internet Service Providers (ISPs) has done a great deal to bring this about. Now, more Society

Secretaries are contacting Marjorie, our FRMS Secretary, by e-mail. She also receives inquiries from other countries as well. Societies are becoming conscious, too, of the value of the free advertising that a Web page offers. Remember, a Web page can be seen anywhere in the world at any time. For those who'd like to have a page, and it is entirely free to FRMS affiliates, it is only necessary to contact Reg Williamson via the Secretary, and a suitable design can be prepared. It can contain whatever the Society wishes, including its own logo or colour photos.



"Surfing the net"



There are a few ground rules before any page can go on our official site. It has long been recognised that it is not wise to have a telephone number, so these are proscribed for security reasons. That is, unless your Secretary doesn't mind being woken in the early hours of the morning by someone trying to send a fax from Australia (this actually happened to Marjorie). However, an e-mail address can be linked or an ordinary address can be given. Once the page has been designed, a copy of the page can be sent for approval for examination in any standard browser.

Some Societies have expressed a wish to attempt to design their own page and they will get all the encouragement and help they need. One golden rule is control over the size of the graphics used and to watch for file labels that are likely to conflict with others on the site. Inquiries should not be directed to Len. He is responsible only for maintaining the whole site. Any queries, changes to the page, such as programme updates, should be sent to Reg and these are normally dealt with in 48 hours. Just to remind our readers, the official FRMS Website is on:

[www.musicweb.force9.co.uk/music/frms/index.htm](http://www.musicweb.force9.co.uk/music/frms/index.htm)

From here you can go to any of the other pages and the entire Music site.

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## Bulletin Editor

Arthur Baker, the new editor, is secretary of the Bramhall RMS. He has been interested in music all his life and helped to establish the recorded music group of the Music Society in Newark nearly 40 years ago and has been involved in record societies ever since. He is a pharmacist by profession and whilst at Manchester University became editor of the University student newspaper and subsequently assistant editor of The Journal of Hospital Pharmacy. Later he joined ICI and was involved in writing and editing technical information.



After taking an early retirement he set up a print shop (and became editor of the Newsletter of the Commercial Section of the British Printing Society). He now works as a locum pharmacist.

He enjoys most types of music, including jazz, but has a special interest in Beethoven and in French music.

## Marketing Manager

Cathy Connolly, the new marketing manager, has worked as a teacher of TEFL (English as a Foreign Language), teaching students in Libya, France, Japan and in the UK. She was a director for 13 years of one of the largest language schools in Britain, a charitable trust with over 100 overseas affiliates as well as schools in England. There she was responsible for quality control in the overseas schools and for the recruitment and selection of teaching staff. Since leaving that full-time post she has worked on a freelance basis, teaching, training, examining and inspecting. She has been a member of Putney Music for the last ten years and is now a committee member. Cathy enjoys music enormously but claims not to know much about it!



Warm Congratulations to our Vice-President John Bulman on reaching his 90th birthday on August 15th.



FRMS Bulletin (Spring 1999)

I can understand the concerns of John Gilks regarding the apparently bleak future of the FRMS (and, presumably, of all recorded music societies).

Since my first association with the Leeds Gramophone Society in the late 1940's, now President of the (Derbyshire) Music Club, the situation regarding young people and classical music has changed, just as the habits of society have changed. Musically speaking, we are now in a different world. The young people of today (I speak of the below 50's) are always short of time; they work and play hard, they're into quality time with the children and into everything electronic. However, enjoyment of classical music needs time and a relaxed attitude; attributes not normally possessed by the younger end, but granted to the oldies.

Our Club has 45, a number which has remained stable over a decade. Why so, when members steadily leave, die or find other interests? Well, the elderly population is growing, so we are told. We cater for this growth, not for the frantic forties and fifties.

So I say, don't worry about the absence of youth in your clubs. By all means, publicise, advertise, evangelise, but (to quote a famous phrase) DON'T PANIC.

*Kenneth Boyes*

### Complete Works

My contacts and travels to affiliates suggest there are significant numbers who never, or rarely, play complete works that are of more than 15 minutes duration, as part of their presentations.

I am somewhat saddened by this, for much of my knowledge of classical music has been gained from listening to complete works.

In my 29 years membership of Wolverhampton R.M.S., it is true to say that until 10 years ago, presentations of complete works were limited to 40 - 45 minutes. However, in recent years our members have, on 2 or 3 occasions each season, presented much longer scale works, both Bruckner and Mahler symphonies have featured, and in May my wife Doreen presented Shostakovich's Leningrad symphony (69 mins). Apart from one person who got up and quietly stretched his legs after 60 minutes although he was enjoying it, members listened very attentively.

A plea then for some of you to be a bit more adventurous.

*Gordon Wainwright*

Agamemnon at the gate...

Picture if you can dear reader, a little performance being enacted throughout our movement and in late May as I write, usually at this time of the year. It is AGM time and a disheartened set of Officers tell the tiny audience, that their Society has to be wound up and usually, the reason given is lack of support. The decision taken, the retiring Secretary undertakes to write to the FRMS, thereby guaranteeing a spoiled day for a depressed Federation Secretary.

It happens all too often. But it doesn't have to be that way, you know. I know of Societies that are so successful, they have a waiting list for membership. So why? I have been connected with this movement for 46 years, and that includes ten years as an Officer of the Federation and currently, albeit reluctantly, a member of the Committee. I hasten to mention, that any views I express are entirely my own and do not necessarily reflect Federation policy. However, I can claim that after all this time to have some idea of what can go wrong.

Let's look at a typical example. The first thing I spot, it is often still a "Gramophone Society" so to an outsider and possibly, a prospective member, the image is one of an archaic organisation. Then I look at the printed programme and I see many flaws. For all the information it conveys to anyone outside the Society, it could be a body devoted to flower arranging. Simply a string of names beside dates, usually Mr this or Mrs That... and nothing else. What for heaven's sake is wrong with the modern and delightful Quaker style of address — simply a forename and surname? And give it a title. Anything rather than nothing. Look next at the venue and quite often, a cheerless hall somewhere and probably lacking adequate heating in the winter. The equipment? Oh, my goodness, nothing spent on it for the past ten years. I know of one Society that has yet to get a CD player!

And the programmes themselves? For this we have to go along to a typical meeting which has been handed over to a member to present his or her programme, *carte blanche*, with little concept of shape or content. Simply a succession of Friday Night is Music Night. This music lover would run a mile.

So what are the answers? First, if the disaster of closure looks likely, don't dismiss it as "falling attendance". Instead, look objectively at why. The

Federation is always concerned for its affiliates and I know there are many on the Committee who would be willing to come along, try to identify the main problems and offer advice. All it requires is a letter to Marjorie. All are members, sometimes Officers of successful Societies, so will have something to offer. Programming; it is my impression that many Societies on the downward path commit the fatal error of simply catering for its members.

Don't do that all the time. Try to plan for those that don't come. This way, you will tend to attract other music lovers. If, as a consequence, you lose some that only like the Friday Night is Music Night type of programme, to be blunt, that may not be such a bad thing.

Remember too, the last name of your title — "Society" so encourage social activity, even if it is nothing to do with music. No one appreciates more than I the difficulty of getting a good venue but this, plus a decent set of equipment, is *sine qua non*. Your Society will not develop unless these criteria are observed.

With these heretical thoughts, I now await the bricks via the Editor.

*Reg Williamson*

## Young Musicians Need You

Whilst recently attending the weekend, I was surprised to find from the Programmes displayed that many of our clubs meet weekly or fortnightly. I am amazed how the secretaries can find the people to present musical evenings on so many occasions.

I mention this because I am very concerned about the need for Young Musicians, who are finishing their studies, to gain the experience of performance before they are able to step on the ladder and world of professional musicianship. Experience is all; without it they cannot present themselves and become professional musicians. There is a desperate shortage of platforms from which they can perform. Members, I therefore ask, beg implore you all to consider having in your programmes one or two live performances per year. As Secretary of Stratford upon Avon Music Society, which only meet monthly from October to June, we have at least two sometimes three live performances a year. These evenings are always the highlights of our yearly programmes and the standard of performances is very high. These young musicians work very hard to present a professional and musical performance

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performance as an option such as in Egham, Manchester or Birmingham, or even as I did, stop and talk to buskers in your streets.

If you all offered a platform to these young musicians it would open up a training ground for

them and they would stay with their music and not as so many do, give up in despair. Think about it and above all talk about it, but please please consider — 'Young Musicians Need You'

*Joyce Knight, Stratford*

## FEATURES... FEATURES...FEATURES...

### Confessions of a DJ

Well I'm not really a disk jockey, but 'sound engineer' sounds too grand a title for someone who plays the music at meetings of our local recorded music society. In theory it is easy, collect a list of what is to be played from the presenter, and then play according to cue; to make a professional approach, reduce the volume to zero

Once everything is working, the next step is to test the system, I have a test recording from a long defunct American Hi Fi Magazine complete with warble tones etc. — the full works! It doesn't take too long and it impresses the punters; in reality I do not really know what it means and the real test is to play a scrap of music from each machine — either it sounds OK or else we rush home to borrow some other equipment.

The golden rule in this game is always to check the list against the label on the recording. It is so easy for the presenter to mark down the wrong track, and to start to play the wrong piece really does not go down well with the audience.

CDs are not normally a problem although occasionally there is a lump of crud on the surface and the correction system just cannot cope. This is not always obvious to a cursory glance and little can be done except to fast forward in the hope of passing the fault; it does not often happen but when it does it is a real nightmare.

Nowadays LPs fall into one of two categories, there are those owned by the audiophile who will really have looked after his cosseted and seldom-played rare disks. There are also those owned by the person who spends next to nothing on equipment and is still playing disks using what is left of the original stylus fitted to the portable radiogram when bought in 1965. This latter type need a very good clean before being played (and careful application of the fingernail to remove stubborn lumps). Nothing can be done about the scratches which disfigure much of the music; however if the stylus starts to repeat on the groove



between each piece or when making any change or adjustment.

However, it is amazing what can go wrong in practice. Before starting, at least in our club, the equipment has to be got out of the cupboard in the basement and carried to the hall and then assembled. The first step is to identify what combination of media are to be used. If everything is on CD, you sigh with relief, if CD, Cassette and LP are to be used you expect a rough night.

Wiring up should be straightforward as all the cables are labelled, but from time to time things do go wrong and it is essential to check that sound does come out of each speaker from every kind of input.



you have either to abort the piece or give the tone arm a gentle push (it is best if you reduce the volume when undertaking this draconian measure).

The other problem with LPs lies with finding the groove between tracks, failing eyes and lack of practice make this harder, the answer is to make your best guess and bring up the volume slowly (VERY slowly if the previous track has not quite finished).

In my experience, mono recordings usually sound better when played in mono, but alas our amplifier like most modern ones does not have such a switch.

Some presenters re-record all their material on cassette, this makes my job very easy, but not everyone likes the sound which almost invariably has a reduced dynamic range, lack of top and a muffled bass. The presenter is always proud of the quality of the recording "...sounds better than the original...", but I inwardly wish we had the original LPs or CDs to play even if it is more work for me.

You ask whether the recording is Dolby B or not; if the answer is "What's a Dolby?", I usually put the Dolby B setting on as experience shows that Low-Fi recordings sound slightly less grim with the treble lift that Dolby gives.

The most contentious part of the job is setting the

volume. In theory this should not be too difficult. The problem lies in the fact that the front row is usually occupied by a number of ladies with hearing so acute they can hear a ladybird cracking it's knees from 100ft; they all have a high intolerance of a loud volume. On the other hand, the back row is occupied by a bevy of old gentlemen who are almost stone deaf and can hardly hear anything unless the volume is set at maximum; most come for the

company and they like a good sleep on the back row, but do feel they should have some idea of what went on. No volume setting will satisfy both contingents but I find it best to start with a high volume as if by accident, then reduce it to the satisfaction of the front row and then gradually ease up the volume just before the interval and the end so that the back row wakes up in time.

One of the main advantages of being the DJ is that by sitting next to the presenter I have a good view of the audience, especially of Cheryl (she of low cut blouses and mini skirts) who is the society's youngest and best looking member. She shows no interest in the music and joined the society a few years ago when she came by accident. She does however appreciate the obvious adoration of the gentlemen and also gets on well with most of the ladies.

My biggest mistake as a DJ occurred when I was about to put on an LP of a Mozart Piano Concerto. Cheryl leaned forward and something must have distracted me because I put on the wrong concerto! The presenter gave me a slightly puzzled look but said nothing. I kept my usual impassive expression and no one appeared to notice the discrepancy between the description of the piece and the music.

However after the programme, when the hard core retired to the Druid's Elbow for a few pints before going home, one man said to me "You know Con, it is hard to tell one early Mozart Concerto from another". I looked him hard in the face and said "Not if you really know them".

*Con Couac*

‘...something must have distracted me...’

## BOMAR PRODUCTIONS

## PUBLICITY

The Federation wants to provide a service for its affiliates and we need your input. Please contact John Philips on 01277 212096 with suggestions of how we can provide publicity for you and your Society.

# Eduard van Beinum

The first in an occasional series by John Phillips

Amsterdam is an extremely fortunate city with a very strong musical heritage, having both a concert hall and an orchestra — the Royal Concertgebouw, both of which are considered to be among the finest in the world. I can vouch for the sound quality in the hall as all the concerts I have attended there have been absolutely first rate.

The subject of this article, Eduard van Beinum, was only the orchestra's third chief conductor, taking up this position in 1945, by replacing Willem Mengelberg, who having disgraced himself by pro-Nazi activities during the Second World War, slipped from a very prominent position in world music into almost complete obscurity. He had held the position of chief conductor of the Concertgebouw Orchestra since 1895, and had moulded the orchestra into one of the finest in the world, although today's purists would abhor some of the things he did with tempo and expression. In order to achieve this style of music making, he had developed the orchestra into an extremely virtuoso ensemble, which could play with great passion and flexibility, and could follow his many extreme tempo changes without difficulty — no mean feat. Fortunately due to research and supportive activists, his reputation is very slowly on the mend, and many releases of his recordings have been reaching the specialist record companies, aided by a small amount of his work from the majors.

When van Beinum took the Concertgebouw Orchestra over in 1945, he had already been guest conductor with them for about 14 years. Because his rehearsal methods and interpretations were quite different from those of Mengelberg, it took quite a while for both orchestra and public to accept that his way of working was equally as valid as his superstar predecessor. Whereas Mengelberg was a great showman, with sleeves rolled up to conduct, together with swoops and sighs, it must have come as quite a shock to accept a new chief conductor who wanted only to make music as close to the composer's score as possible, rather than stand up at the front as clear leader and master. He preferred to work with the orchestra as his colleagues and as part of the total group, all trying their best to make music as the composer had written it.

He was also keen to develop the orchestra's repertoire away from a diet of mainly Beethoven, Richard Strauss, Mahler and Tchaikovsky, to include more modern composers such as Ravel, Debussy, Bartok, Kodaly, as well as a range of contemporary Dutch composers. He also developed a style of Bruckner playing which has stayed with the orchestra right up until today. Over the years he built on the legacy left him by Mengelberg, and developed the Concertgebouw into one of the truly great European orchestras.

He was extremely proud of "his orchestra" and his aim was always to "make music together with the orchestra". His precise interpretations of Classical and Romantic works purged of exaggerated romanticism, soon won the recognition of the musical world. Starting with an incomparably matched string section, van Beinum developed an unusually sonorous, rich and individual sound quality described by critics as that of "antique gold". The rich sound quality he developed was achieved partly by expanding the viola section of the strings, so reinforcing the middle register.

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‘...rich and individual sound quality described as antique gold.’

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The sound quality he achieved was something that would be totally out of fashion in this age of original instruments.

In the late forties and early fifties, he was also the chief conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra, a situation that was duplicated much later by his successor, Bernard Haitink in the seventies. He was a regular visitor to London, and was responsible for some outstanding concerts and recordings, mostly on the Decca label, which were highly sought after in their day. In Amsterdam, he recorded extensively on both the Decca and Philips labels, and many collectors have fond memories of outstanding performances of Bach, J.C. and J.S., Bartok, Beethoven, Berlioz, Brahms, Bruckner, Debussy, Haydn, Mozart, Ravel, Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky and others. Most of these are now out of print, but more of that later.

One of the characteristics that he developed was the practice of getting the orchestra to listen very carefully to what was going on around them and to play as though it was a chamber group. One of the features of the Royal even today, is how good the

internal balance of the various sections is, and how well integrated they are. You can see this in action at live concerts, by the way in which the players tend to bunch up on the platform so they are as close together as possible. This practice, plus having long serving chief conductors, and an excellent hall has made this orchestra absolutely superb. Even now, they are only on their fifth chief conductor since 1888!

van Beinum was responsible for the orchestra's first overseas tours from 1946 and his was a love affair with the orchestra over the entire span of his period as chief conductor. He was not a jet setter, with a marketing / PR army supporting him; although he left numerous recordings, only a few have reached CD, and today he is relatively unknown in this country. He recorded for both Decca and Philips and both companies have released a trickle of his work. Needless to say they are nearly all well worth hunting for, as he provides very intense musical experiences, albeit in not the utmost in hi-fi.

He died of a heart attack whilst rehearsing his beloved orchestra in Brahms First Symphony, as they were preparing for a tour of the U.K. in 1959, just short of his 60th birthday. His prophesy, told to his

mother at the tender age of 14 after hearing his first Concertgebouw concert — “One day I am going to stand in front of that orchestra”, was very fortunate for many of us. He is one of my all time favourites.

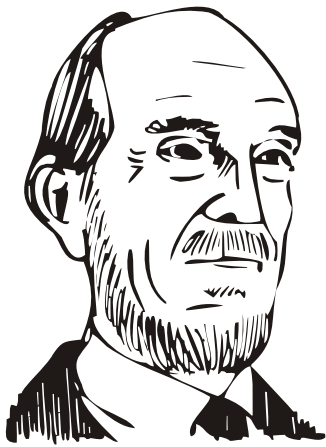
The fortieth anniversary of his death went completely uncommemorated in this country, and only obliquely remembered in his own country by Philips. They are in the process of releasing a series of CDs in the “Dutch Masters” series currently up to 45 or so issues and in receipt of an Edison Award for 1998, specialising in Dutch artists, including van Beinum, Bernard Haitink, and Willem Mengelberg. For probably very good reasons, the series is not being released outside Holland, but the determined collector can buy these discs by mail.

The van Beinum issues in this series are as follows: J.C. Bach Sinfonias, Brahms Symphonies 1 - 4 (at last!) and the Alto Rhapsody with Aafje Heynis, Debussy La Mer, Nocturnes and Iberia, Mahler Das Lied von der Erde, Mozart Symphony No. 29 and Concerto for Flute and Harp, and Schubert Symphonies 3, 6 and 8. Hopefully, future releases in this series may yield up more. If any readers would like more details of this series, they can contact me directly and I shall be pleased to help.

## FOUR HANDS MUSIC

## Choosing the right equipment.

Ten years ago societies main source of recorded programmes was the trusty stereo long-playing record. Although the main magazines were agreed that the best turntable was the Linn LP12, it was a non-starter for society use because of its sprung suspension and its need for specialist setting up each time it was moved (most societies have to store their equipment, therefore robustness, weight and ease of setting up are important). As time went by, more and more societies included the Compact Cassette with B noise reduction for their source of sound. Then came the now familiar Compact Disc (CD) containing digital recordings.



Digital recording, as such, was first used by the BBC for archiving purposes. Some of their older analogue tape recordings were beginning to shed the oxide from the tape, thus producing drop-outs. Digital recording uses complex arrangements of the binary coding

which enables the data to be checked and corrected and even to restore missing digits. Minor damage to the tape (and similarly, small scratches on a CD) is inaudible.

Having got this brief history off my chest, I can come to the question which most societies pose at some time or other...“What is the best equipment to purchase for use at society meetings?”

As Technical Officer to the Federation, it is my desire to encourage a standard of sound quality for every society, large or small which is above the average heard in member's homes. Those who own good equipment would not be happy listening to much poorer sound on their night out.

To digress for a moment, I wonder how many societies have an equipment fund or even review their bank balance with a view to replacing parts of their equipment which is old or unreliable, with something new and technically better? Too much money in the bank is not earning its living in these days of low interest rates and would be better used to give members some pleasure.

The foundation of any system is the amplifier. Provided that this is good enough, the item which is

most critical in producing the best sound quality is the loudspeaker. Design and manufacture of loudspeakers has improved considerably in the last five years so here is an obvious place to consider replacement. However, it might be a good idea, before deciding to spend your money on speakers, to check that you are getting the best sound out of the ones you already have. The principles set out in the next paragraph apply equally to new ones.

Loudspeakers should be high enough to be seen by every person in the room. This ensures that the high frequencies have a direct path to the ears, thus giving a more balanced sound and generally improving stereo placement of instruments. It is important to ensure that the support is firm and solid. If using a table, place the speaker at the front (to prevent reflections from the surface) over one of the legs. If possible the speakers should be clear of walls and other objects to the sides and rear, which will reduce reflections which might spoil imaging. A minimum distance of 2 feet (60cm) clearance should be aimed for. The sound should be spread evenly between the two speakers. If there is a hole in the middle i.e. the sound seems to come mainly from one speaker or the other, move them closer together. For most rooms the speakers should be about 12ft (3m) apart.

For society use it is important to have enough power in reserve to avoid distortion on loud peaks of volume. Where an amplifier of 40 or 50 watts per channel is probably sufficient for domestic use, 90 or 100 plus would be safer in a larger room. These figures can only be approximate as the actual need depends upon efficiency of the loudspeaker itself and the acoustics of the room concerned. A resonant or highly reflective room needs less power than one with extensive furnishings such as carpeting, curtains and other absorbent materials like upholstery and even people's clothes. A room full of people sounds different to an empty one. If choosing a room, a carpeted and furnished one is better.

Getting the volume right is not easy and requires an experienced operator with a sensitive ear. Not all recordings are recorded to the same level so it is not just a question of having a mark or a number on the volume control and using this for all recordings as I once found at a society I visited.

Before leaving the topic of equipment for society use, may I remind societies that I can arrange discounts on some makes of equipment. I am happy



to give written advice on individual problems but, please list your existing equipment and which area you are thinking needs replacement or attention. Please also give the size of the room and audience figures, and don't forget to give your intended budget. Provided a mutually suitable date can be agreed, I should be very pleased to visit your society,

preferably to one of your standard evening meetings (expenses only).

If anyone has a subject they would like me to cover in a future issue of the Bulletin, please let myself or the Editor know.

Good listening,

*Dennis Bostock, Technical Officer*

# Music in the Twentieth Century

## *The Fourth Decade, 1930-1939*

If 1888 was the *Annus Mirabilis* of Late Nineteenth Century music, its equivalent in the Twentieth must be 1936. It was the year in which many of the Century's most influential composers produced some of their masterpieces: Barber (String Quartet No.1, including the original version of the Adagio); Bartok (Music for Strings, Percussion and Celeste); Copland (El Salon Mexico); Hindemith (Trauermusik); Messiaen (Poemes pour Mi); Orff (Carmina Burana); Prokofiev (The Queen of Spades); Revueltas (Homenaje); Schoenberg (Violin Concerto; String Quartet No.4); Shostakovich (Symphony No.4); Strauss (Friedenstag); Stravinsky (Jeu de Cartes); Varese (Density 21.5); Vaughan Williams (Dona Nobis Pacem); Webern (Piano Variations).

During the previous decade great strides had been made in recording techniques with the introduction of electrical recording. We will always be indebted to HMV for taking advantage of the opportunity to persuade Elgar to record a substantial number of his works. These are still referred to by present day performers as definitive performances and they include the famous recording of the Violin Concerto with the 16-year-old Yehudi Menuhin in 1932 and Beatrice Harrison's 1928 recording of the Cello Concerto, not surpassed even by the late Jacqueline Du Pre. (Beatrice Harrison had learned the part specifically for an earlier, pre-electric, recording. Is this the first instance of an artist learning a part for a recording without a concert performance in view?) Another British composer who recorded one of his key works in this decade was Vaughan Williams who went into the studio with the BBC Symphony Orchestra in 1937 with his Fourth Symphony, which he had launched on an unsuspecting audience two years earlier. It was a great decade, too, for chamber music recordings, notably from Cortot, Thibaud and

Casals; the Busch and Lener Quartets. Through radio and recordings music was now available to virtually anyone. Toward the end of the decade Gillingham (Kent) founded the earliest surviving Gramophone Society.

In 1934 Constant Lambert produced a thought-provoking little book that was to have a great influence — whether for better or worse cannot be attributed to the author — on attitudes toward modern music in this country and in particular that emanating from elsewhere. An early manifestation of "Eurosepticism". The book was *Music Ho!* subtitled *A Study of Music in Decline*.

Regrettably Constant Lambert did not live long enough to counter the myth perpetuated in the '50s and '60s by those who had either not read it or — given the clarity with which it is written — wilfully misunderstood it, that he was anti-modernist. (An opinion that would be consistent with having read the first and last pages and

nothing in between.) To be sure he elevated Sibelius and criticised Schoenberg and his disciples. Criticised but did not dismiss. Moreover his criticism arose, not from ignorance, but from a better understanding of the Austrian composer's music than almost any of his (Lambert's) compatriots. Sixty years on it is still a good read.

Political developments in Germany, arising partly from the punitive measures imposed by the allies after the First World War at the Treaty of Versailles, were creating a turmoil in Europe which caused many of its creative artists to seek safety elsewhere, mostly in America but also in this country. Added to this, events in Russia and the Spanish Civil War meant that the whole continent was affected.

Korngold, Rachmaninov, Schoenberg, Stravinsky and Varese went to the U.S.A. soon to be followed by Bartok, Hindemith

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'...A Study of Music  
in Decline...'

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and Martinu. Roberto Gerhard, Berthold Goldschmidt, Nicholas Medtner, Franz Reizenstein and Matyas Seiber found refuge over here, together with the conductor, Walter Goehr, and his infant son, Alexander.

In Germany, for some the decision to stay must have been almost as difficult. And perhaps those, like Furtwangler and Richard Strauss, who did were subsequently rather unfairly criticised for the degree of compromise that this necessarily entailed. Prokofiev decided to return to Russia, only to find that the situation for the artist was very different from when he left. His colleague, Shostakovich, had been censured for his opera *The Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. The opera was received with acclaim by the public but when the uncomprehending Stalin found himself unable to share their enthusiasm he suppressed all further performances. From then on the composer was a marked man and probably in grave danger. His immediate response was to withdraw his Fourth Symphony which was already in rehearsal. His Fifth Symphony he presented, overtly at least, in the form a penance, describing it as, "A Soviet artist's reply to just criticism". It seems to have had the desired effect. Significantly perhaps, he now turned to chamber music and produced his First String Quartet in 1938. In the same year Prokofiev composed music for Eizenstein's great film *Alexander Nevsky*. For the time being he was on safe ground.

The renaissance of English music was firmly established during this decade with the rise of a second generation of composers whose music began to be recognized as being of international significance. Bliss and Walton had already made their mark in the 1920s, Tippett was a late developer (the *Concerto for Double String Orchestra* dates from 1938). But it was their prodigious younger contemporary, Benjamin Britten, who made the greatest impact. In 1935 the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Adrian Boult performed Bliss's *Music for Strings* at the Salzburg Festival. In 1937 the Festival Committee invited Boyd Neel and his string orchestra on the condition that they brought a new work by a British composer. They had given him only three month's notice; who could he possibly rely upon to produce a substantial work in so short a time? He had previously worked with Britten on a film and had been impressed, so he turned to him. Britten started work on the 5th June and completed his *Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge* by 12th July. The first performance in Salzburg the next month was greeted with acclaim.

America, too, was beginning to establish its credentials through a new generation of composers. These included Samuel Barber and Aaron Copland. Rather late in the day for him, George Gershwin was beginning to be taken seriously. Sadly he died, aged 49, in 1937. Charles Ives had given up composing ("Mother and I seem to be the only people who like my music") and taken up insurance — with much greater success. He was still unknown, until his exact contemporary, Schoenberg, arrived in America and told them that they had a genius in their midst — meaning Ives, not himself. Before he left for America he had completed two acts of his music drama, *Moses and Aaron*; he never completed the third. Hollywood had approached Schoenberg and interested him in the composition of music for films. But he refused to compromise and adapt his music to their needs. The nearest he got was his *Film Music* for an entirely imaginary film.

Meanwhile back in old Vienna Franz Schmidt was working on his last composition, his masterpiece, the apocalyptic oratorio *The Book of the Seven Seals*. He died in 1939, just as that apocalypse was about to become a dreadful reality.

*Dennis A. Darling*

## WHO WAS AROUND IN 1930

Peter Warlock (Philip ) died in 1930. Stephen Sondheim and Takemitsu were born in 1930.

AGE IN 1930	Composed 1930-1939 [selected]
86	Widor (d.1937)
82	Duparc (d.1933)
79	d'Indy(d.1931)
76	Sousa (d.1932)
73	Chaminade Elgar (d.1934)      Severn Suite; Nursery Suite; Smyth                      Sonatina; Adieu; Serenade [piano] Ysaye (d.1931)
71	Ippolitov-Ivanov      The Last Barricade [opera] (d.1935)
68	Delius(d.1934)      Song of Summer; Songs of Farewell; German (d.1936)      Idyll; Violin Sonata No.3
67	Mascagni              Nerone Pierne (d.1937) Somervell (d.1937)

# FEATURES

66	Strauss	Arabella; Woman Without Shadow; Friedenstag; Daphne			Legend; London Ov.; Downland Suite These things shall be.
				Respighi (d.1936)	
65	Dukas (d.1935) Glazunov (d.1936) Nielsen (d.1931) Sibelius	Saxophone Concerto Commotio for Organ	50	Bloch	Violin Con.; Sacred Service; Piano Sonata
63	Koechlin	7 Stars Sym.; Loi de la Jungle; Septet	49	Bartok	Piano Con.No.2; Violin Con.No.2; Mus. Stgs Percussion & Celeste; Divertimento; Cantata String Quartets 5 & 6; Contrasts
61	Pfitzner Roussel (d.1937)	Sym.C# min.; Little Sym.; Violin Con.No.1 Symphonies 3 & 4; Sinfonietta; Bacchus & Adriadne; String Trio; String Quartet		Enescu Myaskovsky	
60	Lehar Vierne (d.1937)	Giuditta	48	Kodaly	Dances of Marosszek; Dances of Galanta; Peacock Variations
58	Alfven Vaughan Williams	Sym.No.4; Job; Running Set; 5 Variants on Dives & Lazarus; 5 Tudor Portraits Dona Nobis Pacem; Serenade to Music; Riders to the Sea		Malipiero	Symphonies 1&2; Julius Caesar; Antony & Cleopatra
	Zemlinsky	Sinfonietta; Psalm 13; String Quartet 4		Stravinsky	Violin Con; Dumbarton Oaks; Jeu de Cartes
57	Rachmaninov	Sym.No.3; Paganini Rhaps.; Corelli Vars		Szymanowsky (d.1937)	Violin Con.2; Litany
56	Holst (d.1934) Ives Schmidt (d.1939) Schoenberg Suk (d.1935)	Hammersmith; Brook Green Suite; Lyric Movement; Scherzo; Wandering Scholar Sym.No.4; Piano Concerto; Hussar Vars; Book of 7 Seals; Clarinet Quintets 1&2 Ch.Sym.No.2; Violin Con.; Suite for Stgs; Film Music; Moses & Aaron; String Quartet 4	47	Bax	Smphonies 4-7; Violin Concerto; Nonet
				Dyson	Symphony; Canterbury Pilgrims; Quo Vadis
				Webern	1st Cantata; String Quartet; Saxophone Quartet; Piano Variations
				Zandonai	La Farsa Amorosa
			45	Berg (d.1935) Varese	Violin Concerto; Lulu Ionisation; Density 21.5
			43	Villa-Lobos	Bachainas Brasilieras 1-4
			40	Gurney (d.1937) Ibert Martin Martinu	Flute Con.; Sax.Conc.; Divertimento Piano Con.; String Trio; String Quartet 1 Double Concerto; Julietta; Stg Quartets 3-5
55	Gliere; Ravel (d.1937)	Harp Concerto Don Quichotte	39	Bliss	Morning Heroes; Music for Strings Things to Come; Checkmate; Clarinet Quintet
54	Brian Falla Ruggles Wolf-Ferrari Dohnanyi Quilter			Prokofiev	Sym.4; Piano Cons 4 & 5; Violin Con.2; Lte Kije; Peter & the Wolf; Alexander Cantata Oct.Revolution
52	Boughton Schreker (d.1934)	Symph. No.3 ; Oboe Concerto No.1	38	Honegger	Sym.1; Joan of Arc; String Quartets 2&3
51	Bridge	Oration; String Quartet 4; Violin Son.		Howells	Cello Con.; Con. for Stgs; Hymnus Paradisi
	Ireland	Piano Con.; Conc. Pastorale;		Milhaud	
			36	Moeran	Symphony; Lonely Waters; Whythorne Shadow

# FEATURES

35	Hindemith Orff	Sym.Dances; Nobilissima Visione Viola Con.; Mathis der Maler Carmina Burana	22	Carter Messiaen	Reveil des Oiseaux; Poemes Pour Mi;  Nativity
34	Gerhard Sessions Thomson		21	Holmboe	
33	Korngold Eisler Gershwin (d.1937) Harris Auric Poulenc Revueltas	String Quartet No.2 ; (film music) Porgy & Bess; Girl Crazy Symphonies 1-3; String Quartets 1-3  Two Piano Con.; Organ Con.; Bal Masque; Homage to Lorca	20	Barber  Schuman Hovhaness Menotti  Petterson Reizenstein	Sym.1; Essay No.1; Dover Beach; Stg Quartet  Amelia al Ballo; Old Maid & the Thief
30	Antheil A.Bush Copland Krenek Mossolov Weill Egk Finzi Hely-Hutchinson Rubbra Durufle R.Rodgers Rodrigo Walton	Billy the Kid; El Salon Mexico  Sym.2; 7 Deadly Sins; Silbersee  Dies Natalis; Earth & Air & Rain  Syms 1-3; String Quartet No.1  Concierto de Aranjuez Sym.1; Violin Con.; Crown Imperial; Belshazzar's Feast	18	Cage  Francaix Nancarrow	Construction No.1; Imaginary Landscape I
27	Berkeley Blacher Goldschmidt Katchaturian Addinsell Dallapiccola Kabalevsky Petrassi  Skalkottas  Alwyn Jolivet Lambert  Rawsthorne Seiber Tippet  Wiren	Serenade for Strings; String Quart. No.1  Sym. 1; Masquerade; Piano Concert.  Syms 1-3; Colas Breugnon Piano Con.; Con.for Orch.1; Divertimento Piano Conciertos 1-3; Violin; Cello; Greek Dances  Piano Con.; Horoscope; Summer's Last Will  Con. Dbl. Stg. Orch.; Handel Vars; Stg Quartet 1 Cello Con.; Serenade for Strings	17	Britten  Gould  G.Lloyd Lutoslawski	Piano Con.; Vln Con; Simple Sym.;Bridge Vars American Symphonettes 1-3; Piano Con.; Vln
			16	Panufnik	
			15	Searle	
			14	Babbitt Dutilleux Ginastera Harrison Yardumian Bernstein Einem Rochberg Zimmermann	Panambi (ballet)
			11	Vainberg Addison Brubeck Fricke Maderna Arnold Kokkenen Foss Xenakis Ligeti Rorem	
24	Frankel Lutyens Shostakovitch  G. Williams Badings Maconchy Rozsa	Symphonies 4-6; Piano Con.1; Age of Gold The Bolt; String Quar.1.  Concertino; String Quartets 1-3	6	Nono Schuller Berio Boulez Earle Brown, Feldman Henze	
			2	Baird	



Druckman  
Musgrave  
Stockhausen

- 1 Crumb  
Denisov  
Hoddinott  
Mayazum  
Pousseur  
Sculthorpe

Quotation

*All:* The music ho!  
[Enter Mardian the Eunich]  
*Cleopatra:*  
Let it alone; let's to billiards  
*William Shakespeare*

The Red Faced Pianist

It was 1963 and time for the Norfolk and Norwich Triennial Festival. I was not only Chairman of the (then) Norwich Gramophone Society, but also had a small reputation for doing recordings of local musical events. Some of the material I gathered, could then be used in a magazine programme we ran at the time. The Festival Committee had commissioned from the distinguished composer Thea Musgrave a choral work called "The Five Ages of Man". Now, amateur singers are quite notoriously conservative and the work, in a overtly modern idiom was not going down at all well. For my part, I sensed an interesting interview for our programme, and so arranged to meet the composer when she came to Norwich for the final rehearsal.

We had a meal, then went down to the ancient St Andrews Hall which to this day, is still Norwich's



only concert hall. A very talented local pianist, who had better remain nameless, had the regular task of accompanying the choir in rehearsal. The composer and I sat at the back of the hall.

My pianist friend spotted me, but was of course unable to recognise my guest. In true East Anglian fashion, she asked "Surely you are not going to record this bloody thing, are you?" *RW.*

Songs you might recognize...

- Noah: "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head"  
Adam and Eve: "Strangers in Paradise"  
Lazarus: "The Second Time Around"  
Esther: "I Feel Pretty"



- Job: "I've Got a Right to Sing the Blues"  
Moses: "The Happy Wanderer"  
Jezebel: "The Lady is a Tramp"  
Samson: "Hair"  
Salome: "I Could Have Danced All Night"  
Daniel: "The Lion Sleeps Tonight"  
Joshua: "Good Vibrations"  
Peter: "I'm Sorry"  
Esau: "Born To Be Wild"  
Jeremiah: "Take This Job and Shove It"  
Shadrach, Mesach, & Abednego:  
"Great Balls of Fire!"

- The Three Kings:  
"When You Wish Upon a Star"  
Jonah: "Got a Whale of a Tale"  
Elijah: "Up, Up, and Away"  
Methuselah: "Stayin' Alive"  
Moses: "There's a Place For Us"  
Nebuchadnezzar: "Crazy"

Anon. (contributed by Len Mullenger)

## The Spring Issue “Five Minute Quiz”

It was more than a little disappointing that no one came up with a full set of answers; and here was I, kidding myself that the entire Federation was chock-a-block with musical erudition! Anyway, to those who would still like to know the answers, here they are:

Being knocked off his bicycle killed Ernst Chausson. Charles Valentin Alkan was the unfortunate who had a bookcase fall on him. Enrique Granados hated the sea but during the Great War in 1916 his ship was torpedoed on his first trip to the USA. Alberic Magnard, the Belgian composer, allegedly fired on some advancing German troops, also in the first war; so they retaliated and burnt his house to the ground with him in it. And who died of an ingrowing toenail? Forgive a little Editorial licence, but it was Jean-Baptiste Lully who began the practice of conducting by banging his stick on the floor. He hit his foot and died of septicaemia. Doubtless, his successors discovered waving a little stick around far less hazardous.

Musical cities; Bohuslav Martinu composed his Sinfonietta La Jolla on commission for the Music Society in La Jolla, a town close to the Mexican border in California. The Czechs always refer to

### On Beethoven

The neglect of his person...gives him a somewhat wild appearance. His features are strong and prominent; his eyes full of rude energy; his hair, which neither comb nor scissors seem to have visited for years, overshadows his broad brow in a quantity and confusion to which only the snakes round a Gorgon's head offer a parallel.

The total loss of hearing has deprived him of all the pleasure which society can give, and perhaps soured his temper. He used to frequent a particular cellar, where he spent the evening in a corner, beyond the reach of all the chattering and disputation of a public room, drinking wine and beer, eating cheese and red herrings and studying the newspapers.

One evening a person took a seat near him whose countenance did not please him. He looked hard at the stranger, and spat on the floor as if he had seen a toad; then glanced at the newspaper, then again at the intruder, and spat again, his hair bristling gradually into more shaggy ferocity, till he closed the alternation of spitting and staring, by exclaiming “What a scoundrelly phiz!” and rushing out of the room.

*Sir John Russell (1828)*

Dvorak's 8th symphony as The English. Most should, I hope, have guessed the Johannesburg Festival Overture by William Walton. And finally in Bartok's opera “Bluebeard's Castle”, Judith exclaims in Hungarian “Szép és nagy a te országod” when she opens the fifth door and gazes in wonderment at his domain. A free translation is “Fair and spacious is your country”

*Reg Williamson (Asst. Editor)*

## A NEW Five Minute Quiz and more Oddities about composers....

Do you know, for example, one that was born in a bell tower?

Can you name the composer who began what he hoped would become the English “Ring” based on the Arthurian legend?

He was tried for forgery and sentenced to 12 years imprisonment, but avoided it by fleeing the country. Any idea?

He caused his wife and her lover to be murdered, after discovering them “*in flagrante delicto*”! Who was it?

Now, can you name all the composers that have written variations on the famous Caprice No. 2 by Paganini?

Our last composer wrote a quartet whilst in a concentration camp, to be played by the inmates.

Please send your answers to Reg Williamson.

### From the Archives

Anyone recognise it and name the year? — see page 24 for the answer



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# CORBY FEAST

The title above does not just refer to the food (although seldom has so much excellent food been presented during a weekend — I won't say how much weight I put on!) but to the variety and quantity of music presented in the Federation's Musical Weekend given at Corby in April of this year. Without exception, presentations were excellent, not a dud amongst them. The arrangements ran like clockwork, (but behind the scenes the Committee struggled to ensure that this happened and Marjorie Williamson deserves special praise).

The accommodation was good; even the weather responded by giving us one of the best weekends this Spring. This was the first time I had attended this event and I gained two overwhelming impressions, the first was just how much was available in such a short time, the second and even more important was how very friendly everyone was. Such a happy weekend!

Thanks to members who contributed the photographs and the majority of the reports given below.

*Arthur Baker*

## Who needs a critic?

How does a critic convey to his readers the spirit of a performance of music, whether at a concert where it is transitory but can become legendary or on disc where it may be repeated over and over again? This was the question posed and answered by the distinguished critic Edward Greenfield, our president, in his paper "Who needs a critic?"

He began with a tribute to the late Sir Yehudi Menuhin who personified the spirit the critic needed to convey; A person who loved to share his passion for music with as wide a range of folk as possible. We listened to one of his first 78rpm records, made in San Francisco in the late '20s, and recalled the joy of Sir Edward Elgar on his acquaintance with the lad.

Another great figure to distil the spirit of music was Leonard Bernstein. In his case the enthusiasm to pass on his joy overflowed. To illustrate the point we heard Bernstein's Interpretation of the opening passages of Vaughan-William's Symphony No. 4 and compared

this expansive performance with that of the composer himself. Both Menuhin and Bernstein were heard in interviews with Edward Greenfield.

Then our President turned to the spirit of music as captured by the human voice and we enjoyed a number of songs from Elizabeth Schwarzkopf. The aim was to demonstrate how at an early stage in her career she had, for instance, presented a folk song which in later years, with the benefit of experience, she developed into something so much more. Recently the soprano had authorised the release of a number of recordings which she and her husband — the great EMI producer Walter Legge — had held back. No doubt there were some minor faults in some of these takes but the sequel to this was the spontaneity of the singing and the sheer joy it conveyed. The very spirit that it is the critic's duty to convey.

We also heard an acetate disc of Schwarzkopf tackling the English language in anticipation of "The Magic Flute" at Covent Garden in the late 1940s. Music is becoming increasingly important to the faith of people in an age when conventional church-

going has declined.

Edward Greenfield stressed that whilst a performance which lacked credibility should not go unchallenged by adverse criticism nevertheless it is the critic's role to be positive and embrace the music he has heard. When reading "The Guardian" or "Gramophone" in future — or indeed "The Penguin Stereo Guide" — I'm sure we shall all bear this thought in mind.

## What's new in equipment.

The Federation's Technical Officer, Dennis Bostock, was responsible for the equipment used to produce the very high standard of music reproduction which was achieved throughout the weekend. In his presentation on "What's new in equipment" he discussed the equipment used for the presentations.

These have as a core a set of speakers which each contain three separate amplifiers (for bass, middle and top) which are ideal for use with long cables. Also demonstrated was a Quad



setup with its unique electrostatic speakers which many regard as being the “gold standard” for Hi Fi reproduction. The Quad company has had a recent change of ownership and the changes they



have introduced seem beneficial.

Probably the most important development is the establishment of a standard for musical DVD (Digital Versatile Disks). There are still many questions regarding the full spectrum of activity of DVD which was initially established as a video disk medium but now has musical function. Eventually it will embrace recordable disks for both media and also interactive and computer disks. For music recording, full backward compatibility with CD will be necessary (+ lower prices) before DVD players replace CD players in Hi Fi set ups.

However a demonstration of music recorded on a DVD disk with its increased sampling and band width was very impressive and noticeably better than the average CD.

Demonstration CD's played included extracts from the Shostakovich Quartet No 8 from a disk entitled “Black Angels” by the Kronos Quartet; this also included the voice of Charles Ives (was he drunk?). Another outstanding recording was of the Weber Clarinet Quintet on a disk recorded by Tony Faulkner, which was included with Hi Fi News.

## Sir Edward German

Dr Jerrold Northrop Moore explained the life of this well loved English composer who was born in 1862 and died in 1936. His talk was illustrated by a selection from his music, several conducted by the composer himself, which illustrated that he had a wider range than most of us had imagined.

German was a contemporary of another Sir Edward, i.e. Elgar, who once said “I hear that you admire my music. I love yours”. In the beginning of their respective careers the two composers were rather similar in style and content. However as time went by Elgar progressed musically whereas German did not.

In the 1880 and 90s German wrote many fine piano pieces which were strongly influenced by Chopin. It was interesting to hear, for example, a mazurka which started in the true Polish manner



and then gradually turned into a typical English style.

Although German wrote several successful orchestra pieces, such as his Suite “The Seasons”, he is best remembered for the incidental music he wrote for Shakespeare's plays and his well known patriotic opera “Merrie England”. His song “Rolling down to Rio” was a great hit. Dr Moore finished his presentation by playing a recording of the

“Coronation March” conducted by Sir Roland Lander, recorded to commemorate the 1935 Coronation of King Edward VIII.

## Variety is the Spice of Life - Marilyn Hill-Smith

I always enjoy listening to musician's talking about their experiences. They are invariably entertaining and often shed light on the artist's approach to their profession. It was therefore with eager anticipation that I contemplated Marilyn Hill-Smith's session on the Sunday morning. She is one of our most popular and versatile sopranos, well known for her many broadcasts. Although most often associated with the operettas of Strauss, Offenbach, and Gilbert and Sullivan she has performed in opera houses both at home and abroad. Her operatic roles include Susanna (Le Nozze di Figaro), Olympia (Les Contes d'Hoffmann), and Zerbinetta (Ariadne auf Naxos).

As early as eight years old Marilyn knew she wanted to work in the theatre either as an actress or a singer. She would perform in her living room for her audience which was the red spots on the wallpaper! For her fourteenth birthday she asked her parents to pay for her to make a recording. This they did and we were played the result. A very confident, albeit untrained voice delivered a creditable rendering of Barber's “Sure on a shining night” demonstrating the potential that was later to be fulfilled.

Marilyn entertainingly outlined her career with a wide variety of illustrations ranging from the Baroque to the modern, introducing us, on the



way, to several novelties. These included a delightful duet with Della Jones from Pucitta's opera "La Caccia di Enrico IV" — a real rarity — which was used in a TV advertisement for British Sherry! and a charming duet from the operetta "Der Schatzmeister" by Ziehrer. She demonstrated her considerable coloratura skills with "Poor wandering one" from "The Pirates of Penzance" and "Glitter and Be Gay" from "Candide". We also heard examples from the field of the Musical Show.



Marilyn clearly has enjoyed the various facets of her career and communicated that enjoyment to us with charm and humour. Happily she is still singing, although her roles now tend towards the more lyrical. She is currently touring as Rosalinde in "Die Fledermaus" with the recently revived Carl Rosa Opera Company.

We are not amused!

Or are we?

For the important Saturday evening presentation we were fortunate to welcome Steven Roberts whose programme "We are not amused! Or are we?" promised to be a lot of fun. An energetic and enthusiastic young British conductor, well known to audiences in the North of England especially, he entertained us in engaging style with a varied programme designed to induce

relaxation with, as he described it, 'a little light music to end the day'.

Graduating from Bretton Hall College, Steven, a former chorus master of the Huddersfield Choral Society no less, has trained choirs both here and in North and South America. Subtly playing on the right chords of nostalgia in his audience, whilst scarcely touching upon more serious fare, he amply fulfilled the challenges he had set.

At one point Steven instructed the audience to stand up, he then made us stretch our limbs and shake our heads, "Now sit down. Don't you all feel better now?". And yes, we did!

Beginning with Ambrosia from Billy Liar with Michael Crawford, 'deliberately to settle the audience' as he claimed, would also serve to wrong foot your introducer when he returned once more to end the evening. It was a surprise to hear Teresa Stratas in a track from Showboat jostling with Noel Coward singing a Green Carnation from his very own Bitter Sweet of 1929. Steven himself conducted the Skelmersdale Male Voice Choir assisted by organist, Nigel Ogden, who then accompanied Adrian Blakely in The Lost Chord.

Film music followed from Sense and Sensibility and Disney's Hunchback of Notre Dame, before a change of mood led us to a movement of Schubert's Mater



D383 with Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau conducted by Wolfgang Sawallisch, and the magnificent chorus 'He Watching over Israel Slumbers' from Mendelssohn's Elijah, unmistakably in Sargent's memorable recording with the Huddersfield Choir in 1956.

A choir accompanied by wind band then sang the moving Sanctus from the Hungarian composer, Frigyes Hidas' Requiem of 1996 followed by Mozart's ever beautiful Ave Verum Corpus. The lighter vein returned with Tom Lehrer (Poisoning Pigeons in the Park), and then Steven delivered a moving tribute to the late Lionel Bart with Sonia Swaby singing Nancy's As Long as He Needs Me from his masterly Oliver.

The Hilliard Ensemble with saxophone played by Jan Gabarek in Morales' haunting Pace mei Domine from his Officium Defunctorum, preceded the ever wonderful Edith Piaf singing La Vie en Rose, before Steven reached his predictably enigmatic conclusion.

### Elgar/Payne Symphony No. 3

Throughout musical history there have been occasional attempts to complete unfinished musical works, but success has been somewhat limited. The most notable of these has been Franco Alfano's completion of Puccini's "Turandot". Derek Cooke's scholarly conclusion of the Mahler 10th symphony, although greatly admired, has yet to be widely accepted. As for the "finishing" of Schubert's Unfinished symphony, these attempts are perhaps best left unmentioned. Schubert

probably had little left to say anyway and decided that in this case, there was nothing more he wanted to add.

But without question, the “realisation” of a third symphony from final sketches has been a triumph on all counts. Anthony



Payne, a lover of Elgar’s music and composer in his own right, talked to the weekend audience of his trials and tribulations in the years he worked on these fragments. Elgar had specifically stated that no one should tinker with his sketches which led to the initial opposition of the Elgar family, to the point of his nearly abandoning his labour of love. It was the family’s reluctant but final acceptance of the fact that within as little as four years, the copyright would expire and everything Elgar left behind would be in the public domain, so open to anyone to attempt completion of his final thoughts.

Anthony illustrated the many technical problems he faced, mainly in most cases the paucity of material, and even the total absence of any indication of what might have been. He worked from sketches in the book by Elgar’s violinist friend William (“Billy”) Read, examples of scores held by the BBC (which originally commissioned the work) and manuscripts in the British Museum. The outcome can only be called a masterly example of inspired scholarship. Recordings

of the Elgar/Payne four movement symphony have already established sales approaching 35,000 discs and the creator of this remarkable achievement has already received three important awards. Also at the time of writing, there have been no less than 70 performances worldwide, including by the New York Philharmonic and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. After his fascinating talk a complete recorded performance was given to weekend delegates, followed by spontaneous applause.

“From My Life” :

#### The Czech Addict’s Tale

Peter Herbert is a founder member and the Membership Secretary of the Dvorak Society which is a society devoted to Czech and Slovak performers and composers. His lifetime obsession with Czech and Slovak music arose from serendipity and an accidental acquaintance with his school Music Society, where he heard some Dvorak and was completely bowled over.

Later he was to become engrossed in other Czech composers such as Janacek, Smetana and Martinu. His presentation included works from these masters, but started with music by Rudolf Friml — a song from “The Vagabond King”.

An extract from a violin concerto of Josef Myslivecek illustrated why in his lifetime he was compared with Mozart; this unfortunate man fell upon bad times and suffered the agony of having his syphilis treated by burning his nose with hot irons. Peter Eben was another composer to suffer in his life, he was sent to Belsen for his Jewish blood, he survived to be prosecuted by the Communists for his Christianity; his piece “The Golden Window”

for trumpet and organ is startlingly original.

Another great discovery was the music of Antonin Rejcha. He was a contemporary and friend of Beethoven, and became a teacher at the Paris Conservatoire and taught composing to Berlioz and Gounod. His compositions are startlingly original and many sound like 20th century music.

Peter’s choice of records was magnificent and fully justified his addiction to Czech music and will help to spread his enthusiasm.

#### More Wine in New Bottles

Those of us who were at Corby went into Lyndon Jenkin’s presentation with some trepidation, as his then similarly entitled talk last year was sabotaged by a complete power failure.

Fortunately, all went well this time, and we were given a fascinating glimpse of the present popular process of restoring early 78 rpm, tape and vinyl recordings for re-issue on CD. Many examples were demonstrated which showed the skill of the restorer, together with a few where the process had not been so successful.

For most of the audience some recordings sounded as good, if not better than some current offerings by the record industry. Musically, many were superior to modern recordings, and the artists featured are now revered as superb musicians.

It is true to say however, that the current process of restoration is normally restricted to those artists whose reputations are secure, as one could be sure that there was as much poor quality material recorded, both musically and technically, as

there is today.

Lyndon also played some recordings that had never been released at the time they were made due to contractual, artistic or practical considerations. One of these, Elgar's "In the South Overture", played by the National Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sidney Beer. It was, from the short excerpt played, almost as good as most modern recordings, with a frisson and freshness missing from many of today's releases. This had not been released before as the recording stretched to an odd number of sides. As no fill up for the 6th side had been recorded, the recording had lain unissued since the late 1940's. It is now in the catalogue for the first time.

We were also treated to a side by side comparison of examples of the same recording, processed by different companies and engineers. The differences held us enthralled,

and it was astonishing to hear a recording with an obvious processing fault in it released by a second company (as their own engineering work), with exactly the same fault uncorrected.

Added to the fascination of the material was Lyndon's very entertaining and professional presenting style, which left us regretting that his talk had to end. It would be an understatement to say that it was worth the year's wait

Annetta Hoffnung on  
"The Humour of Hoffnung"

It is rare to find musical humour that is truly funny. The repeated gales of laughter that swept round the room at the Stakis Hotel demonstrated that, 40 years on, Gerard's unique blend of wit and humour still strikes a happy note. Part of his secret was that this was not biting satire but a gentle, kindly humour, even if with a

twinkle in the eye. Gerard Hoffnung had a short life cruelly terminated at the age of only 34 and yet he crammed so much into that brief period. Annetta has made it her life's work to keep the memory of Gerard and his humour shining brightly by presenting talks such as the one we were privileged to hear, arranging musical festivals and a travelling exhibition of his work. At a time when she should perhaps be putting her feet up, Annetta is still travelling the world and working furiously to try and organise a Hoffnung museum that will offer a permanent place for his art.

Annetta was not the only love in Gerard's life. She had to share him with Tilly and his love of cats. Tilly was a B flat tuba which Gerard loved to the risk of becoming a bore, and learned to play sufficiently well that he was able to join the Morley Orchestra

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whose conductor, Lawrence Leonard, described him as “our vice-president, our official conscience, our court jester and our own personal volcano”. Upon auditioning for that orchestra he regaled them with his repertoire, learned by the blow-and-try method, and was somewhat taken aback when found that being able to read music was one of the requirements. Michael Flander’s mother was enlisted to teach him sight reading with piano and she was to describe him as the most exasperating pupil she had ever taught — but she had success as we were able to hear a recording of Gerard practising the solo part of the Vaughan William’s Tuba concerto.

Apart from the drawings, little of Gerard survives. Again we were privileged to be shown the only cine footage that is known to exist of Gerard, supervising the rehearsals for the 1958 Interplanetary Music Festival. In addition we saw a short BBC Monitor programme about his work and an animated cartoon of the Hoffnung Symphony Orchestra.

The Little Books, that once were regular Christmas presents, are no long being published but recently a small cache of some of the titles was found which were offered for sale along with boxes of Hoffnung jigsaws. Postcards of many of his famous cartoons were also available. Fortunately both the EMI and Decca recordings of the Festivals are still available, as is the BBC tape of the famous Oxford Union speech, which Annetta assured us was totally unscripted. This is probably best known for the story of the Bricklayer.

Two years ago I helped to set up a web site in honour of Gerard and there you will find a short illustrated biography and can

purchase on-line the remaining little books and postcards. I can also recommend as a charming read Annetta’s biography “Hoffnung” which is available in paper-back. The web site address is:

[www.musicweb.force9.co.uk/music/hoffnung/](http://www.musicweb.force9.co.uk/music/hoffnung/)

or, more simply,

<http://Welcome.to/GerardHoffnung>  
(without a space between the two names).

*Len Mullenger*

## Best of British

Thelma Mills, the former editor of the Bulletin, brought our weekend to a nostalgic close with her programme ‘Best of British.’ We were treated to many British works including Vaughan Williams’ ‘Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis’ and some not so well-known works like John Field’s ‘Piano Concerto No.1’. One of the highlights for me was a performance of Haydn Wood’s ‘Roses of Picardy’ by Felicity Lott. This was a very popular song in the years between the wars and very familiar to 78rpm record collectors like myself. It is rarely performed in concerts these days.

From the Archives (see p.18)

The photo is of former chair-  
man Gilbert Parfitt with the  
conductor Norman del Mar.  
It was taken over 20 years  
ago at one of our musical  
weekends at Hoddesdon  
Conference Centre.

Bearing in mind the average age-profile of her audience Thelma’s choice ‘Saturn, the of Old Age’ from Holst’s ‘Planets’, conducted by Richard Hickox was most appropriate.

Composers prominent in the latter half of this century were also represented. Kathryn Stott played ‘Her Mind’ from George Lloyd’s ‘Transformation of that Naked Ape’ and the Choir of Westminster Abbey perform ‘Hymn to the Mother of God’ by John Taverner.

Our thanks go to Thelma for giving us such an enjoyable programme, full of variety with the serious and not so serious, and an ideal finale to our weekend at Corby.

*Chris Hamilton*

## FRMS WEST MIDLANDS REGION CONFERENCE

Saturday 23 October 1999

VENUE: Birmingham & Midland Institute, Margaret Street, Birmingham

BOOKINGS: Arthur Mould, 86 Sandyfields Road, Sedgley, West Midlands DY3 3L Tel. 01902 882896

ENQUIRIES: Gordon Wainwright, Tel: 01952 614268 or Graham Kiteley, Tel: 01527 870549

PRICE: £18.00 including buffet lunch.

Speakers will be:

1. JOHN CHARLES  
former Orchestral Manager with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra RPO, CBSO and RLPO. On his years with the CBSO 1966-72.
2. RONALD BLEACH  
Chairman of the Bantock Society. On Bantok in Birmingham.
3. Professor ANDREW DOWNES  
Head of School of Composition and Creative Studies, Birmingham Conservatoire. He will discuss and illustrate his own works.

Full details from enquiries contacts above.



## FROM THE REGIONS... FROM THE REGIONS...

## Bridge of Allan - Scottish Musical Weekend

The Scottish Group of the FRMS held its annual music weekend at the Royal Hotel in Bridge of Allan, starting on Friday, 7th May and ending on Sunday, 9th May. There were approximately 30 delegates, coming from all parts of the Scottish region. In addition, there were also a few "foreigners" attending, as the Friday was the first day of the establishment of the separate Scottish Parliament. As expected, this had absolutely no impact on the warm welcome we all received. We all enjoyed ourselves immensely, such was the relaxed and friendly atmosphere of the weekend.

After dinner on the first night, Anne Morrison (Falkirk R.M.S.), gave a talk on "Music from America", which contrary to expectation, contained very little actual American music. It was a very interesting collage of music which Anne had heard whilst on an extended holiday in the U.S.A., and we were captivated by the original and entertaining way in which Anne presented her lively programme.

Following breakfast on the Saturday morning, we were enthralled by a talk given by Betty Roberts (formerly principal cellist with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra), and there were many fascinating reminiscences from her very full life as a performing musician. As she had spent time also in the Halle under Barbirolli, the Philharmonia under many international conductors, plus other regional orchestras and overseas touring activities, the anecdotes were coming thick and fast, within the context of showing how versatile an instrument the cello is, and the day to day difficulties of being a performing orchestral cellist. There were notable examples from artists such as Tortelier, and Jaqueline du Pre, but most of the examples showed the cello(s) in an orchestral environment. The programme was enjoyed by all, and Betty was thanked warmly for her talk.

After lunch, we had Alastair Macfarlane giving an illustrated talk about the life and scope of the activities of Sir Adrian Boult. Alastair had brought with him, in addition to many examples of the conductor's extensive recordings, an astonishing array of photographs and record sleeves showing Boult's enormous range of repertoire. Seeing some of the record sleeves around the room, brought back memories of my own early collecting days. We were able to see once again records, now long gone,

having been worn out and disposed of, never again to be replaced — excepting the few of them which have been intermittently available on C.D. over the years. Alistair left this listener hungry for more of the Boult experience, as was the case for many of us.

We then stopped for tea, and the Scottish Group then held its A.G.M., thus letting the other delegates time to explore the delights of Bridge of Allan, the thriving second hand book shop doing a roaring trade. We were blessed with quite good weather, the odd shower notwithstanding, so it was very pleasant to walk up and down the high street looking at the variety of traditional Scottish goods for sale and soaking up the atmosphere.

After a hearty evening meal, we reconvened for a talk similar to the first session, this time being a selection of music "From the Northlands", devised by Mr. and Mrs. Cameron (Thurso R.M.S.), and presented very entertainingly by Mrs. Cameron. It was similar to Anne Morrison's programme in that it was made up of music performed by home grown and visiting international artists to the music festival held on Orkney every year, and associated with a similar festival in Norway. We were therefore given a very lively and entertaining session which had something for everyone in it.

Sunday morning was taken up by another outside speaker, Richard Gay, standing in at very short notice for David Blake. Richard was from Select Music and Video Distribution, the U.K. distributors of the label. Richard's talk was aimed at giving a brief history of the label from its early beginnings over ten years ago, to its current eminent position as the world's largest budget label, with an enormous range of both familiar and unfamiliar classical music of all kinds. We were all supplied with a current catalogue, a free sampler disc, illustrating many of Richard's examples, and were able to purchase a selection of discs afterwards at a discount price. A very informative and satisfying session for all.

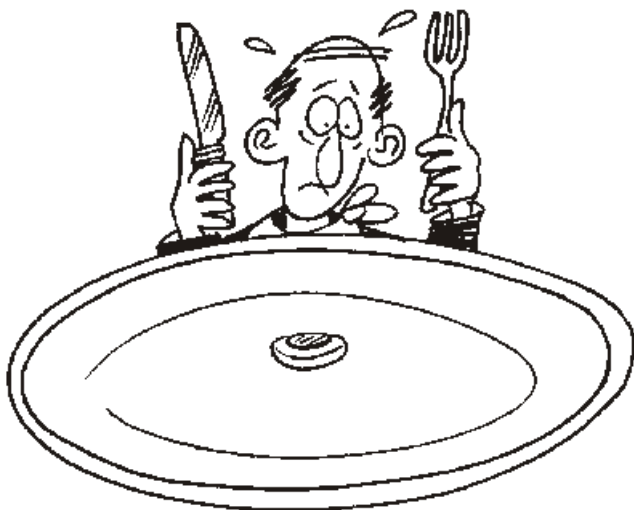
After lunch on Sunday we were entertained by Thelma Mills, former Editor of the Bulletin. This was the first visit to Bridge of Allan for her and her new husband Roderick Shaw, former Chairman of FRMS. In her programme A 'Broads' Spectrum of Music for Pleasure she played us music which had a connection with the Norfolk Broads, Thelma's

home territory. The music she chose was written mostly by British composers. It was a highly enjoyable session and in the tradition of good programmes for the Recorded Music Society movement had a blend of the familiar and not so familiar music. Thelma received a well-earned ovation and it is to be hoped it will not be too long before she returns.

The weekend's programmes were concluded by Margaret Thomson, Secretary of Portobello RMS. Her programme had an intriguing title *The Magic of 176*. The reason for this was soon revealed when she played her first choice of music. This was a piece by George Shearing called *To Hank Jones*. This was followed by Hank Jones' composition *Minor Contention*. Both these pieces were played by George Shearing and Hank Jones on two 88-key pianos. The rest of the programme followed in similar vein and we were treated to music for two pianos by such composers as J. S. Bach, Britten, Mendelssohn, and W. A. Mozart. This was an excellent programme to end the weekend.

The venue was first class, being a reasonably sized local hotel, privately run, but associated with a national chain. The restaurant was first class with excellent food presented somewhat in "nouvelle cuisine" style, but unlike this style, portions were substantial enough to keep hunger pangs well away.

One amusing observation was the appearance of the plates — seemed to me as though the hotel had only one size of dinner plate — very large. This gave the chef plenty of scope for artistic creations using multi-coloured sauces to camouflage and/ or enhance the appearance of the food on the plate. The ultimate was when one of the delegates on my table at breakfast ordered a single poached egg. To see this



**Yorkshire Regional Group  
Spring Musical Weekend**

The Spring Musical Weekend will be held at the Clifton Hotel Scarborough on 29th April to 1st May next year. To mark the start of a new century, it is planned to engage a full team of 'celebrity' presenters, which will include ex-Radio 3 man Malcolm Ruthven. The full programme will be available in October. Put this important event into next year's diary.

on a huge white plate, all by itself, and looking almost naked in public got the day off to a very happy start.

The sound quality in the auditorium was very good, as were the acoustics, and extraneous noises from the hotel, apart from the occasional very low level contribution from the hotel PR system (piped music of a very different kind from our programme material), the conditions for the conference were excellent.

The Chairman, Secretary, and committee of the Scottish group can be justifiably proud of a first class event and we send our best wishes to them for a continuing success of their annual event.

*John Phillips and Chris Hamilton*

**The Wonderful Scarborough weekend (1998).**

Sir Malcolm Arnold says  
"Just listen to the b\*\*\*\*y music"  
Music that is sometimes tuneful  
Entertaining in its way.

So once again the Federation did us proud  
Seeing and hearing music of the past  
Our thanks to Huntley Film Archive  
And not forgetting Testament.

Various facets of Previn  
From jazz to symphonies  
Humorous anecdotes from Opera North  
Choices for a desert island.

It's time to leave splendid friends. Pity the music  
has to end!

(Thank you Federation for a great weekend)

*Ian Hammerton*

## From the Societies... From the Societies...

### Bramhall RMS

This year marks the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Society and we give below an account by Arthur Goodwright of the founding.

Little did I know that moving to Bramhall would start a twenty five year success story of the Bramhall Recorded Music Society, which is still going strong.

Whilst I was a boy a piano purchased for my sister attracted my attention and it wasn't long before I was off to a teacher. Progress was good and soon I was playing at music festivals, which was excellent training for my future role as church organist. Later I became very interested in recorded classical music and I was introduced to the Dartford Gramophone Society, where we held recitals in the atmospheric Reference Library

About twenty years later my company moved north. To my surprise I found there was no music society in Bramhall. The Bramhall Photographic Society caught my attention, and it was in the capacity of Hon. Secretary that an invitation to visit the Bramhall High School was received. The school was to be opened to the public in the evenings and weekends. The facilities of the new music room gave me the idea of forming a Bramhall Music Society.

Well, a free advertisement in the local paper produced a hundred replies. A meeting was held in the School Hall, much encouraged by the then headmaster, Mr Tookey. A committee was formed which could see us through the first couple of years. There was initially much consternation in the nearby

Stockport Gramophone Society, but thanks to Harry Napier and George Bagley, they gave us every encouragement to proceed.

The venue was ideal — and a bar as well — it was too good to be true. Indeed on the strength of the first recital with the music room filled to overflowing, I had fears of having to use the school hall; what would they charge? But not to worry, the core membership soon found its feet (or seats) and

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‘The venue was ideal  
— and a bar as well!’

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was soon stabilised in the new venue, using the School's equipment.

The unpredictable state of the equipment, due to day to day use causing accidental damage, became a serious problem which the committee had to address, if we were to stay in business. The coffers were empty, yet within weeks we had to purchase a stylus for our own use. I was fearful equipment would be a significant factor if we were to maintain a healthy membership.

We could not afford to lose members or prospective members with last minute delays due to these problems. Recital time was precious, particularly for visiting recitalists who may have travelled a long way. We resolved that whatever happened the meetings would always start on time, come what may! This required a degree of organisation plus a sprinkling of imagination.

How we worked to keep this rule! Yet in spite of many

difficulties, even having to rush home to borrow a vital piece of equipment, I don't remember any time that those responsible for the technical side ever failed us.

Try as they may the school could not guarantee the integrity of their equipment. It soon became apparent that the committee would have to resolve the technical side of things fairly quickly. The decision was taken that we must own our own record deck, amplifier and speakers. A fairly daunting task!

In the spring and summer of 1973, recitals were held in members' homes, supplemented by a number of fund raising activities. The summer home visits were very successful and were continued on a permanent basis. As time progressed, the Society gradually became owners of very fine hardware which no recitalist could fault. What you see and hear today is the direct result of the work of a lot of dedicated members, past and present.

What of the future? A strong enthusiastic membership and an attractive programme can ensure continued success. There are many pressing demands on people's time and in order to maintain interest it is important, of course that technical problems do not compromise in any way the music making.

Unfortunately after 22 years, the School Authorities gave us notice to leave. However we found a new home which is very comfortable, at the Quaker Meeting House in Cheadle Hulme, where we are very happy (even though we had to forsake the bar!).



## A Successful Season For Derby RMS

(or An Exception to Murphy's Law.)

Students of electronics, engineering, human behaviour, chemistry or almost any subject you care to mention will be familiar with the mathematical expression:

$$2 + 2 \not\approx 4$$

in which the symbol  $\not\approx$  stands for "is hardly ever". This is the quantification of the well-known principle, expressed in Sod's Law, that "if anything can go wrong, it will".

Even before the beginning of our 1998-99 season it began to look as if Murphy's Law was in full operation, when we discovered that our meeting room would be unavailable for one of our scheduled dates. Then, despite our equipment having been thoroughly tested a few days beforehand, some loud humming and crackling noises detracted from the enjoyment of the first meeting. Surprisingly, though, the problem was simple to fix. A dodgy lead was replaced and from then on the season ran smoothly. Murphy had one last try to put a spanner in the works when we were hosts to the Federation AGM — torrential rain all day, the Rams at home to Manchester United and gridlock caused by faulty traffic lights — but the event was very successful and enjoyed by both the home team and the visitors.

The Federation AGM was one of the successes of our season, but we had other highlights too. A well-known local personality made his "Desert Island" choices for us early in January; the timing proved very appropriate as he'd just been awarded the MBE in the New Year honours list. Other successful evenings included the joys of building one's own cello, a live

recital of renaissance and baroque music, and a local WEA tutor introducing the writings as well as the music of Berlioz.

This was our new Chairman's first season in office, and we are pleased to record that he has accepted re-election at our AGM. Much to the Secretary's relief we have also managed to fill the vacancy on the committee and now have an Equipment Officer once more. So at the moment things are looking good for the millennium.

Oh yes, what about the meeting room being unavailable? Well, the date happened to be the last meeting before Christmas, so we had a social evening at the home of our husband and wife team of Secretary and Treasurer. Judging by the good time that was had by all (despite a quiz described in terms ranging from "fiendish" to "impossible") it looks like being repeated this year. All in all, a successful season.

AC

## Guisborough RMS

As we come to the end of our twenty eighth season of programmes it is a pleasure to report that the range of topics this year has proved popular with average attendances at the fortnightly meeting being maintained at 16 from a membership of 22.

This season we have enjoyed presentations from three visiting speakers with a local musician — Peter Chester with his instruments — taking us into 'The Secret World of the Trombone', a visit from Geoff Bateman from Bradford with his programme 'Andre Previn, the LSO & Friends' and an insight into the 'Listening Pleasure' of the Assistant Curate from the Parish Church.

From our members we have

had 'A Tribute to Sir Georg Solti', a visit to 'The North' with music and slides, 'An evening with G and S', we have explored the works of Elgar and Grieg and listened to a review of '100 years of Recording' among others.

The annual NERO meeting in October is usually attended by a handful of us from this Society despite efforts to persuade more of our members to come along for what have always been very enjoyable and enlightening gatherings. We look forward to the next NERO.

## Haywards Heath RMS

The 1998-99 season of programmes put on by the Society started off with a record high membership — 42, one better than the previous season. This figure may seem low to some, but having visited various other local Recorded Music Societies the chairman found that figure compared quite favourably.

Our first presenter of the season was Brian Bishop, of CD Selections. A good programme and the opportunity to buy some low-priced CDs. 'Life Before Vivaldi' was the title that another visiting presenter called his programme. He was Roy Vass of the Burgess Hill Music Society, who was followed by Clive Wilkes of the Eastbourne R.M.S. He talked about the relationship between Wagner and Listz.

Then we came to what possibly was the highlight of the season, a presentation by Julian Williamson who for many years has been a conductor and a lecturer on musical matters. He told members and visitors about the Wonders of the Diaghilev Ballet and it was a real treat, so much so that he has been



engaged to open our next season. Then it was the turn of two of our own members; Richard Barrass' programme was on the subject of Dreams, Fantasy and Romance, while Margaret Church gave a 'Classical Medley'.

Five days after that meeting came the society's Annual Dinner which was held at our usual venue, Daniel's Restaurant at Hurstpierpoint. Twenty-five members attended and the meal was as excellent as we had come to expect over the years. In fact, in some people's opinion, the evening was even better than usual because the chairman had forgotten to take along the usual quiz.

Then, in February Alan Sanders, of Testament Records, came down from London to tell us of his company that reissues great EMI recordings from the past. Also in February we had a

fascinating and unusual evening when two members of the Elgar Society came with a programme of words and music.

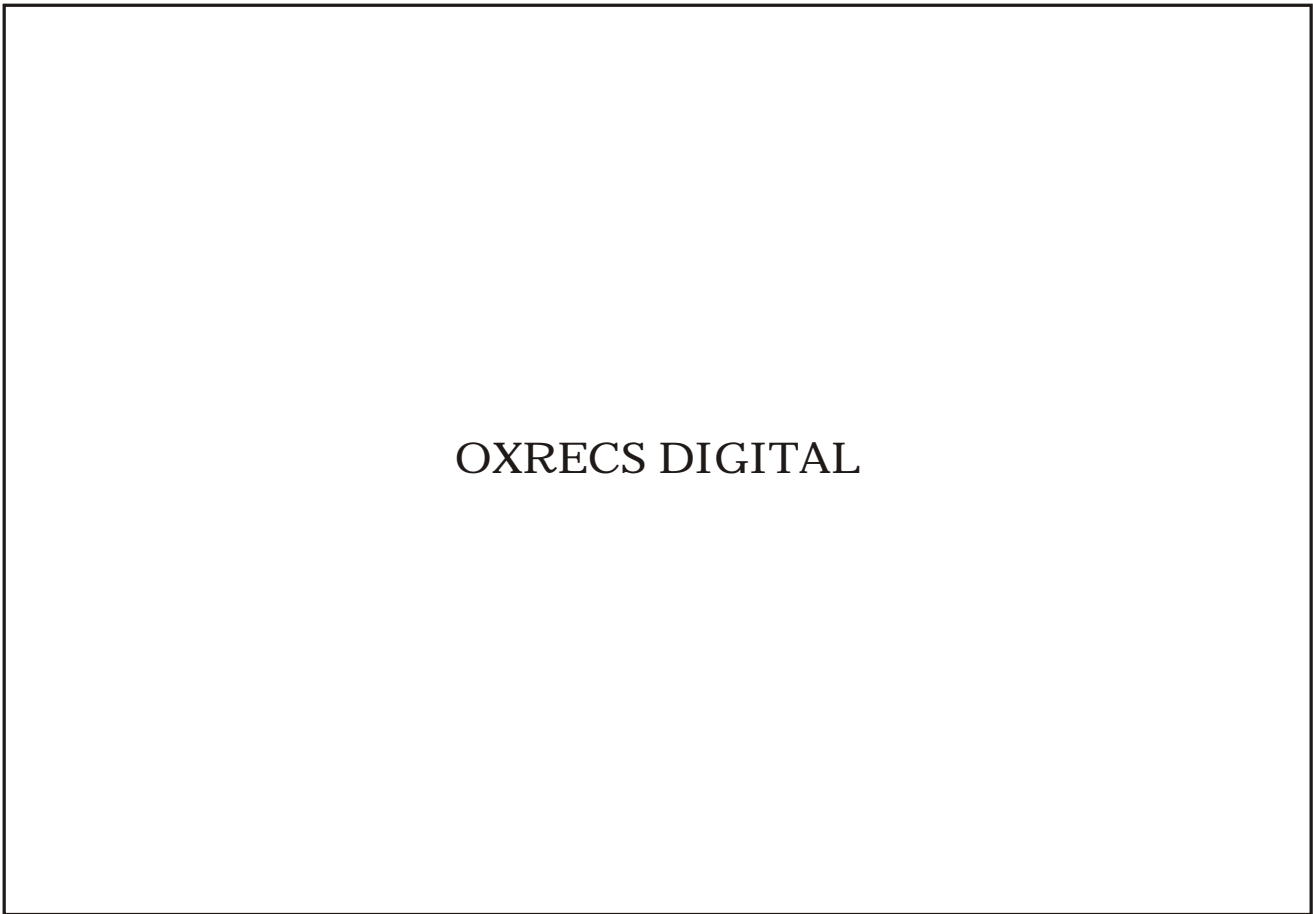
In March came an annual favourite, Members' Choice, when members brought along their choice of recorded music to be played. Next came along Scott Montague, who talked about Mahler and his music. Then it was our last musical meeting of the season, the A.G.M., a very short affair which was followed by the retiring chairman playing a selection of pieces from programmes that visiting presenters had featured during his seven-year term of office.

In his retirement address chairman Cohn Simpson said that he had had a most enjoyable time leading an enthusiastic group of music lovers for the past seven years but he felt that it was time to give somebody else the pleasure of

running such a friendly group. The new chairman is long-term society member David Candy who can be contacted on 01444-414425. The retiring chairman wished his replacement every success in the new job and hoped that David would gain as much pleasure from the position as he had and expected that the Society would go from strength to strength.

Portsmouth Music Lover's Club

FRMS extends a warm welcome to our newest affiliate, enrolled earlier this year as a result of the sharp eye of our Federation Secretary. Diana Batchelor is the Club's secretary and tells us, it began life in 1952. Having gone through a number of venues, they are now settled comfortably at the Fratton Community Centre,



OXRECS DIGITAL

Trafalgar Place, Fratton, Portsmouth. Meetings are weekly on Monday evenings at 7.30, to which all prospective members are most welcome. Aims and objectives are much the same as any successful society; the appreciation of good music in a congenial atmosphere. Whilst most of the Club's music making is from all the recorded media, they do have a piano; so once a month, the objective is to have a live recital by talented local artists. Any inquiries about the Club will be re-directed by the FRMS Secretary on to Diana. With commendable enterprise, the Club is already thinking about a Web site.

### Sunderland RRMS

In the autumn of 1998, Sunderland Regional Recorded Music Group celebrated its Silver Jubilee with a party, with members of the Boldon Colliery Brass Band entertaining us with one of our members John Robinson playing the baritone tuba. John also displayed additional culinary skills by decorating the Jubilee cake.

Whilst a small Society, we are enthusiastic and two of our founder members, Alfie Palfryman and Elizabeth Robinson, attend regularly. We are now looking forward to another enjoyable evening with a performance by a local Pipe band, in which another of our members Jim McCall is one of the performers.

*ER*

### Tavistock RMS

The Tavistock Society's Annual General meeting ended another very successful round of programmes. We had many interesting speakers which included our own members as well as guest speakers travelling from far and wide.

Tony Kind, our president now

residing in Exeter, opened the 98/99 season last September followed by Robert Hardcastle, chairman of the 'Torbay Weekend' and Alan Sanders (Testament Records). Jeannie Moore well known for promoting concerts, in which artists chosen worldwide give recitals in Plymouth, gave a talk as did David Miller, chairman from the Honiton society and Antony Hodgson the recording producer and music critic, along with Brian Bishop (CD Selections) who also entertained us.

Our fortnightly meetings are always fully supported and despite some bad winter weather we usually have approximately 40/50 members in attendance. The Bedford Hotel in Tavistock has been our venue for many years, where we are made very welcome and comfortable with typical Devon hospitality. We could find space difficult if we recruited many new members although we make constant efforts to do so.

Our annual New Year party on January 2nd was very successful, with the committee members celebrating or commemorating fifty to 150 year anniversaries of music and composers. The highlight of the evening being a recital given by John Holden, one of our members, playing the balalaika, accompanied by his friend Jonathan on the guitar, who is a well known guest of the Society. Everyone enjoyed the food and drink together with the social ambience, during the interval.

This event was followed by another popular Tavistock presenter, Andrew Wilson, from Kelly College, where he is resident music master and organist. As our Chairman, Patrick Russell was recently co-opted on to the FRMS committee which is a great honour for Tavistock, we look forward

with great interest to the Bulletins and any news concerning the future welfare of the Federation.

### West Wickham RMS

The 1998-99 season proved to be one of our busiest years yet in our 32 years with one or two "firsts" we will want to repeat.

In August 1998, the Society made its first group outing to a Henry Wood Promenade Concert at the Royal Albert Hall when a full coach of members (53) enjoyed an exciting evening with the St. Petersburg Symphony Orchestra conducted by Yuri Temirkanov with Evgeny Kissin the young Russian virtuoso as soloist.



Our first Society Garden Party was also an August event when fine sunny weather accompanied strawberries and cream and tea. Held in the park-like garden of our Secretary Avis Smith and her husband Bernard, welcome abode was provided by large sun umbrellas at each table — a great success which is to be repeated in 1999

During the year the Society enjoyed presentations from a number of guest speakers including Ted Perry from Hyperion Records Ltd. and Bill Newman, the former EMI and CBS Record Producer and Journalist. Robert Hardcastle, the Chairman of the Torbay Musical Weekend, made a return

visit to talk on Berlioz. Patrick Lambert, a former BBC Radio 3 Producer, spoke on Bohuslav Martinu — “A Czech Composer in Exile” and Julian Williamson, lecturer and conductor, discussed the early critics whose adverse comments on Classical and Romantic Composers proved to be very surprising. Many of our members have given Programmes as well as being visiting speakers to other Societies

Our Annual Buffet Supper and Concert in April was supported by over 70 members when after supper we were entertained by the Emerald String quartet in works by Mozart and Schubert.

Outings to musical events have been a strong point during the year. In May we had a trip to the Royal Festival Hall on the South Bank to hear the Berlin StaatsKapelle Orchestra in an all Beethoven concert conducted by Daniel Barenboim. A most successful visit in November was to the Stag Theatre, Sevenoaks to see a delightful production by the Kentish Opera Company of Mozart’s “The Marriage of Figaro”; this was our first experience of this very talented semi-professional group.

A Christmas luncheon arranged at the very comfortable Bromley Court Hotel was attended by some 60 members and its success ensures that it will be repeated in the next season.

Perhaps the highlight of the year was the Society’s Annual holiday to an English music Festival. We visited the Newbury Spring Festival when 33 members stayed for three nights greatly enjoying concerts by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under Richard Hickox, Emma Kirkby singing with the Academy of Ancient Instruments under Christopher Hogwood in a Handel programme and the London Mozart Players in Lambourn Parish Church. Visits to Stately Homes and gardens in the Region were included in the arrangements.

Our fifteenth annual musical weekend was held at Pyke House, Battle, a residential event with 32 members taking part.

There are 84 members at present with a waiting list of 15; average attendance is near to the 50 mark and next season members can look forward to another Henry Wood Prom. visit, an outing to Glyndebourne for Smetana’s “The Bartered Bride”, a ballet visit to the English National Ballet for the “Nutcracker” at the Coliseum at Christmas and in 2000 in July a holiday to Verona for the Roman Amphitheatre Opera Festival.

*Eileen Taylor (Vice Chairman) and Avis Smith  
(Secretary)*

## The City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society

The CLPGS, our largest affiliate, was founded in 1919 as an amalgamation of the smaller societies which had existed independently around London prior to the First World War. It is believed to be the oldest such society in the world, and has been in continuous existence ever since. Edison agreed to be patron in that year, and it is interesting to note that many of the early society members were ‘Edisonites’, individuals dedicated to the cylinder format, who corresponded with the Edison works in New Jersey commenting on the quality of the recordings reaching England.

Our current patrons are Oliver Berliner, grandson of the inventor of the Gramophone, George Frow, distinguished collector of many years, whose personal machine collection now resides in the BIRS and Frank Andrews, whose tireless researches into the histories of many British record companies has almost single-handedly educated the entire record-collecting world on these matters.

Today, the articles of association of the club dedicate its members to the study and conservation of all the historical formats of recordings made and of the machines which played them. In recent years there has been correspondence in the CLPGS journal, the ‘Hillandale News’ suggesting that too little emphasis is now being put on the machine side, an accusation which is currently being addressed by the new editorial team.

Membership is currently around five to seven hundred world-wide, with a particular concentration in the South Counties and the West Midlands. Meetings are held by local groups at regular intervals. Small ‘Phonofairs’ are also organised regionally, where members bring their surplus items for sale. The annual subscription is £15 for adult members and a special £10 for students in full time education. This buys four copies of the magazine per annum. Articles are invited for the ‘Hillandale News’, and should be sent to the Editor at the address below, who will acknowledge their receipt. Lastly, the Society has a thriving bookshop managed by George Woolford. He will supply a catalogue of existing titles on request.

*Chairman;* Howard Hope 19, Weston Park, Thames Ditton, Surrey, KT7 0HW

*Membership Secretary;* Mrs. Suzanne Coleman (for enquiries); 51, Brockhurst Road, Chesham, Bucks. HP5 3JB

*'Hillandale News' Editor;*  
Edward Parker 6, Newbridge  
Crescent, Wolverhampton WV6  
OLP

*Bookshop Manager;* George  
Woolford c/o 'Ashburton'  
Fakenham Road Wells-next-the-  
Sea NR23 1RD

There are Regional Groups  
operating in the South West, the  
North West, the North East, the  
Midlands of England. Details  
from the Chairman or Editor of  
the 'Hillandale News'

*London Meetings Secretary;*  
Howard Martin 23 Dorchester

Waye Hayes UB4 0HU  
Meetings held in The  
Swedenborg Institute, High  
Holbom at regular intervals.  
*Northampton Phonofair*  
*organiser;* Mrs. Ruth Lambert.

## Book Reviews... Book Reviews...

This important and provocative little book was published 19 years ago, a year after Dr Simpson relinquished his position on the BBC's Music staff. In it, Robert Simpson, for nearly thirty years a BBC Music Producer scrutinised the methods by which the Proms were planned. This late in the day, it is to a major extent now taken over by events. Nevertheless, Simpson's polemic is still relevant, despite the enormous changes that have taken place within that (still) *angst*-ridden bureaucratic organisation.

At the time, the BBC allowed the Controller, Music the absolute right to plan Prom programmes until death or retirement. Since it was largely a management appointment, with succession virtually based on seniority rather than by musical qualification, the succession of the imaginative William Glock by a non-musician clearly rankled and brought Simpson's arguments to a head. Always ready to express robust opinions, but based on careful reasoning and his long experience inside the BBC, he argued that whoever the Controller might be, the effects of his individuality are bound to colour the programmes over time. He highlights in a convincing manner, the omission of many important composers. He felt the only logical way to give the Proms the flair that a single imagination can provide without the otherwise inevitable long-term imbalances affecting both composers and performers would be to appoint a separate planner of the Proms with a limited tenure of four or five years. Dr Simpson further examines the artistic gains and financial savings to be made from more extensive use of the BBC's own orchestras. Not only would have produced a saving of a staggering 62 % on costs at that time, it would give the planner almost total control over the repertoire. This would enable the Proms to become more adventurous than ever before and a true realisation of Sir Henry Wood's original vision.

Well, nothing changes. Due to his poor health in his final years, I never had the courage to ask my old friend during my visits, what he felt about the appointment of a music critic to this important post, again without any clear indication of the length of the tenure. The same appointee now has sole control over the planning of the Proms. At least, it is no longer automatically a choice based on seniority within the management structure. That much has been achieved. So we have to ask ourselves, does this book have any bearing on what has passed in the intervening years? One of his arguments was for the far greater use of the BBC house orchestras. The inevitable consequence would be that whilst it might save money, this major festival would have far less an international flavour with the present foreign guest orchestras omitted. Does one man as planner now leave out, any composers because of the individual bias? And does he consult his music-trained colleagues for ideas and suggestions? This was another of Dr Simpson's objections at the time of his book, one he expressed forcibly once to me when visiting my Society. The book is interesting, albeit somewhat out of date. But at a modest £1.95, a fascinating insight into the BBC politics of the time by someone, not only a fine writer, but who became one of the most distinguished symphonic composers of our time. And, like I said... nothing has really changed.

Published by Toccata Press  
40 Floral Street London WC2  
ISBN 0 907689 00 0

*Reg Williamson (Norwich Music Society)*

### SOUND REVOLUTIONS

Sound Revolutions by Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore, ISBN 1-86074-235-1, softback, 344 pages. Price £12.99. Published by Sanctuary Publishing Ltd., Bishops Bridge Road, London W2 6BB.



This book, which has just been published, is an up-dated edition of *A Voice in Time* by Dr. Jerrold Northrop Moore published by Hamish Hamilton, and has been out of print for many years.

Dr Moore tells the fascinating story of the life of Fred Gaisberg, the pioneering recording expert and talent scout, who built up the catalogue of one of the greatest record companies of the world, The Gramophone Co. Ltd (His Master's Voice).

Fred Gaisberg started his career in the recording industry with the Columbia Phonograph Company whilst still at school. He was accompanist on the piano to several of their artists who made cylinders. He joined Emile Berliner in 1894/5 in Washington DC. In 1898 Berliner sent Gaisberg to London to set up the recording operations of The Gramophone Co. (the newly-formed company which owned the European rights to Berliner's gramophone).



Dr Moore tells the story of the first trip to Russia to make gramophone records. We learn of trips to the far east. The story of Dame Nellie Melba's first recording is told and we learn how Adelina Patti was persuaded to make her first gramophone records. Gaisberg played a part in getting Arturo Toscanini to make his first records.

There is much more to learn from reading this fascinating book, too much to relate here. I advise the reader to buy this book right away and learn the most complete story yet of Fred Gaisberg, the pioneering recording expert. The book is full of marvellous photographs, many of which have not appeared in the public domain before. It is a snip at £12.99 from any good bookseller.

*Chris Hamilton*

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## THE DECCA RECORD COMPANY LIMITED

DECCA 78RPM RECORDS - 1929-1954  
12-inch Diameter Discs - "K" "T" "X" "S"  
10-inch Diameter Discs - "M" "A" "Z"

A DISCOGRAPHY COMPILED BY  
MICHAEL SMITH

Michael Smith, a past Chairman of FRMS, is well known in the discography world. Many years ago he was involved in some of the pioneering volumes called *Voices of the Past*, published by Oakwood Press. More recently he compiled *Columbia Graphophone Company Limited — Columbia DX and YBX Series of 78rpm discs, 1930-1959* along with Frank Andrews, Ernest Bayly and Ernie Bayly.

With this book Michael has plugged a long-standing gap in the chronicling of Decca recordings. Michael goes right back to the start of the Decca Record Company Ltd. in 1929. Michael Walker gives a brief outline of the history of the company in the introduction, then Michael Smith describes the various recording venues Decca used. A list of the different catalogue numbers used in various countries follows. A brief list of contents comes next with various acknowledgements to those who helped Michael in this enterprise.

On the seventh page Michael gets right into the "nitty gritty" of the book. He starts with listing the 12-inch "K" series. Most collectors are familiar with this series as it was with this series that Decca built up its own classical recordings. Initially popular recordings were included but by the time the second world war started the "K" series was almost exclusively a classical label. The records are listed by catalogue number in ascending order. Immediately under the catalogue number the date of issue is given (where known). The second column gives the matrix numbers. The third column gives the recording date (where known). The fourth column lists the artists, the work(s) followed by the composer.

After the "K" series Michael lists the "X" series, another 12-inch label. The series started in 1935 and continued until 1954. It was a relatively small series consisting of 574 records. There are some records in the "X" series that are pretty scarce today like the Russian recordings of excerpts from Borodin's *Prince Igor* with Bolshoi Theatre Orchestra conducted by A. Melik-Pasheyev and Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* with Daniel Shafran (cello) &

the Leningrad State Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Alexander Gauk. These two and a few other Russian recordings were issued by Decca in 1943 but did not stay in the catalogue for any length of time. Another odd feature of the “X” series was the inclusion of Polydor recordings. Decca had a 12-inch Decca-Polydor series with the prefixes CA and LY; so I’m not clear as to why some recordings were issued in the Decca X series. Michael Smith includes all these in his listing and by looking at the matrix numbers and the artists it is easy to distinguish between these and genuine Decca recordings.



There is one page devoted to Decca’s first records on the 10-inch “A” series and the 12-inch “S” series. There are only two “A” series records and four “S” series records. All of these are virtually impossible to come across today. Probably the most interesting of these is Roy Henderson’s performance of *Sea Drift* on S10010-10012. This was the first recording of the work to be issued. I’ve had this set for several years but had no idea who the conductor was. Michael tells us; it was Anthony Bernard. This page is completed by listing the 10-inch “Z” series. This consisted of 6 records, Z1-Z6 (all of the same work, Prokofiev’s *Romeo and Juliet Suite No.2*). Z2 was never issued. Michael states this was probably due to the stampers being damaged in wartime transit from Russia. This seems a very logical explanation to me.

The next pages in the book are devoted to listing the 10-inch “M” series. The earlier records were issued on magenta coloured labels and are very rare today. The content varies from Classical to Popular. Amongst the rarest of the popular items are the recordings by Ambrose and his Orchestra. Many now scarce recordings of Roy Henderson, Dale

Smith and Sir Steuart Wilson are to be found in this section. At various stages in his working life Sir Steuart Wilson sang with the British National Opera Company, taught at the Curtis Institute, was Head of Music with the BBC and Principal of the Birmingham School of Music. The “M” magenta series consisted of catalogue numbers M1 to M164. In 1932 Decca re-launched the series with a red-coloured label starting at number M400. The new series also mixed classical material with popular. The red “M”s continued until January 1954 ending then with catalogue number M682.

Throughout the book Michael gives full details of any records that were re-issued in another series; so it easy to keep track of the recordings.

Michael ends the book with a most interesting section in which he details many recordings that Decca made, but never issued. These include recordings by such artists as Clifford Curzon, The Grinke Trio, Frederic Lamond, Noel Newton-Wood, Peter Pears and Oda Slobodskaya. There are many other artists too numerous to list here. One can only speculate on how much richer the Decca catalogue would have been if these recordings were issued.

For the first time I’ve been able to date all my classical Decca recordings. Up until now I’ve only been able to guess at the recording dates. Any time I tried to find out the information from Decca I was informed that the information was lost and no longer available. Collectors like myself will forever be indebted to Michael Smith for putting this information in the public domain.

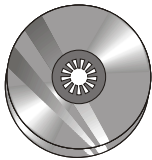
All in all this is an excellent book and is a must for any serious record collector. I can thoroughly recommend it and advise those interested to purchase before it goes out of print. This soft-covered book contains 224 A4 pages and is available from Michael Smith at 29 Brockenhurst Close, Gillingham, Kent ME8 0HG at £25 plus postage and packaging.

*Chris Hamilton*

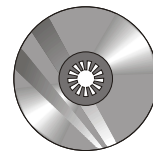
#### Quotation

Too many pieces of music  
finish too long after the end.

*Igor Stravinsky*



## CD Reviews... CD Reviews...



## SCHUBERT

Drei Klavierstücke D946, Valses Nobles D969 Moments Musicaux D780

ATHENE ATHCD7 (TT: 73'33")

4 Impromptus D899, 4 Impromptus D935

ATHENE ATHCD5 (TT: 64' 22")

Peter Katin (piano)

In this era of “authentic” performance the description *fortepiano* is used both widely and loosely. The instrument used here however is a six-octave Square Piano of 1832 manufactured by Clementi who apart from composing and giving concerts had investments in the instrument-making company bearing his name. It seems an excellent choice and it certainly has a fullness of tone superior to instruments of the 1790s. It is interesting to note that Katin (who provides his own notes) explains that he sometimes had to re-think the phrasing that he had applied to Schubert’s music when previously using a modern piano.

The three extensive movements entitled *Drei Klavierstücke* make, in effect, a three-movement sonata more than half an hour in length and it is interesting to hear how exciting the stronger passages become in Katin’s hands. This old piano stays remarkably in tune (the occasional clattering noises from the action are only to be expected). Katin’s delightful subtlety in the *Valses Nobles* would perhaps have been enhanced given a more spacious sound but his mature reading of the *Moments Musicaux* is full of insight although, because of the clear, forward sound, Katin’s tiny rhythmic subtleties in the well-known No.3 seem strangely obvious.

The *Impromptus* imply a grander scale and are therefore more demanding for the period piano. In the event, the firm, clear but very light bass of the instrument does not pose a problem in itself because so many of these works are of a flowing nature. The very first work (D899 in C minor) does have slow, spaced chords at the start and here the bare acoustic does seem to hinder the progress. This apart, Katin has a penetrating sense of shape and form. Gentle *rubato* is applied but it never interrupts the musical current.

The recorded sound is very close and not very resonant. A result of this immediacy of sound is that

the dynamics seem a little limited — most noticeably in the grander *Impromptus*. At a soiree in a 19th Century drawing room, Schubert’s music may well have sounded like this. This is authentic music-making and stylish pianism but the bloom of a concert hall acoustic would have been welcome.

*Antony Hodgson*

“Elektra” by Richard Strauss  
Decca CD 417 345-2

This one act opera by Richard Strauss has as its librettist Hugo von Hofmansthal, after his own play based on the Sophocles drama

This recording comes from those operatically fruitful years whilst John Culshaw was with Decca, a period that included the entire Ring cycle by Wagner. *Elektra* could well have been his last production with the company. It was Culshaw’s realisation that the advent of stereo offered a unique opportunity to attempt to create aurally, what the listener missed from not actually being at a stage performance.

*Elektra* is no exception, with the principal role sung by Birgit Nilsson at the height of her powers. There are no *longueurs* in *Elektra*, it is riveting drama from start to finish. Newcomers to this recording should begin with *Elektra*’s great aria near the beginning, when she sings of her loneliness and her passionate desire for revenge (CD1, band 2). This 9-minute aria is a *tour de force* and at the very moment she sings of the love for her dead father, Strauss’ music suddenly takes on an almost unbearable lyricism. Another sequence illustrating Culshaw’s technique of creating a vivid aural image is during the scene when Klytemnestra is hacked to death in a rear room of the palace (CD2 band 10).

Solti’s conducting of the Vienna Philharmonic creates enormous tension as the moment approaches about 8 minutes from the end, when *Elektra* waits to hear of the death of her mother at the hand of Orest. Then, from somewhere in the rear of the sound stage, comes a bloodcurdling scream. *Elektra* declaims “Strike again!” and this is followed by a dull moan that is undeniably terminal. This re-issue, which takes advantage of the variety of modern enhancement techniques emphasise if one were needed, that this is the version all Strauss lovers should have. It certainly belies its 32 years.

*RW*



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*All other Federation matters initially to the Secretary)*

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