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EDITORIAL

The Bulletin

This issue represents a milestone in my life because I have now been editor for five years and this will be my eleventh edition. We cannot run to champagne in the editorial suite (a converted bedroom in the 'Baker Towers'), but I shall raise a celebratory glass of beer when the publication actually hits the streets!

Looking back I realise that I could not have joined at a more interesting time (the Chinese curse?). The Federation was preoccupied with internecine fighting and the finances of the Bulletin would be used as a weapon against the Committee. However my initial problem was to find a technical solution to the problem of my typesetting equipment being incompatible with those of our Printer (Maxiprint of York- now The Max) this was solved in time to produce my first edition which was broadly based upon the style which had been developed by Maxiprint for my predecessor as editor, Reg Williamson.

I mentioned finances; the technical problems had increased the production costs of my first edition, and this combined with large costs of Reg Williamson's edition (which had been typeset professionally) led to fierce criticism at the AGM. However the new technology and a fixed price contract I negotiated with the printer left us with a predictable stable cost base.

The other side of the budget is our income. The



price of the Bulletin was increased slightly; attempts have been, and are being, made to increase numbers sold; numbers have remained stable despite a fall in the number of Societies.

I was fortunate that at the same time that I was appointed editor, Cathy Connolly had been appointed as Marketing Manager. Her main task was to persuade people to advertise in the Bulletin (we also agreed a small increase in advertising rates). Cathy undertook her job with vigour and has been able to raise our advertising revenue to a new high. The result has been that for the last few years the Bulletin has made a profit. However it is impossible to see into the future, but a continued profit cannot be guaranteed.

As I mention on page seven, Cathy is resigning from her post and from the Committee and we are seeking a replacement. She will be sorely missed, but compelling personal reasons necessitate her departure, however she will remain active in Putney Music so we shall still see her.

The quality of any magazine lies not with editor but with the writers. The Bulletin has been extremely fortunate in gaining articles from volunteer writers (no we cannot afford to pay!) of a very high standard on a wide range of subjects. We also include letters to the editor and reports from Societies and Regions — these are a mainstay of the Bulletin and I implore all readers to keep letting me have your input.

Arthur Baker

Federation of Recorded Music Societies — Annual General Meeting

Commences 2pm. on Saturday 30th October 2004 at
The White Hart Hotel, St John Street, Salisbury SP1 2SD

Following the meeting, bar facilities will be available.

Hosted by The Salisbury Recorded Music Society

*A three-course dinner will be followed in the evening
by a recital by the Ensemble Champagne*

Tickets (£25 each) for the dinner and recital (£6 for the recital only)
should be obtained from FRMS Secretary,

Tony Baines, 2 Fulmar Place, Meir Park, Stoke-on-Trent, ST3 7QF

Please enclose a DL size stamped addressed envelope with your application.

All cheques to be payable to the Federation of Recorded Music Societies Ltd.

We have made no arrangement for accommodation at the White Hart, but some advice on accommodation has been sent to Society Secretaries

Ken Wilkinson 1912 - 2004

Rarely can one describe someone as a legend in his or her own lifetime, but it would certainly apply to Decca's recording engineer, Ken Wilkinson. Affectionately known as "Wilkie", he was respected by his peers and even more important, enjoyed the complete trust of the artists he served with his craft.



Wilkie began his long career with a small company called World Echo, literally at the dawn of electrical recording in the mid-1920's and in 1931 he moved to Decca joining the redoubtable

Arthur Haddy. It was Haddy's team that developed the well-known Decca "Tree" for stereo, a T shaped structure holding three omni-directional Neumann microphones and which Wilkie used extensively.

It had often been said that one could recognise a Wilkie recording because of the rich balance, favouring to full measure the bottom end of the spectrum, and bringing out the acoustic of his favourite venues.

He retired in 1980, just before digital recording began to displace analogue. Paradoxically, his skills were recognised more in the USA than in the UK, where he won the prestigious National Academy of Recorded Art and Sciences Award twice; the first for Berlioz' *Symphonie Fantastique* in 1972 and Ravel's *Bolero* in 1977. He also worked for RCA and for Lyrita. I spent a day with him about 14 years ago, recording his memories of the many famous artists with whom he had worked, and their idiosyncrasies. One will suffice. The conductor Stokowski was notorious for wanting to balance his recordings himself. Wilkie smiled. "Of course, maestro. I take it you won't mind if I come out and try my hand at conducting?"

Ken Wilkinson died aged 92 on January 30th.

Reg Williamson

Greenhorn Records

Yamaha CDR 1300 CD Recorder

Many delegates at the recent FRMS Music Weekend expressed an interest in this product following a demonstration during the Saturday afternoon. I believe that this product is unique (at the time of writing) to Yamaha.

Take a good CD player, add a hard disc as used in most Personal Computers (PCs) and some internal software to make it work and you have a CD recorder, one that has editing capability and about 120 hours recording time for playback and later editing.

Of course most modern PCs are able to carry out exactly the same functions, such that the finished recorded CD is or should be indistinguishable from the original master CD.

However PCs may introduce some compression. Does this compression make any difference? Analogue signals converted to digital signals contain bits of data that cannot be heard in analogue form, so are compressed and when

converted back to analogue and replayed via a good Hi Fi system, the human brain is unable to tell the difference.

Is there a difference?

The Yamaha records without any compression of the recorded material; further the copied disc has a larger recording area by using longer bit lengths than ordinary recording technique. This reduces jitter (timing inaccuracies) by 30% for a clearly audible difference, says Yamaha. But how can the original recording be improved?

Yamaha claim that uncompressed recordings sound better. In a listening test carried out at the Music Weekend the original recording was played and then the copied recording was played. The audience was then asked to comment on any differences.

Interestingly the majority could not tell any difference between the original and the copy.

YAMAHA cont

But others felt that a) Stereo separation was improved, b) Overall sound was clearer, and c) Soloists stood out better. Was this a psychological effect, or was it that some people had better hearing? Or had the recording actually been improved? Personally I can hear up to 10 KHz and could not hear any differences in this case (although some recordings I have made on my computer have sounded shall we say different?).

If any one is contemplating buying one of these recorders, the following should be born in mind:

Recordings that have SQMS (anti copying spoiler) installed (mainly pop discs) can be copied

once, and then the copy on the hard disc is erased. Audio CDR and CDRW blanks must be used. Trying to use the standard discs for PC use (which are cheaper) will result in rejection.

With technology advancing all the time, we now have in the shops DVD recorders which in most cases can record CD's as well. These may well render the Yamaha machine obsolete before its time. One Hi Fi dealer is in fact offering the CDR 1300 at a substantial discount price.

For further information contact me. My telephone number can be found on the back page of the FRMS Bulletin.

Philip Ashton, Technical Officer

John Miller Heyes 1930 - 2003

John was a very private man, someone who lived his life in his own way. Consequently, I am not alone in knowing little of his past, yet acknowledge he always looked to the future.

He had been a solicitor in practice in Southampton and so, for his all-too-brief FRMS Committee service brought a welcome professional expertise when it was needed. He lived alone in his bungalow on the outskirts of Newport and was an avid music fan with a great many CDs and cassettes that demonstrated a catholic taste. Indeed, I recall him playing The Teddy Bears Picnic at one of his Newport presentations! Not only did he enjoy his music at home but he supported many musical functions on the Isle of Wight, particularly the IOW Symphony Orchestra and the Sinfonietta (ex. Bournemouth). He served as a committee member of both Newport and Ryde recorded music societies but, not only was he interested in music, he was an active member of Newport Lions Club where I first met him through mutual friends. He was also member of the local Probus Association; and enjoyed hill walking on the continent.

There were also many occasions when John would laugh and be able to laugh at himself but whatever task John undertook, he did with serious intent and professional thoroughness. He was President of Newport Lions and had been their Secretary prior to this; and as President, he visited the Clamecy Lions Club in France where he received a warm welcome. Small in stature,

unassuming and yet always open to new ideas and willing to help in any way he could; indeed, I never heard him give anyone a bad word.

After a period of ill health, he was recovering well and was happy to be back at his home. Unfortunately, he had to be admitted to hospital for surgery but following complications, he passed away on the 25th November 2003 aged 73. He is greatly missed.

Bob Astill, FRMS Committee

Reg Williamson writes:

Living as we do in an increasingly complex world, the FRMS committee is often in desperate need of specialized advice which the ballot box invariably does not obligingly provide. John Heyes was an exception. As a retired solicitor, his contributions in Committee were always concise and to the point. However, I can personally testify to the expert advice he was able to offer me in our frequent exchange of letters. Initially, in the confused area covering the statutes on Copyright, which was exceptionally valuable during my protracted negotiations on our contracts with the PPL and PRS. Then, when thrust into the unfamiliar role of managing our finances as FRMS Treasurer, again, it was John whocame to the rescue when faced with the equal complexities of Company Law. It is sad that we rarely see his like in Committee.



Getting back into the groove

In a California university laboratory, two men are battling against time to perfect a machine that will read old recordings, and software that can convert those shapes into sound. Their work could bring history to life. Queen Victoria, Abraham Lincoln, Florence Nightingale and other persons from history may be heard again, as scientists work on techniques to recover the sound from recordings that are far too delicate to be played.

The BBC has reported that scientists Vitaliy Fadeyev and Carl Haber, who usually work with subatomic particles at the Lawrence Berkeley National Lab are now planning to use that technology to give a voice to the great and the good down the annals of history.

Haber says the idea came to him by accident after he heard a radio report about the problems archivists have in preserving and accessing the voices and music of the past. The two men are battling to perfect a machine that will read old cylinders using special microscopes to scan the grooves and software to convert those shapes into sound. The scientists programmed a precision optical metrology system normally used to inspect silicon detectors, to map and photograph the undulating grooves etched on old cylinder recordings.

The result was a digital reproduction with all the scratches, bumps, dust and wiggles ironed out. Those images were then transferred to a computer and turned into a sound file to produce a clean version of the original.

The US Library of Congress, in Washington, DC, backs the project. It has given the scientists funding to perfect their technique and technology in the hope it can be used to access a huge archive. The library's files include 128 million items in formats ranging from tape to disc and from wax cylinders to tin foil cylinders. The library has said that America's audio heritage is in danger. At least half of the wax cylinders used to record sound before 1902 are gone, because no one bothered to preserve them or because they weren't properly stored; fungal mould and insects have been the main culprits.

The beauty of this technique is that nothing ever has to touch the actual recording, thereby avoiding any further damage to it.

"It's like a fancy Xerox machine," Haber has said.

Hyperion Records in Copyright case

The early music group 'Ex Cathedra' recorded music by the 17th Century French composer Michel-Richard de Lalande for Hyperion which led to a court case which may have a strong effect on the future of recording of early music.

The problem arose because the musicologist Dr Lionel Sawkins had carried out research of the music prior to recording; this work also involved preparing the musical band parts for the Group. As often occurs in this type of work this involves some editing and composition where notes are missing.

It has been a convention that such editing and minor composing was not capable of being subject of copyright. However Dr Sawkins claimed copyright and asked for royalties. Hyperion had not realised this until it was too late to stop the recording and the record had been issued. Hyperion believed that Dr Sawkins was wrong in law and the matter ended up in court.

The Honourable Mr Justice Patten in the High Court found for Dr Sawkins.

Hyperion was very disappointed with the decision of the High Court. Because Lalande died in 1726, copyright in his music has expired. Dr Sawkins has now succeeded in obtaining his own copyright in some of these works. He has obtained this musical copyright even though he has not composed any new music for two of the pieces and only five bars of another.

As things now stand, Hyperion believes this decision threatens music. Persons who have not composed music but instead have tinkered with music composed by others will now face record companies like Hyperion with assertions of copyright.

Hyperion claim that prior to this case, they could afford to bankroll recordings that they knew would not achieve widespread commercial success; however they still wanted to release them so that the music would be in the public domain. Faced with crippling legal costs, Hyperion can no longer afford to take such an altruistic approach.

Hyperion says that it will not be releasing any further copies of the recording and the future royalties payable to Dr Sawkins for the sale of this recording will therefore be nil although the dissemination of this beautiful recording will be stopped.

Hyperion will be appealing against the court decision and will be seeking its costs.

L E T T E R S

May I draw readers of Bulletin to the attention of a friendly record company at Lyminge, Folkestone known as "Greenhorn" who produce recordings of a bygone era. From their catalogue you will find generously filled CD's of the stars who should be familiar to most readers, eg Hubert Eisdell, Dora Labbette, Frederick Harvey, Frank Titterton, Hedde Nash, Peter Dawson etc. The CD's sell at £4.50 including postage and packaging with a silver series selling at £6.50 also including postage and packaging.

You should contact Mr. J. Phillips at the Old Manse, Church Road, Lyminge, Folkestone, Kent, CT18 8JA. A new catalogue is available.

Rev Neville Jarrett
(Past Chairman of Southport Gramophone Society)

Caricatures of Composers

Meet John Minnion

In my report to the AGM at Kettering, recorded in the Spring edition of the Bulletin, I referred to the excellent caricatures of composers used on the Naxos website, and that societies were free to download them and use them in their own programmes and newsletters with an acknowledgement to Select Music. I am very grateful to John Maidment of the Carnoustie and Dundee Societies who first alerted me to this possibility. However, I learned from John Hart that since John Maidment had received his permission to use them the question of copyright and a fee had arisen.

We were told that we should seek the permission of the artist, and provided with a name and email address. However both pieces of information proved to be wrong and after a series of false steps I eventually found that the drawings had been done by John Minnion. I am very grateful to Graham Bartholomew of Select Music for giving me John's contact details.

I then contacted John Minnion asking whether we could use his caricatures of musical composers. Within a short time I received the following gracious reply.

" Nice to hear from you. I didn't know such societies existed. I have often wondered why music enthusiasts never seem to get together and share the experience, but it seems they do after all. Is there a society in Liverpool?

L E T T E R S

I am usually happy for my pictures to be re-used free of charge by people such as yourselves and appreciate you contacting me to ask. BUT, please, I hate people downloading low-resolution images of my pictures. They really look lousy. Please, if anyone wants to use a picture, can they email me mentioning the FRMS and ask for a composer. I can then - happily - send something that will look good on the page.

I have drawn over 450 composers by the way.

Best wishes,

John Minnion."

[John's email address is:
john.minnion@virgin.net]

John also has what he calls "a loss-making labour of love"

— namely Checkmate Books, to *John Minnion*

be found on *www.checkmatebooks.com* Do look him up and check out his intriguing book:

— *Uneasy Listening*.

Many thanks to John Maidment and John Hart for blazing the trail towards a new and good friend to the FRMS. Don't forget to look him up. (I have sent John details of societies on Merseyside)

Tony Baines FRMS Secretary

Charging PRS Fees

When taking over the Treasurer's Office in 2000 I inherited a large number of problems from my predecessor. It was a good three months before feeling confident in what I was doing. By the end of the year, it was a relief to hand it to a professional, Brian Cartwright, in the comfortable knowledge that most had been resolved. However, one remained and whilst mentioned it in my first report to the Committee, it hardly attracted any measure of priority. This was the manner in which we apportion the share of the PRS fee levied on the FRMS. Traditionally, affiliates have been graded in six group sizes, whereas the PRS charges the FRMS on a per capita basis. Each group and the charge levied is weighted in a manner determined long ago and this created quite a complex piece of mathematics for the Treasurer, especially for one not trained in accountancy. Fortunately, computer literacy came to my aid and I eventually wrote a programme that did all the work for me.

What immediately struck me was how many Societies somehow managed to maintain a



membership that was always on the fringe of the most favourable group! I now suggest this system may be archaic and unfair, and an anomaly that ought to be addressed by the incumbent Treasurer. Possibly, the most rational change would be a charge based on the actual membership numbers but of course, it needs careful examination to make sure it does not create even more unfair anomalies. Similar treatment may be appropriate to the PPL charge, which is also graded according to group size. Such modifications do not need any amendment to the Constitution but protocol suggests a Motion tabled in the name of the Committee at the AGM would be desirable.

Reg Williamson

Charging PRS Fees

As Treasurer completing my first term of office, I have spent some considerable time over the last few months in trying to understand the association between the Federation and the PRS/PPL authorities and especially the administration of the licence fee structures. Bringing my Society database up to date in anticipation of the new invoicing process has also given me greater insight into the membership of our affiliated societies. We obviously have to rely on the membership declarations that societies make and my latest listings show that there are plenty of societies that hover either side of our "charging divide", so I can see no evidence to support Reg's first observation.

The apportionment of the PRS and PPL charges has been done on a broad membership size basis with a bias in favour of the smaller societies. The few soundings that I have taken suggest that the larger societies are still prepared to assist their smaller brethren in spreading the overall costs, and I have been further struck by the careful logic that seems to have been applied in devising the banding process many years ago.

This is one those areas, like the Council Tax bandings, where everyone feels "hard done by", and any six persons will come up with six different proposals as to the "most appropriate" figures. In the absence of any indications to the contrary, I have to take it that affiliates are generally content with the overall costs and the stability that the banding system offers. A selective look at a different apportionment, of PRS based on actual membership figures and PPL at actual cost, indicates that the smaller societies, the one group that we are desperately trying to support and encourage, might actually pay more. I have raised the new invoicing based on the existing structure, but will look

further to see how any changes might be made. Whatever the formula might be, we must aim to minimise the cost burden on the vulnerable smaller societies without putting the larger societies in a position where it might be beneficial for them to source their licence cover elsewhere. I must also be certain that the costs billed to us by the authorities can still be fully recovered.

Graham Kiteley, FRMS Treasurer

Editorial Notes

E-mail re Website:

Would anyone wishing to contact Bob Astill, the FRMS Webmaster using E-mail, please use the following Address (rather than the address printed in error in the last Bulletin):

bobastill@beeb.net

Bulletin Archive:

The archives of FRMS Bulletin, formerly called NFGS Bulletin contains a copy of every edition issued since 1952. However editions 1-15 are missing. If anyone has copies of these missing editions and would be prepared to donate them (or photocopies of same) to the Federation, would they please contact the editor.

Bulletin Marketing Manager:

Cathy Connolly has been Marketing Manager of the Bulletin since 1999 and has been exceptionally efficient and always cheerful and helpful. Thank you Cathy.

We are now looking for a successor. Please contact the FRMS Secretary (see last page for details) if you are interested in doing this interesting and challenging job. The key features are:

- * To contact advertisers and potential advertisers about advert placement.
- * To liaise with the editor re publication aspects of adverts (copy, artwork etc).
- * Be willing to serve on the FRMS Committee as a full or co-opted member.
- * Sales experience is not necessary, but good inter-personal skills essential.
- * E-mail and basic computer skills are important.
- * Cathy has offered to help train her successor.

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Ask any person in the street what they know of Ralph Vaughan Williams's music and the likelihood is that their answer will include one of *Greensleeves*, *The Lark Ascending* or *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*. If you happened to have picked a churchgoer, they might remember singing the odd RVW hymn-tune (*Down Ampney* or *Sine Nomine*, perhaps) once in a while. A slightly more adventurous listener would be aware of the *Fifth Symphony* and a film enthusiast would probably think of him as the man who wrote the score for *Scott of the Antarctic*. Put all these 'average' views together and you get the impression that our man wrote pretty tunes that conjure up the English countryside or remind you of singing evensong, with an excursion into film music as an occasional jeu d'esprit.

This view could hardly be more misleading. Vaughan Williams did enjoy cream buns (who doesn't?) and was prone to wearing ill-fitting tweed (someone once famously remarked of him that "Vaughan Williams looks like a farmer... on his way to judge the shorthorns at an agricultural fair"!). However the 'Classic FM' perception of both the man and his music suggested by the straw-poll I have just imagined does him a grave disservice and does not even hint at the great extent of his importance to English music. Nor, more importantly, does it make much of a case for Vaughan Williams as one of the greatest composers of the twentieth century. Had his name been Rodolphus Van Wilhelms, the general perception of his work might be very different but, at the moment, the quality and nature of much of his music still tends to be overlooked on account of his lazily-assumed Englishness. All of which is both unfair and rather odd, given that his rhythmic chutzpah rivals much of Stravinsky and Bartók, his ear for orchestral colour that of Mahler and his dexterity in manipulating tonality anything to be found in Debussy and Ravel. To all of this might be added that he was still merrily experimenting away well into his eighties (delighting in the Eighth Symphony, for instance, in "all the 'spiels and 'phones known to the composer!"), the stage of life by which most composers are usually coming in for criticism along the lines of 'tales twice told.'

If you were to play one of the listeners imagined above the beginning of either the *Fourth* or the *Sixth Symphony*, they would be astonished at what they heard. Here, after all, are two works that were

for years thought to be, respectively, the prophecy of war and the anticipation of nuclear meltdown. The *Fourth* can surely justify the title of the 'most astonishing inter-war symphony', and what Vaughan Williams provides is music of the utmost violence and anger, commencing with snarling brass dissonances and not letting go of the listener for the entire duration of the piece. Although there are moments of stillness and beauty in the *Fourth Symphony*, they never distract entirely from the maelstrom surrounding them, and the final fortissimo F minor chord punched out by the entire orchestra will blow away any normal listener or audience today – and this despite ears being familiar with the *Rite of Spring*, Schoenberg and Boulez! Vaughan Williams himself said of this astonishing work that "I don't know if I like it, but it's what I meant," the full extent of which can be heard on a famously brutal recording of the work - its first - that the composer conducted in 1937.



RVW in 10 Hanover Terrace in 1956

What exactly Vaughan Williams 'meant' by his music is a question - perhaps the question - crucial to an understanding of how his music is of universal, rather than exclusively English, importance. The *Fourth Symphony* is a case in point; VW himself never intended the work

(written around 1931-34) to have any connotation with the onset of war and he was moved to remark that "it never seems to occur to anyone that a man might simply want to write a piece of music." In fact, recent research has suggested that the F minor symphony might actually have been VW's own attempt to write a symphony along similar structural lines to Beethoven's *Fifth*. At any rate, the work was not meant to be some prophecy of doom, and VW was always greatly amused to be held up as a sage or clairvoyant!

A better example still of the way in which Vaughan Williams's music has been prone to hijacking is that of *A Pastoral Symphony* (No. 3).

For years, it was assumed that this was VW in 'misty morning in the lanes' mood, with noble evocations of All Things English, embodied by those eloquent-sounding trumpet and horn solos in the second movement. Suggest that the country depicted might be France, however, and a very different, much more powerful picture emerges. *A Pastoral Symphony*, as the composer later pointed out, has got nothing to do with "lambkins frisking about;" but it has everything to do with the shell-torn landscape of the Western Front, where VW was on active service as an ambulance man. Insofar as it does evoke a landscape, there are plenty of half-tints and mists about this portrayal (part of which came to Vaughan Williams during the sunrises he witnessed) but, rather than being the kind of scene that Constable might have painted, what VW gives us is a musical version of Corot. Ultimately, as Michael Kennedy points out in his seminal book *The Works of Ralph Vaughan Williams* (OUP), this is his War Requiem and, as such, has a far more significant message than was often thought.

Vaughan Williams's most famous symphony, the *Fifth*, demonstrates another way in which his music has tended to be under-rated. If you are a regular reader of concert and CD reviews, you will probably notice that critics tend to have very set ideas on the approach required for British music and are generally dismissive about attempts to try anything a bit different ("it was a misguided but noble idea to attempt follow Elgar's metronome marking, quite outside the tradition of..."). How peculiar, then, that it's perfectly acceptable to play Beethoven with vibrato, without vibrato, with 60+ strings, with 30 strings, with period instruments and so on. What this rather implies is that

non-British music seems to be credited with a greater ability to take a range of approaches. In the case of Elgar, this is partly justifiable; if it doesn't have that warm, burnished string tone and rock-solid brass, it just isn't right (although you could say the same for many late-Romantic composers - look at Rachmaninov, for example). What, then, of Vaughan Williams? It is interesting to note that, especially in recent years (as a result of efforts by conductors such as Haitink, Vanska, Norrington and Ashkenazy, the latter with the Czech Philharmonic), performances of VW symphonies have been popping up all over Europe. This clearly suggests that the music has

"Pastoral Symphony has nothing to do with lambkins frisking around"...but with the shell-torn landscape of the Western Front"

huge appeal and, interestingly, it is what British audiences would think of as the more gnarly works that have been played (especially the *Sixth Symphony*).

The *Fifth Symphony's* outings on record provide a very useful insight into just how great a range of different, purely musical approaches the work can take. In the main, there are two methods which say something useful about the piece; on the one hand, it can be played in as passionate and warm a manner as possible, with glowing brass, singing strings and huge rubato at climaxes (the best example of which is probably Barbirolli's 1962 Philharmonia recording). On the other hand, it can be played as straight as possible with little vibrato and a Ravelian restraint (exemplified by LPO/Norrington on Decca - one of the best re-thinkings of recent years). The same might be said of the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* - again, Barbirolli epitomises the 'from-the-heart' approach, while Boult chooses to tap in to the mystery and delicacy of the work (think of light coming through a window into a dingy room), both to devastating but quite different effect.

So far, I have concentrated on the symphonies, which in themselves are enough to mark Vaughan Williams out as an incontestably great composer. Although the *Sea Symphony* (No. 1) is generally a weaker work, it contains much glorious music, as does the popular *London Symphony* (No. 2). If anyone ever doubted VW's ability to think like a great composer, they need only compare the original version of this work, recently recorded by Hickox on Chandos, with the standard revised version. Although the original contains extra passages of appreciable beauty, the revision is a much tauter, better balanced work that makes its

point far more intensely. The later symphonies are less often played but, in every case, VW manages not only to produce something wholly different to its predecessor in the cycle, but also music that, whatever its style, has a direct emotional appeal.

What of the rest of his output? Vaughan Williams was enormously prolific. Apart from the nine symphonies, he produced five operas (or rather, four plus a 'Morality,' *The Pilgrim's Progress*), a number of concertos including a rare example for bass tuba, chamber music, choral works both accompanied and a capella, and a great many songs. In every genre, he produced at least one masterpiece (although some might quibble about the suitability of *The Pilgrim's Progress* for the stage, the performances of the work in Cambridge in the 1950s showed what was possible with the help of sympathetic direction). It is difficult to suggest where to dip in since so much of the music is wholly characteristic of the composer, but pieces well worth starting with include the *Mass in G minor*, *Sancta Civitas*, *the Phantasy Quintet*, *On Wenlock Edge*, *the Dona Nobis Pacem* and *An Oxford Elegy*.

As if this were not enough, Vaughan Williams also has a very strong claim to being the single most significant musical figure that England has ever produced (with due respect to Purcell, Elgar and Britten). He himself could be said to have had a healthy mix of both the British and the continental in his musical education. He studied under two of the musical "greats" of their time in London – Parry and Stanford at the Royal College of Music, as well as with Charles Wood at Trinity College, Cambridge. Abroad, he was taught by Ravel (in Paris) and Bruch (in Berlin). His own music, however, stands firmly rooted in all that is best in truly British music – indeed, Ravel is said to have called him "my only pupil who does not write my music". Although, (despite the greatness of works by Parry and Stanford) Elgar is rightly credited with demonstrating for the first time since Purcell that English composers were capable of producing masterpieces, much of his work follows Germanic models (albeit refracted through Elgar's own unique lens).

Vaughan Williams however was responsible for re-examining England's musical heritage and making use of what he found to forge a new, independent and entirely English method of composition, fusing elements of modal harmony, Tudor polyphony and folksong, all of which shine through in lilting, singing melodies and dancing rhythms in a great deal of his output. The work

done by VW, his great friend Holst and Cecil Sharp in collecting folksongs from all over the country was an act of cultural retrieval of the utmost significance, since it preserved a large part of a national heritage that has now almost entirely vanished (much like the work done by Bartók for folksongs in Hungary). Thus, it is from the rise to prominence of Vaughan Williams, not Elgar, that a genuine English musical renaissance can be traced. VW's cultural preservation work also extended to editing a number of hymnals, projects which involved collecting traditional tunes, composing some himself and commissioning new ones from contemporary composers. Today, these provide the backbone of the music used by the Church of England.

It says much for Vaughan Williams's breadth of mind that he was able to write works which, based on folk tunes, have a simplicity and directness of appeal that make them instantly popular but that, as well as this, his more 'serious' vein still carries tremendous emotional clout. Perhaps the final proof of his greatness, though, lies in his towering humanity. As the discussion of *A Pastoral Symphony* above suggests, VW was acutely

RVW SOCIETY



For every lover of RVW's music, the Society promotes and publishes news, reviews and research.

See the website at
www.rvwsociety.com
 and join online.

Otherwise contact David Betts at
 Tudor Cottage, 30 Tivoli Road,
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or by e-mail at
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responsive to the world around him and, in such ways as he was able, he made practical efforts to help (including assisting younger composers financially). One story recounted by RVW's widow, Ursula, exemplifies perfectly his sweet-natured, compassionate, humorous and wholly congenial character – in the 1930's he helped out with housing German refugees, even lodging some of them at his own home. A representative of the refugees once complained bitterly that the houses they were staying in were cold and damp, whereas back in Germany most people had had central heating. VW cut through the other Brit's explosions at the man's ingratitude to comment "Isn't it wonderful that he can remember the good things in Germany!"

The sheer range of sympathies evinced by Vaughan Williams' work shows the many facets to his character. Whether in the riotous jollity of *Hodie* (his Christmas Cantata), the simplicity of the folksongs, the anger of the *Fourth Symphony* or the Prospero-like acceptance of the world's intransigence in the finale of the *Sixth Symphony*, there is never any doubt of the sincerity of expression.

Instead of thinking of Vaughan Williams as the Englishman who wrote *The Lark Ascending*, then,

it is fairer to both the man and the musician to accept him as one of the truly outstanding composers of his or any age. One who had all the techniques one could wish for; who could experiment with the best of them; who rejuvenated a nation's musical life; who preserved its musical heritage; and who remained modest and unassuming throughout. This, of course, was part of his greatness.

If you would be interested in finding out more about the life and music of Ralph Vaughan Williams, a good way to meet like-minded people would be to join the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, one of the largest and most active composer societies in the UK. The Society's aims include the promotion of performances of music by both RVW and those connected with him, subsidising recordings and organising events to examine aspects of his music. The society also publishes a journal three times a year. More details are available at www.rvwsociety.com/

Em Marshall,
Managing and Artistic Director,
The English Music Festival
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Peter Walker OBE DSc 1916 - 2003

The death of Peter Walker of "Quad" on December 10th 2003 brought to an end an important chapter in the development of high quality reproduced sound. It was in the immediate post-war years that interest could be renewed in the design of suitable equipment, taking advantage of advances in technology, which hitherto had been concentrated on the war effort. After a long debate in the Letters columns of the (then) prestigious magazine "Wireless World" the late DTN Williamson published what for a while became a seminal article on the subject, and he offered a suitable design for a preamplifier and power amplifier. Thousands were made throughout the world; but it was soon realised that in many respects, it lacked commercial viability. Peter Walker was already running his own small company making public address amplifiers from 1936 but like so many active in audio design, his motivation was the love of music. He was an accomplished flautist, a hobby he practised in the local Huntingdon Philharmonic orchestra.

In 1941, he concentrated on high quality

amplifier design at a new factory in Huntingdon; the outcome was a series of valve preamplifier and power amplifiers, the last of which was the model Quad 22/2 series. He demonstrated an impressive talent for innovative thinking. Walker acknowledged a simple fact, seemingly lost today, that the user is likely to have imperfections in the source of his programme material that could be improved by correction. The preamplifier was unique in providing a variable slope low pass steep cut filter, with three chosen cut-off frequencies along with variable slope bass and treble boost/cut filters. He remained faithful to this principle right into the transistor era.

With the transition to transistors, the company's first effort was not without its problems – as indeed, many other designers found out. Transistors, it was soon discovered, did not have the inherent robustness and tolerance of valves under overload conditions, particularly if there were any appreciable reactive components in the load. It was this latter characteristic of some loudspeakers that created conditions where the

output devices could be required, albeit momentarily, to exceed both the rated maximum current and voltage simultaneously. The result was usually instant demise! In collaboration with Peter Baxandall, another prolific worker and friend of many years, the problems were examined thoroughly and solved. The concept of the Safe Operating Area or SOAR of a power transistor's operating characteristics is now well established. The Quad 303 was and still is a highly successful design and the Quad model 33 preamplifier, incorporating most of the features of its valved predecessor, still attract enthusiasts.

Peter's major contribution to the design of high quality transistor power amplifiers was the extraordinary concept of current dumping. The early transistor amplifiers often used Class B working for efficiency; but insufficient attention was given to minimising the phenomena that became known as crossover distortion. This is caused by the tiny hiatus that occurs when both output transistors are simultaneously in a non-conducting mode. This produced minute but particularly unpleasant levels of high odd order harmonics, giving rise to the so-called "transistor" sound. Whilst circuit design techniques existed to minimise it, other designers tried to eliminate it altogether by using the highly inefficient Class A mode.

Walker came up with what many regard as the ideal solution. He designed an amplifier that at low levels operated in Class A but should higher power be required relatively low cost high power transistors would "dump" the extra current into the load. It was an extraordinarily ingenious answer to the problem and the transition from one mode to the other was seamless and inaudible. The first of these current dumping amplifiers was the renown Quad 405.

However, Peter Walker's most important contribution was in the field of loudspeaker design. It had long been recognised that the electrostatic principle was ideal for minimal distortion and linear frequency response; indeed, there already existed tweeters for use with conventional middle and bass systems. Walker set himself the task of producing the world's full range electrostatic loudspeaker and in collaboration with DTN

Williamson, published a sequence of articles in May, June and August 1955 of *Wireless World* that discussed the many possibilities and most of the design criteria. Even today, for any one interested in the subject, it is required reading. The Quad prototype first saw the light of day in 1956. Many stood in line to hear this wonder at an audio show organized by the now defunct British Sound Recording Association. Even now, I can recall vividly the impression it made on me when I had the opportunity to hear it and can remember the recording, Rita Streich singing the *Lost Rose of Summer* from Flotow's "Martha". Although in

mono, it was the sheer clarity and transparency of sound that bowled me over, almost as if the singer was somewhere just through the diaphragm. Walker reminded me later of another pioneer's famous comment, Paul Voigt, when he suggested that it should sound as if you are listening to the real thing through an open window and which he regarded as one of the basic tenets of his own design philosophy. The production models came out a year later and many are still in use today. However, stereo was soon to arrive and the original ESL57 (as it became known) showed some deficiencies when used as a stereo pair. Walker was already thinking

ahead and in 1963 began work on a revolutionary concept but still using the electrostatic principle.

Only a hint of what was to come came from a paper presented to the AES in 1979. By this time, we had become firm friends and every time I found myself near the factory at Huntingdon, a visit was a must and after being invited into the secret room behind his office to view progress, it was followed by a leisurely predominantly liquid lunch at a nearby hotel. The new speaker appeared in 1981 and was an immediate success. For a full description of the principles on which it is based, I can only refer the reader to my article in the US magazine "Speaker Builder" issue 1 of 1982. Suffice to say, it was based on the concept that the ideal sound radiator was a sphere. Since it was physically impossible to make a speaker of this shape, Walker made the flat plastic diaphragm operate as a sphere by delaying the sound to arrive sequentially to each of a series of six concentric rings. This created the illusion of sound coming from a pulsating sphere about 30cm behind the



Peter Walker, holding diaphragm of an ESL63

speaker. No cabinet were involved, so no structural resonances. The actual plastic film radiator was actually lighter than the air surrounding it. The ESL63 is still the benchmark standard by which all other designs are inevitably compared.

Peter Walker belonged to that generation of audio designers that firmly believed, as I do, that provided the natural laws of physics are faithfully observed, it is usually possible to predict with almost 100% accuracy, how a particular design would behave. I had this vividly illustrated me when on a visit to the factory with Marjorie. We had just taken delivery of a pair of ESL63s. I casually mentioned her interest to Peter and an invitation came with alacrity! She regards this as one of the most interesting days of her life, not so much seeing the work going on, but at the obvious respect and affection in which Peter was held by his workforce. All were on first name terms. The final test of a production ESL63 consists of being in close proximity opposite a reference model and a high-grade microphone positioned approximately between them. Each is fed a square wave. The phase is reversed on one, so it follows that if each is performing to specification, then it should be possible to position the microphone equidistant from both speakers, and the output should then be nil. As indeed, it was. I very unwisely asked, well, is it not desirable to listen to some music? Peter looked at me in genuine amazement and exclaimed "Whatever for? Oh, dear me, no. No point. We leave our customers to do that..."

He became increasingly irritated by the outpourings of an emerging breed of equipment reviewer, whose talents were confined to writing entertainingly but invariably, had no engineering background whatsoever. For many years, he refused to allow Quad products to be reviewed, particularly after an incident in which a reviewer insisted that all (sic) amplifiers sounded different and that valve amplifiers always differed in some degree from transistor amplifiers. He made the serious error of citing Quad products. Peter, like me, did not accept this premise provided the amplifier was designed properly in the first place — a fact not always true, of course. But his Quad products had been held to be defective in some way and resulted in a deluge of letters at the factory. He then set up a test panel to take place over two days and invited a number of "Golden Ears" to take part. The original complainant was invited to suggest suitable speakers. He chose a pair of very costly Japanese models but subsequently declined to take part because "The relays switching the speakers

from amplifier to amplifier were not gold plated". No comment is needed, I think. Three amplifiers were used, the original valve Quad 22, the first transistor model 303 and the later 405. Suggestions for test material were invited from the chosen panel and I provided a master tape of one of my own recordings. The switching between amplifiers was random, literally on the toss of a coin. Individually and independently, each member of the panel was invited to decide which amplifier was in use and at the end of the two days the results were passed to a statistician. His conclusion was that the same results would also have been obtained by the toss of a coin.

Peter was responsible for the succinct description of the ideal amplifier as "a Straight Wire with Gain". It was only towards the end of his highly creative career that his work began to be appreciated. The AES finally recognised this with an award; he was appointed a Fellow in 1980 and given the Society's Silver medal in 1989. He also was awarded an OBE plus the Queen's Award for Industry to the Quad Company.

It was whilst I was part-time teaching at the University of Keele that I discovered my colleagues in the Electronics and Music departments shared my admiration for this remarkable man, so nomination for an honorary doctorate presented no problem. His award was made by the then Chancellor Sir Claus Moser, himself a music lover and owner of a complete Quad system.

Peter was a family man, with two children, and his son Ross succeeded him as CEO of the company after Peter's retirement. Through the difficult days of a small company striving to make a name, his wife Peggy was loyally supportive. She died a few years ago from cancer but Peter subsequently re-married a former school friend. Sadly, fate can be quite vindictive at times and he found himself bereaved once more after a distressingly short time. His final years were marred by serious ill health, the consequences of a progressive lung disease and he became dependant upon others for care until the end.

The family no longer owns his company and the jury is still out on when it can be decided that the new owners will maintain the high standards on which he insisted. Sadly, the world of commercial hifi is now highly competitive and the label is slapped on almost anything that makes a noise. For example, I can well imagine his robust reaction to the suggestion that connecting cables have a characteristic!

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Ravel and the Prix de Rome

by Anthony Barker

Ravel entered the Concours de Rome five times and to us it seems impossible that the judges failed to recognise his prodigious talent and award the Prix de Rome to him. Injustice, particularly when viewed in retrospect, inevitably brings us over to his side, not least when we recognise that those who won in those years were Florent Schmitt, André Caplet, Aymé Kunc, Raoul Laparra, and Victor Gallois; not all of whom are regarded as giants today. There were many influences in his life and I wonder how his works would have differed had he not entered the competition or, indeed, had he won. It is important to recognise why he entered a competition with clearly defined academic strictures, which were at odds with his determination to speak with his own voice. And did he genuinely try to win, particularly on the last occasion?



Maurice Ravel

Origins

Maurice Ravel was born on 7 March 1875 in Ciboure, a fishing village on the French Basque coast. His father was a Swiss civil engineer and inventor and his parents actively encouraged Ravel in his musical career. His mother was from an old Basque family and his earliest memories were of the Basque and Spanish melodies she sang, creating an abiding love of the music of Spain. He relished the tales of Basque folklore and its countryside.

Training

At seven he took piano lessons from Henri Ghys, then at twelve from Charles René, who was astonished by the originality of his variations on a Schumann chorale. He also took piano lessons from Emile Decombes, a Conservatoire professor. Ravel was not yet at the centre of Paris musical life, in which Debussy and Satie were already composing. In 1889, at fourteen, with the Spanish piano virtuoso Ricardo Viñes, he competed as a pianist for a place at Paris Conservatoire. Viñes was more advanced going straight into the second year, while Ravel, went into the preparatory class of Eugène Anthiôme. This spurred him to win a second prize, then a first, in 1891 joining Viñes in Charles de Bériot's piano class. As a boy, his

mother had to bribe him to practice and he again began to slack, Bériot regarding this as a criminal waste. Worse, Ravel delighted in showing his conservative professors music which he knew they would dislike.

Dismissal

Things came to a head at the Conservatoire in July 1895. Having failed to win a prize for three years in Pessard's harmony class, he was dismissed from it and without a prize in the piano class, from that also. Although chamber music classes were still open to him, Ravel chose to leave the Conservatoire. Two years of lessons from the Spanish pianist Santiago Riera followed, but as Viñes commented: 'Ravel did not love the piano as much as he loved music' and his small hands meant his span was not ideal. So he valued playing duets with Viñes, while their mothers

conversed in Spanish; Falla later also enjoyed Ravel's mother's reminiscences of Madrid.

Early Works

In 1893 he wrote *Sérénade grotesque* and *Ballade de la reine morte d'aimer*. And 1895 was not wasted as he wrote the song *Un grand sommeil noir*, *Habanera* (transcribed for orchestra to form the third movement of *Rapsodie espagnole*) and Opus 1, *Menuet antique* for piano, which was premiered by Viñes, as were many of the piano pieces which followed. This and his *Habanera* for two pianos were regarded as avant-garde and demonstrated Ravel's distinctive style. He had now decided to devote himself to composition and prepared himself for return to the Conservatoire with lessons in counterpoint and orchestration from André Gédalge, to whom he paid particular tribute.

Discipline

Why did Ravel consider returning to the Conservatoire, when he was clearly determined to write in his own progressive and individual manner? While he needed the discipline of learning the academic aspects of composition, he did not want that rigour to extend into the works he composed. In other words, he needed to know the rules, but chose to ignore them when his

creative flow demanded that he should go beyond them. In this period he had discovered the works of Rimsky-Korsakov, Balakirev, Borodin and Mussorgsky, admiring their oriental elements and having grown to like Javanese gamelan music. Before returning to the Conservatoire, in January 1898, he wrote a *Violin sonata* and *Entre cloches*, which with the *Habanera* formed the suite for piano *Sites auriculaires*. Chabrier and Satie also lived in Montmartre and he met them; neither cared much for the prevailing rules of composition and both influenced him in this and other ways.

Back at the Conservatoire, he completed songs and the overture *Shéhérazade*, his first work for orchestra, it having been his intention to write the complete opera. The reception of these and other works was mixed to say the least and this was the case with *Pavane pour une Infante défunte* of 1899 until it was orchestrated in 1910, then becoming embarrassingly popular. Concours de Rome

Ravel was concerned to diminish his reliance on his parents, as the demand for his father's engineering skills had shrunk. The winner of the Prix de Rome received a four year scholarship at the Villa Medici, Rome, a valuable support for any composer whose work was not yet bringing in adequate income. Entering in January 1900, his Fugue in D and chorus did not take him into the final six of the competition. Worse, he was dismissed in July from Fauré's composition class, being readmitted six months later as an auditeur, not being permitted to submit work. In 1901, he progressed to the final five in a poor year and his cantata *Myrrha* gained a second prize. The libretti of the cantatas were infinitely complex delvings into mythology by literary hacks. In 1902 his vocal piece *Sémiramis* (lost, but to be reused in the song cycle *Sheherazade*) put him into the final six, his cantata *Alcyone* failing to impress. In 1903 his cantata *Alyssa* gained him only Fauré's vote. The same year he submitted the first movement of his *String Quartet* for a Conservatoire competition. The Director decided it lacked simplicity and banned Ravel from further classes. Now convinced of the bias of the judges, Ravel did not enter the competition in 1904.

L'Affaire Ravel

Money was still short and he entered in 1905, but at part 2, the modulations of his *Fugue in C*

were seen to be provocative as was his vocal piece *Aurore* (which foreshadowed *Daphnis et Chloé*). He was not selected for the final six, being seen to lack the required technical proficiency. I believe Ravel threw down a challenge. He knowingly transgressed the academic rules and dared them either to allow him, as a composer of some stature, openly to flout the rules, or to dismiss his work and suffer the consequences. Incidentally, there was an easy way out for the judges, as the 1904 winner had married, forfeiting the remainder of his stay in



Ravel - © Naxos

Rome so two winners could have been appointed. A committee member said: '...he shall not take us for imbeciles with impunity'. But Ravel did. It was discovered that every one of those who passed into the final six was a pupil of Charles Lenepveu, one of the judges. The story appeared in the French press, who had a field day to compare with the Dreyfus

case. The scandal led Théodore Dubois to bring forward his retirement as Conservatoire Director and the heir apparent, Lenepveu, to be passed over, a government minister appointing Fauré as Director. Not just that, Ravel caused a revision of the entire Conservatoire curriculum and heads rolled among the faculty.

Concours de Rome

Consists of 2 stages annually, the winner awarded the Prix de Rome (4 year scholarship with lodgings and comfortable working conditions at the Villa Medici, Rome).

Stage 1 (January): requires a fugue and a choral piece to reduce the competitors.

Stage 2 (May/June): Those selected are isolated from outside contact at Compiègne.

Part 1: requires a 4 part fugue and a vocal piece for orchestra from which up to 6 are selected.

Part 2: requires a cantata for 3 soloists and orchestra on a set text (about 100 pages).

Each is performed in public and judged, the winner gaining the Prix de Rome.

Compositions Meanwhile

The composition of the fugues and vocal pieces for the Prix absorbed time and energy, but there was valuable output nevertheless. In 1901 he completed *Jeu d'eau* for piano to almost universal approval, the first performance being to the Apaches. They were devotees of the arts, including

poets, painters, musicians and critics and they had a significant influence on Ravel. They loved Chinese art, Mallarmé, Verlaine, Rimbaud, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Whistler, Rameau, Chopin, the Russians and Debussy.

Befriended by Delius, he arranged the piano-vocal score for Delius' *Margot la rouge*, this providing income while completed his *String Quartet* in 1903, whereupon there was valuable critical approval, Debussy exhorting him not to change a note. The established form of quartet writing places counterpoint before harmony; Ravel brilliantly reversed this. In 1903 he also completed the song cycle *Shéhérazade* for soprano and orchestra to three Klingsor poems, the oriental fantasy yielding to haunting enchantment and then to sensuous languor. A critic praised its finesse and exquisite lightness of touch, stressing the independence of Ravel's musical personality from Debussy's. 1905 brought the *Sonatine* and *Miroirs* for piano and also Introduction et allegro, commissioned for the new, double action, pedal harp, written in eight days and three nights.

Debussy Relationship

Ravel frequently acknowledged his debt to Debussy, whose influence is evident in early works, such as the *String Quartet*, whose premiere marked a deterioration in their relationship. There were two influential groups; that headed by d'Indy, founder and director of the Schola Cantorum, who disliked Ravel's music, the other headed by Debussy. Many saw him simply as Debussy's follower, but, progressively, clear water emerged between their works. When a critic accused Ravel of exploiting Debussy's keyboard innovations, Ravel was able to establish that he had written *Jeu d'eau* in early 1902, using arabesques, passage work and arpeggios, whereas Debussy's piano pieces had not then contained these innovations. Sadly, the relationship between them suffered from the rival claims of each's supporters. And Ravel's support of Debussy's wife, after Debussy abandoned her, did not help.

Maturity

In examining his major works, it is important to remember that throughout his life he composed delightful melodies and chansons, the flow being strong between 1905 and 1907. Then, in 1908 he completed *Rapsodie espagnole*, which captured the essence of Spanish folk melodies and rhythms, originally for four hands and then orchestrated with a freshness which impressed the critics. The piano triptych *Gaspard de la nuit* had its premiere in January 1909 at the Société Nationale de

Musique and despite the favourable reception there, he decided to form the Société Musicale Indépendante, with Fauré as president. Dedicated to contemporary music, Ravel, his pupils and followers now had less difficulty in getting their work performed and he had a sympathetic audience at last.

The Operas

His first opera, *L'heure espagnole*, was completed in 1909, containing reference to the melodies his mother had sung and, in the opening to the clicking and whirring of his father's automatons, expressed by metronomes. The presence of numerous doubles entendres sadly caused the Opéra-Comique to delay the premiere until May 1911, after the death of his father, for whom he had written it. The mixed reception varied between the scandalised, puzzled and enthusiastic. His second and last, *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, was completed in 1925, in London becoming the greatest success of the lyric theatre in 30 years. The librettist, Colette, insists that that the libretto was in Ravel's hands before the outbreak of World War 1, others that he only asked for it in 1919, while I favour it having been lost in transmission to the front line. He wanted the melody to be the main thing, in the spirit of the American musical, the voice dominating the orchestra. It revels in the magic of childhood, the child stretching out its arms in the emotive final moments crying 'Maman', echoing the notes in his *Sonatine*, another expression of his love and dependence on his mother.



Colette

The Ballets

Shortly before his father's death in 1908, Ravel wrote Sleeping Beauty's *Pavane* for the Godebski children, a family with whom he often stayed. He was encouraged to write four other pieces to form the *Mother Goose Suite*. Originally for piano and four hands, he orchestrated it and made it into a ballet score. It is a delightful portrayal of childhood's enchantment, for which he yearned. He was commissioned by Diaghilev to write a ballet on the pastoral romance *Daphnis and Chloe*, for the Ballets Russes. Unhappy with Fokine's scenario, the score was so late that the commission was almost cancelled; he was also working on *Mother Goose* and *Valses nobles et sentimentales*.

Fokine and Ravel felt Diaghilev had devoted inadequate resources to their ballet and Ravel decided to premiere the Suite No 1 from it before the score was complete. Diaghilev was furious; after all he had commissioned it and at the premiere Ravel refused to appear on stage. Stravinsky called it: 'One of the most beautiful products of all French music, with its rhythmic diversity, supreme lyricism and magical evocations of nature'. For the first performance in London Diaghilev proposed dispensing with the beautiful choral scoring. Ravel protested in an open letter to four London newspapers and Diaghilev backed down. In 1912 he orchestrated the piano score of *Valses nobles et sentimentales* and in 1920 that of *Le tombeau de Couperin*. It took him six years to complete *La valse* in 1920. Originally it was to be a waltz in honour of Johann Strauss, then a symphonic poem and finally a choreographic poem. At a preliminary hearing, his relationships with Diaghilev and Stravinsky were ruptured.



Serge Diaghilev

With Diaghilev because he dismissed it as a painting of a ballet not a ballet. Stravinsky's sin was saying nothing at the meeting to rebut Diaghilev's outburst, even though Ravel had championed his works. Later Ida Rubinstein's ballet company performed it. Ravel talked of whirling clouds, with waltzing couples faintly perceived, but that does not take account of the fantastic and fatal element in the score, echoing the horror of war. *Boléro*, the *Piano Concerto in G*, *Introduction et allegro*, *Le tombeau de Couperin* and *Fanfare* were later choreographed.

World War 1

Ravel volunteered to become a pilot in the air force on the outbreak of war, having to be satisfied with becoming an artillery truck driver in March 1915. At Verdun and later, he was profoundly affected by the awful reality of war, as he tried to combat the exhaustion inflicted on his modest stature's stamina. Prior to this, came the premiere in January 1915 of his *Trio for piano, violin and cello*, one of the greatest trios of all time and a significant advance in his chamber music. Then, in January 1917 came his greatest grief, when his mother died and he commenced no new work for three years. Following frostbite, he was discharged

in mid 1917 and he completed *Le tombeau de Couperin*, much of which had been written in 1914. After the War

The offer of the Legion of Honour, which he refused, made him realise that he was no longer regarded as being avant-garde, those in favour being Les Six (Poulenc, Auric, Milhaud, Honneger, Tailleferre and Durey). Nevertheless, he was in high demand as a conductor and pianist in France and abroad, this occupying his time and taxing his fragile health. He also undertook the orchestration and piano reductions of his own and other composers' work, including Rimsky-Korsakov, Satie, Schumann, Chabrier, Debussy and most memorably Mussorgsky, with the brilliant orchestration of *Pictures at an Exhibition*.

A Solitary

It was almost fashionable to be homosexual among the avant-garde, this including Cocteau, Diaghilev and Poulenc and it has been suggested that Ravel was. I believe he was simply a melancholic solitary, who did not form deep, enduring relationships with either men or women outside his family. He felt that musicians and artists were not made for marriage and said: 'My only mistress is music'. Poulenc commented: '... no one knows of any love affair'. He was very conscious of being only 5ft 3ins tall and at his country home, the rooms were scaled down to his size, even the bed.

Final Years

It is important to view the work of his final years against the background of deteriorating health, this affecting the volume but not the quality of his output. From the war he suffered from chronic insomnia and then neurasthenia. Yet in 1928 he completed *Boléro*, one of the most popular pieces of music ever written. Next, he worked on his two piano concertos simultaneously, one sombre with anxiety, the other light with hope. The *Concerto for left hand* came in 1930, while that in G major was completed in 1931. Late that year his doctor insisted that he rest, then in October 1932 he was in a taxi accident. Distressing symptoms emerged, as he had difficulty in coordinating voluntary movements and in writing; he could not play the piano. Next came an increasing inability to express himself in words, even though his ability to understand was unimpaired. His mind was replete with ideas, but when he wished to write them down they were gone and the planned opera *Joan of Arc* was never written. Yet in 1933, he completed the songs *Don Quichotte à Dulcinée*. The companionship of his

brother and a few friends and occasional concert visits helped. Brain surgery offered a faint hope but after it he lapsed into a coma, dying on 19th December 1937.

His Music

Unlike Debussy's fluid forms, his works have finely honed edges. His music has been compared to a complex clockwork mechanism and this accords with his meticulous preparation of each piece, though not with *La valse's* dark fantasy or the lyricism of *Daphnis et Chloé*. And from *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and *Mother Goose* we hear his yearning for the joys of innocence.

Aware of the traditional rules of composition, he expanded the developments of others in fashioning elegant and truly innovative music. His sound is distinctive and his orchestration ravishing, combining fundamental simplicity with subtle complexity. He had few pupils and did not found a school, yet his piano style was of influence for 40 years and more.

Ravel's War

Maurice Ravel did not win any of the five battles for a Prix de Rome, but did he win the war against the establishment? Well, the Conservatoire Director was ousted, the curriculum revised and the tutorial staff was pruned of reactionary members. Fauré, the new Director, invited him to be a judge of the Concours de Rome, continuing in that role until 1933. That sounds like a win to me. And was his 1905 entry a cynical challenge? I think he lit the fuse and retired to a safe distance before the explosion. After being eliminated from the competition, while the press was making much of L'affaire Ravel, he went sailing off Holland on the yacht of the owner of *Le Matin*. He knew the rules, but was not prepared to let them impede his creative flow; they must change not Ravel.

©Anthony Barker

Editor's Note: A recording of Ravel's Prix de Rome Cantatas is available on EMI 5 57032-2 This is a fascinating disc which should be heard by all who are interested in Ravel's music.



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SHOULD COMPOSERS TELL ?

by Arthur Butterworth

Many years ago a most distinguished and revered music critic wrote an essay under this title. It gave many musicians, especially composers, cause for reflection. The main argument being to question whether the composer needs to give an explanation for the thought processes involved in the creation of his music. Whether he ought to reveal the sources of his inspiration; and indeed all the details of how, in the end, the completed work is brought to performance.

Since music itself is a universal language, there would seem to be no need for further explanation. The great masterpieces of the past have made their message universally understood throughout times past and need no further advocacy. There is no absolute certainty as to when programme notes for recitals and concerts were first provided, but in this country at least, it seems to have been about the middle of the nineteenth century. Such analytical notes were, of course, generally provided by someone other than the composer himself. At the present time almost all concerts of any substance or importance are provided with effusive explanatory comment, and when a new work is being discussed it is, as often as not, the composer himself who is expected to provide analytical notes, or an explanation of what motivated the work's creation.

Is this necessary ?

In earlier times when the style and design of music followed accepted conventions - the string quartets of Haydn, the symphonies of Mozart and Beethoven - probably the listener neither needed nor expected a learned dissertation delving into deep psychological reasons for the way the music progressed. However, with the growing complexities and subtleties of musical design probably there arose a justifiable reason to introduce it with a verbal or printed explanation, and so arose the programme note.

Now this is all very well so long as such analysis can be done by a disinterested third party who can contemplate the new work objectively, but creative artists, whether painters, poets, novelists or composers, cannot invariably be relied upon to be objective about their own creations. There is a danger - rarely perceived by the creative artist himself - of indulging in a too self-centred

narcissism, or morbid self-adulation; unconsciously he is tempted all-too-easily to resort to the first person singular... "I did this"... "My first opera"... "My second piano sonata"... "It seems to me"... "An idea of mine"... and so on.

However, unlike Elgar, who had the almost unique advantage of a shrewd, perceptive and enthusiastic mentor, his publisher August Jaeger, who for the greater part of the composer's career provided the explanation and genesis of each successive new work, it is almost invariably the case that in default of such a champion, it falls to the composer himself, being the one who obviously knows more than anyone else what his new work is about, to provide an introduction or preface. If this has to be the case it behoves him to try to be as objective as possible.

Many years ago, on the occasion of the première of the First Symphony, a newspaper reviewer took me to task for being over-enthusiastic about the impact of my own work; pointing out, quite rightly, that it was not for me, the arrogant, ebullient young man to tell the listener just how 'astonishing' the new work was; it was for the listener to decide that for himself; he exhorted me to be more modest and objective. This was a lesson I took to heart immediately, and have gratefully remembered ever since: - "self-praise is no honour".

This has often brought about a dilemma. Over the years many people have sought, probably out of genuine curiosity, to ask how a work has been composed, so maybe one ought to try to satisfy this urge to be enlightened. As already suggested, some composers are only too eager to provide an explanation at great, and often tedious and boring length; on the other hand Sibelius was never willing to talk about his own music, but would brusquely break off an otherwise congenial conversation with his guest at the first sign of a too inquisitive prying into the workings of his inner mind. Perhaps this seems a bit hard on the honest interest of an enquirer, so that perhaps some kind of meeting the listener half-way in the matter of communication might not be inappropriate, for after all that is what the music itself is trying to achieve.

"Should composers tell?" was the original question. "Tell what?" might be an answer. Some

things can be told, especially for the future guidance of student composers, critics, academics, historians: prosaic or factual details concerning musical structure, harmonic substance, historic style, orchestration, general musical texture and design. Even to some extent sources of inspiration. However, some inspiration is not capable being explained; it remains an inexplicable insight or emotion, deeply ingrained in the mind or soul of the composer, who probably even himself could not, or would not, be able to explain to another person how it has happened.

The Five Symphonies

Some things about the five symphonies that I've been able to create are generally known already: that one of the main sources of inspiration, for reasons I've never been able to explain, has ever been a fascination for the northlands of Europe - Scandinavia, Scotland and northern England, and the aura of things connected with the north in general: climate, weather, landscape, the natural world, other living creatures, history, language, culture, but hardly ever people themselves or human relations. Opera, that prime vehicle for expressing the nature of human passions holds virtually no interest for me at all. The music I have written is generally about uninhabited landscapes.

SYMPHONY No.1 Op.15

First performed at the Cheltenham Festival on 19th July 1957 by the Hallé Orchestra under Sir John Barbirolli. This was begun in September 1949 but put aside for several years while the composer was an orchestral player with the Scottish National Orchestra. The aura of Scotland, more especially the far northern highlands was the genesis of this work, although the last movement, a long moto perpetuo, was, to some extent, the outcome of a long non-stop train journey in which the ceaseless movement of the train suggested the notion of a moto perpetuo in musical design. Along with this was the contemplation of the journey fleeing ever northwards, yearning to reach some indefinable and remote landscape.

SYMPHONY No.2 Op.25

This was commissioned by the Bradford Concerts Society for the centenary of the Society's association with the Hallé Orchestra - 1865-1965 - and to commemorate the centenaries of Sibelius and Nielsen (both of whom were born in 1865). It was first performed at the opening of the 100th season in Bradford in October 1964, by the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult. Its three

movements draw parallels with the symphonic styles of both Sibelius and Nielsen.

SYMPHONY No.3 Op.52 ("Sinfonia Borealis")

Although no specific motive lay behind the writing of this work other than a general awareness of the north, hence the sub-title "Sinfonia Borealis", there had been in hind an awareness of wide stretches of lakes bounded by dense pine forests reaching out to the infinitely distant horizon of a northern summer night. It was first performed by the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bryden Thomson at the Royal Northern College of Music on 30th November 1979.

SYMPHONY No.4 Op.72

This symphony was first conceived on the high moorlands of North Yorkshire one clear, bright and cool November day in the early 1970's, although it was put aside for some time until another similar experience, in December 1981 around the sand dunes of the Moray Firth, brought it to mind again. The last movement bears a very close structural affinity with the finale of the First Symphony: they are both founded on a moto perpetuo, based on gradually changing facets of the twelve notes of the scale. It was first performed on 8th May 1986 by the BBC Philharmonic at a public concert in Manchester conducted by Bryden Thomson.

SYMPHONY No.5 Op.115

The orchestration of this work is on a more slender, classical scale than the previous four symphonies. It is more concerned with line, shape and structure than instrumental colour. There are, for instance, only two horns in place of the usual four, and very sparing use of percussion. It was the outcome of a journey across Rannoch Moor in the central Highlands of Scotland:

... Within a ring of distant mountains, wreathed in mist and cloud, covered with the lingering snows of winter, lies the moor... a remote and desolate landscape of silent and lonely lochans, watery peat bogs, boulders and heather. An ancient burial mound under the shadow of a ruined kirkyard, where the March wind roans through a copse of gaunt and withered firs....

It was first performed on the 15th October 2003 at a Public concert in Manchester by the BBC Philharmonic, conducted by Jason Lai.

©Arthur Butterworth

FRMS — Quo Vadis

This is based upon a presentation given by FRMS Chairman, John Davies, at the Musical Weekend at Daventry in May 2004. This is an expanded version which contains extra material contributed by Arthur Baker.

Before we can discuss where the FRMS is going, it seems appropriate to review where we are and briefly how we got there. The first AGM of the National Federation Of Gramophone Societies (NFGS) was held in London in 1936. The NFGS was renamed the Federation Of Recorded Music Societies (FRMS) in 1990, but this involved no major change in policy or structure

Societies and Locations

There are currently 230 affiliated societies in England, Scotland and Wales; there is none from Ireland. Society membership ranges from 10 to over 400! The mode for membership is around 40.

Mission Statements

The Mission statement of the FRMS is "To promote and protect the interests of Societies and Organisations affiliated to it and to promote the development and extension of Societies or organisations using recorded music as part of their activities."

Examples from typical Society Mission statements are "Our aim is to encourage the appreciation of good recorded music by providing regular recitals and illustrated talks..."

"Membership is open to anyone interested in music who would like the opportunity to listen to recordings in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere."

What Does The FRMS Do?

The FRMS is a Limited Company, but effectively it is run by a Committee of twelve. At the Annual General Meeting four officers and six members are elected by the affiliates and associates. The elected officers are Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. In addition the elected Committee appoints the Bulletin Editor and Technical Officer and they become full members of the Committee

The main functions of the Federation are summarised below.

Licences and Insurance

FRMS collects 230 fees and pays out one sum each to PRS, PPL and insurance. Affiliates and Associates thus benefit from economy of size. The Federation operates insurance schemes for Public Liability and for Equipment.

PRS Licences. The Performing Rights Society was set up in 1914. It collects and distributes money to composers, lyricists, arrangers and publishers. By law any location or premises where music is played and can be heard by an audience requires a PRS licence. The Federation arranges PRS licences for all Affiliates (Associated members undertake to make arrangements themselves)

PPL Licences. Phonographic Performance Ltd was set up in 1934. It collects and distributes money to record companies, recording artists and musicians. It operates in a similar way to PPL.

Bulletin

The Bulletin is produced twice yearly, Spring and Autumn. Ideally each member of every Society would receive a personal copy. However this would be very expensive and instead, one copy is sent to every Society for circulation round its members; also Societies may order extra copies to assist in this circulation and individuals may take out personal subscriptions. It is not clear whether every Society has robust systems to ensure that every member can read the Bulletin.

Newsletter

This is sent to Societies twice-yearly between the Bulletin issues. This should prove to be an effective notice board

Website

The FRMS now has its own website on www.thefrms.co.uk. This describes the work of the Federation and also has the facility to include an individual web page for each Society. As the



John Davies

internet is gradually becoming more universally accessible, the importance of the Website is increasing. There have already been some reports of people joining Societies as the result of publicity in the Website. Unfortunately at present only a minority of Societies have web pages, and even then they are not always kept up to date.

Outreach

Societies are visited from time to time by committee members; this is aimed at improving links between the Federation and Societies.

National and Regional: Groups

Scotland
Central
North East
S E London
Sussex
W Middlesex
W Surrey
Yorkshire

Societies

Some Societies still call themselves Gramophone societies; others opt for Music Circle or Music Club. Most have adopted the title Recorded Music Society.

Meetings are usually weekly, fortnightly or monthly; sometimes with a break in summer.

There are different types of programme such as with a list of items to be played as in the form of a concert. Others take the form of illustrated lectures, which usually have an unambiguous title and generally consist of shorter items. Also there are programmes with cryptic titles or even programmes which merely state the name of the presenter and give no clue as to content.

Growth

Salisbury, which is hosting the October 2004 AGM, is an excellent example demonstrating that it is still possible to establish new Societies in the traditional form. We have also had new societies, which specialise in opera, or jazz. We are also heartened by the growth in U3A Music appreciation groups and some of these U3A's are affiliated to FRMS.

Decline?

In recent years there has been a slow but apparently inexorable decline overall, this is both in terms of the number of Societies and in the overall membership.

Societies do not always fail because the membership has declined; it may be because there is no one willing to hold the necessary offices such as secretary and treasurer. Older members may not feel able to come out late at night. There may be lack of transport; or maybe programmes or the presenters are too predictable. There is an almost universal feeling that we are failing to recruit younger members and some wonder whether the recorded music movement is doomed to a long lingering death.

We feel that this is not inevitable, on the contrary there are grounds for optimism and a new regeneration of Societies in which FRMS can play a helpful role. Quo vadis indeed?

In the second part of this article, which will be published in the next Bulletin we shall explore in detail how such a regeneration may be possible

John Davies, FRMS Chairman
Arthur Baker, Bulletin Editor

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Telephon 1-900-453-5646
Amsterdam Concertgeboom Orchestra
Bernard Hijinks, conductor

Beethoven: Infidelio
Endive 647876
Chorus and Orchestra of the Vienna State Opera for the
Criminally Insane
Kari Rictus, conductor

Berlioz: Harlots in Italy
Seraglio 1648
William Pimpnose, viola
Montmarte Philandermonique de Chambre
Nikolous Hardoncourt, conductor

Bloch: Schlemiel
Epic 1-989
Mischa Mainsqueeze, cello
Cantspell Czech Philharmonic O.
Vladimir Ashcanausea, cond .

Debussy: La Merde
Nosuch II 455
Academy of Prince Albert in the Can
Sir Colin Divot, conductor

Gershwin: Rhapsody in Puce
Odium 288
MTV Symphony Orchestra
Leonard Sideburns, conductor

Liszt: Les Quaaludes
Angle DS 847569
L'Orchestre de la Swiss Cheese
Karl Boom, conductor

Mendelstotter: Peace March of the Priests
Deutsche Gestalt Gemütlichkest 3330-676Ä
Stüttgart Chamber of Commerce Orchestra
Raymond Leper, conductor

Mozart: The Magic Schoolbus
Argyle ML 34277
Chorus and Orch. of the Royal Opera House Covert
Garden; Sir Adrian Dolt, conductor

Mozart: Symphonie Disconcertante
Enigma 67580
Anne-Soapy Mutter, violin; Pamela McCuddles-Edel-
weiss, viola; The Fitzwilliam Hippocampus Consortium
of Miami University
Akira Nintendo, conductor

Offenbach: Orpheus in his Underwear
Erratum STU 77080
I Solisti de Zig Zagreb
Loren Mazeltov, conductor

Orff, Carmina Piranha

Douche Gramphon 7201-75
Academy of St. Christopher on the Dashboard
Sir Neville Marinara, conductor

Purcell: Trumpet Involuntary
Serigraph S 64749
Winton Veal Marsala, trumpet
Disneyland Wind Ensemble
Wilhelm Fahrtwangler, conductor

Respighi: Ancient Errors and Dunces for the Lout
Telefunk CX3 42256
Dumbarton Oaks Chamber Pot Orchestra
Rafael Freshbatch de Burgers, conductor

Respighi: The Mountains of Chrome
Turnover TVA 64784
Eastman Kodak Symphony Orchestra
Howard Handsome, conductor

Respighijklmnoops: The Pines of Sol
Archaic DT 9477356
Halley's Comet Orchestra
Sir John Barbarian, conductor

Rimsky-Of-Korsakov: Le Coq au Vin
Turnoff TWA 503472
Vienna Volkswagon Orchestra
Richard Boingg, conductor

Sherbet: Unfurnished Symphony
Deutsche Gewurtzraminer
Gazelleschaft 886
New York Philanthropic Orchestra

Earnest Answer-man, conductor

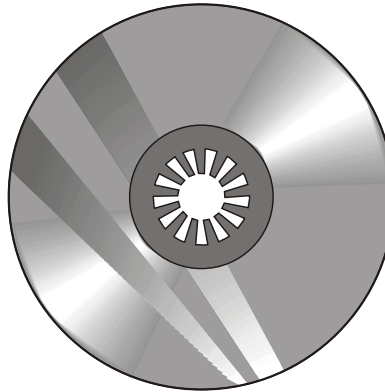
Shostakovich: Concerto #1 for Piano and Strumpet
Decadence 95648
Zoltan Coccyx, piano; William Hips, strumpeter
Bidetfest Symphony Orchestra
Wetold Loutaslapstick, conductor

Smetana: The Battered Bride
Argot ZPG 746
Barbarian Radio Orchestra
Hanns Upp, conductor

Stravinsky: The Firebug
Arson Nova 911
Manuel de Falla Society Orchestra
Krrysstof Painernecki, conductor

Tacobell: Cannon in D
Megaphon 3455 34
English Bedchamber Orchestra
Claudio Abbadabbadoo, conductor

Tchaikovsky: Tobacco Variations
Panatela 4655
Bert Phillips-Morris, cello
The Philadelphia Tabernacle Strings
Eugene Mormondy, conductor



MUSICAL WEEKEND — DAVENTRY

For some time the FRMS has been looking for a new venue, which would be both economical and also of a high standard of facilities and accommodation. Graham Kiteley the Weekend Organizer has been the main force in finding such a venue. After an extensive search and several disappointments the Hanover International Hotel at Daventry was chosen as the hotel which most closely met our requirements. Tony Baines and Graham Kiteley were responsible for the administration of what proved to be an excellent weekend. The attendance surpassed all expectations and the artistic content was up to the normal very high standard.

All guests were requested to provide a detailed comment on all aspects and it was gratifying to record that despite the few inevitable reservations the overall ratings showed a very high degree of satisfaction. There is no doubt that the event was a great success



David Mellor – Aspects of Elgar.

After an excellent reception and dinner, The Right Honourable David, Mellor the well known writer and



David Mellor

broadcaster gave a fascinating talk about a number of key aspects of the life and music of Sir Edward Elgar. The talk, which was illuminated by recordings of his music was both interesting and witty.

Towards the end of life, Elgar was tormented by the question of whether his music would last and indeed in the decades following

his death up to and including the 1960's his music was largely considered as old fashioned and representative only of the Victorian and Edwardian era. However opinion has swung and his true value as a major composer is now widely recognised.

His development as a composer was slow as he was an autodidact – he was largely self taught and chose to follow composers who interested him rather than following the fashions of the musical academies. He was not unduly influenced by English music and had no interest in folk music; his music is built upon Continental influences, especially Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms. Indeed his early success was in Germany. He was always short of money and had to compose light occasional pieces – but he enjoyed doing this and had a marvellous way with tunes.

Another important aspect of his works was his relationship with the human voice. Elgar

wrote numerous choral works, many quite long, for choral societies and music festivals. However now only *Gerontius* is often performed. In David Mellor's opinion part of the problem is that Elgar wrote the words himself for most of his oratorios and it would have been better to use an experienced librettist.

An aspect of Elgar's life that is often overlooked is his pure professionalism as a musician. Not only as a composer and teacher but also as a conductor (not only of his own music). As a conductor he tended to be brisk and non-emotional and David Mellor thought this type of conducting was more appropriate for Elgar's music than an overly romantic approach favoured by certain musicians. It was good that Elgar had recorded most of his major works. Solti assessed Elgar's place as a bit behind Brahms but above Schumann and Dvorak – Mr Mellor thought this was just about right.

Professor Mark Racz

Mark Racz is Vice-Principal of the Birmingham Conservatoire (which is a faculty of Birmingham University). In Britain there are nine such institutions whereas in Germany there are 23. Basically a Conservatoire is concerned with training profes-



Professor Mark Racz

sional performers. The one in Leeds has an emphasis on popular music.

The Birmingham Conservatoire is descended from the Birmingham and Midlands Institute founded in the 1850s. It was originally mainly for singing but instruments were taught from the 1870s. The Institute originally had had up to 1000 students. Granville Bantock was the first principal (between 1900 and 1934). Elgar was a visiting musician from 1902 and Adrian Boult ran chamber music from 1927.

Gordon Clinton was appointed principal in 1960. It was incorporated into the Polytechnic (later University) in 1969 and changed name to Conservatoire in 1992. B.Mus. degrees are awarded and also various higher diplomas. There are five areas of study —

orchestral, vocal and opera; keyboard; composition; and jazz.

Professor Racz was clearly an enthusiast on musical education, especially as undertaken at Birmingham and the talk, which was illustrated by recordings, largely of student groups, was quite fascinating.

Robert Tear

The famous tenor Robert Tear has an extrovert manner and in conversation with FRMS President, Edward Greenfield, spoke with affection about what had clearly been a rewarding and mainly happy career. This was illustrated by extracts from recordings made throughout his life.

He started serious singing as a boy soprano, and after his voice broke he ended up as a Tenor. Kings College Cambridge



Robert Tear

beckoned and he was a choral scholar. In 1964 he went on a tour of Russia with a group led by Benjamin Britten. Britten was a big influence on his career and he sang in several of his operas.

He appeared regularly at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden after 1970 and sang in operas and other vocal works throughout the world. His repertoire had included Shostakovich, Wagner and Mahler and we heard outstanding recorded ex-

tracts from these composers. In 1985 he made his debut as a conductor and has worked with many orchestras internationally. His life is a very busy one and he writes or paints every day. Recently he had been involved in Dyson's Canterbury Tales.

Quita Chavez

Ms. Chavez, who is a proud 85 years and as spritely as someone half that age talked to Edward Greenfield about her "fifty odd" years in the recording industry.

Her interest in music started when she was about 14 years of age when she listened to 'World Music' on the wireless; this was music from all over Europe. Before the war she joined the staff of Imofs at the princely wage of 17/6d a week; she remembers vividly the black dress she had to wear. Around the corner was the prestigious record retailer of EMG who at that time only employed male serving staff. When the war started she was offered the job of Manager of Record Promotion at EMG.

After the war, her career really took off when she joined Decca and worked with John Culshaw etc. Subsequently she worked for Philips Records and CBS. Eventually she left the recording industry to become Editorial Manager of "The Gramophone" She regaled us with a succession of amazing



Quita Chavez

stories about some of the artists she had dealt with, including Stravinsky, Colin Davis, Bernstein, Domingo, Haitink and others. Hilarious!

AB

Simply Music

After tea on Saturday, Graham Kiteley introduced Antony West-Samuel and Robert Swithenbank, technicians for the weekend. Antony talked about the equipment and recordings, with Robert and him operating the equipment.

Antony explained that the first half of the presentation was to demonstrate the Yamaha CD hard drive, which was "What Hi-Fi" product of year 2003. It could copy a CD to its hard drive (capacity 127 hours) in 4 minutes and compilations of tracks could be recorded back on to a CDR with better quality than the original; this was because any errors in the pits on the CD were ironed out. Antony played a track from an original CD and again from the re-recorded version; everyone thought it was at least as good, with opinion divided on whether it was better. (see also page 3)

Antony then introduced extracts from new CDs recommended by Classic Tracks, namely Beethoven's *Choral Fantasia*, French opera arias by Natalie Dessay, and the Saint-Saëns *Violin Concerto*.

RL

John McCabe

After dinner on Saturday, the composer was in a musically illustrated discussion with Edward Greenfield.

The discussion involved both John McCabe's compositions and his life with the influences of events and contacts. The musical examples were chosen by

Edward Greenfield. We listened to an extract of *A fanfare for orchestra* with John as soloist and Solti conducting.



John McCabe

[Photo - ©Reg Williamson]

He was born in Huyton, Liverpool in 1939. At the age of five he was badly burnt and as a result he was not able to attend school. This had the effect that he taught himself to read both books and music. In fact he composed eleven symphonies before he was 11 even before he had learnt to play the piano - only one survived!

His musical tastes include Schubert's great *C Major symphony* and particularly Haydn and Sibelius. He particularly admired Rawsthorne, whose music has a particularly unorthodox structure, and later he studied composition under Rawsthorne's direction. Like so many English musicians he was particularly impressed by Benjamin Britten and adored *Peter Grimes*, Britten's first opera which was written in 1945. We listened to the quartet from *Peter Grimes*. We listened to an extract of Rawsthorne's *Symphonic Study*. Haydn was also Rawsthorne's favourite composer. Between the ages of 11 to 19 John did not compose any music. His mother

wrote to various musicians including John Barbirolli who suggested that he studied at the RCM. He wrote music for piano in 1957. However these studies did not turn out to be very successful and he left the composition class shortly afterwards. He wrote *Dance* which was a piece influenced by Pitfield. He also enjoyed "cool" jazz. As far as the piano was concerned Richter was his hero but also was very enthused by Britten and Bernstein. He played Haydn's sonatas and we listened to an extract Haydn's *Sonata 32 in G minor*. Hartmann's music attracted John and he would have studied under him except that he died. To McCabe medieval Latin was inspiring because it was so musical. For a while he dabbled with serial techniques but gave them up in 1967 because he found that they didn't help him.

Messiaen's organ works were particularly intriguing and we all listened to an extract from *Pentecost*. But now he felt that Messiaen's music was like in a bath of Eau de Cologne. We listened to a composition related to the Fibonacci sequence [a numerical sequence based on the rate at which rabbits produce]. Then we listened to the fugato from his composition for two clarinets. Among other recordings John has produced all the Haydn piano sonatas. We heard the opening of the piano piece *Tenebrae*. Particularly important memories and musical inspiration came from the death of several people. Beethoven, Liszt's late piano pieces, and also Virgil's writings inspired him. We finished with an extract from

his ballet *Edward II*, his most popular work. Altogether a fascinating insight into the work of this most interesting composer.

HWK

Quo Vadis

After breakfast on Sunday, John Davis, chairman of FRMS, made a presentation about the work of the Federation and how it can promote, support and develop individual music societies in the years ahead.

His presentation has been expanded and developed and is included on a paper which appears separately (see page 21). His talk produced a lively discussion with and amongst the delegates.

Concert – Second City Brass

The Second City Brass was formed in September 2001 by a group of freelance musicians from around the Midlands. It has strong links with the Birmingham Conservatoire and consists of two trumpet players plus one each of French Horn, Trombone and Tuba. Its repertoire and style of playing has echoes of the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble (which ceased playing in 1986).

J. Clarke's famous *Prince of Denmark's March* (a.k.a. Trumpet Voluntary) started the concert with a swing and was followed by an exciting performance of Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks*. Three movements of *Harbour with Ships* by John McCabe followed – with much appreciation from the Composer.

The first half of the Concert continued with a fine performance of Holst's *Second Military Suite* and then the finale of the *Symphony* for wind



Second City Brass

[Photo - ©Reg Williamson]

Instruments by the Russian Composer V. Ewald.

After the interval we were treated with the lighter side of the ensemble, with a *Suite from West Side Story* by Bernstein; *Love is here to Stay* by Gershwin; *When I'm 64* by Lennon & McCartney; *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square* by Maschwitz and Sherwin: finishing in fine form with the March *Liberty Bell* by J.P. Sousa. The playing was most exciting and the interpretation was excellent throughout. This was a most enjoyable and memorable concert.

The Music Makers

As a final event of the Weekend, there was a relaxing hour of recorded music chosen by members of the FRMS Committee.

John Davies started by playing an unnamed work which seemed strangely familiar. Afterwards he admitted that it was John Rutter's nostalgic work the third movement of

the *Beatles Concerto*.

Mick Birchall played us two fine examples from Spanish Light Opera (Zarzuela). These were *Wind is the Happiness of Love*, by Jose de Nebra – opening chorus; this was followed by two arias from *The Lady Innkeeper of the Port* by Pablo Sonozabal.

Tony Baines played us *Chebsey to Shallowfield* from the Suite *Conversations with the River* by Andrew Baker of the Staffordshire Library. This depicts the progress of the River Sow through the borough of Stafford. It was recorded using the 'Sibelius' computerised sound system which gave a good simulation of orchestral sound.

Arthur Baker played two pieces by Berlioz illustrating the darker side of experience. The *Ballet of the Shades* was sung by Les Elements; this was followed by the *Funeral March from Hamlet* with the CBSO and CBS Chorus conducted by Louis Frémaux (from a 1975 LP).

Finally Philip Ashton illustrated the lighter side of Sibelius with *Valse Lyrique* Op 96a and *Valse Chevaleresque* Op 96c played by the Lahti S.O. conducted by Osmo Vanska.

AB



John, Mick, Tony, Arthur, Philip

SCOTTISH GROUP ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The FRMS – Scottish Group's Annual Conference was held this year in the Royal Hotel Lodge, Bridge of Allan on Saturday 8th May 2004. As the numbers attending the Annual Conference have been falling off over the last few years we decided to change the format to a one-day conference for this year's event. This proved to be a successful move as the numbers rose quite significantly this year.

The main speaker for the day was John Wallace, the Fife-born trumpet player and Principal of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. John gave us a highly entertaining and interesting account of his days as a recording artist. He illustrated his talk with many of his recordings. He has recorded for companies such as EMI, EMI-Toshiba and Nimbus. He told us he started his career with the



John Wallace

Tullis Russell Band. His father was a member of that band as he worked with Tullis Russell, who are well-known quality paper makers. His first recording was a private one he made whilst a student at Cambridge University. We heard some insights into the art of making records with such producers as Christopher Bishop, Adrian Farmer and Count Labinsky. John answered many questions and in reply to one about the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition John told us about some of the highlights of being a member of the panel of judges of this year's competition.

After an excellent buffet lunch at which John Wallace, his wife and his father joined us we had time to get some fresh air before settling down to the second programme of the day. This was given by Sheila Palmer who entertained us with a well-presented and highly interesting talk about her great-uncle, the well-known conductor Albert Coates. He was born in St. Petersburg, Russia of English parents. His father (a Yorkshire man) worked with the Russian branch of the family firm. He had studied with Arthur Nikisch, the celebrated Hungarian conductor. Sheila played some of Albert Coates' recordings including one from his late

years in South Africa. This was probably his last recording. She also let us view many photos from the family album. Last year Sheila visited the Albert Coates Archive at Stellenbosch University in South Africa and was able to update her information on her great-uncle.



Sheila Palmer

Chris Hamilton finished the day's programmes with a presentation on DVD. The less said about this the better as he was bedevilled with technical problems! However the audience did get some enjoyment out of seeing themselves and some of the presenters at last year's conference.

The Annual General meeting was held before we left for home. It was decided there that as our attendance numbers had risen significantly we should continue the single-day format for next year and that we should hold it on the Sunday.

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CENTRAL REGIONAL GROUP

Music day at Peterborough

The Central Region held a music day on 27th March 2004 in the Hambleton Room of The Great Northern Hotel, Peterborough, attended by about 40 delegates – mostly from the Midlands, but some from the London area and East Anglia.

For many of us, particular pieces of music, maybe even particular recordings, can evoke memories, of places visited or momentous occasions. A recording of Gregorian chant from a monastery in Austria was just such a piece for Jill White, and opened her presentation entitled *A Perspective on the Power of Music*. It was just one of several musical examples which Jill used to illustrate reminiscences of her career, from singer to teaching singing in Vienna (auf Deutsch, natürlich!) to studying medicine to BBC producer to Director of the National Youth Orchestra.

During her time with the BBC, Jill had been particularly involved with choral music and had worked with John Rutter, going on to act as producer for several records of his music. There were nods and murmurs of assent for Jill's assessment of John Rutter as a much neglected and undervalued composer.

The audience was particularly interested, too, in Jill's years with the NYO, and also to hear of its early history. We heard recordings of the Orchestra from several different years, culminating in Mahler, played at a Promenade Concert at the Royal Albert Hall. It was quite eye-opening to realise what faith there has to be for what is essentially a 'scratch orchestra' – a term which in this context is in no way disparaging – to perform such a work with a top conductor at one of the world's leading music festivals. It was yet another perspective on the power of music.

The central session of the day featured Eluned Pierce, Principal Harp of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, who spoke about her instrument and its music, and played examples from its repertoire. Having described her career as a "lovely life", Eluned then promised an insight into the madness of being an orchestral harpist (she is known to her colleagues as Luney).

The first musical example was an arrangement

of a Welsh folk tune by John Thomas, harpist to Queen Victoria. No monarch since Victoria has had a harpist, although the present Prince of Wales does have one.

From the nineteenth century, we were taken back to Handel's time. A favourite piece is Handel's concerto Op.4, No.6, which forms part of a set of organ concertos, although the harp version of this particular work is authentic and almost certainly the original. A Welsh father and son called Powell, both harpists, were active in London when Handel arrived in England. Powell Senior went to Jamaica with his patron, the Duke of Portland; Powell



Jill White, Eluned Pierce and Thelma Shaw

Junior remained in London. Handel wrote his concerto to help Powell, who in turn helped Handel to write for the harp. Most composers find writing for the harp difficult because they think in terms of keyboard technique which involves all ten digits: harpists do not use their little fingers.

The instruments used by the Powells were Welsh triple harps, which had an inner course of strings to play what would be the black notes on a keyboard. The outer rows of strings represent the 'white' notes. These harps are very difficult to play due to the need to reach the inner strings between the outer ones (there are 110 or 112 strings in total). This kind of instrument is still made in Wales, and there are still people who learn to play them.

Nowadays, pedals are used to make the harp fully chromatic, a development which was pioneered around the end of the eighteenth century. It was from around that time that the harp began to be used as an orchestral instrument – Berlioz being one of the first to employ it on a wide scale.

Eluned played two movements from Handel's concerto on her pedal harp, before turning again to John Thomas, and a set of variations on a traditional tune, *The Minstrel's Adieu*. Much of the best writing for the harp is by harpists: not all composers liked the harp, and did not always know what they were doing. The greatest, Mozart, did not like the harp and it shows in his concerto K299, which, lovely as it is, is fiendishly difficult to play.

This is because it is written in terms of the keyboard. Harpists do not like that, they are not pianists, they are unique.

French harpists were very influential in the use of the harp in the orchestra; there was a very busy section of the Paris Conservatoire devoted to the harp from the late eighteenth century (Queen Marie Antoinette played the harp; one of her instruments is now in the Victoria and Albert Museum). Eluned pointed to the idiomatic writing for the harp in Debussy's orchestral music, and regretted that he had not written solo music for it. She attributed this skill to the influence of Alphons Hasselmans who taught harp at the Conservatoire and trained many fine performers as well as helping composers. As an example she played a piece by Hasselmans, 'La source', which was described as a simple study, but by no means simple to perform.

Eluned commented that many of Benjamin Britten's scores incorporate harp parts, and ascribed this to the fact that Osian Ellis was a close friend of the composer.

The next musical example was an old Scottish tune, the Eriskay Love Lilt, which became a favourite of Eluned during her time with the Scottish National Orchestra.

The endeavour to achieve a fully chromatic harp has taxed instrument makers throughout history. Modern harps have seven pedals, one for each note of the scale, and each has three positions; with forty seven strings this gives the harp more notes than the piano. The use of pedals leaves both hands free for plucking the strings.

In answer to a question, Eluned said a good run-of-the-mill harp would cost around £15,000. A simple small harp would be over £2,000. This made it difficult to teach children to play the instrument in schools, although every county in Wales has a peripatetic teacher of harp. She cited examples of a Comprehensive school with 50 harp students, and a Primary school with 20.

To conclude her presentation, Eluned played a piece by the Spanish composer Gurrudi, as a tribute to her own teacher, Marisa Robles.

Eluned received a deserved ovation for her personal charm, her witty presentation, and her extremely accomplished playing.

The accessibility and ensuing popularity of women composers is a relatively recent occurrence. It was therefore both a joy and delight

to hear the choices of Thelma Shaw in her aptly named presentation 'A Swirl of Petticoats'

She began with the remarkable and saintly eleventh century Hildegard von Bingen and worked her way to composers of the twentieth century.

The extract from the 'Gaelic' symphony of the American Amy Beach makes use of traditional Irish tunes that reflected the composer's ancestry. This symphony, which was first performed in 1896, arose from the advocacy of Dvorak of American musical nationalism. Beach chose traditional music from her own heritage; her forbears being from Ireland.



Eluned Pierce

Louise Farranc was born in Paris in 1804 and was thus a contemporary of Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schumann and Liszt. As an accomplished pianist her first works were for piano. After listening to the Valse Brillante one could be tempted to say that Mendelssohn sounds like Farranc rather than the reverse.

Elizabeth Maconchy described her music as 'impassioned argument'. We heard an extract from No 12 of a series of expressively lyrical string quartets.

For these and examples from Beamish, Strozzi and Alma Mahler we thank Thelma for a delightfully presented programme of composers who until recently had been sadly neglected

*Report prepared by Allan Child,
John Davies and Mick Birchall*

FRMS Central Region

ITALIAN DAY

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Durham RMS - A Memorable Birthday Celebration

Bob Bygate is a very important figure in the affairs of Durham Recorded Music Society. He joined the Society in 1968, the year it was founded and in the following years served as Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman, sometimes holding two offices simultaneously during a period of 40 years. He also gave many presentations during a 50-year period. He is still a most enthusiastic member and rarely misses a Wednesday evening. Bob celebrated his 100th birthday in February,



when the Society organised a special evening for him to mark the occasion.

There were photo-calls, a viewing of a greetings card received from The Queen, the cutting of a suitably-decorated cake (see top photo).

There was also a musical presentation by one of our members consisting of an exact programme that Bob had given in 1966. Finally, Bob regaled us with his memories of DRMS down the years. He thoroughly enjoyed the evening, as had we all.

Newport RMS

It is sad to announce that Jack Plucknett, Chairman of Newport, Isle of Wight, Recorded Music Society has resigned, owing to ill health, and at the tender age of 85, has been Chairman for 35 years, he feels that someone younger should take his place. He joined the society in 1962 and was a committee member and Vice Chairman before becoming Chairman in 1969.

When Jack joined the society there were around 20 members, and in 1980 there were 104 and after a couple of years the number had risen to



Jack and Rita Plucknett

a peak of 147. However, numbers are now holding steady at about 60 members. In the past Jack has attended FRMS Annual General Meetings held in London or the South and was a regular attendee at the FRMS Cambridge Annual weekends.

A musical favourite of Jack's is Wagner's Ring cycle and he and his wife Rita, who incidentally is Newport's secretary, often attended performances at the Royal Opera House Covent Garden and also Portsmouth Guild Hall given by ENO, WNO and Glyndebourne Touring Opera.

In honour of Jack's long devoted service to the Newport RMS he has been elected to the Post of Honorary life Vice President and we wish him well for the future.

Norwich Opera Club

The Club is happily in its 35th year!

Can there be a better way of listening to opera as presented by knowledgeable and enthusiasts of opera than in the luxurious surroundings of the Norwich Assembly House?

An answer is that perhaps there can be, now and then!

Following club visits to our own Theatre Royal (and to London theatres) arrangements are now well in hand for members to fly to Budapest and there to see three operas in the sumptuous State Opera House.

The Club's Patron is the well-known musicologist John Steane who is to give his sparkling annual presentation on 11th November.

The range covered by the Club's Programmes is from light to the 'heaviest' (Gotterdamming on 9th Dec.) so all tastes are satisfied at the meetings – which are on fortnightly Thursdays at 7.15pm. For details of membership phone Mary Watkins (01953 456860) or Paul Rhodes (01603 782892), All are very welcome.

Paul Rhodes.

Penguin Guide Head to Head with The Gramophone Guide

One of the interesting aspects of being editor of the Bulletin has been the task of regularly reviewing issues of the famous Penguin Guide to Compact Disks and DVDs. A few months ago I realised that I had not been asked to review the last issue. When checking prices before buying the latest edition I found that Amazon



VS



internet bookshop had a special price when buying both the Penguin Guide and the Gramophone Guide together. I have a collection of all the Penguin Guides going back to the Stereo Guide of 1961, but although I had subscribed to the Gramophone Magazine for more than 50 years, I had not so far tried out their Guide. I therefore bought both and had great fun in comparing and contrasting these two well known Guides.

The physical shape and sizes are similar with Gramophone being about 5mm taller. Penguin however is wider and gains about 20mm extra in terms of printed width. Penguin has 1524 pages of review (plus 42 pages of a new, Appendix of Key Recordings). The extra width of the line, combined with discreet hyphenation allows Penguin to include an appreciably greater amount of text to be included per page. The recommended price is £24.99 for Penguin compared to £21.99 for Gramophone.

The Gramophone Guide precedes each composer with a description of the life and music of the composer concerned – this appears to be based upon text from ‘Grove’, Penguin has no such information presumably because it is readily available elsewhere and its inclusion would have taken up precious space. Penguin has a list of over 1,300 ‘key’ recordings which could form the basis of a collection; Gramophone however has a list of 100 Great Recordings together with a list of over 200 works for a basic library. The Guides use different ways of dealing with couplings with no clear winner. Neither Guide deals with compilation discs based upon performer or other criteria (but this is done with the Penguin Yearbooks which will now also include some less important composers and recordings). The Gramophone has a useful index of performers.

When comparing the two Guides, it soon becomes apparent that there is a fundamental difference in approach. Penguin attempts to review all (or nearly all) recordings issued by the important companies, such reviews are however sometimes very brief perhaps as little as a couple of sentences but often

more. Gramophone however provides often lengthy reviews of far fewer recordings. For example Gramophone mentions ten recordings of Dvorak’s New World Symphony whereas Penguin mentions nineteen.

This also means that there are cases where a little known composers or works are dealt with in Penguin, but not in the Gramophone Guide. For example Reicha is not included in Gramophone and neither is Lord Berners whereas Penguin mention 4 and 1 respectively and other examples could be quoted.

THE BRITISH MUSIC SOCIETY

Founded in 1979 to promote interest in the music of lesser known British composers, especially from 1850 to 1950, The British Music Society does so by issuing recordings and publications.

Membership of the Society is open to all, and in addition to discounts on its own recordings and publications, members also receive a quarterly Newsletter and an annual Journal *British Music*, the next issue includes an article on the Ceremonial music of Masters of the Queen’s Musick in the Twentieth Century.

Recently issued CDs include the digitally remastered recording of Noel Mewton-Wood playing the Concerto for Piano and Orchestra by Arthur Bliss, the Concerto for Piano and Wind Instruments by Igor Stravinsky and the Concerto for Piano, Trumpet and Strings Op. 35 by Dmitri Shostakovich. In *International Record Review* (June 2003) Robert Matthew-Walker wrote of this as being a “...dumbfounding account of Bliss’s Piano Concerto.”

For further information about recordings and membership, please contact

The Hon. Treasurer, The British Music Society,
7 Tudor Gardens, Upminster, Essex. RM14
3DE. (United Kingdom) Tel: 01708 224795

What about the judgments? Gramophone lists 52 reviewers, three of whom are the sole reviewers in Penguin and therefore one would expect diversity of opinions. This sometimes was the case, however I was surprised at how seldom there were major differences of judgement between the Guides. In general where I checked up on recordings I knew, I found that usually the judgements from both Guides were helpful. However both Guides are in my opinion too favourably disposed towards artists who are fashionable; for example Sir Colin Davis and Sir Simon Rattle can do no wrong – but both have issued several recordings which do not satisfy after repeated hearings (this is not just a personal view but has been confirmed by comments from music lovers whose judgement I respect).

With numerous deletions and reissues occurring at an ever more frantic pace, trying to issue any Guide which is reasonably up to date is immensely difficult and both Guides are to be commended for their Herculean efforts. An interesting comment was made to me at a meeting of a recorded music society, the old gentleman had heard a piece of music at a previous meeting and had tried to order a disc for his collection – his retailer informed him that both versions recommended by the Gramophone Guide had been deleted. He phoned up The Gramophone offices and they had apologised and made a new recommendation over the phone!

Overall I judge that both Guides are excellent publications, where there are differences they are of nuances rather than profound disagreements. I have found after several weeks of ownership that it is good to have both. Perhaps the often more detailed reviews in the Gramophone Guide make more interesting reading. However in the end if I had to have only one, it would have to be the Penguin Guide as this reviews more music and more recordings.

AB.

The Grossmith Legacy

Leon Berger (baritone)
Selwyn Tillet (piano)
Divine Art 24109



Readers who are familiar with the history of Gilbert and Sullivan's operas or who have seen the film *Topsy-Turvy* will be aware of the importance of George Grossmith who was the mainstay of the D'Oyly Carte Company when the

major operas were written and who introduced many of the original 'patter songs'. However Grossmith was famous in his own right as a lyricist, composer and comedian.

The *Gay Photographer* was one of the early hits which Grossmith had when playing with his father and other hits followed including *I am so Volatile* and *The Muddle-Puddle Porter*, the latter being inspired by his experience with a late train and a monotonous station announcer. A mutual friend suggested to Sullivan that he would be a good player in his forthcoming opera *The Sorcerer*. Sullivan interviewed him and offered him the part. Grossmith hesitated because it would interfere with his blossoming concert career, however he accepted and was with the Company for 12 years (after he left, his parts were taken by Henry Lytton). After he left the Savoy he gave around 3000 recitals including visits to Canada and USA.

This disc contains renderings of the above-mentioned items together with songs from some of his Gilbert and Sullivan parts and with songs and sketches written after his Savoy years. The Savoy numbers include *My name is John Wellington Wells* from the *Sorcerer* and a curiosity, recorded for the first time, being the full-length version of *I Once was as meek as a new born Lamb*, this includes two verses which were removed after the first performance (to simplify the plot). Most of the songs and sketches have not been sung for nearly a century and not only are pleasant in their own light but also gives a fascinating insight into Victorian Concert Parties.

The final two items on the disc are not by the modern artists listed above, but are of two songs *Bertie the Bounder* and *Yip-I-addy-ay* sung by George Grossmith III (Grossmith's son) recorded in 1909. Apart from the recording, one would have thought this was the same singer as the other items – a good illustration of how well Leon Berger has caught the Grossmith way of singing. The accompaniment is very important in this material and Selwyn Tillet's playing sounds just right. The recording and notes are up to the usual high standard of Divine Art Records. An unusual disc, interesting and entertaining

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Hans Rott — Symphony 1

Cincinnati Philharmonic Orch.
Cond. Gerhard Samuel
Hyperion — Helios CDH55140



In October 1880, a twenty two year old Austrian musician was travelling on a train to Mülhausen when something snapped, a fellow tried to light a cigar, only to be attacked by Hans Rott, the musician in question, brandishing a gun and claiming that Brahms had filled the train with dynamite. Rott was committed to a mental asylum and died within three years.

Rott had been a pupil of Bruckner, and also admired Wagner. The influence of both these composers is readily detected in his First Symphony. This was a student work and appears to be the only important surviving work. It was much admired by Mahler, whose own symphonies were clearly much influenced by Rott's.

The work is unusual in that the four movements increase in size and complexity as they progress and in fact the last movement lasts for twenty five minutes. Although not a masterpiece, it is full of good ideas, with plenty of fervour. It is never dull and holds the attention throughout.

The first movement acts as an introduction and introduces an expansive theme which reappears in the scherzo and finale. The slow movement has a chorale theme which also reappears in the finale. The scherzo generates an insistent rhythm of the type which became a Mahler speciality. The massive finale has two extended slow movements with a faster fugue like central section; the final passages are very exciting. The orchestration is good but perhaps goes over the top a little at climaxes. One cannot but wonder how Rott's music would have developed if he had lived longer.

The autograph score was incomplete, but a copyist's score and orchestral parts exist, which enabled Paul Banks to produce an edited score for performance. This was first performed in 1989 in Cincinnati by Gerhard Samuel conducting the Cincinnati Philharmonic Orchestra (which is a student orchestra). The disc was recorded in London by the same forces a few months later. This review celebrates the reissue in Hyperion's bargain label.

The performance sounds good (especially the brass) and the recording (by Tony Faulkner) is excellent, with no overload in the massive climaxes. A disc well worth trying! AB

Explorations

Music by Kenneth Leighton,
Anthony Hedges, Gustav
Holst and Ronald Stevenson.
for Piano and Piano duet —
Goldstone and Clemmow
Divine Art 25024



This disc contains first recordings of music by three modern and one not so modern (Holst) British composers. This description does not make everyone's heart race with excitement! However even on first listening I found it surprisingly approachable and it gained considerable with repeated hearings.

The first and most major work is Kenneth Leighton's *Prelude, Hymn and Toccata*, composed in 1987. An arresting short *Prelude* is followed by the enigmatical *Hymn*. The hymn is very well hidden and in fact is the very well known *Abide with me*, the music is rhapsodic in form with only oblique hints at the tune. The last movement is *Toccata* which is highly syncopated and is almost jazz-like.

Gustav Holst had exploratory leanings and was interested in the music of India and Japan. His *Japanese Suite* is fairly well known in the orchestral version and was derived from old Japanese songs provided by Michio Ito a well known dancer. The version played here is by Vally Lasker who was a helper to Holst. The music is most exquisite and the *Prelude (Song of the Fishermen)* is quite haunting. The final *Dance of the Fox* draws the suite to an exciting end.

Anthony Hedges is the composer who wrote most of the pieces on the disc; he is described by Anthony Goldstone as "one of the rare breed of composer that is as much at home in the world of 'light' music as in that of the 'serious'". His *Three Explorations* of 2002 is music which has an immediate appeal, but also grows on re-hearing, his *Five Aphorisms* of 1990 are similar in style but shorter and more compressed. The *Sonata* of 1974 is a more substantial work its three movements are nicely contrasted with a second movement with traces of Scriabin and a rondo-like finale.

Ronald Stevenson is represented by Two Chinese Folk Songs. These are both short works, each based upon a genuine folk song (both of which are very attractive) but careful listening shows how incredibly well crafted they are. An unusual disc, beautifully played, good recording and exceptionally good notes. AB

Crossword

(Mainly Music!)

By Hein Kropholler

CHANDOS

This crossword has been sponsored by Chandos Records who will give a prize of a CD from their catalogue to the winner who will be chosen by a draw from all correct answers received by the editor before the 1st January. In the event of a correct answer not being received, the best attempt (at the discretion of the editor) will win the award. If you are nearly there, chance your arm!

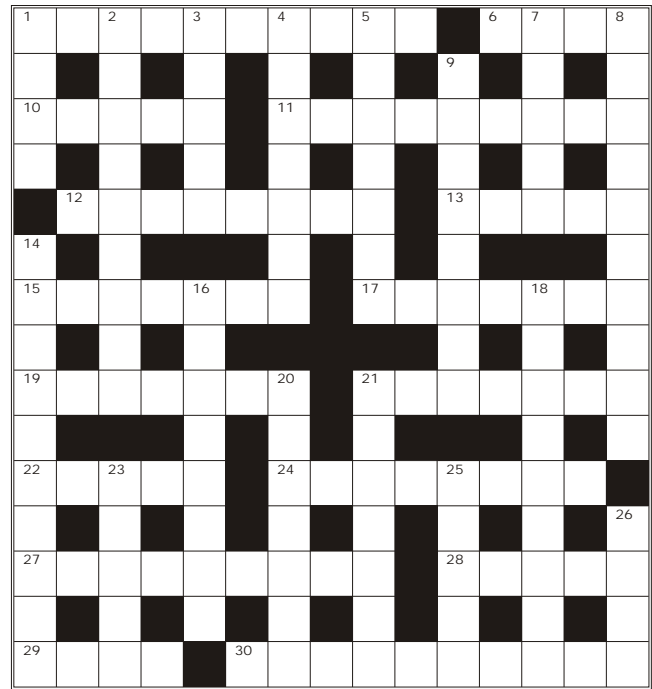
ACROSS

- 1. JSB's eldest son. [10]
- 6. Wild animal. Also songwriter? [4]
- 10. Carries the world? Israeli conductor. [5]
- 11. Film maker or company furious! [4,5]
- 12. Not guilty! [8]
- 13. A piano needs his attention regularly. [5]
- 15. Use stem to make our get together. [5,2]
- 17. Beg. [7]
- 19. Two adjacent notes give this. [7]
- 21. Dvorak overture for orchestra - the moor of Venice. See 24 and 14. [7]
- 22. Did she get her gun. [5]
- 24. Dvorak overture. Name sounds like a party. [8]
- 27. Do not start before signal from timpani. [5,4]
- 28. In Donizetti opera heroine ends thus. [2,3]
- 29. Britten came from this part of Anglia. [4]
- 30. O tradesmen changes to those who correct errors in score. [10]

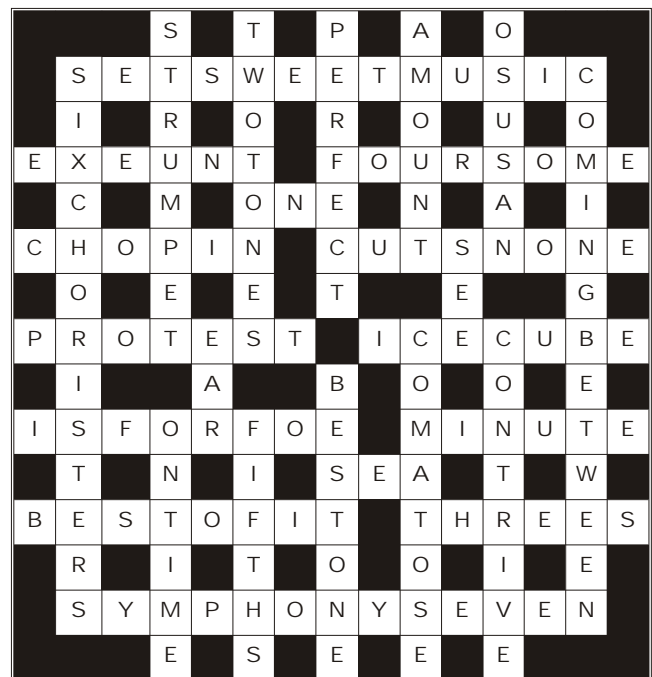
DOWN

- 1. Sign which lowers note by semitone. [4]
- 2. In Britain we are all these! [9]
- 3. Noisy popular music club. [5]
- 4. Ravel Ms are these. [7]
- 5. nine, French [7]
- 7. Grand instrument. In church? [5]
- 8. Our society is a...? [10]
- 9. Glue? Alternatively sew to repair. [2,6]
- 14. Surrounded by natural world for Dvorak overture. [4,6]
- 16. Reduce speed of sixth note. [6,2]
- 18. Strings tuned for the wind, American, to make the sound of a cow! [6,3]
- 20. Boult conducted calmly with great ... [7]
- 21. Those involved with great Eton song! [7]
- 23. What is the language of the score!? [5]
- 25. Musical named after South American President's wife. [5]
- 26. Poems intended to be sung! [4]

Crossword 141



Solution to Crossword 140



Winner

There were 8 correct solutions submitted for crossword no 140, and the lucky winner picked at random was Philip Lusman of Falkirk. Others who had correct answers were Gordon Arkwright of Morecambe, Kath Deem of Sale, Myrtle Fowler of Mitcheldean, Roger Hughes of Middlesex, Betty Seddon of Eccles, Geoff Trinick of Cardiff and Tony York of Northampton. Four people had only one error.



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