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# EDITORIAL

## The Future

In certain circles it is believed that Recorded Music Societies and hence the FRMS are doomed to a lingering death. This scenario is one which I vehemently reject. The scene will of course change, it always does but there has never been such a large number of people with little to do who are interested in new hobbies, especially if they involve meeting people. These of course are the elderly, who are now living longer, are sustained in relatively good health and about 80% of whom are well off financially in the light of reduced monetary commitments. This gives ample opportunity for recruitment to Recorded Music Societies (forget the days of old where legend has it that hordes of young people were flocking to join us).

I have had a number of spoken comments on the Quo Vadis articles mainly of the nature of "Interesting...Food for thought" nature. I have however had two very detailed letters relating to the articles. As these largely describe individual Societies, I have included these at the beginning of the Societies Section rather than in the Letters pages.

Pamela Yates in particular, I think sums up the situation admirably when she says (p28) "a recorded music society can be very successful when it provides a wide range of musical activity together with important social events...". Her stress on the importance of cultivating friendships is, I believe, the key factor for a successful society.



Another issue is new technology, the range of fascinating musical material available on DVD is amazing. The annual DVD event at my own Society has been very well received: as prices for equipment continues to drop, Societies should prepare themselves to use this important new technology (as an adjunct, but not replacement, to sound recordings).

## Farewell

I am now in my seventh year as Bulletin Editor and after much heart searching have decided to retire from the post. Accordingly I have tendered my resignation and this will be my last Bulletin as editor.

It has been an interesting job which I have enjoyed tremendously. I have met numerous people and made many friends. Technically it has been a challenge which has made it even more fascinating — computers are wonderful, when working!

Even the Committee work has been rewarding although I have found myself less than enamoured with some of the 'political' aspects. The Committee works hard and I am especially pleased with the current emphasis in trying to help Societies expand.

I should like to give special thanks to the talented people who have written articles etc for publication. These are the people who have made the Bulletin what it is.

*Arthur Baker*

## Federation of Recorded Music Societies — Annual General Meeting

Commences 2.00pm. on Saturday 29th October 2005 at  
The Crown Hotel, High Street, Nantwich, Cheshire  
Following the meeting, bar facilities will be available.

Hosted by The South Cheshire Recorded Music Society

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

*Second City Brass*

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.

Advice on accommodation has been sent to Society Secretaries

## HYPERION RECORDS FAILS AT APPEAL

Hyperion Records has announced that it has lost its defence of the copyright case brought against it by Dr Lionel Sawkins. Dr Sawkins claimed musical copyright in four editions of the musical works of Lalande. He lost at first instance in relation to the recording of one of the pieces of music but won on the other three. Hyperion appealed with the leave of the trial judge.

Hyperion's principal objection to the claim made by Dr Sawkins was its contention that a performing edition does not amount to a new and substantive musical work in its own right unless the performing edition is original, in the sense that it amounts to a new musical work. Thus, Hyperion contended that if an edition is an arrangement or interpretation of an existing musical work then it may obtain copyright as an original musical work. Dr Sawkins expressly made clear that he was not contending that his editions were arrangements of Lalande's music.

Instead, Dr Sawkins made it clear that his intention was to faithfully produce the music of Lalande in a modern performing edition. Hyperion argued that an edition of Lalande's music that is a faithful reproduction of Lalande's music cannot itself be an original musical work.

In the judgment of the Court of Appeal a performing edition where corrections and amendments had been made was itself copyright. This will of course affect all classical record companies in the future as they will have to seek (and pay for) a licence before performing or recording music from an edition.

The financial consequences for Hyperion are yet to be determined, but will be severe. They will probably be hundreds of thousands of pounds if not a million.

This leaves Hyperion in a very precarious position. The company is small and operates independently of any financial support and survives solely on the sales of classical recordings. Hyperion now is forced to reconsider its general recorded output and will be reducing dramatically its commitment to many new recordings over the next year or two to concentrate on fund-raising activities to help with the legal costs. The collateral damage caused by this decision not only will affect the prosperity of the company but the record buying public whose access to rare and collectable repertoire served by Hyperion, and other record labels, will be diminished.



## Bringing new audiences to neglected repertoire

In spite of the brave efforts of some independent recording companies, there are still enormous gaps in the classical music catalogues: some important composers are poorly represented, others entirely ignored — and there are surprising lacunae in the recorded output of some fairly well known names, even those as familiar as Handel, Haydn and Beethoven. Moreover, the rich musical traditions of many countries are covered thinly, if at all; similarly, a number of aesthetic movements, from the Renaissance onwards, are inadequately documented in recordings. Toccata Classics is a new CD label (and download website) which intends to make good these deficiencies. In consultation with an informal team of some of the world's leading musicians and musicologists, Toccata Classics is building up a recording programme which aims to reveal that the winnowing process of history often takes little account of quality.

Toccata Classics is the brainchild of Martin Anderson, a Scottish-born, London-based, writer and critic, musicologist and publisher. For over 25 years he has been reviewing recordings and live performances in a variety of publications, including *Tempo*, *The Independent*, *Fanfare* and *International Record Review*. For most of that time he has also been publishing a pioneering series of books on music as Toccata Press, dedicated to filling the gaps in the musical literature: a Toccata Press publication is often the only one available on its composer. He is now about to start doing the same in recorded music with Toccata Classics.

First Releases: October 2005 includes music by Charles-Valentin Alkan; Georg von Bertouch; Heinrich von Herzogenberg; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; Matthew Taylor; Sir Donald Tovey. CDs will be available through normal retail outlets.

The Musicians' Benevolent Fund Christmas card catalogue is now out. For a copy and further details, visit the website [www.mbf.org.uk](http://www.mbf.org.uk) or contact Janet Weston, MBF, 16 Ogle St, London W1W 6JA  
Tel: 020 7636 4481

# LETTERS

## WILLIAM HURLSTONE

I refer to the list of anniversaries published in the Spring 2005 issue of the Bulletin and should like to add the centenary of the death of William Hurlstone.

I have been researching this, as yet, virtually unknown British composer (1876–1906), for illustrated talks. The response has been amazing.

Stanford, who taught *inter-alia* Vaughan Williams, Butterworth, Holst, Ireland, Bridge and Coleridge-Taylor, regarded him as the most outstandingly gifted pupil of all and reckoned along with the likes of Parry, that had he lived just a little longer he would have rivalled Purcell and Elgar. He died with his music in manuscript at the age of 30, although already a Professor at the RCM.

Whilst his brilliant chamber music is available on a number of recorded labels, the only recordings of his orchestral music are now, alas, “out of print”. Five of these, including his *Piano Concerto*, were recorded by the LPO on the Lyrita label conducted by Nicholas Braithwaite. He is on record as saying “I adore Hurlstone’s music”.

There is little doubt that his music makes up perhaps the greatest missing piece in the jigsaw of the British musical heritage.

I am hoping to instigate a Hurlstone revival in 2006 (the BBC orchestras played his works extensively until the end of the last war) and should be happy to provide any further information.

*John Humphries*

## AGM Motion

I have read with dismay the account of the AGM with its shenanigans over governance, and agree generally with your editorial. It seems to me that a few points need to be made more bluntly, and perhaps a member of a component Society is better placed to do this than officials of the Federation:

Put colloquially, the purpose of FRMS is to advance the enjoyment of recorded music among the membership of its component parts

Of itself, FRMS is a tiny organisation involving small amounts of money and having an insignificant impact on the life of the world in general; however, the existence of thousands of such organisations worldwide, in all sorts of

interest areas, does contribute to the cultural richness of the lives of all of us and we do, therefore, have a duty to ensure success of FRMS going beyond the narrow interests of our own membership.

Considering the particular spat in question, I have to say that I can hardly believe that grown people can get so worked up over a matter too arcane to be of interest to most members and involving amounts of money too small to affect their daily lives — whether generally or in their strictly ‘cultural’ aspects.

Something has gone wrong when the Editor of the Bulletin has to use as much space to deal with this ongoing sore as he does with such vitally urgent matters as declining membership. Forget the Committee set-up, forget the odd penny on the subs! Leaving both as they are will serve us perfectly well even if they’re not ideal. Let’s stop wasting our energies and use them instead to further the success of the organisation.

I can see a number of ways in which this matter could be settled once and for all, and doubtless the members of the Committee will think of others. The exact mechanism is probably unimportant, but I am sure that almost everybody would be glad to see the end of this unrepresentative group airing their own self-importance to the detriment of the Federation as a whole; and if there were to be a plebiscite it would best be aimed at stopping this misuse of people’s time and energy rather than on some footling aspect of governance or finance. Good luck!

*Bob Polfreman, Kidderminster*

Only 29 Affiliates attended the last AGM. We have seen and considered a proposal made by Reg Williamson to facilitate the democratic functioning of the FRMS. In essence he suggests that, because so few Affiliates go the AGM, changes to the constitution and annual election to the committee should be subject to postal voting by all Affiliates. We support this view and ask the Board to approve these proposals.

In view of the difficulty in getting anyone to join the FRMS committee we would go further and ask the Officers to consider “What are the core activities of the Federation?” or to put it another way “What do member societies want or need from

FRMS in today's world?"

This Society would list in order of decreasing importance the following:

1. Negotiating performance licenses on behalf of member societies, collecting fees and arranging insurance for societies.
2. Sharing information on presenters of either recorded or live music.
3. Providing a web site for each Society's programme.
4. Providing organisational and technical advice when needed.
5. Organising the annual music weekend including a brief AGM.

To undertake tasks 1-4 and the AGM, FRMS might manage with a much smaller organisation and committee than at present and much of the committee's work might be undertaken via the web, letter and phone. This would reduce the burden for committee members and perhaps encourage others to take a turn on the committee.

*Mrs Muriel Brindle*

*Hon. Secretary Kings Lynn Music Society*

[Editor: I notice with interest that the publication of the Bulletin is not on the list of things to be done.]

-----

Mr John T. Taylor invites views on his letter (Bulletin, Spring 2005).

I have attended nearly every Federation AGM in the last 25 years and have always spoken without fear or favour. But at last year's AGM I remained silent, except for seconding the Federation accounts for adoption.

The silence was because the motion for a referendum on clause 4.2 of the Constitution was total nonsense and in any case, impracticable and possibly unworkable. This view was reflected by others who did speak at the meeting and the subsequent comments by the Editor and Chairman in the last issue.

Mr Taylor also said in his letter, that any motion presented which has not got the backing of the committee has no chance of being passed at the AGM, because with proxy votes the committee can outvote any proposal they do not agree with. Whilst the Chairman has responded to this, may I underline this point to prove this is very unlikely to happen.

The FRMS committee of 12 people has normally a maximum of 24 votes, their own society plus any proxy they may have. This total figure would only increase if any committee member is

also a member of more than one society. (Rule 18 Refers)

I have never known less than 20 non-committee delegates (potentially 40 votes) attend an AGM and in any case it is very rare for all 12 members of the committee to attend an AGM.

In response to attendance it is simply up to affiliates to attend or appoint a proxy, if there is a concern about the cost of travelling.

In regard to a lack of nominations or no need for a ballot, that is often a reflection of contentment with the committee, as at present, I suspect.

To answer the Chairman's point about the lack of nominations at the 1998 AGM, although I stood myself and was defeated, the lack was in part, due to the fact that at least two possible nominees felt uncomfortable, to put it politely, working with other nominees at that AGM. They were not far wrong! The period 1998 to 2001 was the most disastrous period in the 69-year history of the Federation. Happily that is behind us. I can assure Mr Taylor and others that we have one of the most successful committees in years, a committee we should be proud of.

Mr Taylor, please, try to attend a Federation function, we were sorry not to see you at our Central Region event at Peterborough in March 2004, which is relatively near you at Great Yarmouth.

*Gordon Wainwright, Telford.*

*FRMS Central Region Chairman.*

*Wolverhampton RMS. Treasurer*

*Member of the FRMS Committee 1993-1998.*

## Classicalmania

For those who are 'internet literate' MSN has a 'community' called 'classicalmania'. This consists of a discussion board where you can join discussions on any topic related to classical music, or indeed initiate one.

The members are knowledgeable and some members of the FRMS committee have already joined with a view to promoting Recorded Music Societies.

Anyone can apply for membership, a formality, and choose a 'non de plume'.

The link is

<http://groups.msn.com/CIASiCaLMaNiA>

*John Maidment,  
FRMS Committee*

# Busoni and Faust

by Anthony Barker

**B**usoni was the complete musician: composer of operas, chamber, instrumental and symphonic works, piano virtuoso, transcriber, conductor, leader of the avant-garde, theorist and teacher. And, possibly because of the range of his diverse musical talents, he may be less well known and less appreciated as a composer than he deserves to be.

## Infant Prodigy

He was born at Empoli, near Florence, on 1 April 1866 and died on 27 July 1924, four months before Puccini, while Respighi was born in 1879 and died in 1936, like Busoni in his fifties. He always considered himself to be a Tuscan even though he spent only short periods in Tuscany, leaving there for Trieste as a baby. His father was an Italian virtuoso clarinettist, of Corsican extraction and his mother a pianist, whose father was German. He began piano and composition studies at six, making his first public appearance as a pianist the following year and entering Vienna Conservatoire at age nine.

Exploited by his father as an infant prodigy, he was already including his own compositions in recitals: there were over 200 before he turned 20, including his *Stabat Mater*, which he conducted at 12 and his oratorio *Il Sabato del villaggio*. Aged 15, he concluded his studies at Graz, having gained the diploma in composition and piano of the Accademia Filarmonica of Bologna and having developed a phenomenal piano technique. The family moved to Leipzig in 1886 and three years later he completed the short score of his unpublished opera *Sigune*.

## Pianist and Teacher

His widening circle as a concert pianist brought him the friendship of Goldmark, Mahler and Delius and advice from Brahms and Tchaikovsky. Thoroughly immersed in the German musical ethic, he regarded Italian music as ossified, until Verdi's *Otello* and *Falstaff* lifted his hopes. Now began his metamorphosis, as his varied talents successively struggled to become dominant. In

1888 he became professor of piano in Helsinki, gaining the friendship of Sibelius and meeting his future wife Gerda Sjöstrand, daughter of the sculptor. 1890 brought the professorship of piano at Moscow Conservatoire and the first performance of his *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra. With this, his *Sonata for Violin and Piano* and his *Two Piano Pieces* he won the



Rubinstein prize for composition. The *Konzertstück* marks his maturity as a composer, already demonstrating his ability to absorb the influences of others and to refine them in producing unique works, while constantly seeking to find his individual musical voice. His recognition as a significant composer may have been delayed by his increasing volume of transcriptions of Bach, Beethoven, Liszt, Mozart, Schubert and others. Soon, the demands of the concert circuit made America a more attractive proposition than Moscow

and he spent a year in Boston, also teaching at the New England Conservatoire, before relocating to New York. No works of note emerged during these two years in America.

## Pianist and Composer

In 1895 came the *Geharnischte Suite*, with its glimpses of Brahms, Liszt and Wagner. His recitals continued to absorb much of his energy and it was 1897 before he completed the *Violin Concerto*. One of his most popular works, it demonstrated his understanding of the violin's potential, the last movement being encored at its premiere. Immediately afterwards came *Lustspiel-Ouverture* (Comedy Overture), with its Mozartian lightness of mood. The success of his first *Sonata* and the *Violin Concerto* encouraged him to compose his *Sonata No. 2 for Violin and Piano* in 1900, a work he regarded as marking his true emergence as a composer.

He gave Berlin premieres of orchestral works by Bartok, Debussy, Delius, Elgar and Sibelius, as well as his own. Clearly, he was regarded primarily as a virtuoso pianist as his 1905 programme for Elgar's Malvern Concert Club contained neither

his own work nor his transcriptions.

### Leader of the Avant-garde

From about 1904, in his thinking and writing Busoni advocated the creation of universal music, without geographical or tonal boundaries and some of his ideas are inset into this article. This involved intense study of the works of Bach and Mozart and from this basis the pursuit of free expression brought him leadership of the avant-garde, briefly stepping from tonality into atonality, with Schoenberg close behind him. The start of WWI brought this pursuit of new instruments, new forms and rhythms to an end; he consolidated this sortie into Expressionism into his ever-developing style. During this period the ideal of writing the story of Faust became imbedded in his soul, leading to his personal identification with Faust.

### Composer and Pianist

His *Piano Concerto* took three years to complete in 1904, today his most popular work. In order to complete it he cancelled London concerts, this marking the point where composing began to predominate. He refined it from seven to five movements lasting 70 minutes, with a choral finale incorporating the *Hymn to Allah*, written for a projected opera on Aladdin. Mondonville and Steibelt had already used a chorus in their concerti, unusual though it may seem to us. He channelled his grief at his mother's death in 1909, in three weeks reworking his *Berceuse* for piano into the *Berceuse élégiaque*, in her memory. The unrelieved melancholy of this elegy, with its cradle-rocking rhythm is his orchestral masterpiece.

### Three Pre-Faust Operas

It took from 1906 to 1911 to write *Die Brautwahl* (The Bridal Choice), his first published opera. It lasted for three hours before prudent cutting, the characters including two magicians (one counterfeiter, one alchemist) and three suitors of the Councillor's daughter. It conveys particularly well the ghostly scenes and the casket scene, to determine the victor. To defray the cost of publishing the substantial score, he wrote the *Brautwahl Suite* for concert performance,

elaborating five themes (ghostly, lyrical, mystical, Hebrew, joyous), rather than stitching together the opera's best elements.

Now followed two operas using masked figures, based on the puppet theatre, in a revival of the commedia dell'arte. Busoni was working on *Arlecchino* (Harlequin) when WWI broke out, as an alien being forced to leave Berlin for New York, where he spent unhappy months, completing it in Zurich in 1916. *Arlecchino* is portrayed as Rogue, Warrior, Husband and Conqueror

*"The ultimate musical form would be opera, so he set out to extend his music by free expression then refined it, with Doktor Faust to be the perfect exemplar."*

and is a spoken role, addressing both the audience and the other characters, making obvious the origin of some of the ideas of Busoni's pupil Weill. While writing the delightful *Arlecchino*, he produced his orchestral study *Rondò arlecchinesco*. At the end is

another musical surprise: a tenor singing lalala and echoing the German puppet character Little Kasper, who always bounces on stage with his larallera. *Arlecchino* was an hour long, so he needed a companion piece and he turned to the suite for orchestra he had written for Gozzi's play *Turandot* (which Puccini also used as his source); it took four months to complete in 1916. Princess

*"Opera singers should be given a magical, unreal story to act, as opera appears contrived when attempting to portray the truth."*

*Turandot* is an unattainable ideal, capable of being achieved only through a life and death ordeal. This she deliberately creates in her search for a worthy consort, while her attraction for Kalaf is just that unattainability. Here is a link to

Helen, who is to appear in *Doktor Faust*.

### Composer and Conductor

During this period, Busoni assumed his final role, with composition the prime function, conducting having largely displaced appearances as a pianist. He had conducted numerous performances of his own works, but it is interesting that Elsa Respighi regretted this change, as although there was a progressive improvement, the early quality of his conducting was modest. His withdrawal from performance was compensated by a number of works for piano. Written between 1910 and 1920, his *Sonatinas* are his finest piano works, with No. 1 a reworking of his cycle *An die Jugend*. No. 2 attests to his brief period of comradeship with Schoenberg and his adventure into impressionism, probably being his piano masterwork. No. 3 incorporates the benefits of his experimental period, its setting simple and

beautiful, while on the surface No. 4 is refined and calm, concealing considerable depth of feeling. No. 5 is an exploration of J S Bach's Fantasy and Fugue and No. 6. the well-known *Carmen Fantasy*. He returned to Bologna as director of the Liceo Musicale, determined to wean the city from its obsession with Wagner. He failed and returned to Berlin rapidly. His pupil Nathalie Curtis had gathered the lore and songs of the Hopi Indians and, during his months in New York in 1915 he produced his *Indian Diaries*, based on these melodies, a rhapsody for piano that included a Cheyenne song.

## Faust

Busoni's interest in the occult caused him to be convinced at times that he was the reincarnation of Leonardo da Vinci (born five miles from him) and Hoffmann (author of *Die Brautwahl*) and it also gave him a sense of identification with Faust. Parallels with Leonardo were his constant quest for perfection and the leaving of works unfinished, despite thorough preparatory sketches and works. These were echoed in *Doktor Faust*, the closing monologue and the music for Helen of Troy's appearance remaining incomplete at his death. He constantly reached out for perfection for Helen's music, but it eluded him, possibly because the ideal he sought was truly unattainable. *Doktor Faust* obsessed him for twenty years and, though incomplete, it is his most finished work, synthesising and incorporating all his experiments, applying his theoretical grasp and his melodic skills. From it he produced in 1919 the *Sarabande and Cortège*, which pleased him greatly and is now recognised as being of his finest orchestral music. He drew the character of Faust partly from legend and fairy-tale, concerned not to be overpowered by the language of Goethe. It incorporates three tableaux and two intermezzi, which were deliberately not joined up. He was concerned to convey atmosphere by whatever means possible, whether texture, style or technique, ranging from modality to chromaticism. On his death, the task of completing it was refused by Schoenberg and was unwillingly

*"While the eye absorbs the visual portrayal of the action, the music of an opera should convey the psychological content and the characters' moods and thoughts."*



undertaken by his pupil Jarnach, who strangely was denied access to the manuscript of Busoni's detailed plan. Antony Beaumont, the Busoni scholar and conductor, produced an alternative completion in 1982 (see the comparative CD review on page 34)

## Conclusion

Paradoxes abound among composers and Busoni was no exception. He advanced theories that he did not carry through fully in his compositions. He dipped his toe into atonality, but did not dive in. What held him back? Maybe the presentiment that it would be unproductive, as it was for Schoenberg for seven years. Or, possibly, the need to relocate following the outbreak of WWI threw his creative impulse out of gear. He can certainly lay claim to being the most complete musician as composer, pianist, conductor, teacher, theorist and promoter of the works of emergent composers. He had returned to Berlin in 1919, teaching composition at the Prussian Academy of Arts from 1921, but by then his heart disease was evident and on 27 July 1924 he died at the age of 58, ironically succeeded at the academy by Schoenberg. The preparation for his masterwork *Doktor Faust* was painstaking and unrelenting and it is a crowning testimony to his musicianship. He was interesting but uncongenial as a person and that and the multifaceted nature of his skills may have blinded many to his fine music. One critic suggested that his work would not be fully appreciated until the turn of the century, so his music is ripe for re-examination and enjoyment. He died in the same year as Puccini, who left his finest work, *Turandot*, uncompleted and Respighi died with *Lucrezia* unfinished.

He departed in the august company of his compatriots.

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# Red Rays, Blue Rays and Other Related Topics

FRMS Music Weekend 2005  
Technical Forum

As you probably all know (being of a technical mind) CD's are read by a red laser and SACD/DVD-A are read by a blue laser. There are two rival formats (just like VHS/BETA), SACD using Blue Ray has the support of Philips, Sony and Panasonic. HD-DVD from Toshiba is supported by Matsushita, Time-Warner and others.

The system called SACD or Super Audio CD is backed by Philips and Sony. It is a modified DVD but contains no video, just super Hi Fi music in stereo or surround sound. There is big difference between this and HD-DVD. SACD was designed to be a hybrid system. The disc has two completely different sound recordings on the same side but at different depths in the optical layer. This is invisible to the naked eye but the laser in the SACD player recognises and plays the super-fi layer. If played in an ordinary CD player the red laser reads the CD layer. To sum up; An SACD disc plays on either a CD player to give CD quality or on an SACD player to give super-fi stereo or surround sound.

Toshiba's HD DVD or DVD-Audio discs play either on a new HD-DVD blue laser player or existing DVD player. Its trick is to make the disc with two separate recording layers; the top layer being an ordinary red laser DVD recording and the lower layer is a new blue laser recording. There has to be a penalty and that is the capacity is limited to 4.7 G-bytes, while most of today's DVD's hold 8.5 G-bytes and a blue laser capacity is 15 G-bytes.

DVD-Audio (DVD-A) is a system which uses almost all the recording space on a DVD for sound with only short sequences of video or a gallery of still pictures and information about the artists. In effect DVD-A is a super Hi Fi system. It is designed to play without a screen.

Originally the idea was to make DVD-A discs play properly only on new DVD-Audio players. But this was abandoned in favour of a DVD-A disc that not only plays on a super Hi Fi DVD-Audio player but also in ordinary DVD quality on a "normal"

DVD Player. In fact some DVD players can play both types of DVD disc. So the original idea of DVD-Audio has been diluted. Record companies have shown little interest in the format and you'll be hard pressed to find any in the local record store.

Who will win? My guess is SACD as it does not require a TV/monitor/screen to be used and also because these discs are appearing more and more.

There is another rare format being pushed by Pacific Microvision (an offshoot of Microsoft) called HDCD. I have a couple of these but honestly cannot see any improvement in the sound.

Looking at the digital waveform using an oscilloscope shows that the digital level is a lot higher in amplitude, but that is all, I can only presume that it is an attempt to improve the signal to noise ratio. Now therein lies a mystery, as noise in the digital domain just does not exist!

On another subject, we have emerging a new kind of home entertainment system; yes, you have guessed it. It is a special kind of PC.

The new breed of multimedia PCs can come in a style reminiscent of a Hi Fi unit, by design it is meant to sit with all your other units and will/can render your existing equipment obsolete! It can play DVD's and CD's, is a video recorder/player and a TV/Radio as well. Other options can include for example a satellite receiver, e.g. the WinRadio module. The latter is a highly sophisticated short wave receiver able amongst all its other options, to pick up the new method of transmission called DRM (Digital Radio Mondiale). This offers an FM quality of reception on Short wave, medium and long wave transmissions. Already radio amateurs are trying to use a version of it. PCB's or cards are now available for just about any application, one such is the reception of Satellite signals using a dish with one, two or three LNB's (Low Noise Blocks) for the reception of the Astra, Eutelsat and Hotbird satellites. It is not generally known that there are literally hundreds of radio channels available in HiFi sound. These piggyback on the various TV channels Of course one doesn't need to have a PC to receive these. Suitable receivers can



be obtained from specialist shops from about £100 upwards. The more expensive have facilities to steer dishes using co-ordinates pre-programmed to accurately align themselves on the chosen satellite. Of course, TV channels in many languages can be received, but they are gradually becoming encrypted to make one pay to receive them.

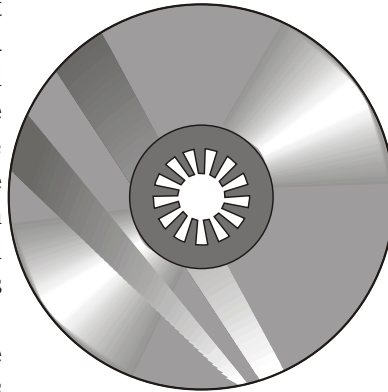
I would like to now dispel some myths about digital/analogue audio signals. All the various media we have at our disposal use either or both digital and analogue methods. One of the biggest differences is the susceptibility to interference from extraneous noise sources. We have all heard surface noise/clicks etc from playing LP's, and possibly mains hum from unshielded cables etc. In the digital domain this just cannot happen. Digital signals are unaffected by analogue interference. This is one of the many reasons that this country adopted DAB radio. A DAB radio picks up a digital signal and when converted to analogue sound is an exact replica of the original transmitted signal. If the signal strength falls to an unacceptable level then there is total breakup with some clicking noises and if the signal does not improve, silence. This is unlike an analogue signal, when the signal becomes weaker, noise builds up until one is forced to retune or switch off.

When a CD is copied either in a PC or a dedicated CD recorder one gets an exact copy with nothing added or subtracted. A popular belief is that PC's with all the various digital "noises" going on inside the case can cause the digital signal going to the recording, to alter subtly the final recording. This just cannot happen.

At Daventry last year a simple test using the Yamaha HDD Recorder to copy a CD and also one made with a PC was played to an unsuspecting audience. Then comments were called for, I expect most of you took part. But the test was flawed. You should have listened without knowing which recording you were listening to. I think the results would have been very different. Various technical editors of Hi Fi magazines have carried out similar tests. In all cases no one could tell the difference using identical playback equipment.

Digital signals cannot be altered in any way. One either gets an exact replica or nothing.

Analogue signals can be altered/degraded to such a point that they become unlistenable.



On another subject, perhaps a few words might be helpful. DAB or Digital Audio Broadcasting has taken off in this country. But there is a problem. 20 years ago the technical standards were developed by EUREKA, a research project for the European Union. It's based on MP2, an audio standard that was soon replaced by MP3 and now MP4. The MP3 standard uses much much better compression algorithms than MP2 and can reproduce high quality audio using much less bandwidth. MP3 can produce the same audio quality at 128 Kbps that requires 192 kbps using MP2.

The problem in the UK is lack of space in the frequency spectrum; this has led to squeezing more stations into the limited frequency space currently available. To do this there have had to be compromises in the audio quality made. Which rather defeats the object of being on DAB in the first place. Many stations are encoding at such low bit rates that the audio quality is actually lower than analogue FM, which is a crazy situation. Yet the UK market is one where DAB is turning out to be relatively successful. It obviously is not audio quality that is driving people to DAB, so it must be something else. I'll leave that for discussion. It should be noted that the Media Council for Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany is saying

that they want to replace DAB with something better; Finland's public broadcaster YLE has dropped it's DAB services because commercial broadcasters are not interested. DAB has been a flop in Canada and its not exactly flourishing in other places. Surveys have shown that there is a substantial amount of radio listening via Sky and Freeview. Here there is no compression and the audio quality has to be heard to be believed. So in order of preference for quality radio listening: Freeview/Sky is the best for all round listening with Radio Three on DAB (192Kbps) followed by analogue FM. We have all heard that analogue TV channels are going to disappear. This does not apply to analogue FM. Finally the BBC along with a number of commercial radio companies support a trade body called the Digital Radio Development Bureau (DRDB). It's task is to ensure digital radio's wide accessibility and swift adoption in the U.K. One of its slogans is that "DAB digital radio delivers improved sound quality." It can, but too often it doesn't. So it is not entirely truthful.

*Philip Ashton. Technical Officer FRMS*

# Reverse Transcription

— a matter of black and white? by Arthur Butterworth

**A**lthough a term well-known to bio-scientists, the expression has its own very different musical meaning. I remarked a few years ago that, throughout musical history, much original music has been subject to all manner of re-arrangement and transcription according to the whim of later musicians. Purists, of course, generally object to this, believing that an original work of art is sacrosanct and ought never to be tampered with.

The point was made that transcriptions nevertheless serve a useful purpose in making a work more widely available when the original might not have been, orchestrating for a variety of other combinations of instruments music perhaps originally intended for the piano. This generally implies expanding the texture of music that otherwise had to be confined to what one pair of hands might conveniently manage to play at the keyboard. It offers all sorts of imaginative opportunities to explore timbre, increasing the sheer volume of sound and perhaps most of all to give many others the satisfaction of taking part in a performance which would otherwise be the exclusive preserve of just a privileged few.

To an arranger or transcriber (the two functions are not exactly alike) the prospects of expanding some other composer's original ideas are full of exciting and challenging possibilities, and in a sense easier than having to think up something of one's own. The material is already there, its structure, melody, harmony and overall texture ready-made; like the child's black and white, outline picture book; all it needs is to colour the blank spaces between the outlines provided ... but this is hardly original art. However transcription, and perhaps even more so 'arranging' (which usually implies being free to do something different than remaining faithful to the original design) is never quite so straightforward; some invention is required to fill out a slender original, expand and convert it into a more colourful piece of musical architecture. No matter how much it might be objected to in principle, the idea and the practice of taking someone else's creation and altering it — defacing it in the purist's opinion — has been almost universal.

One kind of transcription has been of particular practical use: that of making piano versions of

large-scale vocal works: opera, oratorio, and such music that originally called for a large orchestra to accompany singers or instrumental soloists. In order to get to know their solo roles solo performers have always needed to have a piano reduction of the full score so that they can have an accompaniment in the early stages of learning their part.

These workaday piano reductions, by their very nature, are generally only an outline of the essentials of the accompaniment. It is not practicable to cram into the space that can accommodate two hands at the keyboard all the richness and multifarious subtle detail that the full orchestra is able to provide. A compromise has to be made: this is the very opposite situation of transcribing a keyboard work for a large orchestra or band, where the requirement is to expand — and maybe enrich — the original. Now the requirement is to condense a fulsome score to the slimmed-down essentials of melody, harmony and rhythm. Very often subsidiary themes: counterpoints, which might be quite interesting in themselves have to be omitted; there is no room for them within the scope of one pair of hands.

There is a better chance with four hands at the keyboard instead of two. Slimming-down a score becomes considerably more a problem than expanding it. It is a simple parallel with moving into a bigger house: there is more room for the multitude of one's possessions, nothing need be discarded, this is akin to orchestration; there are enough instruments to take care of every strand of the original score. On the other hand moving into a smaller house requires one to be selective and throw out things that are not absolutely essential; in the same way reducing the full score to the piano means that some of the less essential counter-melodies have to be left out.

Most traditional vocal scores, the publications that are meant to assist vocalist in learning their parts, have generally been in the prosaic phrase: "workmanlike"; in other words they serve a purpose if not always a very artistic one in terms of keyboard idiom. Concert pianists familiar with performing the great solo works of Schumann, Brahms or Chopin can hardly expect to find much of satisfying idiomatic keyboard style in a vocal score of Wagner or Verdi. Before the development

of recording and the availability of well-nigh perfect CDs, it used to be the common way of getting to know the classical symphonies by playing them in piano transcriptions, either for one player or for two playing as duettists, perhaps less frequently in transcriptions for two pianos, where of course much more variety of texture could be put in. Purists did not object to the piano being used to make the classics better known in this way. The objection has really been on idealistic grounds. Why make a transcription when performances of the original are now widely available?

The ethics of making transcriptions from orchestral scores for brass or wind band has been much debated. Making orchestral transcriptions from an original brass band work has only rarely been considered worthwhile, but there have been some notable exceptions: Elgar's original brass band work, *The Severn Suite* has been re-scored for wind band, and for large orchestra, and is also known as the composer's *Second Organ Sonata*. Holst's *A Moorside Suite* is also available as a wind band piece as well as in a full orchestral version. Holst's *Hammersmith Prelude and Scherzo* originally written in the 1930s for the then BBC Wireless Military Band became far more familiar in its full orchestral guise.

What of transcribing such works for the piano? The same kind of problems arise as in re-casting an orchestral score: Can the brass idiom be satisfactorily re-cast in terms of the keyboard, or is it inevitable that something has to be omitted to make it playable? The problem is vividly demonstrated in the case of the solo piano version of the Brahms *Academic Festival Overture*. It is interesting to compare two widely differing situations regarding this major orchestral work. When it was transcribed by Denis Wright in 1937 for a major brass band contest, there were severe limitations as to what the brass band was capable of representing: the enormously exciting, flamboyant string passages had to be jettisoned completely since there were just not enough instruments — 24 brass players — to accommodate all of Brahms' complex counter-melodies originally shared-out between an orchestra of over seventy players, including the basic string band, a large wood-wind ensemble and a complement of horns, trumpets and trombones along with a percussion section. The brass band of 1937 was not allowed to use any percussion at contests so that Brahms's essential timpani part had to be fudged on the E-flat bass — hardly a satisfactory

arrangement. The two-handed piano version made in 1882 by Robert Keller, Brahms's regular copyist, in the employ of Simrock the publisher, caused some misgivings on Brahms' part: ...“Keller is a splendid man and does everything so diligently and properly that he cannot be faulted. But I do need to tell you that a two-hand arrangement by him reveals the philistine, and that it could be of no interest to a player with any sophistication” ... The implication being that Keller's transcription was too awkward and likely to put off those who might like to try it at the keyboard. Keller's two-handed piano score is well-nigh impractical even to a virtuoso pianist, let alone the 'average' accomplished amateur. It tries to include every instrumental nuance and inessential decoration in the string parts, is not pianistic and attempts to play it sound laboured and crude. It could have been much simplified and would thus sound far more effective as a representation of Brahms' original score. These two widely different realisations of a major orchestral work demonstrate just how difficult it is to make a convincing and wholly satisfactory “transcription in reverse”: reducing rather than expanding a composer's original creation.

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# Robert Simpson, Symphonist

by Martin Anderson

Robert Simpson was arguably Britain's most important composer since Vaughan Williams; he was certainly one of the century's most powerful and original symphonists anywhere. But recognition took a while to come. Twenty-five years ago Simpson's music was appreciated by a small coterie of enthusiasts, some of whom came together in 1981 to form the Robert Simpson Society (a development Simpson himself regarded with a mixture of gratitude and detached irony), which then began to seek a company that might begin the systematic recording of Simpson's music. Good fortune led the RSS to Hyperion and Ted Perry, its maverick founder, who took on the project and stuck with it through thick and thin. The resulting recordings, first on LP, then on CD, transformed Simpson's reputation in the last decade and a half of his life: at the time of his death, on 21 November 1997, he was firmly established as one of the most original and powerful symphonic voices of the twentieth century — such is the power of the gramophone.

Robert Simpson was born in Leamington Spa on 2 March 1921, son of an English father and a Dutch mother. His parents intended him for medicine, but music was the stronger calling — although, as a conscientious objector, he did serve in a mobile surgical unit during the Second World War. From 1942 to 1944 he studied under Herbert Howells in London, and took his DMus at Durham University in 1951, presenting his First Symphony (in truth the fifth he had composed; he rejected the first four) for the occasion.

His first public activities were with the Exploratory Concert Society he founded in London after the war, where, with Donald Mitchell and Harold Truscott, he would present music by composers he felt were undeservedly neglected. In 1952 he joined the BBC as a producer. He spent the next 28 years there, becoming one of Britain's best known broadcasters, his low, gravelly voice articulating penetrating insights into the music of

the composers he most admired: Bach, Sibelius, Nielsen, Bruckner and, above all, his beloved Beethoven.

Simpson was also one of the finest writers on music that the English language has yet produced. His prose was uncluttered, his metaphors direct and highly imaginative — and often extremely funny — and his command of the subject unflinching. In the Preface to his 1967 study *The Essence of Bruckner*, he wrote that 'the inner processes of music reveal themselves most readily to another sympathetic composer', a remark constantly vindicated by his steady stream of discoveries, particularly in the music of Beethoven.



Robert Simpson

But he was never an academic theorist: he was a communicator, because he cared passionately about the music he admired, and his articles and broadcast talks were all intended to let the reader/listener perceive for himself the musical procedures at work. Describing a change of key in a Sibelius symphony, for example, Simpson would add: 'But it doesn't matter if you can't tell E minor from a rissole' — the important thing was that you could hear, feel, the effect it produced. There is no missionary hectoring zeal in his writing, simply the firm belief that good music could do its own convincing.

His views were indeed held firmly. He was a lifelong pacifist, and his move to south-west Ireland in the early days of the Thatcher era was encouraged by the fact that Ireland did not have a nuclear arsenal. Having joined the BBC at the heyday of the Third Programme, he was appalled at the degeneration of its standards; like his friend Hans Keller, he saw the corporation as the ideal means of communicating the values he held to be important — not because of any cultural snobbery but because they both believed deeply in the civilising force of great art.

The breaking-point came in 1980, when the BBC attempted to make swingeing cuts in its orchestral resources, occasioning the musicians'

union boycott of BBC work that summer. Simpson resigned, writing in a letter to *The Times* that he could no longer work for an institution whose views he no longer respected. His 1981 monograph *The Proms and Natural Justice* objected to the fact that the person planning the Proms was there until he was claimed by death or the BBC pension scheme — an objection which still holds under the current arrangements.

Simpson was also a powerful force in promoting fellow composers in whose music he believed. The British discovery of Carl Nielsen in the 1950s owed more to Simpson's committed advocacy than any other factor. And the emergence of Havergal Brian into the public consciousness came about thanks to a chance encounter with the score of Brian's Eighth Symphony in 1964, when its composer was 78. Simpson was so impressed that he arranged for the work to be performed by Sir Adrian Boult and the London Philharmonic Orchestra; and with time he determined that the BBC would perform all of Brian's symphonies — 32 by the time Brian died, after an astonishingly creative Indian summer unleashed in good measure thanks to Simpson's encouragement.

But for all his prominence in British musical life it is for his own music that Robert Simpson will be remembered. He completed 11 symphonies, concertos for violin, piano, flute and cello, 15 string quartets, a good number of other chamber pieces, a substantial corpus of works for brass band, two choral compositions and a handful of none the less sizable pieces for piano and organ.

Most of these works employ the structural principle that makes his music so singularly compelling: the tension between opposing tonalities — a reflection, perhaps, of the vast tensions that inform Simpson's hobby, astronomy. Over time, Simpson moved away from the pitting of one key against another; instead, he began to examine the generative power of an interval or series of intervals — though the controlling grip of key still gave his music a sense of purpose and direction that very few of his contemporaries ever achieved.

The ability of tonal conflict to generate tension and momentum first occurred to Simpson not through the music of Nielsen, whose symphonies had developed along similar lines, but via the negative example of Schoenberg — surprisingly, in view of Simpson's aversion to his music. Simpson was struck by the fact that Schoenberg's *Piano Concerto* seemed 'fixed to a tonal centre, which loomed periodically behind the murk, and was

deliberately avoided at the end', and he felt that he could make a more positive use of this phenomenon: 'I wanted to find a way to make tonal centres react against each other, not to make non-tonality react against tonality. I felt (and still feel) that to try to anaesthetise the listener's tonal sense was to deny oneself a powerful means of expression'.

It was after Simpson had embarked on this path that he encountered the music of Carl Nielsen, which so impressed him that for months he couldn't compose: he felt someone else had said it all before. But with the first British performance of the *First Symphony*, under Boult, in 1954, it was clear that an important new voice had entered British music.

Edmund Rubbra — another composer whose works, like Simpson's, were marginalised by the modernist orthodoxy that ruled musical life in Britain from the 1950s until the 1970s — commented on the strength of purpose and clear sense of direction of *Simpson's No 1* stated:

*"There is no trace of diffidence in facing the issues of symphonic thought; indeed, to write a symphony in one continuous movement lasting about 26 minutes argues an assurance that is usually arrived at late in one's composing life."*

Rubbra continued with a description that applies to Simpson's style throughout his nearly 50 years as a composer:

*"The music is rugged and uncompromising but intensely logical in its thought and if there are more than occasional echoes of Nielsen in it, both in the scoring and the actual music, it is an influence that has been so absorbed and transmuted that one is aware of an attitude rather than another personality."*

Simpson's music almost always took the larger forms of Western classical music — the symphony, the quintet, the quartet, the trio — since he was acutely aware of his responsibility to the tradition in which he worked, especially as it then seemed under fire from the Darmstadt radicals who claimed that the symphony was dead. As a result, there is almost nothing in his output that is 'easy' — no suites (some early incidental music apart), no songs, no concert overtures; instead, Simpson used those large spaces to grapple with particular compositional problems, often with considerable ingenuity.

The slow movement of the *Second Symphony*, for example, is a fairly strict palindrome. And his early (1948) *Variations and Finale on a Theme of Haydn* took a palindromic minuet of Haydn's as

the basis for variations that are themselves palindromic. He expanded this idea in his huge *Ninth Quartet* of 1982: an hour-long set of 32 palindromic variations and fugue on that same theme — one of the most difficult pieces in the quartet repertoire, and also one of the most moving. Ten years earlier, the *Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Quartets* (1973–75) formed a unique homage from one composer to another: as Simpson put it, they ‘constitute a close study of Beethoven’s three *Razumovsky Quartets, Op. 59*, that is to say, the attempt to understand those great works resulted in not a verbal analogy but music’.

The 50-minute *Ninth Symphony* (1986–87), the work Simpson himself regarded as his greatest, is built in a single tempo, over a single basic pulse; what the listener perceives, of course, is not some stale compositional technique but an enormous organic construction of terrifying power. It was when the Hyperion CD of the *Ninth Symphony* won a Gramophone award that the world really began to take notice. That recording was sponsored mainly by the Rex Foundation of San Francisco, a front for the charitable activities of the rock group the Grateful Dead, the source of much help for British music over the last 20 years or so (Simpson immediately referred to himself as ‘the grateful living’).

Simpson had been composing vigorously since leaving the BBC and looked set to have a productive retirement on the south-west coast of Ireland when, in 1992, he suffered a massive stroke that left him partially paralysed and in constant pain. With the valiant, unflagging support of Angela, his second wife, he managed to complete his *Second String Quintet*, but the flood of new works was over. He had, at least, the satisfaction of seeing his status assured — though he never courted approval, never used his status as a senior producer at the BBC to push his own music; with the cursed determination that characterised his friend Havergal Brian, he simply ploughed his own furrow until the world caught up with him.

Yet Simpson’s music is not ‘difficult’, even if it does demand concentration from the listener. And at its best it has a visceral excitement that is bound to evoke a physical reaction in its audience: the *Fifth Symphony*, for example, is a ferocious explosion of energy that could easily match the century’s other major Fifths — Sibelius’, Nielsen’s, Shostakovich’s — in popularity if it were given sufficient exposure. The music, indeed, is like the man: tough and uncompromising, its stubborn integrity often illuminated by a fleet wit and surprising gentleness.

## THE ROBERT SIMPSON SOCIETY

was formed in 1980 by a group of enthusiasts to promote and maintain interest in the music and life of the British composer Robert Simpson (1921-1997).

During the last 25 year the Society has arranged the recording of all of his 11 symphonies, 15 string quartets and works for brass band, choir and chamber ensembles.

We have a world-wide membership and would be pleased to supply details to you. We send out to all enquirers a free information pack, which includes a complimentary copy of Simpson's polemic *The Proms and Natural Justice*. Please contact the undersigned if you would like to receive the pack.

We shall be happy to supply speakers with a program of Simpson's music for your society.

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# MUSICAL WEEKEND — DAVENTRY

For some time the FRMS had been looking for a new venue, which would be both economical and also of a high standard of facilities and accommodation. Last year after an extensive search and several disappointments the Hanover International Hotel at Daventry was chosen as the hotel which most closely met our requirements. This proved to be very popular and accordingly the decision was taken to repeat this venue for a second year. The Hotel had by now had a change of ownership and in practice the standards of accommodation were, if anything even higher.

Tony Baines and Graham Kiteley were responsible for the administration of what proved to be an excellent weekend. The attendance was good and the artistic content was up to the normal high standard. The main change from the previous year was to have more free time between events and this proved popular and delegates feedback on all aspects seemed very positive



## Allan Schiller — “Still Tickling the Ivories?”

The above sub-title was a question posed to Allan Schiller by the Duke of Edinburgh after he had appeared at a Victorian Evening at Balmoral. This



*Allan Schiller*

opened the talk given by this pianist who combines distinction in his playing with a humorous and highly approachable personality. He was born in Leeds of a father who was a professional violinist; Allan studied with Fanny Waterman (founder of the Leeds International Piano Competition) who was the best teacher around. She instilled strict discipline and expected him to play pieces from memory and be able to start from

any bar from memory. At the age of 14 he played a Haydn Piano concerto with The Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra. In 1957 he started his recording career with Pye/Nixa.

After studying with Denis Mathews (who specialised in music by Mozart and Beethoven), he became the first British Pianist to win a scholarship at the Moscow Conservatoire.

He has been a professional concert pianist for most of his life and has made many recordings including music by Chopin, Mozart, Haydn and Busoni. His talk had the audience enthralled by his humorous stories and his obvious deep musical knowledge.

Dame Joan Sutherland in conversation with Edward Greenfield.

Dame Joan was born in Point Piper, Australia, the daughter of a mezzo-soprano. She won a scholarship which led to her study as an apprentice at Covent Garden in 1950. Her life changed after she met Richard Bonyngé a pianist who became her

accompanist, they married in 1954 and subsequently he became a conductor and musicologist.

Richard Bonyngé had originally been scheduled to come to the weekend but unfortunately was unable to attend. However Edward Greenfield and Dame Joan spent the first part of the



*Dame Joan Sutherland*

presentation in discussing his career as a conductor.

Bonyngé himself as a musicologist delved into the scores



of old operas and became the first modern conductor to delete the cuts which had become commonplace in bel canto operas. He also became an expert in classical ballet music and his interpretations and recordings in this field helped his reputation. He recorded full ballets of Massenet and Offenbach. His repertoire embraced much of the music which had previously been explored by Beecham. Extracts from his recordings demonstrated his artistry and expertise in his chosen repertoire.



*Dames Norma Major and Joan Sutherland (Photo-Colin Dancer)*

The session was completed by a showing of a number of private filmings of Bonyngé conducting ballet and also conducting the orchestra accompanying Dame Joan and other singers such as Domingo in operatic extracts. The quality of filming was not always up to full professional standard technically, but the quality of musical and artistic interest was exemplary.

After lunch we enjoyed a conversation between Dame Joan and Edward Greenfield. Dame Joan was sharp as a needle, with a marvellous sense of fun. She confessed to being a slow learner of operatic parts and stressed the need to express the dramatic role in her singing. Her height was a problem, not to her, but to some of the male singers; she said she sang on large stages and mainly with tall men, others stood on something or made her sit down!

She had wanted to sing from her earliest childhood, singing with records of singers and practical scales with her mother every day. She became a secretary, but sang as an amateur; her life changed when she won the competition that led to her apprenticeship at Convent Garden. She attended opera classes at RCM for a year. After singing with the St Pancras Opera Company, she obtained a part at Glyndeborne. She dismissed the suggestion that her success was due to her natural voice; instead she protested that it was mainly due to very hard work and practice.

The Decca two LP disc set "The Art of the Prima Donna" made her reputation. She toured throughout the world and appeared in most important opera houses. She gained the nickname "La Stupenda" and there can be little doubt that she was the leading bel canto singer of her time. She was made a Dame in 1979 and retired from opera in 1900, ending a career that had lasted four decades.

Edward Greenfield introduced a stunning selection of her recordings that fully justified her nickname. The warmth of her personality completely won over the audience (which included another Dame — Dame Norma Major).

#### John Amis

Dr John Amis appeared in a wonderful orange corduroy suit and gave a marvellously entreaty after-dinner talk. He started by telling us that his career started at Barclays Bank, but soon had had enough. He used to read the EMG Monthly letter; he went to EMG and asked for a job and got one! At EMG he was expected to talk to customers, which he did with

enthusiasm and made friends with many celebrities. When he left EMG he joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra in an administrative function and with Beecham as concert manager of the newly founded Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. He became the London critic of *The Scotsman*, and in the late fifties organised the *Hoffnung* festivals. Later he was mainly involved in broadcasting, first in radio and then TV.

John Amis presented a selection of fascinating music and entertained us with a non-stop selection of anecdotes about some of the musicians he had known. The highlights included a weird story about



*John Amis*

skinny-dipping with Sir Michael Tippett and also the tactless way that Sir John Barbirolli had tried to comfort the wife of a musician whose husband had been unfaithful (... I'm sure it will improve and he is playing better than ever!).

His speech was a perfect answer to any woes and he sent us off happy to our beds (in some cases via the bar!).

#### Caroline Brown and the Hanover Band

Caroline Brown studied the cello at the Royal College of Music and whilst there, developed a passion for period instruments. Hearing Nikolaus Harnoncourt conducting



Caroline Brown

classical works played on original instruments in Vienna was a major influence.

In 1980 she founded The Hanover Band and remains its Artistic Director. A first task involved players assembling a comprehensive set of instruments to match the times of the various composers played (for example 10 different flutes were needed). Soon the Hanover Band became one of the world's foremost period instrument orchestras. In the early days Nimbus Records helped the Orchestra and made 56 CDs (all single microphone recordings). Roy Goodwin became conductor in 1986 (he was originally in the Band as a violinist) and held this position until 1994. Whenever possible, the original scores were consulted as the published scores were often not authentic.

Caroline spoke with enthusiasm and authority and played extracts from recordings made by The Hanover Band with mainly 18th-19th century music up to and including that of Sir Arthur Sullivan.

Arguably the most exciting of the recordings played was from Weber's Horn Concerto on



Serenata Winds

Nimbus, with Anthony Halstead playing the natural horn with breathtaking virtuosity.

### Serenata Winds

The wind quintet 'Serenata Winds' was originally formed in 1998 from professional freelance musicians and post graduate music students from the Birmingham Conservatoire. It is mainly concerned with educational and community projects but has given recitals all over the UK. It has the traditional wind quintet line-up of flute, horn, oboe, bassoon and clarinet.

The first part of the programme contained The *Italian Girl in Algiers* Overture by Rossini, Divertimento No 9, KV240 by Mozart followed by a superb performance of Gounod's *Petite Symphonie* which is one of the most melodious pieces in the whole wind quintet repertoire.

After an interval we were entertained by a collage of light music which included Hungarian Dances by Farkas, Elgar's *Chanson du Matin* and *Salut D'amour*; these were followed by a series of 'exhibition' pieces which included well known tunes such as the *Charleston*, *Bobby Shaftoe*, *Volga Boat Song* and many more. The playing demonstrated the virtuosity and artistry of the group and it received a rapturous reception from the audience.

### Anthony West-Samuel

Anthony who has served the Federation so well over the years as Musical Weekend Technician changed role and became presenter of the session — a presentation which was exceptionally interesting and was also deeply personal to him.

His father had been a keen collector of 78 recordings mainly of operas; upon his death Anthony

inherited his very large collection. These 78's were of great fascination to Anthony who despite his enthusiasm for High Fidelity retained a deep respect for the early singers whose artistry was so clearly demonstrated on these recordings despite their technical shortcomings. Anthony's father had been a member of The Manchester Gramophone Society (alas now defunct!). Amongst his father's papers Anthony found the programme of "A Miscellaneous Operatic Recital — by Mr L. Western" given in Manchester in 1935 which comprised 18 items.



Anthony West-Samuel

Anthony found most of these recordings in his father's collection and he gave us a close reconstruction of this original concert with a few omissions or substitutions where necessary. The sound of the 78's was given as good a reproduction as possible and incorporated onto a CD. Some of the artists are very well known eg. Galli-Curci, Tetrizzini and Caruso; others however are now largely forgotten eg. Gentile, Nessi, Venturini, Hislop and Salvi. He had obviously done a great deal of research on these artists and gave detailed information about them. The programme was fascinating and also gave a clear representation of a Gramophone Society 70 years ago.

A.B.

# CENTRAL REGIONAL GROUP

## Music day at Nantwich

Regional Chairman Gordon Wainwright welcomed 72 delegates to the Crown Hotel, Nantwich on 19th March 2005 before introducing the first speaker, Frank Woolham, who reflected on the changes he had observed during four decades of music teaching.

Frank's own formal musical education began at school in Bridgnorth, but he also absorbed much by listening to records. One of his early loves was Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll*, and this was the first musical example we heard. Pupils were expected to write out all the main themes from memory.

Frank began teaching music, to CSE level, at a high school in West Bromwich. Pupils were expected to identify themes from music played to them on tape, and also to demonstrate knowledge of the composers.

Later, as a member of the Teacher's Panel, Frank advised the Examinations Board on appropriate music — one of his recommendations was *Che gelido mano* from Puccini's *La Boheme*, which we heard in a recording featuring Pavarotti. Frank defied anyone not to be moved.

After moving to Kingswinford School (where he spent 28 years) Frank taught music to GCE and CSE level, which were superseded by GCSE. Here the emphasis is on styles of music, rather than particular pieces. Pupils were expected to assign a newly heard piece to its appropriate style. Frank illustrated Baroque music with an extract from Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, and minimalism with *Different Trains* by Steve Reich.

To conclude his presentation Frank gave us an example of modern music — Prokofiev's *First Piano Concerto*. Although the composer died more than half a century ago the work still sounds modern — “a little gem”. The audience evidently concurred.

After lunch, due to the indisposition of Carl Davis, Brian Pidgeon was welcomed as principal speaker. Although his is not a household name almost all of us will have recordings of his — Brian has produced all of the BBC Philharmonic's CDs for Chandos and BBC Music Magazine, as well as a host of others. His total discography runs to well over 400.

We were treated to a series of anecdotes punctuating an outline of Brian's musical life. This began with singing in Poynton Church Choir and

an early interest in record collecting. Later at Liverpool University he played in the orchestra and got to see many conductors at work, and feels that he learnt more from this than at university. Having written to a number of record companies, he obtained a holiday job at Decca where he was able to sit beside the producer at sessions which included Boult conducting Elgar and the Starker/Katchen recording the Brahms *Cello Sonatas* — “a wonderful recording”.

After graduating Brian became a free-lance percussionist; going on a tour of Eastern Europe with the CBSO costing him a regular job with the BBC Philharmonic. During this period he produced recordings of Havergal Brian symphonies conducted by Charles Groves.

Brian then became manager of the Royal Liverpool PO where he broadened the orchestra's recording activities, and was always in the control room. His first recording there was of Canteloube's *Auvergne Songs* with Jill Gomez and Vernon Handley for Saga. This was followed by Vaughan Williams symphonies for Classics for Pleasure — intrusive noise from a manhole cover outside the hall was cured by unofficial traffic coning. This disc won a Gramophone Award. Charles Mackerras recorded Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* which marked Bryn Terfel's debut on disc.

During Marek Janowski's period as chief conductor, he programmed a lot of Haydn symphonies to refine the orchestral playing; he recorded all the Brahms and Schuman symphonies. A “brilliant conductor”, Janowski hated hotels and stayed at Brian's home. He was always silent in the mornings except to swear in German at the cat.

Brian was instrumental in bringing Libor Pesek to Liverpool as Janowski's successor. The orchestra wanted him; Pesek's wife worked for Supraphon in Prague; Virgin Classics were just starting up. A joint recording project of all Dvorak's symphonies conducted by Pesek was arranged, shared between the RLPO and Czech Philharmonic, issued by Virgin in the West and Supraphon in the East. The partnership went on to record music by Smetana, Suk, Novak, Prokofiev and Richard Strauss, in all of which Brian was involved with the production.

A notable event at Liverpool was the recording

of Paul McCartney's *Liverpool Oratorio*, conducted by Carl Davis, Kiri Te Kanawa was introduced to McCartney at Carl Davis's home and expressed her excitement at participating in the project. Paul thought she was being rather presumptuous and said "I've not heard you yet".

After 13 years at Liverpool Brian answered an advertisement for a producer with the BBC Philharmonic and was interviewed by a panel which included Edward Downes and Yan Pascal Tortelier. He got the job. The first sessions involved music by Britten and Bruckner. At that point in time the BBC Philharmonic had done virtually no commercial recording, apart from some George Lloyd for Albany. There were some three days of spare sessions and Edward Downes wanted to do Glière's *Third Symphony*. Chandos had abandoned plans to record that work in Detroit with Neeme Jarvi on cost grounds. Thus began the connection between Chandos and the BBC Philharmonic which has gone from strength to strength — more than 100 CDs so far, all produced by Brian.

One of the early problems Brian encountered was inconsistent sound — he was assigned a different engineer at every session. He requested and got a dedicated engineer. A recording of Dutilleux won a Gramophone Award.

It is Chandos policy to record series of composer's music to sustain sales — for example Glière, Korngold, Respighi, Hindemith and Grainger, among others. Brian particularly recommended Hindemith's *Santa Susanna* — "Elektra in 22 minutes" — and Grainger's *The Warriors* in which the identical tuning of three pianos was a ticklish job.

Vernon Handley's recordings of the Bax symphonies were made for broadcasting, and no. 3 was a magazine cover disc. They were so good that Chandos took them on for commercial release despite having Bryden Thomson's set already in the catalogue. The new set won a Gramophone Award and is already into profit.

Brian retired from the BBC last year but continues to produce his old orchestra's recordings for Chandos.

Graham Ladley of Oswestry RMS introduced the final presenter Christopher Symons who spoke about the Oswestry-born composer, Sir Henry Walford Davies. The session began with a recording of *Solemn Melody*.

Christopher briefly outlined his own musical background — brought up in Penzance where he sang Walford Davies's music in the choir; later he

learnt music and singing at Canterbury as a cathedral chorister. He later spent 35 years as Head of Classics at Oswestry School; for the school's 500th Anniversary in 1907 Walford Davies had composed a commemorative song. Since this had never been recorded, Christopher sang it to us.

Situated on the Welsh border, Oswestry is a bi-cultural town. Walford was the seventh of nine children of John Whitridge Davies, a cello and flute-playing Welshman and his wife Susan. Walford demonstrated an early aptitude for music by playing the family harmonium. Formal training was recommended and he was accepted as a chorister at St George's Chapel, Windsor, at the age of 12. He regularly sang for Queen Victoria, but when he was fifteen his voice broke and he left the choir two days later. Shortly afterwards he returned to Windsor as assistant to his former teacher, and also became organist at Windsor Park Chapel where the choristers were 'unruly' local boys.

It was at this time that he began a life-long friendship with a family called Matheson who introduced him to secular music and arranged private musical tuition. He studied for an external degree from Cambridge University and won a scholarship to the Royal College of Music; he also gained practical experience as organist at a succession of London churches.

Walford was appointed Professor of Counterpoint at the RCM in 1895, where his teaching proved to be inspirational. Shortly afterwards he failed the counterpoint paper in his Cambridge Doctorate of Music examination.

Walford was a very humorous person which helped him as a communicator (later to be demonstrated in his broadcasts on music). Christopher illustrated this with a recording of a playful organ piece; and further demonstrated by singing one part of a four-part setting of A.A.Milne's *Disobedience* — the one that begins 'James James Morrison Morrison Willoughby Charles Dupree'.

In 1897 Walford was appointed organist at the Temple Church, where one of the choristers was Leopold Stokowski, a post he held until 1923. His successor, George Thalben Ball, composed an *Elegy for Cello and Organ* which he dedicated to Walford Davies. We heard a recording of this, from a Dutton CD entitled *A Tribute to Walford Davies*.

Meanwhile, Walford had been busy in other fields. In 1901 Edward Elgar commissioned a work for the three Choirs Festival. Due to inadequate

rehearsal the piece, *Solomon's Temple*, was not well received. His next commission for the 1904 Leeds Festival proved to be a winner. *Everyman* was taken up by choirs throughout the land for the next decade to great acclaim, but it then abruptly vanished. It has recently been issued on a highly praised CD, again on Dutton. Christopher played three excerpts from this; he hopes to conduct a performance in Oswestry in the near future.

In 1908 Walford supervised the music for a service at Bow Church to celebrate the Milton Tercentenary; needing an additional short piece, he composed probably his best-loved work — the Solemn Melody.

In 1918 the RAF was formed from the previous army and naval air services. Walford was appointed Musical Director with the rank of Major; he founded the RAF Choir and School of Bandsmanship and also composed Royal Air Force March Past, possibly his best-known work — particularly among those old enough to have done National Service.

In 1919 Walford was appointed Professor of Music at Aberystwyth and Director of the Council of Music for Wales. He was knighted in 1922, and two years later at the age of 54 he married the daughter of a Canon of St David's Cathedral, thirty

years his junior.

Also during the 1920s he began his association with the BBC, doing schools broadcasts (over 400 in 10 years) and later talks on music for the 'ordinary listener' — his declared aim was to 'beguile the beginner without wearying the wise'.

In 1926 health problems obliged him to resign his post at Aberystwyth and he returned to Windsor as Organist at St George's Chapel the following year. He was put in charge of all religious music broadcasting at the BBC.

In 1934 Walford was appointed Master of the King's Musick, a post he did not treat as sinecure — he organised a concert for George V's Silver Jubilee, composed memorial music in 1936, and Coronation Music for George VI the following year.

At the outbreak of war in 1939 the BBC was evacuated to Bristol, and Walford and his wife moved to a nearby village. He continued to broadcast to the end of his life. He died in 1941.

It had become evident that Walford Davies was a man of great versatility, a quality shared by Christopher Symons who received a warm ovation for his outstanding presentation, which concluded a splendid day.

*Gordon Wainwright; Graham Ladley  
and Mick Birchall*

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# Sussex Region

by Alan Thomas

After a number of most enjoyable years I am standing down as Regional Secretary for Sussex. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who have helped in so many ways in making the task so much easier. There are too many wonderful friends to thank individually. I have lost count of the number of visits I have made to affiliated societies and the hospitality and warmth of greeting have been marvellous, as have the kindness and attentiveness to which my presentations have been listened to. We all share a common and deep love of music and to share that with so many has been a great privilege.

The Pyke House weekends will continue in the capable hands of Jonathan Parris, Eileen Taylor and Alan Gilby and the next meeting will be held on 29th/30th October. Please contact Jonathan on 01323 504747 for further details. The Regional meetings have been a source of great enjoyment over twenty five years, initiated by the late Denis Bowyer they have, with just a few exceptions, been fully booked – a sure sign that the format must be about right. Many friendships have been made in these twice-yearly meetings and it is an event that is eagerly looked forward to.

The weekends would not happen without a lot of hard work and in particular I must thank Eileen Taylor, Jonathan Parris and Alan Gilby for all their help and endless enthusiasm, somehow even without committee meetings the musical shape or theme of each weekend comes together.

There is never enough time to organise everything. The equipment arrives, the raffle is organised, the tea and coffee breaks even the washing up (when the staff have gone) all seem to get done without any fuss. So a big thank you to everyone who have attended the weekends, some have attended every single weekend, and new friends have been gathered over the years. I am sure the weekends will continue to be successful but they will need your support and encouragement, if you feel you would like to be involved please contact Jonathan Parris.



*Alan Thomas*

PYKE HOUSE MEETING No.54  
2nd/3rd April, 2005.

'Hungary; The Music of a Nation'.

Another 'full house' at Pyke House, Battle, East Sussex as members and friends gathered for a weekend devoted to the music of Hungary. The chequered history of the nation eventually brought Hungary under the control of Vienna and culture came under the sway of the Austrian capital. The maintenance of some kind of Hungarian tradition now fell to the very numerous class of petty nobility and the almost guerrilla forces who continued to oppose the rule of the Hapsburgs.

Out of this turmoil came a strong folk dance and song development, notably the 'csárdás'. Building on the tradition and extending the 'national music' theme were composers such as Liszt, Bartók, Kodály, Goldmark, Erkel, Mosonyi, Dohnányi and operetta composers such as Léhar and Kalman.

Our regular presenters certainly researched the subject in some depth and introduced a veritable feast of Hungarian music in all its passion and unique rhythms. JONATHAN PARRIS explored the life and music of the much neglected Mihaly Mosonyi and the better known Erno Dohnányi, although for the latter he found much little known music.

ALAN THOMAS presented the life and music of Bela Bartók introducing much that was unfamiliar to the audience. ELAINE TAYLOR investigated the music of Liszt and some of the great Hungarian conductors such as Sir Georg Solti.

ALAN GILBY wound up the weekend with, as always, a wide ranging selection of composers some familiar such as Liszt, Léhar, Kalman and Lanner and such unfamiliar names as Paix, Mainero, Erkel, Gunzl, Sieber and others.

So Meeting No.54 was judged a great success on many counts; music, presentations friendships and food and wine, the essential ingredients and a winning formula.

# The Yorkshire Regional Group

## Spring Music Weekend, April 2005

With Spring in the air it's nice to look forward to a weekend of music by the sea. We set out optimistically but didn't expect to find snow flurries and dark skies! Fortunately Saturday's weather was a great improvement and delegates were able to take their customary morning promenades along the cliff top or wander into Scarborough to do a little shopping.

The weekend started with dinner on the Friday night and, as we have come to expect, the food at the Crown Hotel was first class. (It is rumoured that some people come for the food and don't bother with the music!).

*Wild Geese that Fly...*

*.....with the moon on their wings,*

These are a few of my favourite things.

Ron Downs, of Bradford RMS, chose this title from the Julie Andrews' hit song, which she recorded with the Syd Lawrence Orchestra in 1972. He opened the programme with it and then introduced us to a relaxed evening of fond memories, which embraced the war years and the days of big band jazz, taking his 12-year old daughter to the ballet, visits to the Proms in London and to brass band concerts in Yorkshire.

The second half of the programme was equally varied with music from the South African province of Kwazulu, a Bollywood brass band and, inevitably, for Ron, finishing with a good solid chunk of *Lohengrin*.

### 300 Years of Russian Music

After a free Saturday morning on the town we were very pleased to welcome FRMS Chairman, John Davies on his first Scarborough visit. We gave him only ninety minutes to present this broad Russian survey but he accomplished his task well, including traditional music from the 1700s and composers of the classical era, covering the early years of Mikhail Glinka up to the present day with Georgy Sviridov.

John also discussed the affect of Russian royal politics and the influence of the aristocracy on musical development; the movement of the court between Moscow and St Petersburg; how the banning of instruments in the Orthodox church influenced the development of Russian music in ways different from the West; and the early dependence of Russia culture upon French and Italian opera.

This all changed with Glinka, who studied with the Irishman John Field, travelled in Europe and used his aristocratic uncle's orchestra to explore and develop Russian folk music. Glinka prepared the way for the Mighty Five, Balakirev's 'amateurs', who developed nationalist Russian music, rather than the European route favoured by Tchaikovsky and the Rubinsteins.

We then came to the more modern and very different styles of Glazunov, Shostakovich and Sviridov, which John illustrated with examples from their highly individual compositions. It was great music played by great artists and led to several enquiries about the most modern piece, Sviridov's *The Snowstorm*.

### Musical Milestones

There are not many people who can equal Brian Jenkinson's record: he has been a member of the Huddersfield Society for 58 years, and was one of the founder members in 1947.

Brian came from a musical family — organists, pianists and singers — and was introduced to music on early 78s, mainly on the Zonophone and Arrow labels. His first musical examples, Billy Wilder, the Australian music-hall comedian singing *Let's have a song upon the gramophone*, came from these early years.

At the age of 7 he was given his own equipment in the form of a "Pygmyphone". This played 6" records which could be bought for 6 pence from Woolworths! Even at this tender age Brian had his classical favourite, Auber's *The Crown Diamonds Overture*.

Brian became a chorister and his love of music was further developed by his grammar school's music master, who introduced the choir to all sorts of music, including opera. They sang great choruses at school speech days in the Town Hall, one example being *The Entry of the Guests* from *Tannhauser*.

Brian remembered concerts in wartime London and the free entertainment tickets that the forces could obtain from the kiosk in Trafalgar Square. This enabled him to go to concerts conducted by Henry Wood, Adrian Boult and Basil Cameron. He was demobbed in 1947 and it was then that a friend told him about a meeting to discuss setting up a gramophone society in Huddersfield. The man who put forward this idea

was called Ralph Tinker. He already gave programmes to local societies and, having no car, took his records and his gramophone to meetings in the baby's pram!

Brian read the first 38 lines of a poem which he wrote in 1997 to celebrate the Huddersfield Society's 50th anniversary and then played examples of the music he had come to know through being a member of the Society. This included Elgar's *Starlight Express* and Nielsen's *Serenata in Vano*, the Bax *Violin Concerto*, a song by Stenhammar and two excerpts from Leoš Janacek's *Lachian Dances*.

#### Confessions of a Music Critic

In 1969 Christopher Morley completed his music degree at Birmingham University. He joined the Birmingham Post as the assistant music critic and now, some 36 years later, he is the paper's Music Critic and it is obvious that he still enjoys his work enormously.

Of course, there have been great changes in practice since Christopher filed his first report. His press deadline used to be 11.30 pm and his report would be dictated over the phone, immediately after a concert. The telephonists were skilled and would equally take concert reports, stock exchange movements or the greyhound racing results.

In addition to being a music critic Christopher writes about music and lectures at the University of Central England (formerly the Birmingham Conservatoire) and does a little conducting.

As a music critic Christopher is very conscious of his responsibilities towards musicians and their careers. He tries to be positive and to be kind and encouraging, particularly to amateurs and children, and yet he still has to have basic standards. He sees his principal duty is to listen, to evaluate and to come to an informed opinion.

Christopher's talk was illustrated with a wide variety of musical examples, ranging from Reger's *Variations on a theme of Mozart* to Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*, and Walton's *Cello Concerto* to *The Ball Scene* from Prokofiev's opera *War and Peace*.

#### Sixty Glorious Years

This talk was not about Queen Victoria's reign but it turned out to be a vigorous, mind-stretching exercise session covered the six decades following World War II. Geoffrey Kinder warned us in advance that his music would be very varied and urged us to be patient with those things we thought we wouldn't like.

He opened with the rebirth of English opera through Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* in 1945,

contrasting this with the revival of jazz in the Red Barn, with Chris Barber playing King Oliver's *Chimes Blues*. Meanwhile, in post-war Europe a group of radical composers, including Luciano Berio and Luigi Nono, were making new waves, exemplified by *The Hammer without a Master* by Pierre Boulez. Stravinsky said of the Boulez work "I like the noise it makes" and William Glock of the BBC liked this type of music so much that a lot of music by the more conservative style of composer did not get performed at all.

In the next decade, from 1955-1964, there were major changes in popular music, when Doris Day's *Que sera sera* gave way to Elvis Presley's *Blue Suede Shoes* and cool jazz took centre stage, the example played being Miles Davis's *Flamenco Sketches*.

In the mid 1960s Geoffrey was teaching in Bristol and the pupils brought records to school, and he was able to borrow a copy of The Beatles' *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Noteworthy in this period was the production of Shostakovich's (final) *15th Symphony*, played by Haitink and the LPO.

Geoffrey moved to the ILEA in the 1970s and met Witold Lutoslawski who was invited to conduct the London Schools Symphony Orchestra playing his *Third Symphony*. James MacMillan, the Scottish composer, came to prominence in the period 1985-1994. At the same time, in America, the minimalists were beginning to be heard and they continued to develop into the next decade. And so we finished with extracts from John Adams Opera-Oratorio *El Nino*.

Harmonia Mundi Presents...

We reserve Sunday afternoon for presentations by record companies and this year we welcomed Celia Ballantyne, the British press Officer from Harmonia Mundi. She told us of the company's history, founded in 1958 in Southern France, with its Head Office in Arles, well-known to Provence holiday-makers.

Celia played generous extracts from the current HM catalogue, including a Violin Concerto by Vivaldi and works by Haydn, Liszt and Rachmaninov in the first half. HM also represents other, smaller labels: from LSO Live we had an extract from Shostakovich's *Fifth Symphony* and on RCO Live the Concertgebouw played the Largo from Dvorak's *Ninth Symphony*. The Ondine label was represented, appropriately, by *Ondine*, the first poem from *Gaspard de la nuit* by Ravel. After the interval we had works by Debussy and Ravel, finishing with film music by Nino Rota.



### Life in the Orchestra

Thirty-one years as the principal trombone with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra certainly provided Eric Jennings with a fund of experiences and anecdotes to share with us.

As a child Eric learnt to play the violin and when he went to the Royal College of Music this was his first instrument. The trombone was his second study but finished up being his professional instrument. He got a job for three months in the Billy Cotton band at the Coventry Theatre, after which he went to the RLPO. It was here that he met his wife, also a member of the orchestra, who played the viola.

Apart from his stories, which we won't report here as it might spoil future programmes, Eric told us about the background to preparing for a concert. It could involve nine hours of rehearsal for a two-hour concert, although the time allotted for rehearsals was not always so generous.

Eric's music started with two trombones in unison to introduce Gustav Holst's ballet music, *The Perfect Fool* and his other selections included Elgar's *In the South*, Bridge's *Sea Scape*, Sibelius's original *Wood Nymph* conducted by Osmo Vanska and *Agnus Dei* from Fauré's *Requiem*.

### The Spirit of England

Our Monday morning programme tends to be devoted to proportionately more music than talk. With the approach of the fiftieth anniversary of the VE Day Robert Seager, from Barnsley RMS, chose music written during the war years 1939-1945.

Patriotic music and the heat of battle was exemplified by William Walton's *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue*, the attitude of the British people shone through in Eric Coates' *Calling All Workers* and the mood of the times was represented by Louis Kentner playing *The Warsaw Concerto* from the film *Dangerous Moonlight*.

After a break for coffee we heard Gerald Finzi's *Five Bagatelles for Clarinet & Strings* and part of *Sinfonietta* by Ernest Moeran. In a more sombre mood we learned what inspired Michael Tippett to write his moving Oratorio *A Child of our Time*. Our finale, for the programme and the weekend, was the concluding movement of Vaughan Williams' *Fifth Symphony*.

It only remained for me, as Chairman to thank every-one who had contributed to the weekend, and to look forward to next year's event, from the 31st March to 3rd April 2006. See you there!

*Tony Pook*

### Study Breaks

## Society Regeneration

Re. FRMS Quo Vadis: Part 2 —

The need to submit my crossword effort has reminded me of your very helpful article on Regeneration of recorded music societies, and in particular your final sentence — “please write to give us your views”.

My immediate reaction was, “Yes, I agree,” but I suspect you want a little more than that. Most of your guidance is common sense, augmented by practical suggestions how to implement that common sense, but it is both helpful and salutary to have these points set out in logical groupings so that each society can look at itself critically and see where it is falling short.

I belong to two local societies, Ickenham and Ruislip, although the following comments are primarily my own rather than representing either society officially.

**Ickenham Gramophone Club**

Ickenham has 12 members, meeting weekly through the year and alternating each calendar quarter between two members’ houses. Our occasional additions to membership usually result from word of mouth, although they do not outweigh the occasional loss from death. We run on a nominal subscription and minimal costs, we do not advertise and we must be one of the few societies who are not desperate to attract too many more members. If our numbers were to rise above 14 or 15 we would have accommodation problems (and expense), as the through lounges of our host members have their seating limits. On the other hand, the provision of a few extra cups of coffee in the break would not be a major problem!

To say we are chugging along nicely may well sound complacent (perhaps it is) and I note your warning. However, I believe we have an active and varied programme, each member generally presenting a programme once a quarter, with the occasional top-up programme from another society member within the West Middlesex Group. We have forged some mutually beneficial links within that Group and Bulletin 142 carried a report of our bi-annual Festival Programme in the Autumn of 2004. Ickenham looks forward to its 60th anniversary in 2007.

**Ruislip Gramophone Society**

Ruislip’s membership is 45 and for over 40 years we have met each Tuesday from late September until end of April in our local library. Following a fire inspection last year the library store room, which had housed our equipment all

this time, was deemed to be a fire risk and so neither we nor the library were allowed to continue storing anything there. For the past season our equipment has been transported each week to and from the home of two of our willing but long suffering members. This was causing a fair amount of wear and tear on personnel as well as equipment and so we reluctantly decided that a change of venue had to be found.

Of the few alternatives we found, only one could offer storage space for our equipment, so from September this year we shall meet at the nearby Methodist Church. The one disadvantage of this venue is that they can only offer us alternate Tuesdays and a change of day was not acceptable to our members. The answer to this was to extend our season from early September to end of June, the favourite of four options put to members at a special meeting.

We still have to decide how to tame the resonance of our new meeting room, and our first programme is entitled, with good reason I suspect, Trial and Error, in which we shall play different types of music and voice, moving our loudspeakers and/or the audience around as required. A tale of woe? I don’t think so. Problems, yes, but we see them as challenges which so far we have managed to overcome, thanks to good teamwork on our committee.

Our membership does unfortunately drop marginally as each year passes, the new members never quite outweighing the losses through death or infirmity. We obtain new members by some of the methods suggested in your article. Take-away copies of our programme are displayed in the Borough libraries, and we have a poster, regularly updated, in our local record shop showing the next six to eight programmes. In recent years we have had our programmes included in a “What’s On” leaflet produced and distributed by our Borough Arts Association. And last, but by no means least, we have our details on the FRMS website, which we know has led to some enquiries.

Our presenters are a mix of outside speakers from record labels, the music industry generally, or individuals with some musical experience, augmented by our own members, so giving us a very varied season of programmes for all tastes. And in our coffee break we endeavour to talk to any visitors or newcomers. We encourage comment from our members, not only at our AGM but also at intervals through the year where we consider feedback is needed.

We have clearly not adopted all the points

made in your article but I find it reassuring that we have for some time been following a number of them. Although we are concerned about slowly falling membership we are not despondent, and Ruislip GS certainly intends to keep going for some years yet.

I realise that this letter does not so much give my views on your article (other than agree and applaud it) as give some kind of informal report on the two societies with which I am involved. We endeavour to help ourselves, but the Federation's offer of assistance with any problem is appreciated and I will try to ensure that our respective committees bear this in mind and pass the word round. Meanwhile I have tried to put you in the picture as to how two of the affiliated societies are coping, which I hope will help you to build the general picture.

*Roger Hughes*

*Chairman, Ickenham Gramophone Club  
Treasurer, Ruislip Gramophone Society*

## West Wickham RMS

Who says that the recorded music movement is dying? At our Society, which is affiliated to the S.E. London Regional Group of the FRMS, we have had over 100 members for the last three years, having moved to a bigger hall. Before that we had a waiting list of 15 potential members. We are now in our 38th season and during that time, there have been only five Chairmen and three Secretaries.

Not now being on the Committee of West Wickham RMS, but having been its Secretary from 1975 to 1995, perhaps I could set out some of the reasons which I believe have contributed to our society's success. Our Chairman, three Officers and four Committee Members are all very effective in their various allocated jobs. Our distinct advantage, as I see it, is that we meet fortnightly throughout the year, summer and winter, with no breaks, which maintains a close contact between members. As a result, many friendships have been forged within the society over the years.

We thus have a minimum of 26 programmes annually, comprising a mix of those given by our own members, and by those from other societies, together with a sprinkling of professional speakers, and representatives of the recording industry who do brisk business selling CDs to members. One of our most distinguished visitors was Oleg Prokofiev, the younger son of the great Russian composer, Sergey Prokofiev. In June 1990 he presented a programme to the society based on his father's early works, including excerpts from

Prokofiev's opera *The Giant* written when he was nine, together with rare choral works not heard before in this country.

In the past we have run several series of programmes, which have included chamber music groups; items from specific periods in musical history; programmes featuring a single instrument; orchestras of Europe and the USA and so on, and composers' special anniversaries have been covered. A recent development over the last four years has been the introduction of a large screen video projection evening of opera and ballet excerpts. The projector and screen were hired for each occasion and the evenings proved to be so popular that the society has now purchased its own wide screen, recently updated to DVD projection.

As well as the music-programme; we enjoy a number of social events and visits to concerts and recitals during the year. These are mainly arranged by our Chairman, Phillip Cox, who has been in office for over 21 years. Let me give you some idea of a typical year in our calendar: -

January: Coffee Morning with Bring & Buy Stall and Raffle.

February: Coach visit to a Royal Festival Hall concert with a full coach.

March: Annual Buffet Supper and Concert — with a piano duo or trio, string quartet or piano quintet.

April: AGM with a very large attendance for a novelty evening.

May: Annual Musical Weekend at Pyke House, Battle, for a programme of music — sometimes with poetry readings - devised by a sub-committee. May 2005 sees our 22nd year of musical weekends.

May/June: Summer visit to a chamber concert such as Finchcocks or the Wigmore Hall or, as recently, to the Florestan Festival at Rye, Sussex.

July: Annual Garden Party with strawberries and cream — held in the delightful garden of our Secretary.

Summer: Society holiday each year to a music festival. Now in its sixteenth year, this popular annual holiday comprises a three night stay in this country and abroad. English music festivals visited have included King's Lynn, the Buxton opera festival, the Cheltenham International Music Festival and the Newbury Spring Festival. Several visits have been undertaken to music festivals abroad including the Verona Arena, the Puccini Festival at Torre del Lago, the Ai Win-Provence-Music Festival. In 2004, the 47 members of the Society stayed for three nights in Malvern for the special Elgar Festival, marking the 70th

anniversary of the death of Sir Edward Elgar.

August : Coach visit to a Henry Wood Promenade concert at the Royal Albert Hall.

October : Coach visit to the Glyndebourne Opera House.

November : Pre-Christmas visit by coach to a symphony concert at the Royal Festival Hall or the Barbican Hall.

December : Society Christmas Luncheon at a local hotel ; also annual Christmas Party. Other varied visits are fitted in, such as to the Kentish Opera productions in Sevenoaks and a conducted tour backstage of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, as well as seeing there the ballet *Coppelia* by Delibes.

A number of our members give programmes at other societies, both within the Region and beyond, as well as to other organisations and retirement associations.

Apart from having an excellent Chairman and Committee, all dedicated to the society and its members (it tends to take over one's life if one is not careful!). We are most fortunate in having a willing friend of the society who purchases the wherewithal for our refreshments, makes the tea and coffee and serves the chocolate biscuits in the interval and clears up afterwards — a real treasure is John.

So one can see that a recorded music society can be very successful when it provides a wide range of musical activity together with important social events, maintaining continuity and retaining a large membership year after year.

I hope that a few ideas have been suggested as food for thought.

*Pamela M. Yates*

## EASTBOURNE R M S

The 28th April 2005. A.G.M. brought to a close our very happy Society's 58th Season — and, according to Officers, Committee and Members alike — one of our very best. In addition to outstanding programmes by Julian Williamson, Edward Thorpe with his "Romantic Movement", Helen Arnold gave us a wonderful evening — "Plays Harp, Will Travel, With Difficulty." Not only did she captivate us all with her charming manner, but she brought with her large harp plus a smaller Irish one and explained to our Members some of the intricate details especially regarding the pedals, etc. We also had a superb Presentation by the internationally acclaimed organist — Jennifer Bate. Not only were we enchanted by her presence, but also her organ-recordings were superb — yet

another charming lady.

Liz Buckland, Director of Southern Youth Ballet, presented "The Ballets of Frederick Ashton; which programme was complemented by the dancing of one of Liz's own ballet pupils. Several of our own Members gave us most interesting evenings. These included Robert Milnes with "An Odyssey in Sound", a splendid Quiz Night with Carl Newton, Clive Wilkes with "Once Upon a Time -Fairy Tales, Myths, and Legends," and our fellow-Members Robin and Ann Gregory who gave us "A Musical Travelogue." Robin and Ann's programmes are always so varied that they are eagerly awaited as we never know what will be in store. Another of our visitors was Peter Kemp from Cheshire, who talked to us about "The Strauss Family."

Then in December we held our annual Christmas Party, with over 60 present. This number has to be limited owing to the restrictions of the Hall in which we meet, so it is a "Members Only" party, but always thoroughly enjoyable.

To aid our funds we were given an unexpected item for disposal, the proceeds going directly into the Society. This was an oil painting given by one of our own Members who is a professional Artist, and we also received a gift of nearly 300 operatic CD's that had been in the collection of one of our



Members for many years. Needless to say, they were much sought after and purchased. We are indeed indebted to our two Members for their great generosity. The painting was raffled and was won by a lady who has just been elected to our Committee, which pleased us all.

Although we actually close our Season annually with our A.G.M. we had already arranged a Luncheon at a sea-facing Hotel in Eastbourne on the 10th May. At least 36 attended, and the photograph above (taken by Michael Sales LRPS) shows us all eagerly awaiting our repast. This was most enjoyable — another "success" to add to our store of memories.

*Eileen J. Howell (Mrs.) Hon. Secretary.  
Eastbourne Recorded Music Society*

## THURSO RMS

Thurso [Pop. about 9,500] is the most northerly town in mainland Britain and the largest north of Inverness which, depending on your mode of travel, is somewhere between 120 and 169 miles to the south. Despite its comparative remoteness the performing arts are well catered for with groups like the Caithness Orchestra, the Caithness Handbell Ringers, the Thurso Players and the Thurso Live Music Association to name but a few — well represented and supported. The latter group, which has just completed its 40th season, manages to stage about 8 or 9 concerts each year between September and March by up and coming professional musicians most of whom, it has to be said, are from the South.

It is against this background that the TRMS was formed in 1990 by George Speed. George had been a founder member of a record circle which had come into existence about 1959 or 1960 and which met in the homes of its members. However, when George and his family moved into a larger house in Thurso with a sizeable lounge, he decided the time had come to affiliate with the FRMS and form a proper recorded music society. George died in 1999 but his widow Joan has continued to allow the Society to meet at her home most Tuesdays.

This year is our 15th anniversary and the Society decided to mark the occasion with an autumn series of celebrity talks, which would involve bringing professional speakers from the South, and which we estimated would cost approximately £1800. However our existing equipment was showing its age and we considered we could hardly invite celebrity speakers to our meetings until we had replaced it which would cost another £750. Where was a small Society like ours [20 members] going to be able to find this kind of money? We enquired of the Awards for All Scheme, the Highland Council and the Atomic Energy Authority at Dounreay, all at different times and I am pleased to be able to report that they all responded positively. Needless to say forms had to be completed and independent referees found, but thanks to an energetic Chairman, Secretary and Committee, in no time at all they had all been dispatched and approved and the project was up and running.

The next thing we had to do was to decide which speakers should be invited. The former MP for the area, the Right Honourable Lord MacLennan of Rogart, who was known to have an extensive knowledge and wide interest in all types

of music was an obvious choice. His talk entitled 'A Life with Music' was stimulating and thought provoking and as Lord MacLennan had waived his fee for his most interesting, entertaining and wide ranging presentation the Society's Chairman presented a cheque on his behalf to Ian Gunn of North Lands Creative Glass of Lybster. Most of the others who agreed to come north will be household names to RMS members.

The Season started on the 14 September with the Scottish composer Eddie MacGuire who was born in Glasgow and Studied at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music. His talk was entitled 'Eddie MacGuire.. exploring links in his music with Scottish and Chinese Traditions'. This was a fascinating evening of enchanting music most of which [with the exception of the Chinese items which started and ended the programme] was composed by Eddie MacGuire as commissions for the 'Whistlebinkies', Mr McFall's Chamber, Stefan Grasse [the German guitarist], the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Ballet and the Cadenza Singers from Edinburgh.

This was followed on the 28th September by Lord MacLennan's talk referred to in the paragraph above and then on 5th October, Bryce Morrison, the internationally celebrated teacher and broadcaster, who is considered among the world's foremost authorities on piano performance, spoke to the Society on the subject 'The great young pianists...?' His choice, which he stressed was personal, included a Norwegian [Andsnes], an



*Bryce Morrison*

Englishman [Paul Lewis], a Pole [Anderszewski] and three Russians [Kissin, Volodos and Berezovsky].

Professor Morrison's talk was well received by the large audience and many commenting afterwards said they had never known two hours to pass so quickly whilst others said they had never heard such realistic piano sound from a recording.

Jennifer Bate [Concert Organist] who has been in the top rank of international organists for many years, entertained a capacity audience on the 19th October with a charming and delightfully witty presentation entitled 'A funny thing happened...amusing anecdotes from a life in and out of the organ loft'. Jennifer who is the world authority on Oliver Messiaen, was invited by

Trinity College, Cambridge earlier in the year to give a lecture about the man and his music and said she was thrilled to be asked to speak in Thurso and to share her experiences and love of the music of the organ with the Society's members.

Jennifer Bate's talk which included music of Blairstow, Messiaen's *La Nativite du Seigneur* and *Livre du Saint-Sacrement*, Liszt's *Fantasia and Fugue*, Whitlock's *Scherzo* and Boellmann's *Toccata* was artistically enlightening and greatly appreciated by the large audience. Our Society are indeed fortunate to be able to find artists of this calibre who are willing to travel from London and beyond to share their love of music with us.



Jennifer Bate

A week later on the 26th October Norman White, Record Consultant and Producer with Nimbus Records' Prima Voce Series entertained us with his talk entitled 'Great Singers of the World'. Norman who spent more than 20 years as the leading bass with Scottish Opera is no stranger to Thurso. He began his talk by outlining the financial difficulties the recorded music industry had undergone during the last decade and spoke in particular of the rise and fall and re-emergence as part of a management/employee buyout of Nimbus records. In his survey of the 'Great Singers of the World' Norman spoke briefly about the various methods of recording the human voice and said there was no doubt in his mind that the acoustic method was the most truthful and realistic once the extraneous background noises had been eliminated. The programme had been specially assembled for the TRMS and comprised recordings which, in the main, were not in the public domain. For the next 2 hours or so members and public alike were regaled by the most fascinating stories about each of the singers he discussed who included Walter Widdop, Amelita Galli-Curci, Feodor Chaliapin, Nellie Melba, Beniamino Gigli, Sigrid Onegin, Lawrence Tibbett, Eva Turner, Igor Gorin, Sesto Bruscantini, Alfredo Krauss, Gwyneth Jones and Franco Boninsolli. Norman White is an excellent speaker who knows his subject inside out and can imbue his audience with enthusiasm for these historic performances.

Thurso Recorded Music Society's Autumn 2004 Season of Celebrity Talks ended on 23 November when Tony Baines, the Secretary of the Federation of Recorded Music Societies gave his talk 'The Seven Deadly Sins' which some of you may have heard, at Scarborough for example. TRMS members earlier in the day had the opportunity to meet him on a personal basis at lunch in one of the local hotels and to learn something of the FRMS's present policy and future plans. In the introduction to his talk Tony said that as a child he had been intrigued by talk of sin and when later in life he came to consider the subject he had thought the seven deadly sins were all perfectly natural. So why should they be called deadly? After referring to numerous dictionaries and other sources of information and giving the matter further thought he had concluded the seven deadly sins were all normal until they were allowed to run out of control. Anger was the first of the deadly sins to be considered and Tony chose the closing scene from Stravinsky's *Petrushka* to illustrate. Other musical examples were taken from Handel's *Messiah* [PRIDE], Amirov's *Arabian Nights* [AVARICE], Debussy's *Prelude A l'apres-midi d'un faune* [SLOTH], de Falla's *El amor brujo* [ENVY], Arnold's *Tam o' Shanter* [GLUTTONY] and Tchaikovsky's *Francesco di Rimini* [LUST]. Everyone enjoyed Tony's talk and it made a superb ending to a most enjoyable season.

Whilst our Secretary was finalising arrangements with the Speakers arranging publicity with the local radio and press, answering enquiries and taking bookings for each of the talks our Chairman, Antony West-Samuel, who will be well known to those RMS members who attend the FRMS Weekend at Daventry, was busy auditioning the new equipment, [courtesy of McMichael Bros., Alloa], re-arranging the room to accommodate up to 40 people and to show off the acoustical qualities to best effect, installing the new equipment and making and erecting signs to enable the public to find us. Neither should we forget the efforts of the Society's hardworking Treasurer and Committee nor members who offered accommodation to our visitors or collected or returned them to Inverness Airport by car [a round trip of 240 miles]. This really was a team effort and I am sure it brought the membership closer together.

The talks were well supported with the audience, as a result of our efforts membership now stands at 26 [an increase of more than 20%].

As far as the RMS movement is concerned the moral of this story is perhaps best summarised in the old proverb — 'Where there's a will there's a way'.

*JM Cameron*

## Wellington GS.

The recent meeting was a combination of the annual meeting, the 21st birthday celebration complete with cake, and a short programme of members' requests.

The annual meeting saw the committee re-elected with the exception of Bill Mayberry, who had decided to retire from the post of technical officer after many years of onerous labour transporting the equipment from and to his home in Stoke St Mary. He was warmly thanked by Ken Frost and presented with two bottles of wine.

The 21st birthday cake, beautifully decorated with an old type gramophone complete with external horn, was cut by founder members Tony and Helen Dawes, Muriel Holmes and Philip Knighton (See Photograph above).

The request programme began with the first part



of Mahler's *Song of the Earth* — a setting of Chinese poems for orchestra and tenor and contralto soloists. Then came two songs by Tosti sung by Rosa Ponselle, a great star of the Metropolitan Opera House, New York in the '20s, these were recorded in 1926 at the height of her fame.

Piano pieces by Debussy followed, the beautiful Clair De Lune and evocative *Gardens in the Rain*. Then came the dance *Koanga* and choral piece *Song to be Sung over the Water*, both by Delius and beautifully sung by the King's College choristers.

The presentation finished with a selection from Karl Jenkins' *The Armed Man*, opening with *Sanctus* and closing fittingly with the *Benedictus*.

Sadly, since the above celebrations, the Society's President, Mr Norman Littlewood, died at the age of 95. We have thus lost a wonderfully generous benefactor who had given the current equipment, including floor mounted speakers, to the Society. He was a much loved personality who will be greatly missed.

*M.W. Richards, Press Officer, Wellington G S*



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## Cockaigne

Essays on Elgar "In London Town"

edited by Kevin D. Mitchell, £20

256 pages of text; 32 pages of illustrations

The contents of this book, issued in November 2004 by Elgar Editions, the publishing imprint of Elgar Enterprises, serves to persuade the reader that the London Branch of the Elgar Society is not only interested in the life and achievements of Sir Edward Elgar but also the social and physical environment in which he lived, existing as he did in London, Europe and in his beloved Malvern countryside where he was undoubtedly influenced by his experiences and the people whom he met.

There are also some pictures which may have influenced him. These include "Summertime in Gloucestershire" by James Archer (1860), "Rain, Steam and Speed" by Turner (1838), "Iron and Coal" by William Bell Scott (1861).

Archive photographs are included of Elgar himself, his birthplace, "Dorabella" and Troyte, Carice Elgar Blake at Woodend, Herbert Howells, Yehudi Menuhin, Richard Strauss and Severn House.

Each of the nine contributors gave a lecture to the London Branch and these are now printed in this book to offer different but inter-related views.

The first chapter, "A History of the Elgar Birthplace Museum", composed from a series of carefully researched sources, is a fascinating elaboration of a lecture that Andrew Neill gave to the Thames Valley Branch of the Elgar Society in February 2002.

This is followed by a diplomatically constructed observation by Michael Kennedy in which he comments on the manner in which Elgar and Richard Strauss supported each other and the extent to which their wives also contributed, starting in 1897.

In the third chapter, "Now he belongs to the Big World", Carl Newton suggests that "Elgar himself had a very clear idea of how he wanted his life to read and from the beginning of his fame set about creating a suitable mythical version" but goes on to say that "Elgar had a fundamentally boring life". This chapter was based on a lecture given to the London Branch of the Elgar Society in December 1998 and again at the Southern Branch in 2001 and in it he offers the conclusion that "the life of Edward Elgar tells us a great deal about our nation and people at a crucial stage of our history."

Chapter four tells us the complicated but intriguing story about Elgar, Parratt, the Benson family and "The Coronation Ode" and how the whole thing nearly came to grief.

Following this chapter there is a good collection of photographs which serve to add to the story told here, which is an expanded version of a lecture given to the London Branch of the Elgar Society in November 2002.

Some photographs of human and floral "Windflowers" precede the article thus titled, composed by John Kelly. It is well known that Elgar loved setting problems and enigmas for others to try to solve and behind some of these there lived some never to be resolved questions regarding his private life and how this influenced his musical life.

At the heading of some of his orchestral works, he wrote a part of a sentence which is not completed at what is an interesting stage and many musicologists have sought to find the significance of these words. This chapter, based on a lecture given to the London Branch of the Elgar Society in February 2000, suggests some answers but recognises that now no-one will ever really know.

Robert Anderson in his chapter, "Elgar's Passage to India", describes how Elgar enjoyed financial success when involved in a Masque produced by Henry Hamilton in the Coliseum.

Under the heading "Sleuthing the Falstaff

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Manuscript Diaspora”, Arthur Reynolds quotes Elgar as having written that “I have I think enjoyed writing Falstaff more than any other music I have ever composed and, perhaps for that reason, it may prove to be among my best efforts.” Elgar never lost his affection for this work, however and “after dinner with friends at Milbank one night, the composer led his guests to the gramophone and played a recording of “Falstaff” conducted by himself. During the first “Dream Interlude”, Elgar listened intently, then exclaimed “That is what I call music.” This is probably because this music reflected his own happy childhood.

Michael Holroyd, who gave his lecture “Elgar and Shaw” to the London Branch of the Elgar Society in April 2001, tells the story of Elgar’s friendship with Bernard Shaw and how it was stimulated by The Malvern Festival, but it comments brilliantly on the kind of life in which Elgar was involved with particular reference to oratorio, Christianity and atheism. Their friendship was surprising considering that they had very different temperaments.

Chapter nine by Michael Oliver, “Elgar’s Legacy”, a transcription of a lecture given in March 1985, suggests that “Elgar’s legacy might be defined as the effect of his music on the English

musical scene and the composers who succeeded him.” The question posed then is which of Elgar’s music do we mean? The author in attempting to give an answer quotes a number of Elgar’s musical successors including Constant Lambert, Benjamin Britten, Delius and Turina but ends his interesting lecture in the same enigmatic state so appropriate for Elgar himself.

The avid Elgarian will appreciate the notes and references quoted at the end of each chapter while those who wish to find out just a bit more about Elgar, his friends, his Life and Times will enjoy the easy style of the narrative.

The editor, Kevin D. Mitchell is to be congratulated on the careful balance of information and narration he has succeeded in developing throughout this book.

*John Kemsey-Bourne*

## Bayreuth — A History of the Wagner Festival

by Frederic Spotts

Published by Yale University Press 1994

334 pages, HB, £14.95

It must have been almost as much a labour of love writing this book as it was, almost, in Wagner designing and building his magnificent theatre.

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The index at the back of the book is most impressive, carefully detailing and cross referencing many significant facts while the Bibliography is detailed. Carefully and appropriately distributed among the written material are many black and white photographs of the theatre, the Wagner family, many of the singers and conductors who have contributed over the years and original designs of stage sets and costumes for the earlier operas.



It is not surprising consequently that it was the winner of the Royal Philharmonic Society Award of the best music book of 1994.

David Mellor, reviewing the book for *The Daily Telegraph*, said that “Spotts knows his Wagner as well as any professional musician. He writes illuminatingly about the political as well as the musical context of the Bayreuth phenomenon.”

The Bayreuth Festival which Wagner founded in 1876 is the oldest and most famous in the world. It is also the most controversial, for it became the cultural showcase of the Third Reich.

In this prize-winning book, the first to provide a frank and well rounded history of Bayreuth, Spotts describes the festival’s performances and productions, the Wagner family who have run it, its debasement into “Hitler’s court theatre”, and its postwar liberation from its chauvinistic, anti-semitic past. This book does not seek to defend Wagner’s actions and opinions, preferring rather to present as many facts as possible, leaving the discriminating reader to develop his own impressions of Wagner and his creations.

Spotts’ “Introduction” is as craftily constructed as any of Wagner’s Preludes to his operas, leading on to the nine chapters each headed by appropriate “quotes” from his operas.

The author’s final summary, or his own personal immolation scene is that “Bayreuth has always had its ups and downs...There have been times when its performances were qualitatively no better or even as good as in other opera houses. But even at its worst — which is rarely bad — one can only concur with Shaw, who observed in ‘The Perfect Wagnerite’ that ‘the performances are often far from delectable. The singing is sometimes tolerable, sometimes abominable’. But, as he insisted, ‘Those who go to Bayreuth never repent it’.”

This book serves to provide the reader with a better understanding of Wagner and his very own type of opera for which he built his own opera house.

*John Kemsey-Bourne*

## Busoni — Doktor Faust

Bavarian Radio SO  
Cond. Ferdinand Leitner  
DGG 427 413

Lyon National Opera O  
Cond. Kent Nagano  
Erato 3984-25501

These two fine recordings of Busoni’s masterpiece *Doktor*

*Faust* both have Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau in the cast. DGG recorded him in fine voice in 1969, singing the role of Faust, whereas Erato has him in the spoken role of the poet in 1997/8. There are some cuts on DGG, which do not materially harm the overall structure, while the full score is available on Erato.

Like Puccini (*Turandot*), Respighi (*Lucrezia*) and Falla (*Atlantida*), Busoni was striving to complete his final opera at his premature death: straining to produce the perfect exemplar of what he saw as the ultimate musical form. *Doktor Faust* was completed by his friend and pupil Philipp Jarnach, but he did not have Busoni’s plan available to him. Consequently he made use of passages from earlier parts of the opera and incorporated some of his own music; this is the version used by DGG. Antony Beaumont’s completion was published in 1984 with the benefit of that plan and he had spent many years studying Busoni’s works. For the Helen of Troy scene, Beaumont uses music from the *Sonatina No. 2* and the *Trills Study*, the final scene again using Busoni’s music. Throughout the opera Busoni exercised restraint, avoiding outbursts and Beaumont eschews the passion that Jarnach introduced. Both these completions are available on Erato, which is a big plus. For me the Beaumont completion has the seamless flow that Busoni might have wished.

Both conductors and choirs are excellent and, at times, Erato and Kent Nagano have a superb clarity. DGG’s recording is of 156 minutes; on Erato the Jarnach version is 178 minutes, with Beaumont’s completion 184 minutes, making an overall total of 196 minutes for Erato (you can programme your player to move smoothly between the bands of the two versions). In summary, with DGG you have the majesty of Fischer-Dieskau, whereas Erato provides both completions and a finer Duchess in Eva Jenis. My advice is to buy both, but if you were to buy only one, then Erato wins by a short head.

*Anthony Barker©*



## Jean SIBELIUS — Symphony No. 5, Symphony No. 6 and Tapiola.

The DIVINE ART 27801

This is part of a new venture by the enterprising recording company, Divine Art, in presenting well restored historic recordings on to CDs.

Symphony No. 5 and Tapiola are performed by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Robert Kajanus and the 6th Symphony performed by the Finnish National Orchestra conducted by Geog Schnéevoigt. Both were recorded in 1932 and issued by HMV on behalf of the Sibelius Society. These 78 recordings were well known to Sibelius and the performances endorsed by him. Thus the recordings are considered by many as being definitive.

I well remember hearing some of these early Sibelius Society recordings. The music seemed very strange, but often exciting. Their price and the fact that you could not purchase individual records but only a complete album ensured that they were rarities. As with many 78 recordings of that era made by HMV the surface noise was excruciating.



This issue is of astonishingly high quality, with all trace of surface noise removed. It is hard to believe that the recordings were made such a long time ago. There is a technical note by Andrew Rose, who said that of all his restorations this is perhaps the one he is most proud of.

Kajanus is the conductor who was specially noted for authentic performances of Sibelius, and locally Schnéevoigt was considered his younger rival. All three pieces are given unsentimental performances, driven hard, but applying flexibility of tempo and phrasing where appropriate. In the last few decades, conductors have tended towards relatively slow performances, especially in the slow movements, thus emphasising the emotional feelings which can be found in the music.

This disc will serve as a corrective to this approach, and some listeners will be shocked by these performances. However this disc is of genuine historical importance and lovers of Sibelius should consider buying.

The two performances by Kajanus are especially exciting. That the 6th is perhaps less overwhelming is due most to the nature of the Symphony which is perhaps the most enigmatical work produced by Sibelius and the subtlety of the scoring has most to gain from modern recording.

A fascinating release.

A. B.

PMC

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.

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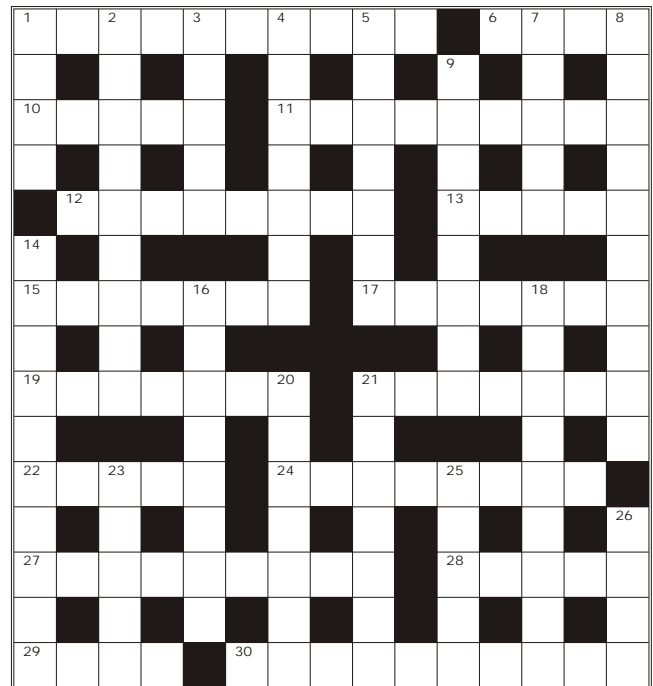
ACROSS

- 1. Musical style of Reich or Glass [10]
- 6. Music!? Usually for the hair [4]
- 10. The speed of playing [5]
- 11. Impertinent lady! [6,3]
- 12. Sore unit becomes melodious [2,2,4]
- 13. The piano regularly needs his attention [5]
- 15. Why? ...Famous popular song [7]
- 17. Robert the composer [7]
- 19. Make bigger [7]
- 21. Mahler 8 needs these forces [7]
- 22. Horses or drudges! [4]
- 24. See 14 down [1,9,8]
- 27. Previn's 5th wife is one [9]
- 28. Got bigger [5]
- 29. How many symphonies did 14 write? [4]
- 30. So near done changed [8,2]

DOWN

- 1. Mechanical device used to reduce tonal volume [4]
- 2. Composing by numbers [9]
- 3. Feelings [5]
- 4. Giving of talk [7]
- 5. Modern reproduction equipment [7]
- 7. Adlington Hall has a famous one [5]
- 8. Churches may need more than one [10]
- 9. When TV there are some programmes [3,5]
- 14 & 24. One type of work by famous composer [1,9 & 8]
- 16. When the music is boring there is this in the hall [6,2]
- 18. Not usual for musicians, more usually popes [9]
- 20. Several movements in same key [4,2,1]
- 21. Chopin waltz is only one of these [7]
- 23. "... Imperial" — march by Walton [5]
- 25. Encourage the players [3,2]
- 26. Not now but soon [4]

CROSSWORD 143



Solution to Crossword 142



Winner

Congratulations go to Roger Hughes from Pinner, Middlesex who submitted the only completely correct answer.

There was a number of other entries which were nearly correct.



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