



Bulletin



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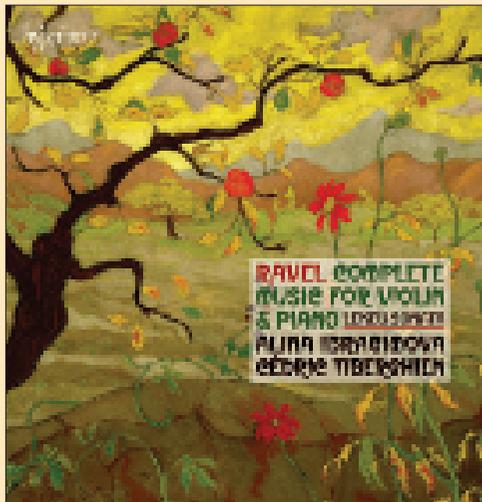


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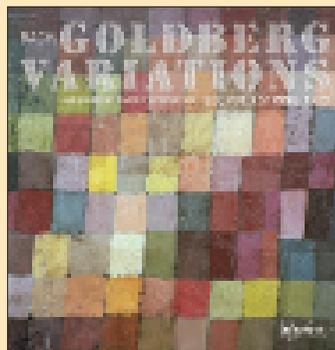
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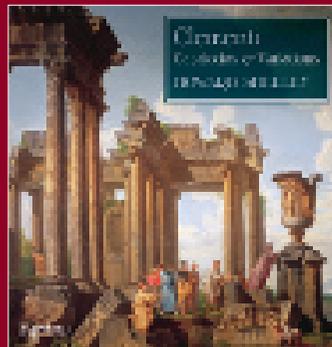
CHRISTOPHER HERRICK
THE ORGAN OF TRINITY COLLEGE,
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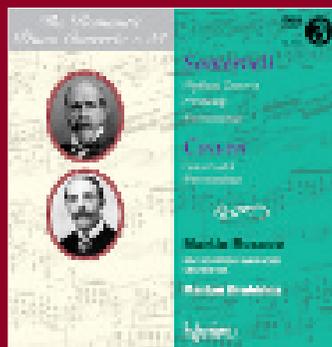


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FRMS BULLETIN Autumn 2011 No. 155

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Editorial & From the Chairman	4
FRMS Daventry Music Weekend 2011	5
Regional Groups	
Scarborough Music Weekend	9
West Region launch event	13
Scottish Group Spring Music Day	14
Societies	
News from Loughborough, Epsom, Bradford, Spalding and Swinton	15
CD Reviews	
Collegium - Rutter's sacred choral compositions	16
BIS – Gluzman plays Bruch	16
Hyperion - Avant-garde works	16
Dutton Epoch – World firsts	17
SOMM – Beecham magic	18
Wyastone - Children's Corner	18
Naxos - Opera for Children	19
Stars in Brass - Fairey Engineering Band plays Berlioz	19
Book Reviews	
Biographies of Beecham and Heddle Nash	19
News and Comment	
Marjorie Williamson, Vice President (1930-2011)	21
Letters and emails	21
From the Secretary	22
In Brief - news items	23
FRMS Technical Officer's Review	26
Features	
Vaughan Williams Society	25
Jessie's Fund - a worthy UK charity with music at its heart	25
Hollywood and the Europeans - Second in a series charting the history of movie music	28
A History of the FRMS - a project in progress	29
Officers and Committee	30

Forthcoming Events

FRMS AGM October 22nd (page 27)
 Yorkshire Region Autumn Meeting October 15th (page 26)
 Central Region Music Day November 5th (page 25)
 Torbay Music Weekend November 18th – 21st

Further ahead

2012 Daventry Music Weekend April 27th – 29th

Front cover: 75th birthday cake presented by the Barceló hotel
 at the Daventry Music Weekend *Photo and design: Paul Astell*

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to my first outing as editor of the *Bulletin* having taken over from Thelma Shaw following publication of the Spring issue. There, our Chairman paid full tribute to her long and much-valued service to the Federation, but she has not completely left the scene. Whether handing down useful tips, continuing her excellent relationships with our advertisers or contributing to the Reviews section, she has remained a key figure in the production of this issue, for which I am most grateful. I happen to know that Thelma has celebrated her 80th birthday in recent weeks and on behalf of all within the FRMS, I offer sincere congratulations.



I would also like to acknowledge the invaluable support provided by Sue Parker (Barnsley RMS) who has employed her considerable talents in the essential task of checking and proofreading these pages.

In Thelma's final Editorial, she kindly announced my imminent arrival and I am grateful for the measure of confidence she expressed. Although during my career I was, as she said, involved in desktop publication to a certain degree, my background is one of engineering. Initially this was in telecommunications but leading on eventually and perhaps inevitably, into the world of data-communications, Information Technology and computing. Editing future editions of the *Bulletin*, which is an essential means of communication within the Recorded Music community, is a challenge that I very much look forward to. I freely admit that I took on this task not fully knowing what to expect – for example, would I have too little material to work with, or too much - but with the help and encouragement of those I've mentioned, as well as the input of the contributors to this issue, the experience has been a satisfying one.

My arrival is just one of the changes to the make-up of the FRMS committee that will be finalised at the AGM in October. Several current members will be standing down, having given outstanding service over the years, and we offer them our grateful thanks for steering the Federation through some difficult times. The Chairman and Secretary refer to these in their respective columns.

Finally, Thelma has always stressed that this is your magazine and I look forward to receiving your comments, positive or negative, and perhaps any news from your own Society that may be of interest to the wider movement. My preference, by far, is for that contact to be by way of email for those that have the means. Otherwise, the more traditional methods are, of course, acceptable.

Paul Astell

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I was elated to receive an invitation to attend the inaugural meeting for the West Region which took place on Tuesday July 19th at Stonehouse.



This was organised primarily by Malcolm Lewis of Cirencester RMS and Roger Apps who is an FRMS committee member. This was followed by news from John Maidment that the Scottish Group held its second Music Day in Stirling in April and is already planning for next year's offering. John, who was a prime mover in this venture, is a former FRMS committee member. Such activities look outward and are signs of confidence and strength; they broaden our scope and widen our horizons. We offer our congratulations for continuing success to both ventures.

Our Federation has evolved from the days of the gramophone societies of the founding fathers of 1936. Their business is our business even today. Without the umbrella of a Federation, societies would have to make their own arrangements for licensing fees and insurance. The FRMS has a large data base which maps the society membership, and any subsequent change of meeting address, meeting venue and officers is logged. At the front-end of our organisation we have a secretary on the end of a telephone who can answer most of the queries relating to fees, insurance, society locations, society personnel, regional activities such as music days and national events such as Music Weekends. If he can't answer your question he will know someone who can.

It is with very mixed feelings that I announce my intention to stand down at the Rochdale AGM in October. I joined the committee as Vice-Chairman in October 2001 at Cardiff. It was at the time we had 'a few local difficulties'. Within a few months I was catapulted into the Chairman's seat. Such was the nature of the FRMS political scene in those days. Your committee realised that it was a fight for survival of the Federation. It was of the utmost importance that the FRMS survived intact. In the end the factions came together and common sense prevailed; the Federation was too important to fail.

I am sure that you will all join me in extending our good wishes to Paul Astell for this his first *Bulletin* edition.

I have been honoured to lead such a prestigious organisation as the FRMS. Long may the Federation continue the necessary work to keep good music alive. My thanks to all of my colleagues past and present for their camaraderie, combined wisdom, support, and encouragement over the past ten years. I shall miss you all.

John Davies

Daventry Music Weekend

THE 2011 DAVENTRY MUSIC WEEKEND, planned to be something special to celebrate the Federation's 75th anniversary was, by common consent, the best ever. Sincere thanks are due to Graham Kiteley and his team for the organisation and smooth running of this event. 102 residential delegates attended the Barceló Daventry hotel along with 10 day visitors. Photos by George Steele & Paul Astell. Thanks to those named below for additional reporting.

An enjoyable celebration dinner began the weekend perfectly before the assembled delegates heard John Davies deliver the traditional Chairman's welcome. He also passed on the sad news regarding the death of FRMS Vice-President, Marjorie Williamson (see obituary in later pages).

An interesting man

Jim Bostwick reports on the opening session...

David Owen Norris kicked off the 2011 Daventry weekend with an enlightening presentation about what really goes on in the recording studio with illustrations from recent releases, including his own.



The *Toronto Globe & Mail* described him as 'quite possibly the most interesting pianist in the world', a statement which to my mind, had a distinctly ambivalent ring to it. However, we were not left in any doubt when David held our attention for the full 90 minutes recounting his and fellow artists' experiences making records.

David has long been an advocate of English music and has a continuing association with the English Music Festival. A fluent broadcaster and champion of original interpretations of Elgar's piano music on period Broadwood pianos, he gave us recorded excerpts to underline his text. He provided an excellent start to the weekend.

All change?

On Saturday morning the Chairman outlined the changes to the FRMS committee that will take place at the next AGM as well as confirming that this will be the last of many successful Music Weekends to be organised by Graham Kiteley. John reported that a replacement had yet to be identified and he made an impassioned plea to anyone who might consider

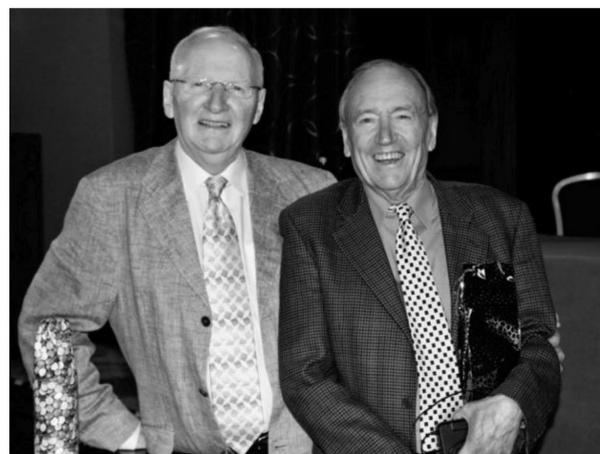
themselves a suitable candidate to come forward. The Barceló Daventry staff then wheeled in a magnificent-looking cake kindly donated by the hotel and this inevitably led to a rendition of *Happy Birthday* directed from the piano by Rita Davies.

John Lucas and Lyndon Jenkins

Jennette Murphy, Cirencester RMS reports...

Lyndon joined Sir Thomas Beecham's biographer, John Lucas, to give us a most interesting and fascinating talk on the life and work of Sir Thomas who died 50 years ago. The background of Beecham's early life, and estrangement from his father for many years, showed just how determined he was to play a part in English music. Using the money made by his grandfather making Beecham's Pills, Thomas was able to continue his career in music. He founded the London Philharmonic Orchestra in the 1930s and staged opera seasons at Covent Garden, Drury Lane, and other London theatres. Thomas Beecham later worked with the young Dr. Malcolm Sargent and the newly formed Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. These two conductors brought new music to audiences both here in Britain and overseas.

Sir Thomas had a famously coruscating wit which he was able to turn to his advantage when not getting his own way. Lyndon and John played some recordings of Sir Thomas speaking to his orchestra and told us many of his stories and witty asides. He



was, however, also known to upset his players sometimes.

Money became a big problem when the family fortune ran out but Sir Thomas always managed to find someone to finance his ideas, although he was often still in debt. Beecham's passion for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, which he conducted from

Daventry Music Weekend

1946 until his death in 1961, is evident as many of his recordings are still being played on radio today.

I do not think that those of us present will listen to our own favourite recordings in the same way. We will hear them with the humour and wit Sir Thomas gave to his rehearsals, recordings, and most of all to his public performances which many of us enjoyed. They continue to be a great part of the musical heritage of British music.

Editor: See a review of John's book *Thomas Beecham – An Obsession with Music* on page 20.

A leading organist

Our own Thelma Shaw took to the stage to introduce 'one of the world's leading organists'. As well as an international performer, **Thomas Trotter** is the official organist to the City of Birmingham, playing the famous Town Hall organ in some 20-30 concerts a year. He recalled that when signing up for this job, the contract still showed the scrubbed-out name of the previous incumbent, George Thalben-Ball! Thomas played recordings of some of his best-loved music beginning with his favourite composer, JS Bach: *Chaconne*, from Violin Partita No.2, performed by Hilary Hahn.

Thomas started piano lessons at the age of five and the organ at eleven, continuing to study piano during his college days. Radu Lupu was pianist on the next track playing Schubert's Impromptu in G flat. A major influence at the Royal College of Music was Ton Koopman who was soloist in the next item: Handel's Organ Concerto No.2. Reminiscing on time spent at Malvern College inevitably led to talk of Elgar, and Barbirolli's rendition of *Sospiri* with the Philharmonia Orchestra followed. Thomas recalled his time as organ scholar at King's College and we next heard John Tavener's motet *Dum Transisset Sabbatum* performed by the King's College Choir.

The problems associated with recording organ music were illustrated by using the mighty Royal



Albert Hall instrument as an example: the RAH is always heavily booked (and noisy) on a daily basis between 4am and 2am leaving just a two-hour window for recording sessions. We heard one such early-hours recording of Thomas at the RAH organ:

Edwin Lemare's rousing transcription of the *William Tell Overture*.

The final choices were an excerpt from Steve Reich's cantata *Desert Music* and 'September' from Strauss's *Four Last Songs* performed by Elisabeth Schwarzkopf.

In his vote of thanks John Gilks (York RMS) echoed the audience's appreciation of an interesting discussion expertly conducted by Thelma Shaw; John Davies followed with a tribute to Thelma herself for the long and valued service she has given to the Federation.

Piano Masterclass

We were very fortunate to be joined for the weekend by three young and very talented musicians. Two of them, brilliant pianists Sasha Grynyuk from Ukraine and Moscow-born Tatiana Dardykina, embarked on something not attempted before at a Musical Weekend. They gave a masterclass whereby each performed a prepared piece and in turn went on to discuss each other's performance and provide criticism and suggestions. Tatiana was first to perform with Chopin's *Polonaise-Fantasia in A flat*. After some thoughtful exchanges Sasha followed with Schumann's *Kinderszenen (Scenes from Childhood)*.

The mutual respect and admiration these fine artists have for each other was very apparent where they each pointed out how a different interpretation might be applied in various passages. The audience's obvious appreciation confirmed that this



innovative session was a great success.

At the conclusion our President, Lyndon Jenkins, paid tribute to the late Marjorie Williamson: 'Her generous personal offer to mark the 75th anniversary by sponsoring the hire of the Blüthner piano has made this interesting occasion possible. Marjorie had felt that if there was to be a masterclass and a full-length recital, then we owed it to the artists to provide them with the right facilities. She had been inclined to make her practical gesture anonymously, but in the sadly changed circumstances I felt that

Daventry Music Weekend

delegates would wish to know of it.' This announcement was warmly applauded.

Howard Shelley

After dinner, the final event for Saturday featured pianist and conductor Howard Shelley in conversation with Lyndon Jenkins. Howard reflected on his childhood and told us that he owed a great deal to a benevolent music teacher who waived expensive tuition fees.

The first musical item was his own recording of the 'Scherzo' from Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer*



Night's Dream as transcribed by Rachmaninov. Throughout his talk Howard was to leave us in no doubt as to his love for Rachmaninov's music and an item from the *Etudes-Tableaux* was the next music choice.

Now working widely as a conductor, Howard (above, right) told us that he now rarely works with other conductors, preferring to direct from the keyboard. His explanation was that too little time is actually spent with conductors to get the desired results. His next choice was of him conducting music by Ignaz Moscheles in a recording with the Tasmania Symphony Orchestra. Curiously, Chandos was dissatisfied with the resulting sound quality despite Howard being perfectly happy about it; the recording was eventually issued by Hyperion. Also on Hyperion, Howard left the piano aside for his Haydn recordings with the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana and we heard an excerpt from Symphony No. 93.

Howard has never fathomed why the opening of the Schumann Piano Concerto is rarely performed at the faster tempo he believes the composer intended. The audience had the opportunity of judging Howard's interpretation for themselves.

Muzio Clementi was born four years before Mozart, and Howard believes the older man's piano sonatas to be, by far, the more interesting; the final item featured the last movement of Clementi's opus 37/2.

The vote of thanks by Anne Davies (Cardiff RMS) summed up the audience's appreciation of a highly entertaining ninety minutes.

Sunday Morning Recital

Sasha Grynyuk was joined by Polish-born Alicja Smietana for a piano and violin recital which proved to be one of the highlights of the weekend and fully deserves the detailed description provided here by Graham Ladley (Oswestry RMS)...

Sasha opened the recital, playing Bach's *Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue in D minor BWV 903*. The complex chromatic fireworks of the Fantasia were thrown off with dazzling ease but also allowing for the light and shade so essential in Bach. This was followed by a muscular and well-delineated fugue. He followed this with three movements from a work unknown to many of us: *Five Pieces, Op. 34* by Paul Ben-Haim. This music, with its Jewish overtones, was most attractive, a gentle *Pastorale* and an *Intermezzo* being followed by a fiery *Capriccio*.

Alicja then joined Sasha for a performance of Brahms' Sonata Op. 108. This was a well-balanced performance, in which the composer's melodies were allowed full play but not over-sentimentalised. Alicja's slightly reedy tone suited Brahms' high-floating melodies, while she matched the piano in the more energetic passages. The simplicity of the *Adagio* was beautifully conveyed, while the youthful drive of the *Finale* was a delight. Next, Sasha performed Beethoven's Sonata Op. 31 No.1, known as being technically one of the most difficult of the 'Thirty-two'. In the first movement Beethoven is said to be parodying contemporary fashion and pianists, the two hands seeming to rarely fall



together. Sasha conveyed this with fine rhythmic power and precision, but with a lightness of touch which let the comedy through, and brought laughter from the audience at its conclusion. The second movement is highly elaborated and almost operatic in nature. This was brought off beautifully, with particularly well-modulated playing of the middle section. The finale, with its beautifully contrasted sections, was built to a fine climax before entering

Daventry Music Weekend

into the coda, played with a panache which again ended with the audience in laughter.

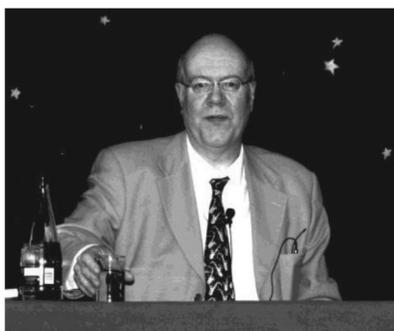
The performance of Mozart's Violin and Piano Sonata, K454, was a complete, and enjoyable, contrast. The power and grace with which this wonderful work was performed was a delight, from



Music Weekend organiser, Graham Kiteley, makes presentations to Sasha and Alicja

the majestic *Largo* introduction to the infinitely varied *Finale*. Throughout, the players always succeeded in keeping us conscious of the overall structure of the work, while allowing us to delight in Mozart at his most tuneful. This was a true partnership, with the two players in turn leading and accompanying and always allowing Mozart to speak. To conclude we were given a truly virtuosic performance of Sarasate's *Zigeunerweisen*, Op.20 by Alicja Smietana. The delightful tone of the first part gave way to a display of technical brilliance which took the breath away, while Sasha's accompaniment ably supported her. We have enjoyed many fine performers at Daventry, but none better than this year's. To say that these two young artists are stars of the future is not accurate. They are stars already. Look out for them!

A man of many talents



personality', a description he is none too pleased with. His multi-faceted professional life has seen him study oboe at the Royal Academy of Music,

Paul Arden-Taylor began the final session of the weekend by telling us that many people regard him as being in possession of a 'split

becoming involved in early music with the Praetorius Consort and appointed principal oboe with the Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet Orchestra at the age of 20. He is also still performing as a founder member of the English Symphony Orchestra. Over the years, Paul increasingly became interested in the technical aspects of sound recording and he now combines his performing career with that as an independent recording engineer and record producer. He is the founder of Dinmore Records.

This was to be a programme with some lighter elements, but first, Paul declared he had to 'get an early music offering out of his system': a compilation of music by Praetorius, Holborne and Demantius. Paul was soloist in the next item, the first movement of Albinoni's Oboe Concerto, before moving sharply in a different direction.

The Aeolian self-playing pipe organ at Dinmore Manor provided renditions of Tchaikovsky's *Waltz of the Flowers* and Bizet's *Carmen Fantasie*. Two pieces by Handel followed: David Ponsford playing harpsichord – 'sounds better recorded than live' – in the *Passacaglia* from Handel's Suite No. 7, and *Eternal Source of Light Divine* with soprano Carolyn Sampson. A modern piece by Christopher Ball – 'sounds like a fire in a pet shop!' – was followed by the same composer's Flute Concerto with Adam Walker as soloist.

Paul joined the Midland Radio Orchestra in 1979 and he explained that many of their recordings had been mostly wiped, but 81 tracks were saved and archived by Paul himself. We heard a selection from a 1973 session under Norrie Paramour – 'in the days when Radio 2 still played light music during the day!' – beginning with *Little Miss Molly* by Robert Farnon followed by Betty Smith (formerly of the Ivy Benson Band) singing a very different version of *I Feel Pretty*. A superb arrangement of *Summertime* captured the wonderful string quality of the MRO, and a slow version of *The Entertainer*, played on vibes, was followed by Rubenstein's *Melody in F* in an arrangement 'like you never heard it before'. Finally, a big session augmented by half the CBSO in Porter's *Night and Day* brought a super finale to the weekend to a close.

The future?

The weekend was a huge success not least due to the efforts of Graham Kiteley, Lyndon Jenkins and Tony Baines. Graham is retiring from the organising role but the excellent news is that two members of this year's audience, Ron and Denise Beech of Solihull RMS, have agreed to take up the reins and we look forward to hearing how their planning is proceeding in the coming months. Daventry will once again be the venue and provisional dates have been reserved for 2012:

Friday April 27th - Sunday April 29th •

REGIONAL NEWS

Scarborough Music Weekend

Chairman Tony Pook on Yorkshire Regional Group's annual event. Photos: Robert Swithenbank, Huddersfield RMS

FOR THOSE OUTSIDE THE YORKSHIRE REGION, the Elgar or photographic societies, **Dennis Clark's** name may be unfamiliar but Dennis was exceptional: talented in his hobbies and tireless in his efforts for societies to which he belonged.



Dennis died in May 2010 and it was therefore fitting that tribute should be paid by his Horsforth friend, **Robert Seager** (left). Tributes have been paid in *Bulletin* and elsewhere by Lyndon Jenkins, Jim Bostwick, Paul Bassett, Carl Newton and Michael Trott; Robert focussed on the

interests and things that he had shared with Dennis.

Elgar's music was much in evidence, starting with the 'Triumphal March' from *Caractacus*, ending with the finale from the First Symphony, with Elgar's finest work, *The Dream of Gerontius*, in the middle of the programme.

Dennis (right) was born in Ossett in 1925 and was active in Horsforth RMS and Leeds Camera Club. Pictures and music came together in audio-visual programmes set in Elgar's countryside, in Yorkshire and in the Malverns. Robert also featured excerpts from *Merrie England*, Schumann's Second Piano Sonata, Dvořák's *Scherzo Capriccioso* and Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto. Dennis was the Yorkshire Regional Group Secretary from 1986 to 2009 and for that alone, those that attend the Scarborough Music Weekends are in his debt.



SATURDAY AFTERNOON'S GUEST, Basil Tschaikov, cancelled unexpectedly because his wife broke her hip on Friday. **Jim Bostwick**, Secretary of YRG, stepped into the breach with a nostalgic look at **Britain: Backs against the wall**.

The government closed all places of public entertainment at the outbreak of World War II, to avoid mass casualties from bombing raids. Within a month the pianist Myra Hess arranged for lunchtime concerts to be given in the National Gallery and they ran from Monday to Friday every week, even during the Blitz, from October 1939 to April 1946. Jim played Neville Chamberlain's 3rd September speech declaring war with Germany and he followed this with Myra Hess playing her famous transcription of Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. Peter Dawson sang 'Yeomen of England' from *Merrie England*, followed by nostalgic Ivor Novello settings: *Keep*

the Home Fires Burning from World War I, and 'Rose of England' from the musical *Crest of the Wave*. Jim (below) wondered if anyone was writing stirring music for our forces today!

Eric Coates' music became famous in wartime including *Calling all Workers* and *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, still used today to introduce *Desert Island Discs*. Similarly, William Walton's music came into its own in celebrating Britain's war effort: *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue* and his 1944 film music from Laurence Olivier's *Henry V*. We heard two other famous pieces about war: Arthur Bliss's *Morning Heroes* and Michael Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*. Jim gave much background to these pieces, too much to report here, but perhaps you could invite him to give the full programme! It finished in a most British fashion, in thoughtful and reflective mood, with the *Romanza and Passacaglia* from Vaughan Williams' Symphony No. 5.



GEOFFREY KINDER'S CAREER was in music education: 'Many people baulk at the idea of engaging with contemporary music and this programme is intended to give a human face to modern composers'. Thus, **Talking with Composers** – or could it be **A Spoonful of Sugar**!

Geoffrey met all the featured composers except for Olivier Messiaen, but he met Yvonne Loriod, Messiaen's wife. He plunged us straight in at the deep end with *Antechrist* by Peter Maxwell Davies, a chamber work for piccolo, violin and 'cello, plus an assortment of percussion instruments: cowbells, tambourine, handbells, Burmese cymbals and gongs. 'Don't take it too seriously,' he said. 'You can smile or laugh outright!'



A host of new music followed: *Tomorrow shall be my dancing day* for jazz and symphonic forces by John Gardner; minimalism for brass in *Altitude* by George Benjamin; James MacMillan's *Sun-Dogs* for large unaccompanied choir ('it is finished when the whistling stops!'); *Raw Taw* for violin and piano by Nigel Osborne; Carla Bley's *Are we there yet?* for jazz piano and electric double bass; and Anthony Milner's *Salutatio Angelica*, a setting of Psalm 130.

REGIONAL NEWS

More familiar names then appeared: Birtwistle with *Silbury Air*, Tippett's *Midsummer Marriage* and Messiaen's *L'Ascension*. We finished our 'modern education' with *A Song from Michelangelo* by Simon Bainbridge and *Die Wiederkehr (The Return)* by the noted jazz saxophonist Barbara Thompson.

MAKING A WELCOME RETURN to Scarborough, **Michael Aston's** subject was **Charles Ives, American Musical Pioneer.**

Born in Danbury, Connecticut, in 1874 Charles Ives had prodigious musical talent, probably taking after his father, George, the youngest bandmaster in the Unionist Army, who liked to give his son musical challenges but advised against a career in music.

Musicians in nineteenth-century America followed Germanic European traditions and no one more so than Horatio Parker, with whom Ives studied at Yale University. They lived in different musical worlds and often clashed, but even so, when he graduated in 1898 Ives had composed his first symphony.



He chose to work as a clerk in the Mutual Life Assurance Company and led a very structured life: by day he was an insurance clerk, at night he composed and on Sundays he was an organist.

We heard excerpts from the first String Quartet and *The Unanswered Question*, the latter being dialogue between questioning trumpets and the woodwind, accompanied by chords on the strings. In 1907 Ives and a friend, Julian Myrick, formed their own insurance agency, taking premiums of \$20m in their first year. Within four years they were both rich but Ives still composed at weekends. We heard part of *The Housatonic at Stockbridge* (one of *Three Places in New England*) and the song *Tom Sails Away*, written in the period of his support for America's involvement in the First World War.

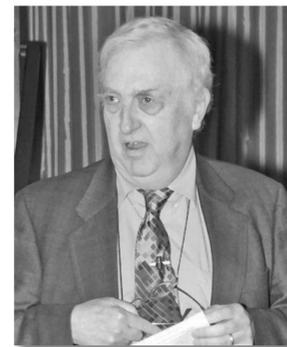
Although rich, Ives continued to work in insurance to earn money with two main priorities in mind: to ensure security for his family and to be able to promote his music to the public. He had suffered heart attacks and thought he was on borrowed time, although he survived for another thirty years.

Michael (pictured above) played *Alcott*, from the Concord Sonata for piano, named after Louisa May, the author of *Little Women*, and her husband. It had many references to Beethoven and Bach as well as popular hymn tunes.

Scarborough Music Weekend

Recognition came late to Ives, by which time he had ceased to compose new works, but still revised and promoted earlier works. We heard a marching tune, *He is there*, written during World War I and revised for World War II as *They are there*. Our last musical example was the finale of his Second Symphony, written in his twenties but not performed until 1951, 43 years later, by Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic. In 1954 Ives had a stroke and died aged 79. He is buried in Danbury cemetery.

CHRISTOPHER FIFIELD (pictured) is a conductor and music historian and author of the only full-length study of Max Bruch, published in 1988. **Max Bruch - Beyond the First Violin Concerto**, sought to dispel the myth that Bruch was a one-work composer, and to explore some of his other works. In *Jubilate-Amen* for soprano, choir and orchestra, the soloist describes a country



walk during which she hears *Vespers* sung by a distant choir. A good but unwilling pianist, Bruch gave concert tours but really wanted to write opera. We heard his 1863 *Overture: The Lorelei* written before Wagner's *Tristan* turned Europe's music upside-down. Bruch was not influenced by this 'new music' and stayed with the 'Mendelssohn tradition'. Although he died aged 82 in 1920, Bruch's music stayed firmly rooted in the 1860s.

Bruch became court conductor at Koblenz (1865), Sondershausen (1867) and Berlin (1870-72) and was originally noted for his choral works. We heard part of his cantata *Beautiful Ellen*, Opus 24, about the siege of Lucknow in the Indian Mutiny of 1857-8, in which the soldiers sing *The Campbells are Coming*.

Bruch wrote three symphonies (1868, 1870, 1882), which have tended to be 'lost' between Beethoven and Brahms. We heard the first movement of the First Symphony, followed by excerpts from *Odysseus*, an oratorio based on Greek myths, performed over 40 times in its first two years. This led to Bruch's appointment in 1880 as conductor of the Liverpool Philharmonic Society (a choral society), where he remained for three seasons. It was in Liverpool that Bruch began his Piano Quintet, commissioned by a chemical industrialist: we heard the *Scherzo*. In 1893 Stanford sponsored Bruch for an honorary doctorate at Cambridge. After the Romance for Viola and Orchestra, Opus 85, we heard three songs: *Little Christmas Song*, *Johnnie and Jenny* and *The Bells of Aberdovey*. We

REGIONAL NEWS

concluded with part of the Organ Sonata, Opus 88, and the *Finale* from the String Octet of 1920.

SIVA OKE IS THE FOUNDER AND OWNER of SOMM Recordings and has spent most of her life in music as a performer or in the record industry. The lovely sixteenth-century polyphony of Orlande de Lassus was demonstrated in *Ave Verum Corpus*, followed by Karine Georgian playing the *Prelude* from J S Bach's Suite No. 6 for solo 'cello.



Sarah Williamson, a BBC Young Musician finalist in 2002, played part of Copland's Clarinet Concerto with The Orchestra of the Swan, who also played 'Simple Gifts', the Shaker Tune from Copland's *Appalachian Spring*, and part of Mahler's Fourth Symphony in Stein's arrangement. The Cheltenham Bach Choir, conducted by Brian Kay, sang *Sigh No More Ladies*, George Shearing's arrangement from *Much Ado about Nothing*. *Amberley Wild Brooks* came from the second volume of Piano Music by John Ireland, played by Mark Bebbington, and to take us to the interval we had Haydn Wood's *Manx Overture* and Edward Elgar's setting of *The Lowestoft Boat* by Rudyard Kipling.

During the interval we were able to chat, drink teas and coffees and buy copies of the records reviewed, plus many more from the SOMM catalogue. Leon McCawley played Chopin's *Fantasia Impromptu in C# minor* and Mark Bebbington and the CBSO played extracts of British piano concertos by Howard Ferguson and Frederick Austin. Walton's First Symphony was conducted by Adrian Boult and Schubert's Ninth by Thomas Beecham. SOMM are involved with Lady Beecham in the 'Beecham Collection' a project to re-issue all the great recordings made by Sir Thomas. Finally we heard the first recorded performance of Bridge's chamber work *Sir Roger de Coverley*.

ON SUNDAY EVENING WE WERE pleased to welcome **Lyndon Jenkins**, this time in his new guise as President of the FRMS. He recalled 50 years of encounters with musicians and played some of their best music. My report on **LJ Entertains**, a relaxing evening, will avoid telling too many of Lyndon's jokes because that would spoil your future encounters with him. Early musical memories were in Swansea, aged 12, hearing Sir Adrian Boult conduct Mahler's Fourth Symphony and Norman del Mar conduct contemporary Welsh music at Swansea

Scarborough Music Weekend

Festival, but his musical example from that period was Karel Ančerl and the Czech Philharmonic playing Antonín Dvořák's Slavonic Dance No. 11.

In 1943 Sir John Barbirolli became conductor of the Hallé Orchestra. It was a sadly depleted ensemble with only 33 players, and needed to be increased to 70 in a month to meet the first concert commitment. His recruits included a schoolboy flautist. Barbirolli spoke of the revival of the Hallé and we heard Delius's *On Hearing the First Cuckoo in Spring*.

Lyndon heard Josef Krips conducting Monteverdi in London, and Dr Sargent and Basil Cameron at the Proms. He remembered Boult's early days in Birmingham (1924-30) and we heard him conduct a sprightly march, *El capitán*, by John Philip Sousa.

Lyndon first met Malcolm Sargent in 1960 when he was rehearsing *Land of Hope and Glory* in order to conduct the Proms audience. He recalled Sargent's friendship with mouth-organ player, Larry Adler; Sargent touring Russia; his great affection for Gilbert and Sullivan; and his last tour of America in the year of his death. He conducted Vaughan Williams' symphonies in concerts in America but never recorded them here, the record companies preferring Boult and Barbirolli. We heard an extract from the finale of VW's Second Symphony. Lyndon then spoke of his 20 years with the BBC and his work on 'Special Projects' in Symphony Hall. We heard Menuhin talk about recording the Elgar Concerto when he was sixteen (his introduction to a British audience) and his 1944 recording of *Salut d'Amour*, which was not issued in Britain.



Lyndon does a lot of pre-concert talks but claims to be semi-retired: i.e. he only works five days a week! As his finale and farewell music for the evening he chose Alfred Brendel's encore from one of his ninety-two 'Farewell' concerts - Schubert's *Impromptu No. 3*.

SUE PARKER IS ASSISTANT SECRETARY of the Yorkshire Regional Group and has helped in organising this year's Scarborough Weekend. Her programme title **Here will we sit and let the sounds of music creep in our ears** is from *The Merchant of Venice* and reflects the huge variety of music which has been inspired by Shakespeare. Introducing her first piece, *Fear no more the heat of the sun* (performed by Cleo Laine and the John

REGIONAL NEWS

Dankworth Ensemble), Sue (pictured below) said: 'Scarborough has been strange without Dennis - this is for him.' The BBC asked Gerald Finzi to write music for a 1946 production of *Love's Labour's Lost*. We heard the opening, followed by two songs from *Twelfth Night: Oh Mistress Mine* by Thomas Morley and Joseph Haydn's *She Never Told Her Love*.

Walton depicted Ophelia telling Polonius in *Hamlet* how Hamlet came to her room 'As I was sewing in my closet' and Turnage wrote desolate, despairing music as Ophelia declared 'O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown'.



We then had contrasting versions of 'Take, O take those lips away' from *Measure for Measure*, the first by English composer John Wilson (1595-1674) and then by the American, Amy Beach (1867-1944) who was a New England Classicist.

Ned Rorem wrote a suite for 'cello and piano, *After Reading Shakespeare*, and Matthew Harris has written many Shakespeare songs from which we heard *Tell me,*

Scarborough Music Weekend

where is fancy bred. Vaughan Williams wrote his celebrated Serenade to Music in honour of Henry Wood's Golden Jubilee, which took us to another interval.

Refreshed, we had three more short works: Charles Wood's *Who is Sylvia*, Roger Quilter's *Blow blow thou winter wind* and Thomas Arne's *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Sue made the connection of Warwickshire's Forest of Arden, where Shakespeare set *As You Like It*, with a forest near Athens, the setting of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Mario Castelnovo-Tedesco set to music some seventy of Shakespeare's sonnets and songs but we heard his Overture to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in which he pays homage to Mendelssohn. We also heard the end of Act II from Britten's opera of the same name. From *The Tempest* we had Ariel's song 'Come unto these yellow sands' by Frank Martin and 'Full Fathom Five' in a setting by Robert Johnson (1583-1634). Macbeth provided the witches' chant *Double, Double, Toil and Trouble* by Jaakko Mäntyjärvi from Finland and, finally, we heard the Musicians of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre playing *The Winter's End* by the Irish composer Shaun Davey. Sue said: 'Only one of Shakespeare's plays, *King John*, does not have reference to music'.

The 2012 YRG Musical Weekend will again be at The Crown Spa Hotel, Scarborough from Friday 30th March to Monday 2nd April. •

Berlioz Society Annual Weekend

5th & 6th November 2011

at

Art Workers Guild

6 Queen Square, London WC1



This year is the Society's 9th principal annual London event and the focus will be on

BERLIOZ'S SACRED WORKS

Messe Solennelle, Te Deum, and Grande Messe des Morts

Among the eminent musicologists, academics and music critics who will present talks are: Society Chairman, author **David Cairns**; Professors **David Charlton** and **Hugh Macdonald** who is Editor-in-Chief, Bärenreiter New Berlioz Edition; Emeritus Professor **Julian Rushton**

American musicologist and conductor, **Professor D. Kern Holoman**.

David Temple will direct singers from the Crouch End Festival Chorus

in Berlioz's choral works.

Further information from:

Shelagh Marston: shelaghmarston@btinternet.com

Helen Petchey: helenpetchey.berlioz@gmail.com

www.theberliozsociety.org.uk

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Regional News

Stonehouse, Gloucestershire saw a major event on July 19th: the inaugural meeting of the new West Region. Hosts Stroud Valley MC worked tirelessly to provide a trouble-free day and a splendid lunch. Thanks are due to Chairman, Robert Crockford and to Jenny Buckland for their seamless teamwork. A capacity attendance of seventy-two representing Societies from across the UK enjoyed three very varying and contrasting presentations. Several FRMS Officers and Committee members were present. Ian Spar reports on proceedings.

The initial presentation was given by the West Region joint founder and FRMS Committee Member, **Roger Apps**. For **All in a lifetime...so far**, Roger (pictured) drew on music composed from each decade of his life. As a 21-year-old in 1968, he had joined Maidstone Gramophone Society and was so impressed that he formed one the following year in his then home town of Tenterden, Kent, giving his first programme in 1976. Today all his music was to be British, commencing with two movements from Grace Williams' *Penillion*. This rousing Welsh music is quite nationalistic but of universal appeal. To follow was an excerpt from Malcolm Arnold's neglected Viola Concerto played by Rivka Golani. The *andante* is poignant in that peculiar Arnold style: a sad melody interspersed by angular chords. Another female composer followed: Doreen Carwithen, former Secretary to, then subsequently wife of, William Alwyn. Doreen and William lived in Suffolk and her *Suffolk Suite* evokes the area. The second movement, *Orford Ness*, gently portrays yachts at anchor; tranquil and serene, this is superb scoring from a virtually unknown composer. Next a 1990s piece: the third movement from Steve Martland's *Danceworks* played by the composer and his band. Influences from the minimalists and Stravinsky were revealed. To represent Scotland, Roger chose *From Ayrshire* for violin and orchestra by James MacMillan, composed for Nicola Benedetti.

Roger related how the BBC, under William Glock, promoted *musique concrète* of the 1950s and 60s (the likes of Boulez and Stockhausen) but, in his opinion, other melodic works composed during these years were rarely heard. William Lloyd Webber's *Invocation* was an example of a 'three-minute wonder' making it apparent that son Andrew certainly genetically inherited his father's melodic gift! Next was an excerpt from Gavin Bryars' haunting cello concerto, *Farewell to Philosophy*, dreamily played by the other Lloyd Webber, Julian. Roger ended his presentation with a Dave Heath early work from the late 1980s, *The Frontier*, rhythmically alive, *à la* Stravinsky, with a haunting middle section.

The second presentation of the day was given by West Region joint founder and Cirencester RMS member, **Malcolm Lewis**, providing a wide-ranging, penetrating, and humorous survey of Sir Arthur Sullivan's life and music before Gilbert. Malcolm

West Region launch event

started with the *Lambeth Walk* - Sullivan was born in Lambeth - and it was noted that several members were animated once this was underway! Sullivan trained in Leipzig and won the Mendelssohn Prize: an excerpt from his first major composition, *The Tempest* (1861) was used to illustrate his achievement. In the 1860s it was customary for a ballet to precede the opera and Malcolm then played 'Dance of Nymphs and Satyrs' from *L'île Enchantée*. This was followed by an excerpt from the *Irish Symphony*, reminiscent of Dvořák in its rhythmic drive. An excerpt from the long-lost Cello Concerto, as reconstructed by Mackerras, led next to Sullivan's first foray into operetta, *Cox and Box* (1867). Then followed a performance of the Overture *Di Ballo* (1870), again typical Sullivan and at once recognisable. *Onward! Christian Soldiers* was played as an example of his hymn-writing and two later works completed the survey: the 'Bridal March' from *The Rose of Persia* and a snippet from *Te Deum*.



The afternoon session was given by guest presenters and long-time supporters of the FRMS, **Adrian Farmer and Antony Smith** from **Wyastone/Nimbus**. They entertained us in various guises and with much mirth including a review of the history of recorded formats, from 78s through to CD and beyond with many technical explanations. They gave us an appraisal of the current situation with regard to recording companies and that 'dying breed', the record shop. Their initial piece was the familiar Mendelssohn *Midsummer Night's Dream* incidental music in a unique single-microphone Nimbus recording which includes actors relaying Shakespeare's text. Next a recording by their artist, Vladimir Feltsman: a wonderful 'Russian piano-performing-style' disc of Rachmaninov Preludes and the third Piano Concerto. A cello sonata by an 'unknown' composer, Simon Laks - very Ravel-like - superbly played by Rafael Wallfisch and John York was followed by a short piece of cantor music from a Ukrainian with a range going into falsetto with extraordinary ability. Next we heard a Brahms Hungarian Dance performed by Oscar Shumsky (violin) and Adrian Farmer himself at the piano. At Shumsky's insistence it was never released. The final item was Benny Goodman's version of *After you've Gone!* There were compliments from those present and it augurs well for the future. Hopefully the next event will be Spring, 2012 in Salisbury. ●

Regional News

On 7th May forty people attended the Smith Museum and Art Gallery, the setting for a highly successful Scottish Group Music Day. Secretary, John Maidment reports...

Sir Thomas Beecham, 50 Years On was presented by Graham Melville-Mason in this the 50th anniversary of Beecham's death. Graham (below with Pat Leishman, Chair of FRMS Scottish Group) is a Patron of the Dvořák Society and is the editor of its journal, *Czech Music*. Graham spoke of Sir Thomas's extraordinary relationship with his players - they called him Tommy behind his back - creating a



relaxed atmosphere, with the occasional joke, but at the same time bringing out the best in everyone, building a rapport and winning the respect and admiration of all who played under him. To illustrate this point he played an excerpt from a rehearsal of Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*. Other musical examples included the minuet from Schubert's 3rd symphony which demonstrated elegance and balance, Berlioz's *La Corsaire* with a perfectly judged dramatic climax, and the *scherzo* from his favourite Dvořák symphony, No. 8. Beecham and Sir Edward Elgar were friends, but not close. However, Sir Thomas had promised the composer that he would record the *Enigma Variations* the way Elgar wished it to be played whenever recording techniques had improved sufficiently to do it justice. This recording was eventually made in 1954. We heard two of the variations, *G. R. S.* and *B. G. N.* After the death in November 1954 of the German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler, Beecham in tribute conducted the two programmes his colleague had been due to present at the Festival Hall, and from one of these we heard the 'Malagueña' from *Rapsodie Espagnole* by Ravel.

In December 1955 Sir Thomas Beecham led the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in a Royal Festival Hall concert which marked the 90th birthday of Finland's greatest composer, Jean Sibelius. Beecham had championed this music since it was new, a service for which the Finnish ambassador awarded him his country's Order of the White Rose during the intermission. The sense of a great occasion was caught in a recording of the British and Finnish national anthems, after which Beecham led an affectionate performance of the rarely-heard music

Scottish Music Day

from *Swan White*. Sir Thomas left behind a large legacy of recordings, many of which are in the catalogues and continue to appear. The vote of thanks was given by Chris Hamilton.

The Annual General Meeting followed: in her opening address, Chair, Pat Leishman, welcomed delegates from eight societies, seven from Scotland and one from England. She thanked the Stirling society for hosting the 2011 event which had surpassed the numbers attending Dundee in 2010. Stirling has quite a lively music scene: aside from the thriving Recorded Music Society, there is a branch of El Sistema (which originated in Venezuela) in nearby Raploch. Sistema Scotland is a charity set up in the belief that children can gain huge social benefits by playing in a symphony orchestra. They use music-making to foster confidence, teamwork, pride and aspiration in the children taking part – and across their wider community. Nicola Benedetti is a regular visitor to this project. The following Office Bearers were re-elected: **Chair:** Pat Leishman, Dundee RMS; **Vice Chair:** Iain Pinkerton, St Fillans MC; **Secretary:** John Maidment, Carnoustie RMC; **Treasurer:** Chris Hamilton, Dundee and Kirkcaldy RMSs.

Dr George Fyfe of the St Fillans Music Circle gave the second talk, **The Orchestral Song**. George (pictured) began by contrasting the refined French *mélodie* with the more unrestrained German approach such as that of Richard Strauss and Mahler. The musical examples began with 'Villanelle' and 'Absence' from *Les nuits d'été* by Berlioz, performed by Bernarda Fink (mezzo) with Kent Nagano conducting the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin. This was followed by 'Sabbath Morning at Sea' from Elgar's *Sea Pictures* (Janet Baker), *Three Orchestral Songs* by Sibelius two sung by Soile Isokoski and one by Jorma Hynninen, baritone. Mahler was represented by *Urlicht* from *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (Anne Sophie von Otter). Songs by Henri Duparc (Bernadette Greevy) were followed by Canteloube's *Bailero* (Jill Gomez) and *Vocalise* by Rachmaninov (Anna Moffo, soprano, with Stokowski conducting the American SO). The programme ended with Strauss's *Gesang der Apollonpriesterin* with Felicity Lott and the RSNO, conductor Neeme Järvi. The vote of thanks was given by Douglas Paton of the Kirkcaldy Society.



Next year's Music Day will be held at the same venue on Saturday 21st April. ●

Society News

Spalding Music Club Centenarian

We read with interest the item re Claude Spiers celebrating his 100th birthday (*Spring Bulletin*); however, I would like to report that we also have a



centenarian, Don Swales, who was 100 in 2009. We made a cake and celebrated on his birthday; he is still in good health, lives alone and looks after himself.

Keith Dobney, Hon. Secretary

Editor: Congratulations to Don from all at the FRMS.

Loughborough RMS at fifty

Fifty years ago a group of music enthusiasts got together with a view to forming a music society; they all put in £5 - which each one received back as funds grew - and so the Loughborough Gramophone Society was born. In those early days, as well as playing and listening to records, members went together to concerts and even produced their own. Of course times have changed - from the humble 78 through to LPs and on to CDs. Our name has also changed - to the Loughborough RMS - as has our venue, four times, although not always through choice. From a peak of around 60 members our numbers have settled at around 25 but the enthusiasm is still as strong as in those early days. Our programme for the season usually includes half a dozen guest speakers along with music by our own members, coupled with a Coffee Evening and Annual Dinner. What of the future? Well, for the immediate future we will continue to enjoy our music and social evenings just as they are. The distant future will take care of itself, but I am sure the music of Tchaikovsky, Beethoven, Brahms, Sibelius *et al* will still keep groups like ours listening together.

Ray Wainwright, Hon Secretary

Epsom RMS - a sad loss

We are sad to announce the death of Peggy Dubois in February, just short of her 83rd birthday. Peggy was a founding member and served as Hon. Secretary for more than fifty years until retiring from the post in 2006. Her musical interests included singing with the Royal Choral Society and the Malcolm Sargent Festival Choir. At Peggy's final farewell, members of Epsom's Ebba Singers sang Elgar's *Ave Verum* and Schubert's *Sanctus* to reflect Peggy's love of choral music.

Martin Le Ray, Hon. Secretary

Bradford RMS closes

It is with much sadness that I advise that Bradford RMS folded on the 28th June 2011. For several years the Society faced declining membership and attendances. It was hoped our move to a new venue four years ago would help re-launch the Society, but regrettably, we were not supported in the numbers we had both hoped for and expected. The Society did not stand still in its quest to recruit new members and probably did more than any other society in the FRMS to promote itself with many different initiatives taken, most of which prompted no response whatsoever. Within the first two months of our move to the new venue, our Chairman died suddenly. With an already depleted Committee this meant that I, as Secretary, had to run the Society almost single-handedly, requiring a virtual 100% attendance record, something I am no longer able to commit to.

Geoff Bateman, Secretary

Swinton hits 40

Thirty guests, including nine from other societies, recently celebrated at Swinton Recorded Music Group's 40th anniversary meeting.



Cutting the cake is guest, Rita Davies with (l - r) Chairman, Betty Seddon; Secretary/Treasurer, Derek Kinsey and Committee Member, Derek Stott

Derek Stott, Swinton RMG

REVIEWS CDs and Books

CDs reviewed by Thelma Shaw

A Song in Season

The whole range of John Rutter's music has an indefinable quality that is immensely satisfying to singers and listeners alike. From the whimsical, such as his setting of *Wind in the Willows*, to the powerful grandeur of his *Te Deum*, one is left with a joyful sense that all is right with the world. His latest sacred choral compositions on the **Collegium** label are a prime example. *A Song in Season* is an album of 12 commissions to celebrate important occasions or people, including:

- **Wells Jubilate**, written for a service in Wells Cathedral to celebrate the completion of restoration work, and **Winchester Te Deum** for the installation of the Dean of Winchester.
- **Look to the Day**, commissioned by Cancer Research UK for a special thanksgiving service in Ely Cathedral.
- **To every thing there is a season** expresses the theme of the album and is in memory of a choir director in New York.

In a superb recording by the incomparable Cambridge Singers and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by John Rutter, each of these songs by an inspired and inspirational composer adds another gem to the modern English choral repertoire.

COLCD 135

Gluzman plays Bruch

On the **BIS** label Select Music has issued a recording of the acclaimed young Israeli violinist Vadim Gluzman playing works by Max Bruch: Violin Concerto No. 1, *Romance in F major* and String Quintet in A minor. Gluzman realises the lyrical and dramatic qualities associated with the familiar concerto that Bruch himself disparagingly called 'the concerto for all and sundry.' But, if only because they are much less well known, it is the two other works that stand out. Both written in the composer's later years, they are every bit as compelling as the concerto.

• In sonata form, the **Romance** sustains a rapturous mood throughout, with the solo violin supported, but not overpowered, by an atmospheric orchestral score.

• For me, the **String Quintet** was a revelation. It was rediscovered in 1988 in the BBC music library, where it had been overlooked since a broadcast performance in 1937. Written almost a century ago by an 80-year old, it has the impact of a modern composition. This ensemble demonstrates the technical skill as well as the artistic and dramatic interpretation demanded by this joyous work.

BIS SACD 18

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O Lord, thou has searched me out · Most glorious Lord of Life · Look at the world · Veni Sancte Spiritus

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REVIEWS CDs and Books



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"Siva Oke's Somm label continues to delight. The label's connection with the Beecham Trust has already yielded a substantial catalogue of the conductor's rarities. This disc continues the story and upholds the high standards of the rest of the Beecham Collection".
 Rob Barnett - MusicWeb International.
 Mozart, Alwyn, Grieg, SOMM-BEECHAM 23.

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WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION For catalogue and further information: sales@somm-recordings.com www.somm-recordings.com

electronics and synthesised elements in composition, it is impossible to ignore this compelling CD of four works by Jonathan Harvey. Using a combination of the human voice, flute, cello and synthesiser blended with pre-recorded elements, Harvey creates exhilarating sounds that deserve more than a cursory hearing. This disc contains two contrasting *a cappella* choral pieces. *The Angels* (1994), written for the Christmas Eve festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College, Cambridge, is a setting of words by John V. Taylor. In a blend of humming, two-part canon and unison, the words and music convey a sense of unending tranquillity in the Anglican tradition.

In complete contrast *Marahi* (1999) also draws on Buddhist beliefs in what Harvey describes as 'a hymn of adoration to the divine feminine'. Chanted Sanskrit Buddhist prayers alternate with a spoken English adaptation of a hymn to the Virgin in three continuous sections headed *Angelic*, *Human* and *Animal* realms respectively. These demonstrate the common basis for differing beliefs and concepts, using highly unconventional sounds and rhythms that make great demands on the singers. It is the other two futuristic compositions that really stretch the imagination and force us into new territory. In *Ashes Dance Back* a specialist chorus and pre-recorded sound are electronically interwoven in a setting of a Persian poem that

depicts death as a rapturous event. Again, the vocal sounds, sometimes stridently dissonant, are unfamiliar, as in *The Summer Clouds Awakening*, scored for choir, flute, cello and electronics.

Appreciation of alternative music is essentially subjective but, however one views the result, this magnificent Hyperion recording is a masterpiece of brilliant performance. For many of us, this poses a challenging leap into the unknown but it is one that deserves to be taken. The works incorporate modern audio technology to produce strange, exciting music that will eventually become familiar. Try it!

CDA67835

Beecham magic on SOMM

In excellent digitally remastered transfers of memorable live recordings, SOMM has captured brilliantly the magic of the legendary conductor Sir Thomas Beecham. This outstanding first commercial release in the *Beecham Collection* contains items from three concerts recorded in 1955/6 with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra: Wagner's *Rienzi Overture*; Delius' *In a Summer Garden*, and Schubert's *Symphony No.9*.

Sir Thomas Beecham's conducting genius and empathy with his orchestra was such that he could instil life into the most mundane work and make

REVIEWS CDs and Books

one listen to hackneyed pieces with renewed interest. Here his skilful interpretation of the *Rienzi Overture* at a performance in the Royal Festival Hall, is a prime example.

Beecham described Delius' *In a Summer Garden* as 'well-nigh flawless in form and orchestration'. On this recording, its breathtaking performance at the 1956 Edinburgh Festival is sheer joy and reflects Beecham's deep feeling for the work. The still silence after last bars of diminuendo is as eloquent an appreciation as the applause.

Sir Thomas Beecham conducted Schubert's Symphony No.9 for the last time at a concert recorded at the Royal Festival Hall in 1955. Under its conductor's typically skilful and sensitive direction, the RPO gave a dynamic performance, from a lyrical unhurried opening to a thrilling finale.

Released in collaboration with the Sir Thomas Beecham Trust, this outstanding CD is an example of SOMM's expertise in using modern technology to preserve historically significant performances.

SOMM Beecham 29

First the book, now the CD

In the Spring 2010 issue (152) I reviewed the book *The Music Goes Round and Around* by the renowned clarinettist Basil Tschaikov. SOMM has now issued a recording under the title *My Years with Beecham*. Here the author talks with Jon Tolansky, concentrating on the sections of his book that described his life as a musician playing under the spell of a superb conductor.

With amusing anecdotes and excellent musical illustrations from the SOMM catalogue of Beecham conducting the London Philharmonic and Royal Philharmonic orchestras during the time the author was a member, this is the perfect companion to Tschaikov's most readable book.

World firsts on Dutton EPOCH

The steady output of rarely-heard works from Mike Dutton's Vocalion studio is invaluable to RMS groups aiming to include unfamiliar compositions in their programmes. Excellently recorded releases on the Epoch label include world première recordings by Delius, Gordon Jacob and a selection of unknown works for cello and orchestra by York Bowen, Alan Bush and Havergal Brian.

•**Delius: *Poem of Life and Love***. Delius constantly revised this orchestral work and its extended form was published in 1999. Life and love are represented in two distinct sections that lead to a stirring climax just before the work ends.

Delius enthusiasts will also welcome a revised (2010) version of David Matthews' arrangement of the moving opera *A Village Romeo and Juliet*, recorded

by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. The CD also includes *Lebenstanz* and *Irmelin Suite*.

CDLX 7264

•**Gordon Jacob: *Music for Viola and Orchestra***. In his two concertos and four pieces for viola and orchestra Jacob demonstrated the versatile nature of the viola with music ranging from "rugged and virile" to "gentle and singing". This is a stunning CD of significant music, in particular the Viola Concerto no.1. Also included is a short Passacaglia Stereophonica, written in 1960 for BBC stereophonic test broadcasts.

CDLX 7258

•**Discoveries of Cello music**: Recorded on 2 CDs, York Bowen's romantic *Rhapsody* (1924), Bush's virtuoso *Concert Suite* (1952) and Brian's light and appealing *Concerto* (1964), all scored for cello and orchestra, are a joyous find. The celebrated cellist Raphael Wallfisch, supported by the BBC Concert orchestra conducted by Martin Yates, warmly and sensitively interprets every nuance of mood and style in these works.

CDLX 7263

These welcome issues should do much to bring to the fore British music that has been sadly, and puzzlingly, overlooked.

Children's corner

At the FRMS music weekend Paul Arden-Taylor (Dinmore Records) played a delightful version of *The Teddy Bears' Picnic**, rarely heard nowadays. Also, among the large selection of CDs on **Wyastone's** stall were several recordings of the old singing games and nursery rhymes that were an important part of childhood for most of our readers. I suspect that very few children today know any of these songs and games and this traditional aspect of children's play seems to have been lost.

Chatting along these lines to **Antony Smith**, a director of **Wyastone**, I was cheered to learn that his 8-year-old son loves to listen to the songs and to have the unfamiliar language and games explained. Maybe the pendulum will swing back; childhood might become less sophisticated and play less technology-driven. For anyone wishing to introduce their youngest to the way we played 'in olden days', the following delightful CDs from Wyastone, each with a booklet of words and comprehensive background information, are an excellent buy.

•**Children's Singing Games**. This collection from the early 1960s features children from Junior Schools in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales. They were recorded in the school playgrounds as the children played skipping, ball-bouncing, line, dipping and ring games. I guarantee this will revive many a long-forgotten and happy memory. *SayDisc CD-SDL 338*

REVIEWS CDs and Books

•**Old English Nursery Rhymes.** Vivien Ellis and Tim Laycock with the Broadside Band sing 52 songs that will appeal to the very young.

SayDisc CD-SDL 419

•**Alice in Wonderland; Alice through the looking Glass.** A lovely 4-CD set for older children in which Sir John Gielgud reads these abridged classics. With musical extracts from Mendelssohn's String Symphonies and Boyce's Symphonies.

NimbusNI 1723

*Dinmore's *Teddy Bears' Picnic* is a recording from the archives of the BBC Midland Radio Orchestra and features the rickett, a 2-reeded instrument of the bassoon family. Its long tube is folded many times and it will amuse children to know that it is often called a sausage bassoon!

Opera for children

To mark the 60th birthday of the British composer, Ronald Corp, NAXOS has released his superb new four-act opera for children, *The Ice Mountain*. Based on a Swiss legend, this expressively beautiful work describes the cycle of life, represented by the four seasons, and how to come to terms with death. The New London Children's Choir and members of the New London Orchestra, both founded by Corp, respond eloquently to the composer's sensitive direction to give a vivid performance ranging from powerful joy to haunting sorrow. **Naxos 8.572777**

Summary: These reviews encompass a wide range of music and all are worth repeated listening and can contribute to the variety of RMS programmes.

Thelma Shaw

Stars in Brass

Works of Berlioz: Fairey Engineering Band

For lovers of Berlioz AND brass bands this CD reissue could be for you. The band was founded in 1937 by a group of employees at the Fairey Aviation Works in Stockport and is currently The Fairey (Geneva) Band. As the William Fairey Engineering Band in 1992 they recorded a selection of Berlioz pieces under the late Major Peter Parkes and the resulting CD was considered to be one of the band's best efforts. Due to repeated demands this CD is a 'one-off' reissue by a Fairey's old boy, Peter Nicholas.

Peter explains: 'The bandroom was completely destroyed by fire in 2010 and items from over 60 years, which cannot be replaced, went up in smoke. Any help you can give us would be extremely welcome'.

The band gives us the *Hungarian March*, *Carnaval Romain*, *The Corsair*, *Benvenuto Cellini*, *Witches' Sabbath* and *Judges Of The Secret Court* as well as two lesser-known items, *Will o' the*

Wisps and *Ballet Des Sylphes*. I very much enjoyed this CD, performed superbly by the band, and Peter offers it to readers of the *Bulletin* at £12.50 but without the usual postal charge. Send a cheque payable to Stars in Brass to: Stars in Brass, PO Box 760, Stockport, SK5 9AP. **Paul Astell**

Music All the Way

by Brian Astell

Pen Press; 376pp

The surname may seem familiar and Brian is indeed the Editor's first cousin! He has past associations with the FRMS as founder of Hereford Music Circle as well as being involved in a multitude of other musical activities in that city. His story begins with the earliest memories of childhood in 1930s London, the trauma of World War II and his first steps on a musical journey that has shaped his whole life. The initial interest in music can be traced back to those wartime years and the inspiration provided by two Baptist ministers: the first toured the bomb shelters during the Blitz and was to reappear on the scene after the war; the other was Brian's host during evacuation when billeted in Lancashire where the home-sick child was taken along to church services and the strains of a mighty pipe organ were heard for the first time. This sparked a fascination that would lead not only to a lifetime as a church organist, but also to taking up music as a full-time career. The front cover illustration depicts the delivery of his first piano by horse and cart, but after the war Brian dabbled with various other instruments, especially the clarinet.

He also developed 'a lifelong record-collecting obsession' with an estimated 10,000 discs purchased over the years. The 'living hell' of National Service in the Band of the Coldstream Guards is described in agonising detail but eventually a degree paved the way towards a career in teaching – music of course. School life ended prematurely but the education system's loss was the leisure industry's gain with Brian leading musical holiday groups, including SAGA, at home and abroad. It was yet another musical talent that drew him to Hereford when invited to sing bass with the cathedral choir. This is a fascinating and often intimate insight into a life dedicated to music and of one who is equally passionate about communicating his extensive knowledge to a wider audience. **Paul Astell**

Heddle Nash: Singing against the tide

The life and times of a British tenor

by Eleanor Allen; Jubilee House Press; 272pp

Heddle Nash was surely the most popular British tenor on record, in concert and opera, from the 1920s through to the late 1950s. His was a light lyric tenor with a distinctive and unmistakable

REVIEWS CDs and Books

timbre which was also characterized by the most exquisite diction. You would think that given his natural gifts, his rise to the very top of his profession would have been easy and assured. This was not the case and he worked very hard against adversity to achieve his success. He was just twenty when the First World War broke out and he spent the next four years witnessing the most appalling sights; the experience affected him for the rest of his life. The end of the war saw him in poor health and with no job and he eventually enrolled at Blackheath Conservatoire in London.

His father agreed to pay for Heddle to go to Milan to study with Giuseppe Borgatti where he made a stunning debut as Almaviva in the *Barber of Seville* at the Teatro Carcano. Nash returned to England, his reputation established, and went on to become one of the best-known and best-loved of all British artists. Heddle Nash made many fine records, mainly for Columbia in the 1920s and 1930s, which were very popular. He signed for HMV in 1944 and made many fine recordings with them including the definitive *Dream of Gerontius* in 1945. Heddle Nash continued working throughout the 1950s and made his final appearance in *Messiah* as late as March 1961, the year of his death at the age of 67.

Before this book, little seems to be known about the life and career of Heddle Nash; it is therefore very timely as this year sees the 50th anniversary of his death. It is extremely thoroughly researched and reveals much information long since forgotten, even by the family. Heddle Nash was a devoted family man: one son was the distinguished baritone John Heddle Nash and the other, David Nash, provided much of the information in this book. David is on the FRMS Presenters panel and he gives a fascinating talk, 'My Father, Heddle Nash', illustrated by his father's many recordings. Previously, David's talks were the main source of information about his father's life and career; therefore, this is essential reading for all devotees of one of the finest British singers of the twentieth century.

Andrew Golds, Chairman, Forest RMS

Thomas Beecham – An Obsession with Music by John Lucas; The Boydell Press; 388 pp

Sir Thomas Beecham, Bart., has been the subject of a number of biographies and associated collections of the conductor's (in)famous stories. But John Lucas has provided a definitive, perhaps even the definitive, one.

It is the product of meticulous research but written in a style which allows for both continuous reading and subsequent reference. It is a biography which pricks many of the myths surrounding Beecham, chiefly, that he was a rich man. The association with Beechams Pills, his grandfather's

famous and highly successful company, did provide the basis for his musical education but the tempestuous relationship with his father, who continued the business empire, did not lead to any major subsidy of his son's conducting career. Indeed, Sir Thomas had numerous scrapes with near bankruptcy trying to found good orchestras, opera companies and festivals.

The Delius association runs through the story like a leitmotif and the book fully explores Beecham's life-long support of his music. The biography frankly examines Beecham's personal life and personality. But most of all, it is a celebration of the life and work of one of this country's greatest conductors, if not the greatest. An added bonus is the included CD* of Beecham conducting and rehearsing. Thoroughly recommended.

Jim Bostwick, Barnsley RMS

**Editor: Please note that the CD is only available with the hardback edition and the many people, like me, who bought the paperback version at Daventry needn't go looking for it!*

When making enquiries with advertisers please remember always to quote the FRMS Bulletin as your source of reference.

Dr. Jonathan Halliday (1950-2011)

The former Director of Wyastone Estate Ltd and Technical Director of Nimbus Technology & Engineering, has died aged 60. Dr. Halliday joined the Founding Directors of Nimbus Records in 1982 and his initial contribution, the creation of a Laser Beam Recorder (LBR), was to enable the company to make the massive leap from LP to CD manufacturing.

In 1984 Nimbus opened the UK's first CD plant and in 1992 the company began to sell the Nimbus-Halliday LBR to CD factories around the world, where its advanced capabilities were quickly recognised, and Toshiba and Time-Warner recruited Nimbus to develop production mastering equipment for a new video format, which would eventually result in the DVD standard. Nimbus-Halliday mastering equipment became an international success, and Dr. Halliday a valued contributor to the development of optical disc formats.

Antony Smith

Wyastone Estate Ltd; Nimbus Records

Did you know...Internet users can browse copies of the *Bulletin* as far back as Autumn 1999?

www.thefrms.co.uk/pastbulletins/bulletin.htm

Marjorie Williamson (1930-2011)

THE FRMS OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE regret to announce the death on 13th April 2011 of Federation Vice-President Marjorie Williamson. Marjorie was born on 28th July 1930 in Kidsgrove, Staffordshire, the only child of William and Janet Taylor. Her early interest in music resulted in achieving piano Grade 8 and the offer of a place in a music college, but she chose instead secretarial work, ultimately becoming Secretary to the Headmaster of King's School, Macclesfield. In 1951 she married Graham Dudson of Burslem with whom she shared her interest in music and European travel; there followed time off for the birth of daughters Laura and Philippa. Sadly, Graham died in 1969.

During the 60s, 70s and 80s, Marjorie was an energetic member of both Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme Gramophone Societies, serving each at some time as Programme Secretary and also serving a term as Chairman at Newcastle. She was a talented and well organised programme presenter. In 1984 she married long-time friend Reg Williamson and extended her travel to the USA where more long-term friendships were made. Marjorie and Reg served together on the committee at Newcastle and later at the Stone Gramophone Society. More recently they were members of the Stafford RMS and last Autumn Marjorie rejoined Newcastle. In 1995 Marjorie became National Secretary of the Federation, where again she worked with Reg: her most precious memories of this time are of organizing and taking part in the annual Music Weekend.

Marjorie was a good cook and a noted hostess for business meetings at Galleys Bank. On her retirement from the National Committee in 2000 she became a Vice-President of the Federation, a position which she held with pride for the rest of her life. She survived Reg by almost two years.

We send our deepest sympathy to daughters Laura and Philippa and their families.



Letters and emails

Anniversaries correction

The 'Anniversaries' section in the Spring *Bulletin* shows Thomas Campion's year of birth as 1562. Is this correct? I have always thought it was 1567.

Graham Cosway

Hereford Music Circle

Brendan Sadler, compiler of the Anniversaries section replies: my main source of reference for the list is the *Dictionary of Composers and their Music* by Eric Gilder and June G Port, published by Paddington Press in 1978. It gives Campion's birth as 1562 but that book only gives the year, therefore, when compiling my list, I consulted the 2002 edition of the *Oxford Companion to Music* for the day and month. This gives 12th February 1567 as Campion's baptism date. This I intended to use but made an error in transposition! Incidentally, I also have the 1940 edition of *Grove* which gives the later date as that of his birth. Take your pick!

Is it a bird...?

One of our members presented a programme called 'Back to Nature'. The theme generally was music connected to anything natural

including the countryside and animals. He introduced a piece called 'The Dove Song' from *The Marriage of Figaro*. Now I know *Figaro* reasonably well but I had never heard of the 'Dove Song'. It turned out what he was playing was the Countess's aria, *Dove sono i bei momenti di dolcezza e di piacer* (*Where are the moments of sweetness and pleasure?*) Only one letter out but I blame all that tiny print on CD covers these days!

Andrew Golds

Chairman, Forest RMS

Editor: I did check that this particular presenter would not be offended by having his 'gaffe' made public. Apparently he has a sense of humour. I do hope so...

Long names?

In the Spring issue there was reference to Swinton RMG's earlier title as the longest name registered with the Federation at that time. I suggest, though, that it was not the longest name ever borne by an affiliate. In the early sixties I was a member of the grandly titled – but long since defunct – British Nylon Spinners Sports and Social Club Music and Film Section. It was certainly

affiliated to the NFGS as it was then known; presumably the name as recorded by the Federation was something shorter and more manageable. Do any readers know of other very long names borne by affiliates in the early days of the Federation?

Allan Child

Derby Music Circle

Editor: Is there anybody in North Wales willing to form the Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllantysiliogogoch RMS?

Good news from the Treasurer

In case you have missed it, and are still concerned about the issue of cheques being withdrawn in 2018, the Payments Council (PC) have announced 'that cheques will continue for as long as customers need them and the target for possible closure of cheque clearing in 2018 has been cancelled. The PC Board will continue to focus on security, efficiency and encouraging innovation in all types of payments to ensure customers have options best suited to the 21st century'.

Graham Kiteley

FRMS Treasurer

From the Secretary A Valedictory Utterance

In my early years of teaching - I think it was 1962 - I was involved in a school production of *Toad of Toad Hall*. I played the Court Usher, a part that calls for no talent, no imagination and very little memory. At the time it was considered a masterstroke of casting. From that time a line of the play has rested in my memory as something that might come in useful one day. As the Judge was about to pass sentence on Toad he asks: 'Have you any last words or valedictory utterances?' I hope my last words will not be due in the foreseeable future, but the time has come, I feel, for valedictory utterances.

When I became National Secretary in April 2002, the Federation was in the last throes of a very difficult time. In this connection, I congratulate John Davies, Tony Pook and Thelma Shaw, who are also retiring, for their work in the heat of the day. I am one of the beneficiaries of their efforts, and my nine years in office have proved to be a most rewarding and enthralling way of spending my retirement.

The main question during this time, and long before, was: 'Is the movement dying out?' Ploughing through the minutes of ancient AGMs, I discovered that the number of societies reached a peak of 378, I think, in 1957. The number declined steadily since then and, at the AGM of 1983, the Chairman announced with foreboding that the number of societies was now less than 300. Now, nearly 30 years later, we still have two thirds of that number. I suppose that, in very round figures, about 200 of the societies of 1983 have gone into extinction and been replaced by about 100 societies that have come into being since then.

It is always sad when an RMS closes. Most of our societies are quite informal groups who have enjoyed music together for years. Recruitment is not always easy, and we do not get any younger. If the time comes to call it a day, such groups are to be congratulated on what they have achieved over the years. A sadder story that we sometimes hear is that of a society closing because nobody will 'do the jobs.' We have many societies of ten or so members who go happily about their business with no thought of closure. On the other hand we recently had a closure of a society with nearly 100 members because nobody would take responsibility for running it. Ouch!! A society with a passive membership is treading on very thin ice. On the other hand, although in smaller numbers, new societies are still being formed and today I have received a letter informing me that the Ealing and Acton Music Appreciation Society holds its inaugural meeting on 8th September.

Society itself has changed since those early days. Think of all the pubs and cinemas there were in every town in 1957, and even in 1983. There are still pubs and cinemas, but in fewer numbers as they are



less prominent in the needs of the changing society. And so it is with our music societies. In the early days the technical equipment was the star, but now, with excellent equipment easily available to everyone, the emphasis has shifted to the social aspect of sharing our love of music with like-minded people. The age-profile of members has changed with the times. Now the typical new recruit is already retired, or close to it. Don't let us fret that 30-, 40- and 50-year-olds are not flocking to our doors. Those days are gone. Our field now is the mature leisured class with time to relax – and they are out there.

Being Federation Secretary is, in many ways, the Front Desk Job, and I have to say how much I have appreciated the long-distance, friendly relations I have enjoyed with so many of you. It was a pleasure to communicate with you. Thanks to those of you who have welcomed me into your circle and been prepared to sit patiently and listen to my presentation; it was always a joy to come and see you. Thank-you also to all you Weekenders with whom I have shared the joys of Daventry over the years and thank-you, not least, to my fellow committee members; the friendship and camaraderie will be missed.

At the time of writing it is not certain who will take my place. This is due to the formality of advertising the post and inviting applications. All we know is that there is at least one in the pipeline. And so, I welcome my successor into post with the wish that he or she may get as much enjoyment from it as I have done. It is a cracking way to spend your leisure time.

When Toad had completed his valedictory utterance he was thrown into gaol, whereas I will return to the obscurity from whence I came, sit on the back row, and listen to the music.

Tony Baines

I n B r i e f

Free classic recordings

Brompton's, the auction house specialising in rare and fine musical instruments, offers free downloads from an excellent collection of classic recordings by many of the 20th century's greatest artists. For readers with access to the Internet, this could be a wonderful opportunity to hear for the first time - or possibly get re-acquainted with - the great performances from the past, and all without any charge (or catch) whatsoever. Simply sign up and provide the usual details on their website and you will be able to download recordings featuring, for example, the likes of Jascha Heifetz (with Beecham), Albert Sammons, David Oistrakh, Yehudi Menuhin, Fritz Kreisler, Pablo Casals, Joseph Szigeti, Alfred Cortot and many others. You could even compare recordings of the Elgar Violin Concerto by Menuhin and Sammons.

www.bromptons.co/music-library

CD Pioneer dies

The man widely credited with developing the compact disc has died aged 81. Norio Ohga, the former president and chairman of Sony, led the company from 1982 to 1995 and transformed the company into a global entertainment leader although, in the 1950s, he had high hopes of a career as an opera singer. He rose up to executive level and during the development of the CD, Ohga pursued the specification for a disc that was 12cm diameter and capable of storing all of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Ohga's specifications are still used today. Sony introduced the CD to the world in 1982 and the new format overtook LP record sales in Japan within five years. Ohga was also the chairman of the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra.

Presenter Panel amendments

For the following presenters please note these email address changes from those given in the Spring *Bulletin*:

Ian Boughton

boughtontrust@btinternet.com

Chris Fifield

cgfifield@btinternet.com

Spring Bulletin front page

Did you spot Thelma's subtle reference to the Federation's anniversary year on



her front cover image?

It is a snapshot from the score of Haydn's *Theresa Mass* which includes bar number 75.



BRITISH MUSIC SERIES

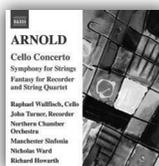
NEW RELEASES 2011



8570705

ALWYN
Violin Concerto

"This recording calls attention to the music's beguilingly romantic heart... Beautifully played by Lorraine McAslan"
The Daily Telegraph



8572640

ARNOLD
Cello Concerto

World Premiere Recording
"Arnold would have adored Raphael's playing. His tone is gorgeous, and he has caught the chiaroscuro quite beautifully."
Gramophone



8572597

BAX
Piano Concerto No. 1
Winter Legends

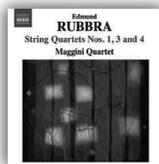
"Ashley Wass has cornered the market in recordings of Arnold Bax's piano music... The performances throughout are thoroughly winning"
The Guardian



8572452

STANFORD
Piano Quartet No. 2

"This excellent performance from the Gould Piano Trio highlights the dramatic contours... the Gould elucidate with understanding and panache"
The Daily Telegraph



8572555

RUBBRA
String Quartets Nos. 1, 3 & 4

"The Maggins clearly love this music... playing it with the understanding and finesse it deserves"
Financial Times



8572570

BRYARS
Piano Concerto

"A deep, evocative response to the waterway in Bryars's new concerto... Ralph van Raat's playing combines powerful projection with a neo-Romantic sensibility"
Gramophone

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With Terry Barfoot and Peter Rhodes

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The Wroxton House Hotel is set in the delightful thatched village of Wroxton. Dating in parts from 1649, the hotel has been beautifully modernised with excellent facilities.

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With Terry Barfoot and Roy Westbrook

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FOR ALAN GEORGE (viola, Fitzwilliam String Quartet) and Lesley Schatzberger (former principal clarinet, English Baroque Soloists and Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique) life was going broadly to plan as they juggled their musical lives with bringing



up two happy young daughters. But just after the younger, Jessica, celebrated her ninth birthday, everything changed irrevocably: after what was first thought of as a middle ear infection she was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour. Six months later she died, having spent the last few days of her life in a children's hospice with her family.

Jessie's Fund stands as a memorial to this lively and musical little girl and for the past 16 years has been helping children with complex needs all over the UK to communicate through music. The majority of the

children with whom this unique, small charity works have multiple disabilities and are unable to speak, so music can provide an invaluable means of expression along with the chance to have some fun.

For the first decade or so *Jessie's Fund* focussed on giving children in children's hospices access to music-making and music therapy, and to date has established posts for thirty music therapists in hospices along with providing training to care teams in order to remove the mystique of simple musical activities. In 2006 the charity devised its 'Soundtracks' programme which provides schools for children with special needs with high quality musical residencies lasting, on average, five days in the first instance. Two specialist musicians work with children and staff, usually aiming towards a performance, recording or film track: a means by which these children can achieve something extraordinary. Beyond that, there is training for staff and provision of a wealth of resources to enable them to enrich the musical life of the school. So often music is a 'way in', and can be a conduit for learning social and life skills. To find out more, or to become a Friend of *Jessie's Fund*, go to:

www.jessiesfund.org.uk or call 01904 658189.

If you would like an illustrated talk on the work of the fund, call the same number, email info@jessiesfund.org.uk or write to:

Lesley Schatzberger, Jessie's Fund
15 Priory Street, York, YO1 6ET.

The Ralph Vaughan Williams Society



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS is today being recognised as a truly international composer of stature and integrity. Audiences are looking beyond the better-known works, such as *The Lark Ascending* - which *Classic*

FM radio listeners have voted one of the 'best-loved pieces of classical music' for several years running - to the brilliance and riches of the symphonies, chamber and choral works as well as the operas. The Vaughan Williams Society was formed in 1994 and has, in recent years, experienced unprecedented interest in the composer's life and work. As a Society, we encourage and support RVW-related concerts, seminars, films, recordings, publications, festivals and events both here and abroad, as well as recordings of lesser-known works by the composer through our own recording label, Albion Records. We continue to work to influence concert programming and are particularly keen to see the symphonies and operas enter the repertoire on a more regular basis. This year is particularly exciting, with major world-premiere performances of re-discovered Vaughan Williams works: *A Cambridge Mass* and *The Garden of Proserpine*, both of which are also being recorded. Contact our membership secretary, David Betts, for more information about joining: davidbetts@tudorcottage.plus.com and visit our website www.rvwsociety.com for much more information. **Karen Fletcher, Publicity Officer**

FRMS CENTRAL REGION AUTUMN MUSIC DAY 2011

Saturday 5th November
at the
Quinborne Community Centre
Ridgacre Road
Quinton
Birmingham, B32 2TW

The theme for the day is
"Better Late Than Never"
(Composers whose music was
slow to gain acceptance)

Cost £12.50 including lunch

For more details when available please
contact:

Regional Secretary, Mick Birchall, on
01455 823494

or

email the Regional Chairman
Allan Child - allan.child@thefrms.co.uk

Technical Forum

A Review of the Past Year *Philip Ashton*

You might ask: 'Why is the audio/hi-fi industry heading in a downward direction in absolute audio quality?' Increasingly, record companies are offering music downloads in the compressed mp3 format either via their own websites or many others such as *YouTube*. There are lossless downloads known as FLAC (Free Lossless Audio Codec) from the likes of *Chandos*, *Hyperion* and others; for these downloads some software has to be installed on one's computer. Downloads are so popular, especially with the younger members of society, due to cost and ease of accessibility via websites now that record shops seem to be a thing of the past.

We read in the popular press and trade magazines that CD sales are falling, and if the present trend continues they will eventually cease to be available. This theory is not borne out by the likes of *Nimbus* and other smaller specialist companies, where the appetite for their repertoire continues to expand. It is obvious that these companies are fulfilling a need for unusual and rare music to be recorded, of which there is a huge amount. *Decca Eloquence* discs produced in Australia are in great demand as they are reintroducing past repertoire originally on LP, whereas *Universal Music* (their parent company) are not issuing these discs. They are all mid-price in Australia but due to transportation costs we have to pay a higher mark-up! Our best way of obtaining CDs at the best price to us is by buying online.

The rapid development of digital audio music sources, including higher resolution downloading and a plethora of Wi-Fi techniques, seems to be giving mainstream hi-fi a boost. The proliferation of digital sources – computers, smart phones, NAS (Network Attached Storage) drives, TV sets, Sky boxes and so on – has increased the need for some form of 'digital pre-amp'. Although some examples build the necessary features into a CD player or hard-disc server, all that's really required is a DAC (digital-audio converter) plus a flexible collection of digital inputs – optical (TOSLINK), electrical co-axial (S/PDIF) and USB.

Hi-Fi people were rather dismissive when the iPod and other mp3 players first appeared on the scene because of the serious sonic limitations of the compressed mp3 format. Ten years on, with much more PC memory now available, there's no longer any need to compress the music files, so good reason to take these convenient devices much more seriously.

Loudspeaker manufacturers have an eye on large sales of low to medium quality products for the mass market: I have seen such blurb as SLAM, Ear-Popping Loud, Dynamic, Thrusting, Talent, Cohesive etc. They are not interested in the small volume of sales that are generated by the real classical music enthusiast, rather concentrating on the younger listener who knows no better; this is where the money is and they are determined to have some of it. If I sound cynical then yes I am, after one sales manager said that our age group was an anachronism!

The headphone market is one of the few areas in the consumer electronics retail sector that is enjoying good growth in both volume and value. It has been driven by the phenomenal success of portable mp3 music players like the iPod and the uptake of Smartphones. Where once there might have been one pair of phones stuck under the Hi-Fi cabinet, now there are probably half a dozen scattered around the house. Consumers seem to be trading up to better quality headphones; they are becoming fashion items.

A more detailed report can be found on the FRMS website.

These views are not necessarily supported by FRMS Ltd but are based on the Technical Forum hosted by Philip Ashton, FRMS Technical Officer, at the 2011 Daventry Weekend. ●

Yorkshire Regional Group 2011 Autumn Meeting

At the Baptist Church, New North Road, Huddersfield on **Saturday October 15th** when the host society will be Huddersfield RMS. This is a good central venue with easy access to public transport and parking facilities. We hope that members of all affiliated societies will be able to join us and enjoy a friendly, musical day.

Programme

10.00-10.30 Doors open: Time for a cup of tea/coffee

10.30-12.00 "Chuck 'Em Again Charlie": Peter Smart gives an affectionate tribute to conductor **Sir Charles Mackerras**

12.00-1.45 Lunch

1.45-3.00 A Brief History of the Wiggly Line – Presented by **Jim Bostwick** of Barnsley & Huddersfield Societies

3.00-3.15 A Short Break

3.15-4.30 The 'Gramophone' Cover Disc – gone but not forgotten – presented by **Tony Haywood**, Huddersfield RMS

4.45 Conclusion – Time to go home

Booking forms are available from Anne Hartley, Sec. Huddersfield RMS, 12 Wellands Lane, Scholes, Cleckheaton, BD19 6EY or Jim Bostwick, Sec. YRG 6 Oakroyd Close, Brighouse, HD6 4BP

The Cost, including lunch, is £14.50

Booking Closes October 8th

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Our Annual General Meeting**

will be hosted by

The Rochdale Gramophone Society
itself celebrating its 80th Anniversary

This auspicious event will take place at 2pm

Saturday 22nd October 2011

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01782 251460 secretary@thefrms.co.uk
or via www.thefrms.co.uk

Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope with your application.

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

Hollywood and the Europeans

Second in a series charting the history of film music

The innovative Max Steiner (see *Spring Bulletin*) retired from films in 1965 having scored some 300 movies. As a composer he was actually created by Hollywood and was not only the founder of what is regarded as the sound of the 'Golden Years' but he also developed techniques in scoring that have become standard practice up to the present time. Memorable scores included *The Informer* (1935), *Now, Voyager* (1942), and *Since You Went Away* (1944), all Academy Award successes, but possibly his most popular and enduring contribution was *Gone with the Wind* (1939), one of the most famous soundtracks ever.

Erich Wolfgang Korngold

If Max Steiner was the first and major influence on film scoring, Erich Wolfgang Korngold (pictured) became a close second. Korngold was born in what is now the Czech Republic but the family soon moved to Vienna. Erich was a genuine child prodigy and was composing major works at a ridiculously young age.



He was only 23 when he composed his greatest operatic success, *Die Tote Stadt* (*The Dead City*) which is still frequently performed, as are many other of his concert-hall works. Mahler called him a 'musical genius' and Richard Strauss also spoke highly of the youth.

Korngold first arrived in the US in 1934 to adapt Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* for the screen but eventually returned back home.

In 1938 Warners asked him to return to Hollywood for a new and expensive Errol Flynn picture, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Shortly after he arrived in California the situation regarding Jews in Austria became very perilous following the *Anschluss* so he stayed in America. Not only did *The Adventures of Robin Hood* win him an Academy Award (Oscar) but he later claimed that the film had saved his life! Having such an eminent composer working in Hollywood was recognised by his fellow composers and within the industry. He believed that film music was essentially opera without singing and joked that Puccini's *Tosca* was the best film score ever written!

Korngold though was far less prolific than Steiner and produced just 18 scores between 1935 and 1947. His name became identified with the in-vogue swashbuckler films written in the grand Wagnerian manner, and his first original score was for the Errol Flynn vehicle *Captain Blood*.

Franz Waxman

Yet another European expatriate, Franz Waxman, moved from Germany to Paris in 1934, having tangled with the Nazis in Berlin. He moved to Hollywood the following year when he composed the soundtrack for

The Bride of Frankenstein, a score still considered one of the finest for horror films. He also wrote scores for many other famous films including *Rebecca*, *Rear Window*, *The Philadelphia Story* and *A Place in the Sun* for which he won an Academy Award. He also won an Oscar for the classic 1950 picture, *Sunset Boulevard*, the most famous of the Hollywood-



on-Hollywood movies. Here he employs any number of devices that create a darkly neurotic atmosphere.

Tiomkin and Rózsa

Many other Hollywood composers hailed from Europe but Dimitri Tiomkin, from Russia, and the Hungarian, Miklós Rózsa, one of the last Europeans to arrive, were true giants in their field. Tiomkin was responsible for over 100 movie scores including memorable films such as *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), *Red River* (1948), *High Noon* (1952), Hitchcock's *Dial M for Murder* (1954) and *Gunfight at the O.K. Coral* (1957). Rózsa's contribution included *The Thief of Bagdad* (1940), *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Spellbound* (1945) and *Ben-Hur* (1959). Like Korngold, Rózsa's musical training was in the conservatoire rather than the theatre and he too had a dual career in films and the concert hall.

Alfred Newman

If the talents of Steiner, Korngold, Waxman and others were, from the beginning, crucial in setting the standard of symphonic film music, it was an American, Alfred Newman, who was probably the most influential of all musicians in Hollywood during the Golden Age and beyond. Newman, despite the dominance of the European composers, made his name as a musical director, arranger and conductor as well as being a prolific composer for film with 250 scores to his name. This versatility is borne out by his nine Academy Award wins, including one for an original score (only Walt Disney has won more Oscars). Like Steiner, Newman made the move from Broadway following the Wall Street Crash and went on to write for many famous movies including *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *How Green Was My Valley* and *The Song of Bernadette* (the Oscar winner). Alfred was but one of the Newman music dynasty: other family members, past and present, include Lionel, Emil, David, Thomas and Randy.

The next article in the series includes a look at the British contribution to the genre. ●

Paul Astell

The Birth of the Federation

Colin Dancer (Cardiff RMS) is currently producing a book documenting the history of the FRMS in words and pictures. Here he describes how it all started.

The 19th century saw great strides in science and engineering which led to the development of radio, telephones and sound reproduction. Without these developments there would be no gramophones and no Gramophone Societies!

Edison invented his phonograph in 1876, in which a stylus inscribed a track in tinfoil wrapped around a cylinder; the depth of the track varied according to the sound waves hitting a diaphragm attached to the stylus. He tested his invention by speaking those immortal words: 'Mary had a little lamb'. This was the same year that Alexander Graham Bell invented his electric telephone, technology which would lead to the development of the loudspeaker.

After ten years of development, Edison was selling his talking machines for use as dictation machines, but a year later, in 1887, Berliner invented his gramophone which used flat shellac discs for recording and reproduction. These flat discs were much easier to store than Edison's cylinders.

In 1898 the *Gramophone and Typewriter Company* was formed, the predecessor of *HMV*, and machines were made and sold for the domestic market. These were sold through bicycle shops, since, if you had the skills to repair bicycles, you should be able to understand and repair gramophones. Sound quality was not good and commercial discs were produced of mainly comic songs and speeches by eminent people. I remember hearing a speech by Florence Nightingale for the troops: I couldn't understand what she

was saying, but it must have been very uplifting for those men! The breakthrough for music recording was made in 1902 when Fred Gaisberg persuaded Caruso to make some recordings in Milan. This created the only chance that the man in the street had to hear this legendary voice; other opera singers quickly followed.

In 1903 a complete recording of Verdi's *Ernani* was issued on 40 single-sided discs. This must have been produced with a much reduced orchestration since recording was purely mechanical, with sound input through a large horn that you had to be near to record at a reasonable level. Early gramophone societies concentrated on achieving the best reproduction from their crude instruments and held competitions with prizes for the best results.

A big step forward in technology occurred in 1925, when electrical recording was introduced. The microphones were sensitive enough to be suspended over the performers and larger orchestras could be used. As technology improved to give better reproduction, people became more interested in the content of the recordings and the uses to which the gramophone could be put. The recording companies saw that the growth of gramophone societies was good for business and suggested to their dealers that they should give every encouragement to the societies; gradually the movement grew.

In a parallel movement the universities ran evening classes which used the gramophone for musical illustrations. This was the route that led Johnny Johnson (who was to become the first chairman of the

Federation) to a gramophone society. The first classes he attended were run by a good musician who taught the theory of music. This did not suit Johnny's idea of what the classes should be about and he complained, explaining that what was needed was an appreciation of music. (Was this the first time anyone had talked about music appreciation?) Johnny took over the classes and when the university pulled the plug due to insufficient support, he carried on privately in his own home and these classes were converted to Gillingham Gramophone Society.

In those days there was little co-operation between societies. Each society had to arrange its own licensing and insurance and deal with the taxman over entertainment tax. There was no one to turn to for help so Johnny Johnson, with his friend, F. Eric Young, decided that it would be a good idea to have an umbrella organisation which could help with these functions. They contacted as many societies as they could trace, but the response was lukewarm. After two failed attempts, the third was supported by the record companies and the *Gramophone Magazine*. Perhaps it was the lure of a meeting at the Columbia studios in Abbey Road that did the trick, but the inaugural meeting was attended by 37 delegates representing 12 societies, and the National Federation of Gramophone Societies was on its way! ●

Colin would be grateful for any contributions of photos and stories from individual societies. His details are on page 30.



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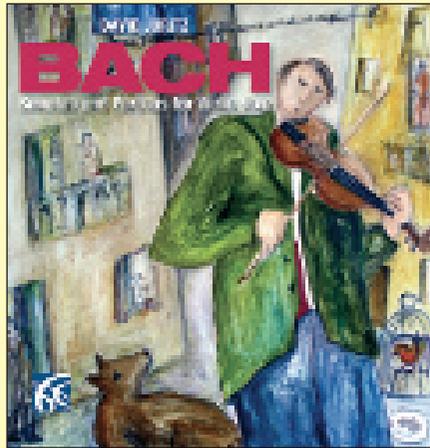
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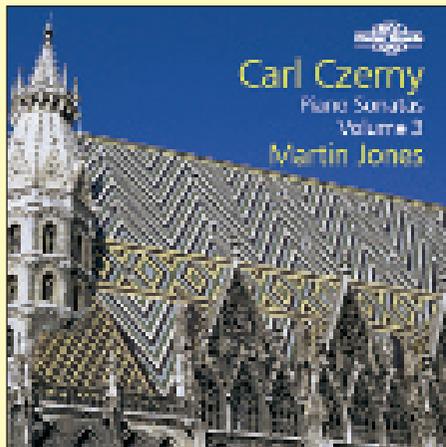
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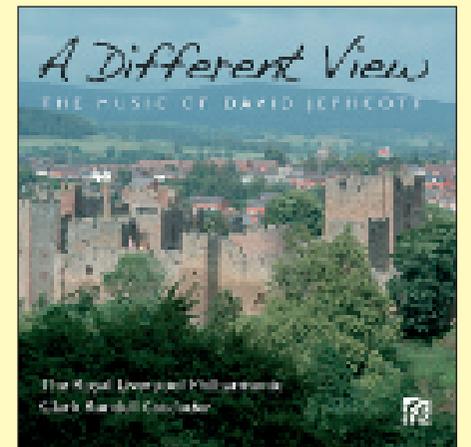
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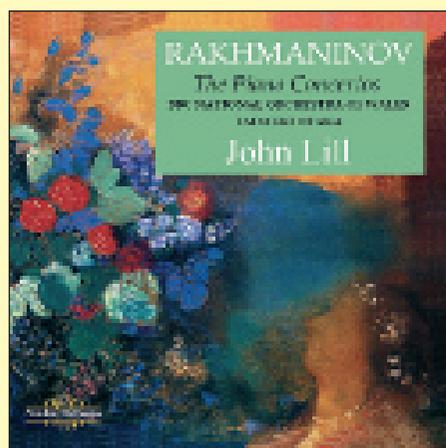
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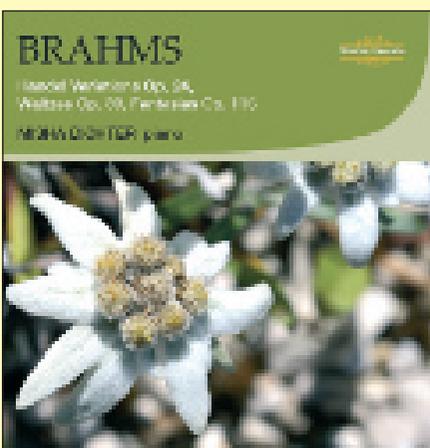
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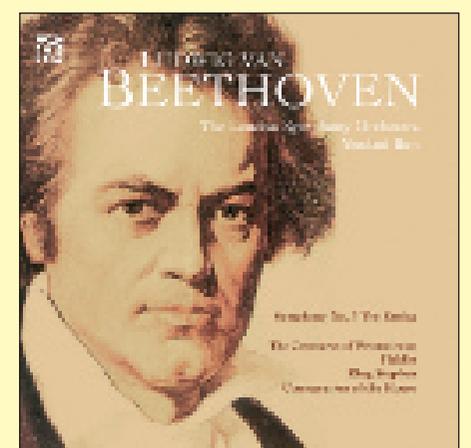
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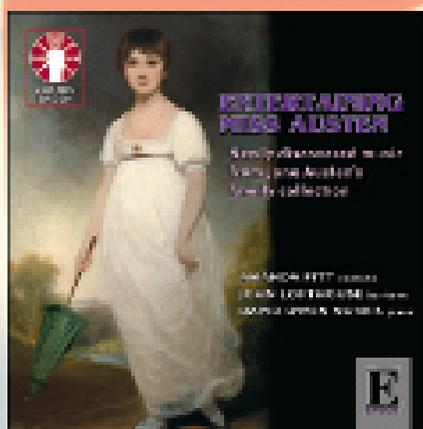
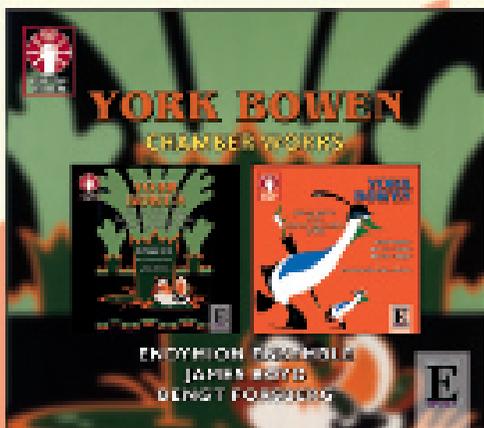


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The long-lived French composer Florent Schmitt (1870-1958) created many of his most impressive and influential works in the first two decades of the twentieth century, equally gorgeous in their piano versions (four hands or two pianos) as for the orchestra. Pianists Leslie De'Ath and Anya Alexeyev have recorded a ripe selection for this 2-CD set, all but two of which are world premiere recordings in these versions. Here the decadent sound world of *La tragédie de Salomé*, influential on Stravinsky and Diaghilev, is the most familiar but the charm and colour of the ballet music *Le petit elfe 'Ferne-l'oeil'* ('The Little Fairy 'Sleepy-eyes)'), a touching evocation of childhood, has a charm all its own. These and various other pieces complete a most enjoyable traversal of Schmitt's piano music, presented here in immaculate, heartfelt performances.
Includes *La tragédie de Salomé*, *Le petit elfe 'Ferne-l'oeil'*, *Reflets d'Allemagne*
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