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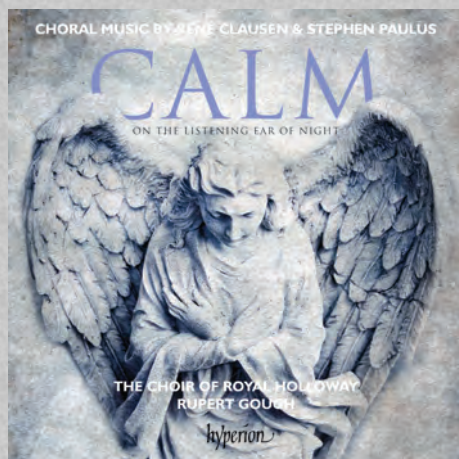
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Front cover: *Jean Sibelius in his late 70s* by Santeri Levas, made available by the Finnish Museum of Photography

The editor acknowledges the assistance of Sue Parker (Barnsley and Huddersfield RMSs) in the production of this magazine.

For more information about the FRMS please go to
www.thefrms.co.uk

Forthcoming Events

Scottish Group Music Day, April 23rd 2016 (Page 10)
FRMS AGM, November 7th, Paignton (Page 17)
Torbay Musical Weekend, November 20th - 23rd (Page 18)
Daventry Music Weekend, April 22nd - 24th 2016

EDITORIAL Paul Astell

DR JOHN ALLEN'S ARTICLE featured in the last issue seems to have generated some comment, and further items relating to this subject appear within these pages. Our secretary, Jim Bostwick, also has his say in his column, and there is some feedback (pun not intended) in the letters and emails section. Dr Allen's 'Computer-based hi-fi for beginners' item raised many points of interest, including the space-saving possibilities offered by transferring many shelves of CDs (or LPs and tapes) to a digital format. Well, in her article, Debbie Bilham thinks it's time we ditched the CD anyway, and that we were hoodwinked into accepting it as the optimum solution to our music listening requirements in the first place. You may, though, be surprised by at least one of her preferences.

I must say, I have always thought the CD to be a wonderful compromise in terms of convenience and 'clean' listening. Yes, that sound experience is far too clean for some and I understand their reservations. I have to admit, though, I do miss the feel of an LP cover with its accompanying artwork and readable notes.

The CD format should afford record companies the ideal opportunity for providing its customers with extensive information on the music by way of the accompanying booklet. In his article our treasurer, Paul Corfield Godfrey, has some strong opinions on how committed some of those companies are to this cause.

We are grateful that our President, Julian Lloyd Webber, took time not only to send a message to the Daventry faithful, but also to pen an interesting article for this magazine.

Finally, you will have seen the photograph of that seemingly perennial favourite with our members, Jean Sibelius. There is no dedicated feature on him in this issue, but there are, as is often the case, several references, not least the presentation, at the Federation's AGM in Paignton in November, by surely one of the composer's greatest advocates, John J Davis. We look forward to seeing as many Society representatives as possible at the AGM event – details are on page 17, and if you are interested in joining the committee, turn to page 21. ●

Daventry Music Weekend

A message from the President:

'Regular attenders at the Music Weekend may recall the occasion a few years ago when I was one of your guest speakers in conversation with the late – and much lamented – Lyndon Jenkins. That seems to have left a lasting impression as I was recently invited to become your President in succession to my dear friend and colleague Lyndon! His death last year was a huge loss, not only to the FRMS but to the whole world of music. I like to think that Lyndon would have been pleased that I was delighted to accept, so it is with pleasure that I send this message to welcome you to Daventry 2015. Regrettably, Jiaxin and I cannot be with you this time, but we are looking forward to meeting you at a future event. Until then, I can see that you have a wonderful programme in store for this special weekend which I am sure you will enjoy.' **Julian Lloyd Webber**



The Friday pre-dinner drinks reception once again raised the curtain on the Music Weekend in traditional fashion. The evening meal soon followed, after which delegates adjourned to the auditorium. Chairman Allan Child opened proceedings by passing on the above message from Julian Lloyd Webber. The following reports and photos are by Paul Astell, with additional reporting by Sue Parker. More photos on page 17.

The art of coarse conducting

Given the nature of his audience, conductor **Adrian Brown** began by talking about his early record-collecting habits and also how indebted he is to *Gramophone* magazine (whose current editor just happened to be in the audience). The title of Adrian's talk was inspired by his one-time teacher, Sir Adrian Boult, who at one point in a rehearsal said, 'I'm going to fish around in two for a bit, you can get on as best you can'. Sir Adrian's 21½-inch baton, which he used in the manner of fly fishing, was the inspiration for our presenter's title.



Adrian asserted that if Martians landed, they might look at a conductor and think 'what is this man doing; is a conductor really necessary?' Adrian had always wanted to conduct, and at an early age was often seen waving his arms around in his pushchair. His father was a good violinist who played with the Ipswich Orchestral Society under Colin Davis, this being the great conductor's first job in 1952. Little did Adrian know what a major influence Davis would become later in life. Adrian loved, and became immersed in, the work of Colin Davis and he worked extensively with him. To remember those times, Adrian played 'Tuba Mirum' from the Berlioz Requiem.

Adrian conducted and composed while a schoolboy, during which time his school collaborated with the Aldeburgh Festival and gave the first performance of Britten's *Psalm 150*. That day, in 1963, he regards as the anniversary of 'when I decided I wanted to be a musician'. Benjamin Britten was the conductor and 'he was wonderful to us youngsters'. Chorus-master and conductor John Alldis allowed Adrian to join the LSO Chorus, the best thing that ever happened to him. Adrian performed in what was one of the greatest experiences of his life: singing in the LSO Chorus under Bernstein in Verdi's Requiem. We heard the 'Sanctus' from that great work.

Britten was phenomenal in his preparation and approach to performance and as a tribute, Adrian played

the 'Fugue' from *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, 'which is one of the toughest things to conduct'.

Adrian gave brief examples of the different approach taken by two conductors. Mahler gives every possible instruction in the score of his Fourth Symphony, but when we heard the opening of that work in versions by Welser-Möst and Mengelberg, the contrast in speed was startling.

Returning to another of Adrian's heroes, Sir Neville Marriner, that conductor's 'sparkling, wonderful conducting' was demonstrated in an excerpt from *The Italian Girl in Algiers* by Rossini. Recordings of Beecham's famous rehearsal sequences are always a joy and today's was no exception, here in preparation of Haydn's *Military* Symphony with the RPO in Paris. Adrian asserted that Beecham's success wasn't luck, it was sheer perspiration, and orchestras adored him.

For Adrian's final selection came a performance by another of his great heroes: Karl Böhm with the LSO in the finale of Symphony No. 2 by Brahms. Böhm could be difficult now and again but he could certainly make an orchestra play. Adrian was in the audience at this live performance in 1977 where the conductor appeared tiny and frail beyond belief.

This was an excellent and entertaining session which got the Weekend off to a tremendous start. **PA**

Charles Mackerras – his life and career

Nigel Simeone is a writer, musicologist, teacher and conductor with a wide range of research interests. Usefully for the purposes of his presentation, Nigel is also co-editor of the biography *Charles Mackerras*. Nigel launched straight into his talk with an excerpt from the 2002 BBC Proms performance of Haydn's *The Creation* performed by the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. Nigel stated that this was a typical late Mackerras



performance. Before the Australian musician departed from his home country in 1947, the 20-year-old composed a score for *Namatjira the Painter*, a documentary about the aboriginal artist Albert Namatjira. We heard an extract of Mackerras's score.

Charles Mackerras frequently worked at Sadler's Wells in the 1950s, and the 1960s saw a new production of *The Marriage of Figaro*. We heard the aria 'Voi che Sapete' from Mozart's popular opera. Singers at the turn of the 19th century were expected to decorate their arias and Nigel explained the different uses of *appoggiatura* (an ornamental note that temporarily displaces a main

note). This wasn't a fad. Every book in 1800 or earlier gave instructions on how to do it. Taken from a radio broadcast, we heard Cherubino's aria from *Figaro* sung by Anne Pashley. She begins the aria 'straight' but eventually employs some 'pretty crazy improvised ornamentations'.

In 1970 Mackerras became Music Director at English National Opera and we heard the finale of *Figaro* from that period. Next came a couple of broadcasts of the ENO. From 1972 the duet from Act 4 of *Il Trovatore* by Verdi with Norman Bailey, and Rita Hunter in her prime. This was followed by the end of Act 1 from Puccini's opera *La bohème*. Valerie Masterson and David Rendall were the soloists in this 1977 production.

The music of Leoš Janáček ran throughout Mackerras's life and next came a Janáček opera, one that he never recorded. We heard an extract from the second half of the 1993 production of *The Excursions of Mr Brouček to the Moon and to the 15th Century*. Following his tenure with the ENO, Mackerras set out to explore the music of composers he hadn't performed previously. One such was Mahler's Symphony No. 2, 'Resurrection', an excerpt from which came next in a 1995 Prom performance with the BBC Philharmonic.

Mackerras's later career saw several fruitful ventures. He enjoyed a particularly close relationship with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and his time with the Philharmonia was 'terribly happy'. The latter association came about by accident. Wolfgang Sawallisch became ill in 2001 and Sir Charles had to perform most of a Beethoven Symphony cycle. In 2004, he became principal guest conductor, a relationship that yielded wonderful results. From this period we heard an excerpt from Symphony No. 3, 'Rhenish' by Schumann.

Shostakovich is not a composer associated with Mackerras but conductor and composer met two or three times. We heard an extract from Symphony No. 9 recorded with the Berlin Phil in 2006 when Sir Charles was aged 81. He was approached by pretty much every major orchestra in Europe, including the Leipzig Gewandhaus. We heard that partnership in the love duet from the Prologue of Wagner's opera *Götterdämmerung* featuring Christine Brewer and John MacMaster. For his finale, Nigel took us back to 1954 when Sir Charles started working with Benjamin Britten and the English Opera Group. We heard the last scene from *Noye's Fludde* in a recording Nigel considered a real treat. He had managed to find a radio transcription recording of the world premiere in 1958. PA

A tale of two careers

Richard Blackford studied composition with John Lambert at the Royal College of Music, and conducting with Norman Del Mar. The two careers Richard came to talk about see him equally at home in composing scores for concert works and various media, including films. Richard told us that composing is a solitary profession. Having spent 18 months or so working on a score, you have to trust that something worthwhile will result.

In terms of writing for films, Richard was advised 'not to do it, you'll have a nervous breakdown'. There is the constant pressure of fierce deadlines, and most of the music will likely be discarded. Two weeks may be spent on something that appears really terrific, but ends up never being used.

Richard has worked on around 200 films, something he sees as a collaborative venture. When writing a symphony, you are on your own. Film-making involves a

large team of which the composer is just one component, along with the editor, director, and many others. Despite this, Richard feels privileged to be working with 'bright people at the top of their profession'. This particular career – 'very demanding, very rewarding' – started 30 years ago.

Song For a Raggy Boy is a film from 1998 and is set in the 1930s. Returning from the Spanish Civil War, a



teacher works at a strict catholic school for 'awkward' children. The music needed to depict what the children are going through, so what kind of theme would be required? Well, Richard showed at the piano how he had developed his ideas and a very beautiful theme was the result. We saw a clip from the film itself which

amply demonstrated the finished article – and Richard's art.

The modern musical trends of the 1970s and 1980s didn't appeal to Richard, so he didn't write any concert music. Rather, he worked in other fields that opened up whole new opportunities he didn't know existed. *Mirror of Perfection*, a cantata for soprano and baritone soloists, chorus and orchestra, with text by St Francis of Assisi, was commissioned by the Royal Ballet School and first performed at the Royal College of Music in March 1996. Richard is proud that this work is performed all over the world. We heard the track entitled 'Canticle of Peace'.

That work led to a commission from the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus – a group he has been happily associated with for about 14 years. Their secretary is a member of Amnesty International and they had discussions about human and civil rights and Richard was asked to write something 'cutting edge about today'. The result was *Voices of Exile* based on 17 poems by refugee poets. The work incorporates the spoken voices of some of those refugees reading their poems. From that album, first we heard 'Fugue over double bass', the poem read by its Somali author. Richard had got to know a young Macedonian refugee in her twenties. She had sung a local folk song, 'the most beautiful thing I'd heard'. Richard set about making a recording, which included the girl harmonising with herself on playback. She also spoke some text in her own language. At the editing stage in the studio, Richard accidentally and simultaneously played all six tracks he had recorded. Hearing music as well as English and Macedonian speech merged as one, he realised he could create a movement utilising all those elements.

Richard was inspired to write his next musical selection having listened to a fascinating week of readings on Radio 4's *Book of the Week*. Bernie Krause's *The Great Animal Orchestra* embodies the most amazing and fascinating layers of sound he experienced in the Borneo tropical rain forest. Richard proposed to the author the idea of developing a symphonic work. The star of the show is a musician wren, the possessor of a 44-note cyclic melody. We heard 'Introduction and Tuning' and then 'Scherzo with riffs'. Then to the darker side of nature: 'Elegy' with howling wolves and horns. Finally from this work, the whole of the final movement, 'Variations: Song of the musician wren' complete with common potoo and screaming piha. To end his fascinating talk, Richard introduced his version of *Carnival of the Animals*,

specifically 'Aquarium', which unlike Saint-Saëns's original contains no part for piano. PA

Gramophone editor on current trends



The chosen topic of **Martin Cullingford**, editor and publisher of *Gramophone* magazine, was **Current trends in the classical music recording industry**, and he was there to reassure us that reports of the death of the industry are greatly exaggerated. Things are

changing fast but classical music is in good shape, and first-class music-making is still happening and being recorded. Finding solutions to all the challenges leads to new opportunities, and Martin had many examples of this.

Vinyl sales across all genres last year were over a million for the first time since 1996, and that included new classical issues as well as reissues. For many people it is important to have a well-produced physical object to own, and packaging for vinyl offers plenty of scope for high-quality text and photos. Boxed CD sets of a composer's complete works used to be produced as cheaply as possible but these are now also presented to a very high standard. Decca's Britten centenary set of 65 CDs includes a DVD and 200-page full-colour hardback book. From that set Martin played the well-loved 'Nocturne' from the Serenade for Tenor Horn and Strings, performed by Pears and Tuckwell. His next example was from a remastered 78 of Callas singing – in Italian – the 'Liebestod' from *Tristan und Isolde*, on Warner. In contrast, the next musical extract was completely unknown: Cecilia Bartoli in the thrilling aria 'Razverzi pyos gortani, laya' from Hermann Raupach's Russian opera *Altsesta*, taken from her 'St Petersburg' album on Decca. Bartoli's well-researched and lavishly presented 'project' albums are a fine example of innovative CD production.

Although CDs are still being produced and bought, the idea of owning a collection of music has really changed for ever. The quality of downloads can now be superior to that of CDs, but even downloading has become old hat. The big revolution is streaming: Spotify, for example, has 20 million tracks and 60 million users worldwide. Although record shops have sadly almost disappeared, the growth of web communities offers some compensation. We heard Murray Perahia playing Brahms's Romance, Op. 118, No. 5, from one of the top 5 classical albums on another streaming site, Qobuz.

Martin then turned to labels. Not all the traditional CD labels have lost their identity in takeovers. Decca and Deutsche Grammophon, for example, remain distinctive, and independents have a strong presence too: Hyperion, Linn, Signum and BIS are just 4 examples out of many. Such labels are trusted and create a loyal following. Many artists, from individuals to major orchestras, now record on their own labels, and as an example we heard Vaughan Williams's 'Lord, thou hast been our refuge' from King's College Choir's new English Hymn Anthems CD. This development can lead to a closer relationship between performers and listeners, but it may also weaken an established relationship with a major label. For example, the Berlin Philharmonic used to be a cornerstone of DG's repertoire, but in future a substantial part of their output will be on their own label. Martin's final example was

from Andris Nelsons and the Boston Symphony Orchestra playing the first movement of Sibelius's Second Symphony on their very new BSO label. We were then invited to help ourselves to free copies of the new issue of *Gramophone!* SP

Marking 75 years: My life in music

The Saturday evening slot was given over to **Martin Jones** who has been one of Britain's most highly regarded pianists since first coming to international attention in 1968 when he received the Dame Myra Hess Award.

Martin began his session by explaining that we had heard a lot about conducting during this Weekend, and perhaps we might like to hear the other side of the story! Thus came a series of amusing and interesting stories. One of his first comments was that for a conductor, a concerto is the low point of any concert – he has to share the spotlight with someone else! Martin was born in Witney, Oxfordshire and he went on to take exams in Oxford, a journey that changed his life. In the music shop where the exams took place, a large pile of sheet music lay seemingly unwanted. Martin's father entered into negotiations for those thousands of scores, and eventually they were his. Working through endless pages of wonderful music led to Martin becoming a very good sight reader. He eventually gained admission to Magdalen College where the headmaster recognised Martin's talent and arranged lessons at the Royal Academy of Music, where he eventually became a student.



Martin soon began entertaining us with his wonderful playing. His first item was from what he described as his Czerny project, a composer whom he regarded as an extraordinary man. He was a pupil of Beethoven and a teacher of Liszt and has more than 100 opus

numbers, including books of studies of many works within one opus. Martin performed Czerny's concert piece *Grand Caprice*.

Percy Grainger preferred his own serious music rather than those works we normally associate him with, which he didn't consider to be his proper compositions. Martin played one such serious piece, 'Pastoral', from the suite *In a Nutshell* dedicated to pianist Cyril Smith. A couple of wonderful after-dinner pieces came next: the first of *Vier Kleine Fröhliche Walzer* (Four Little Cheerful Waltzes) from 1912 by Korngold written at the age of 16, followed by *The Enchanted Nymph* by the less well-known Russian, Mischa Levitzki (1898-1941).

Martin thought he should mention Nimbus Records, especially as that company's representatives were in the audience, and he is, after all, their house pianist. A wonderful relationship has been formed with many projects under his belt and some that are still ongoing today. There are endless discoveries still to be made in piano music, all tuneful stuff – just as well because Martin is not a fan of 'squeaky-gate' music.

Next, Martin announced he was to play a set of variations, but he wasn't going to say what they were, other than being based on an old 20th-century tune, which proved to be 'The Lambeth Walk' from Noel Gay's 1937 musical *Me and My Girl*. The variations are played in the style of composers such as Chopin, Verdi, Wagner and

Liszt, among others, and include some of their themes. The old 1937 tune, though, is never far away. Franz Theodor Reizenstein's highly entertaining piece seemed to be bringing the evening to a wonderful conclusion, but Martin had a couple more encores up his sleeve. First came a spirited version of Mozart's 'Rondo Alla Turca' from the Piano Concerto K331 followed by an energetic rendition of Gershwin's *Fascinating Rhythm*. This was an evening of dazzling virtuosity that had the audience enthralled and sent them happily to their beds ... or the bar. **PA**

Recital: Chloë Hanslip and Danny Driver

It was thanks to the generosity of a long-standing supporter of the Daventry Music Weekend that our live recital this year was given by the celebrated violinist Chloë Hanslip and pianist Danny Driver. Both as solo performers and in their recital partnership these artists are of course renowned for their musicianship and their technical mastery and they certainly didn't disappoint on this occasion. From the opening notes we knew we were in safe hands! In a refreshingly relaxed and informal atmosphere they performed three works: Beethoven's Kreutzer sonata, Op. 47, Prokofiev's Five Melodies, Op. 35b, and Richard Strauss's sonata in E flat, Op. 18.

The Kreutzer is too well-known to need any description. It dates from 1803, at the start of Beethoven's so-called middle period with its characteristic large-scale 'heroic' compositions. Suffice to say that both performers were fully up to the heroic nature of the work, and they played with assurance and evident enjoyment.

Prokofiev originally wrote his Five Songs Op. 35 for wordless soprano and piano, and arranged them as Five melodies for violin and piano, Op. 35b, in 1925. Each lasts for only around two or three minutes but they are well contrasted in character while all being lyrical and eminently suited to the violin. The first gave us a gentle nostalgic melody with a more agitated central section, while the second had a pizzicato opening leading to a wide-ranging theme with a rippling piano accompaniment, and a brief muted but animated interlude. This was followed by the longest and most passionate of the set, with an arresting opening and a hushed, rapt central section. By contrast the fourth movement, a light, whimsical piece, lasted not much more than a minute, and the last movement offered a calmly unfolding melody with a jaunty middle section. The work came to a gentle, rather teasing, conclusion with some ethereal harmonics on the violin.

Melody was also a key feature of the final work in Chloë and Danny's programme, Richard Strauss's Violin sonata, Op. 18. Strauss composed a dozen or so chamber works, mostly during his youth when he was experimenting with different genres. The sonata in E flat for violin and piano was the last significant example and probably the most successful of these. It's on an ambitious scale, playing for around 30 minutes, and each of the three movements shows the lyricism and Romantic passion that we expect from one of the great composers of opera and Lieder. The first movement, Allegro ma non troppo, featured two beautiful flowing melodies; the following movement, described as an 'Improvisation', gave us another song without words; and after a series of solemn chords on the piano the Finale exploded into an exuberant outpouring where for the first time I discerned hints of the mature composer. To round off their excellent recital, Chloë and Danny gave us a brief encore: the opening

couple of minutes of York Bowen's Allegretto Op. 105, a liting, folksy piece by a composer in whose music Danny specialises. After that we had the opportunity to buy copies of the Hyperion double disc set from which the piece was taken, and to chat to the performers. All in all a wonderful way to pass the morning. **SP**

The Scandinavian Symphony

Terry Barfoot is a well-known figure to many RMS members having given presentations at music groups and festivals throughout the country. It was a pleasure to welcome him to Daventry, not least because of his loyal and valuable support to the Federation and this magazine.

Terry had set himself the challenging task of dealing with the Scandinavian symphony in his 75-minute presentation covering an enormous repertoire by composers famous and not so famous. Into the 'famous' category falls Carl Nielsen and we heard the first movement of 'one of the greatest symphonies by one of the greatest of the Scandinavian symphonists', the Symphony No. 3, 'Espansiva'. Terry remarked that 'this will ensure there's no after-lunch napping'! This movement is very exciting – a virtuoso piece. Nielsen had played in the first violins and was a great master of the orchestra. Here, everybody is on the edge of their seat where the whole orchestra sways to and fro, building to a dramatic conclusion.



There was no time available to listen to their music but there was a brief run-through of notable Scandinavian composers. We were soon back to the music and the next example was Swedish composer Wilhelm Stenhammar's Symphony No. 2. Written in 1915, it is contemporary with Sibelius's Fifth. Terry played the third movement, 'lyrical and warm-hearted, romantic, very Brahmsian'. Terry next turned to the Symphony No. 4 'Nostalgia' by Einar Englund who was born in Finland in 1916. The movement called 'Tempus Fugit' features just strings and percussion. From the same country, Einjuhani Rautavaara wrote his Symphony No. 7 in 1994 and gave it the subtitle 'Angel of Light'. The second movement has a good balance of activity and lyricism and moves very slowly. Terry claimed that audiences, when hearing this music for the first time, can't help but be moved by this piece, the beauties of sound always making their mark – and so it proved.

Terry, for the final item in his very interesting and thoughtful presentation, perhaps inevitably turned to the master: Sibelius emerged when music of Finland had no reputation at all and became its most important international figure. At the premier of the Symphony No. 5, everybody was satisfied with the work, except the composer himself who continually revised it until the version we are familiar with today was published in 1919. The original version had four, rather than three, movements with the symphony's extraordinary ending of detached, powerful chords accompanied by strings. Terry thought this 'a fantastically powerful piece, and that ending makes for a very dramatic atmosphere with every member of the orchestra hoping it's not them that breaks ranks'! The performers were the Lahti Symphony Orchestra conducted by Osmo Vänskä. **PA**

Thanks are due to all those involved in making Daventry 2015 such a success. Be sure to make a note of the dates for next year: April 22nd - 24th 2016 •

REGIONAL NEWS

Yorkshire Regional Group Music Weekend

IN THE STEPPES OF ILKLEY MOOR – Barbara Satterthwaite and Geoff Bateman report on a successful YRG Music Weekend. The event was again held at the Craiglands Hotel in Ilkley, with the emphasis on recordings of neglected English composers.

Ron Cooper (Barnsley RMS) got the weekend off to a spirited start with an audio/visual programme called (appropriately) **Setting the Tone**. He explored the development of the descriptive symphonic or tone poem, from its roots in the early 19th century through to the early years of the 20th century, and considered the influence of the parallel in romantic literature with poets such as Goethe, Byron and Yeats.

Ron opened with the 4th movement of Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony, which clearly looks forward to the tone poems of the late 19th century. This was followed by part of Liszt's Symphonic Poem *Tasso*, then Strauss's *Don Juan*, in a splendid recording by the Zurich Tonhalle under Zinman. Then came the Liverpool Phil under their highly rated chief Vasily Petrenko with Tchaikovsky's *Voyevoda*.

In stark contrast was *In the Faery Hills* by Bax, inspired by Yeats's romantic image of Ireland. The programme ended with Sir John Barbirolli's famous Philharmonia disc of Elgar's *Cockaigne* Overture. The organ pedal in the coda had a startling impact in that recording, made in London's Kingsway Hall and a taste of things to come.

Saturday dawned with **Chris Richmond's** (Wakefield RMS) tribute to **Neglected English Composers**. The programme kicked off with Arnell's overture *The New Age* performed by the RSN0, and then came *Music for String Orchestra* by Walter Leigh. But Chris's emphasis was on the ladies, firstly with Dorothy Howell's *Rosalind* for violin, then Doreen Carwithen's overture *Bishop Rock* under Richard Hickox, music which dramatically evokes a stormy sea, ending in calmer waters.

We had music by much lesser-known composers – Rebecca Clarke (*Lullaby* for Viola and Piano) and Margot Wright (Piano Quintet). Chris ended his enterprising exploration with Rubbra's short Symphony No. 11, again featuring Richard Hickox.

For our featured neglected composer, we turned to **Dr Geoff Ogram** (Stafford RMS), a lifelong friend of Gordon Jacob, and his programme **Seventh Son Revisited**. Here was a composer/arranger of comparatively modern vintage, who could be melodious, tuneful, grave, humorous, and whimsical in the style of Malcolm Arnold (who had been his pupil). We heard movements from the First and Second Symphonies, Oboe Quartet, Trombone Concerto (the work performed by Michael Hext when he won the inaugural BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition in 1978), Suite for Recorder and Strings, and the Concertino for Piano and Strings. The two symphonies (like Malcolm Arnold's Fifth) should surely be standard repertoire – that not a single Gordon Jacob work has been performed at the Proms in 50 years is cause for the BBC to hang its head in shame.

Warmth, depth, detail and bloom are all characteristics of the sound quality of the much

lamented Kingsway Hall, a venue favoured by Decca and EMI in particular. In his audio/visual presentation **Kingsway Hall Remembered**, guest speaker **Gordon Drury** traced the proud recording history of the Hall, ranging from Elgar's arrangement of Bach's Fantasia and Fugue in C minor, BWV 537, played by the London Symphony Orchestra under Albert Coates, recorded in 1928, to the very last recording made in the Hall (Sinopoli's *Manon Lescaut* in 1984). The acoustic properties of the Hall, with which we would become so familiar, were evident in the famous Kathleen Ferrier/Bruno Walter recording of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*, recorded for posterity in 1949. This was the only recording the Vienna Philharmonic made in the Hall.

Superlative sound quality was again to the fore in the Halle/Barbirolli recording of Sibelius's Sixth Symphony (yes, Kingsway Hall, not Manchester), and Giulini's *Firebird* from 1956. The excerpt from Britten's own recording of *Turn of the Screw* defied belief that this was a mono recording from 1954. The visual presentation included historical photos of the Hall and session pictures. This was a wonderful journey through an era the like of which will never be repeated. It is now a 4-star hotel, and one wonders how many guests checking in will be aware they are standing in the footsteps of Furtwängler, Giulini, Karajan, and Klemperer.

Our Saturday evening guest presenter was music consultant, composer and chorister **Geoffrey Kinder**, who kindly stepped in at short notice for an indisposed speaker. His programme **By Arrangement** was a selection of 19 pieces in various guises. He opened with Stravinsky's *Greeting Prelude* – a variation on 'Happy Birthday'. Also by Stravinsky we had the 'Russian Dance' from *Petrushka* arranged for two accordions. Stokowski's arrangement of *Night on a Bare Mountain* was a wild and wonderful interpretation. In Britten's *Turn of the Screw*, Geoffrey drew attention to instruments used in unusual ways.

In sharp contrast, an arrangement of *Little Miss Britten* by Dudley Moore and the overture to *The Nutcracker* arranged by Duke Ellington proved surprising delights. The arrangement of the *Hallelujah Chorus* by Goossens and Beecham was a fitting and rousing finale to the evening's entertainment.

'A quaint and antique drainage system' is how the irrepressible Sir Thomas Beecham once described the trombone. Not that our Sunday morning guest speaker, **Eric Jennings**, would necessarily agree with that. As principal trombone of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic for more than 30 years, Eric reflected on the conductors he played under including Sir John Pritchard, Sir Charles Groves, Libor Pešek (his last conductor), and Marek Janowski – 'at his best, *the best*'.

Eric resisted the temptation to play recordings he featured on, instead presenting a choice of personal favourites. He opened with the first movement of Rachmaninov's *Symphonic Dances* (Royal Concertgebouw under Ashkenazy) followed by two songs from Elgar's *Sea Pictures* from the famous Janet Baker/Barbirolli recording. We had more Elgar with the second movement of the Piano Quintet, and an excerpt from the *Tallis Fantasia* by Vaughan Williams. Eric ended his programme with *Liebesleid* by Fritz Kreisler, played by arguably the world's finest trombone player, Christian Lindberg.

Tony Haywood (Huddersfield RMS) reviews new CD releases for both this magazine and *Musicweb International*. His Sunday afternoon programme included both new releases and tributes to two conductors who died in 2014.

Tony opened with Nielsen's overture to *Maskarade* played by the Swedish Radio Orchestra, and then played excerpts from Mozart's *Così fan tutte* conducted by Iván Fischer at Glyndebourne. James MacMillan was represented by *The Gallant Weaver*, performed by the Elysian Singers, followed by an avant-garde selection, Kaija Saariaho's 'Winter Sky' from *Orion* – a cosmic landscape.

A tribute to the late Lorin Maazel was in the form of his recording of Gershwin's *Cuban Overture* (Cleveland Orchestra). For the last item, we viewed a DVD of Claudio Abbado conducting the Lucerne Festival Symphony in the final movement of Mahler's Symphony No. 9, a poignant eulogy to one of the great conductors.

FRMS Chairman **Allan Child** provided our Sunday evening bill of fayre with **Hatless in Ilkley**, in which he linked the verses of the famous song with no fewer than 16 musical items. These included Bryn Terfel singing *Scarborough Fair* (a fitting memorial to our previous venue!), excerpts from Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kijé*, and *Carmina Burana* by Carl Orff. We also heard the Worms computer game theme by Bjørn Lynne, and Flanders and Swann performing *The Reluctant Cannibal*.

With a history of guests dozing off during the evening session, Allan's mandate was to keep everyone awake. That there wasn't a snore to be heard was clear evidence he successfully completed his mission!

It seemed all too soon that we reached our final programme, with audiophile addict Geoff Bateman (Huddersfield RMS) dipping into the **Early Sound of RCA Living Stereo**. Although RCA made some 500 Living Stereo recordings, only about 140 were originally released in the UK. Geoff opened with a track from arguably the 'hottest' disc from the catalogue – *Witches' Brew* (originally RCA SB 2020, now available on Decca Australian Eloquence 442 9985), with original copies of the LP still selling for big dollars. We had the overture *Tam O'Shanter*, Malcolm Arnold's musical view of the Robert Burns tale. The recording was made in 1957 by Decca engineers in the now familiar Kingsway Hall, with Alexander Gibson conducting the New Symphony

Orchestra of London (the LSO?). The sound quality was astonishing, and from the same venue, we had the final movement of Borodin's Symphony No. 2 with Jean Martinon and the LSO.

Fritz Reiner, the most recorded RCA conductor of the era with over 100 album credits, was married three times and his surviving wife was a Hollywood film actress. Impressive credentials for a man who reputedly never smiled. Of the choices played, the most unusual was from the Swiss-born composer Rolf Liebermann – his Symphony for Jazz Band and Symphony Orchestra, written in 1954 and recorded that year in a gloriously open acoustic. We had to wait until 1981 for the first stereo release. Liebermann's biggest claim to fame was that he was the President of the jury at the inaugural Eurovision Song Contest – won by the Swiss!

We had chamber music performed by Byron Janis and Jascha Heifetz, an excerpt from Montoux's Paris recording of *The Rite of Spring* (he conducted the infamous premiere), and an excerpt from Ibert's *Escapes* under Charles Munch. From Doráti's *Flying Dutchman* recording, we heard the crashing of the anchor into the water when, during the first take, the assembled cast were drenched as the recording producer sought maximum realism!

The weekend ended with another marine disaster, the shipwreck from Rimsky's *Scheherazade*, with Reiner and the Chicago Symphony challenging Sir Thomas Beecham's famous account. The visual presentation had replicas of the original LP covers, as well as artist and composer portraits to provide added interest.

The event organisers were encouraged by several messages of appreciation for the event. These included: 'I enjoyed ALL the programmes – I hope it will be continued'; 'I enjoyed it very much, wish I could have stayed for the whole weekend'; 'it was my first time at Ilkley, everything was first rate'; 'the programmes were all excellent, the atmosphere was fun, friendly and relaxed'; 'such an interesting variety of presentations'.

Our next Music Weekend is scheduled for March 11th -14th 2016 at the same venue. Further details will be on the FRMS website as soon as available. ●

FRMS Central Region

AUTUMN MUSIC DAY 2015
Saturday 24th October

at the new venue
Littleover Baptist Church, Derby
10.00 am to 5.00 pm

Cost £15 including lunch

For programme details please contact regional secretary Mick Birchall on 01455 823494 or email allan.child@thefrms.co.uk
Details will also be circulated to societies in the region and included on the FRMS website

KIRKCALDY RECORDED MUSIC SOCIETY was the host for the FRMS Scottish Group’s annual Music Day which took place on the 18th April. Guests were greeted with a programme of **Music for Early Travellers** compiled by Douglas Paton, chairman of the host society.

Pat Leishman welcomed FRMS Chairman Allan Child, his wife Ruth, and visitors from Dundee, Carnoustie, Stirling, Surbiton and Sunderland.

Peter Herbert of Stirling RMS was the first speaker and gave a fascinating talk on **Two Unexplored Centenaries: The music of Vítězslava Kaprálová and Jan Hanuš**. Vítězslava Kaprálová (1915-1940) is



From left: Doug Paton, Pat Leishman and Peter Herbert



Douglas Lorimer

considered the most important female Czech composer of the 20th century, and Jan Hanuš (1915-2004) was a prolific Czech composer. Almost every category of composition is represented among his works, many of which are overtly political, expressing anti-Nazi, anti-Fascist and anti-Communist sentiments. For good measure Peter added Jakub Jan Ryba (1765-1815), who was known to some of the audience as composer of the Czech Christmas Mass.

Continuing the day’s anniversary theme was **Douglas Lorimer** who gave a fascinating and well-researched talk covering **Sibelius and Nielsen on 78s**. All of the recordings used had been transferred by Douglas with remarkable results.

The **Annual General Meeting** was held at the end of the day and it was agreed that the 2016 Music Day would be held in Dundee University Chaplaincy Centre on Saturday 23rd April.

John Maidment, secretary

CHAIRMAN’S CHAT Allan Child

IN PREVIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS to *Bulletin* I have referred to one of the roles of the chairman as fostering contact between societies and the Federation. So it is encouraging to see from their programme cards that a good number have been welcoming members of neighbouring societies, as well as members of the Federation committee, to present programmes. It has been my privilege in recent months to visit groups as far apart as Angus and South Devon, with several in between, not forgetting regional events in Scotland and Yorkshire. By the time you read this, I will have been to a few more events, including one society’s 70th-anniversary celebration, and my diary for 2016 already has a few dates marked in it.



The societies I’ve visited, regardless of size, are all thriving despite, in some instances, membership numbers having fallen recently. So although there are signs of encouragement there is also cause for concern and some societies have closed recently. There are several reasons for these closures: sometimes there is no-one to take over if the secretary or treasurer has to step down; maybe the meeting room becomes unavailable, too expensive or simply inconvenient; perhaps the equipment needs replacing or there is no longer anyone with the expertise to look after it; or, of course, there may simply be too few members for those left to feel it worth carrying on.

These problems, though, can often be overcome. Members of the FRMS committee come from societies with a variety of backgrounds, so they may have already encountered – and overcome – the difficulties mentioned above. This means that our collective experience is at the disposal of societies and we can often help to solve problems if we are made aware of them in time. So even if you only foresee a problem in, say, one or two years’ time why not contact Jim Bostwick or myself now? ●

Remembering Roger Apps

Back in 2011 the FRMS West Region Group's inaugural meeting (see *Bulletin* 155) was hosted by the Stroud Valleys Music Club at St Joseph's Church, Stonehouse. So it was appropriate that the same venue was used for a meeting on July 8th, which remembered the life and the love of music of Roger Apps, one of the Group's founders as well as a member of the FRMS committee and the Federation's vice-chairman. Robert Crockford, chairman of Stroud Valleys MC, welcomed participants, after which FRMS chairman Allan Child paid a brief tribute to Roger before introducing the first presentation.

This was given by **June Apps** and was a programme she and Roger had been devising together, **Shake, Rattle and Roll**. This enigmatic title encompassed three elements of which 'Rattle' was the largest, devoted to recordings by Sir Simon Rattle. First, though, 'Shake' took us to the sultry world of Strauss's *Salome* and the 'Dance of the Seven Veils' before the selection of Rattle's recordings reflected some of Roger's interests



June Apps

beyond music. Railways were represented by Percy Grainger's *Arrival Platform Humlet* and *Train Music*, whilst the travel he enjoyed in Nordic lands was exemplified by Sibelius's Fifth Symphony. We also heard the 'Funeral March' from Britten's *Ballad of Heroes*, which prompted June to recall the words of Abraham Lincoln: 'In the end, it's not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years'. This was followed by part of Elgar's Violin Concerto with Nigel Kennedy as soloist. June's presentation ended with Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* representing the 'Roll' element, since Gershwin began his career in music by cutting piano rolls! There is a modern recording of the work with the piano part played from a roll Gershwin made, but we were treated to a recording from the 1920s featuring not only Gershwin but the Paul Whiteman Orchestra for which the work was composed.

Dr Lionel Carley, President of the Delius Society, was our second speaker. His topic reflected Roger's love for the northern lands, considering Delius (1862-1934) in relation to Grieg (1843-1907) and Percy Grainger (1882-1961). Delius and Grainger shared a fascination with Scandinavian lands, Norway in particular, and enjoyed friendship with Grieg. Delius's well-known orchestral work *Sleigh Ride* – the first item we heard – was originally a piano piece composed for a Christmas party hosted by Grieg in 1887. Grainger's association with the other two composers naturally came somewhat later but there was a brief period when the lives of all three became entwined in the years 1905-7. Grieg was delighted with Grainger's interpretations of his (Grieg's) music, and made arrangements for Grainger to play his

Piano Concerto with himself conducting at the Leeds festival in 1907. Sadly Grieg did not live to fulfil the engagement, but Grainger duly performed the concerto with Stanford conducting. Shortly afterwards Grainger made a recording – acoustic, of course – of the cadenza from the concerto's first movement.

All three composers are linked by a piece from Grieg's *Scenes of Country Life*, although the work dates from 1870-71, before either Delius or Grainger had made Grieg's acquaintance. The second of the three *Scenes*, the 'Bridal Procession', was recorded by Grainger in 1921. Before that, though, in 1891, Delius had orchestrated it, yet his orchestration remained as a draft in pencil and was not published in his lifetime. There is another orchestration which is frequently heard, but Delius's version was finally prepared for performance in 1993 for the 150th anniversary of Grieg's birth. Naturally, this was the version we heard. These items were just some of the music we heard in an enjoyable presentation which gave us a new and intriguing view of Delius.

After an excellent buffet lunch provided by members of the Stroud Valleys, the afternoon's session took us into the **Red Light District** – not some insalubrious downtown area but the recording studio! Maggie Cotton was percussionist with the CBSO for 40 years, 18 of them during Simon Rattle's tenure of the podium, and her account of life in the orchestra was slanted towards the hours spent in the studio, though not to the exclusion of the concert platform or the delights(?) of concert tours.

Maggie had brought with her some of the more portable items in the percussionist's armoury, starting with the wood block on which she tapped out a rhythm instantly recognisable as the opening of John Adams's *Short Ride in a Fast Machine*. In one recording session for this work, the red light came on, Rattle indicated that she should begin but he gave no beat. After a couple of minutes of exchanging silent signals Maggie eventually spoke out. 'You're the conductor!' she said to Rattle, whereupon the producer came in from the control room to ask what was going on, in time to catch Rattle's reply, 'But you're the one who knows how fast it should go!'

In addition to learning how important an instrument the triangle is, we were introduced to, or heard about, some other 'oddities' in the percussion department, such as the giant mallet employed for the crack of doom moment in Mahler's Sixth symphony. Maggie's talk was well illustrated with music examples and enlivened with humour. Just the thing to set us on our homeward journeys in a happy frame of mind, for the day was no solemn act of remembrance but, as intended, a celebration of Roger's life and his love of music.

Thanks for organising the event are due to Malcolm Lewis (Cirencester RMS) and Robert Crockford. Mention must also be made of the members of Stroud Valleys MC who provided lunch and other refreshments.

Allan Child

Roger Apps died on June 7th 2014 and a full tribute appeared in Bulletin 162. ●

Formative Records by FRMS President Julian Lloyd Webber

I WAS VERY LUCKY with my introduction to music on records. I had been ‘tinkering’ with the cello ever since the age of four and, when I was about nine, my grandmother obviously decided that it was time I should hear the instrument played properly. So she took herself off to our tiny little local record store and returned – entirely by chance – with two classic cello recordings. She would have had no idea which performances to buy, so she either received good advice from the nice old gentleman who ran the shop or she was very lucky indeed. Her grandchild was now the proud owner of the Elgar Concerto played by Paul Tortelier with the BBC Symphony Orchestra under Sir Malcolm Sargent, and the Saint-Saëns and Lalo Concertos played by Pierre Fournier with the Orchestre Lamoureux under Jean Martinon. Little could I have known that, fourteen years later, I would be studying with the latter of these two great cellists!

In any case, these superb performances were the beginning of my collection of cello records which was to acquire shelf-groaning proportions over the next ten or so years. While other little boys were collecting cigarette cards, I was collecting cello recordings – either on disc or on tape from the radio. It became an obsession, and each week I combed through *Radio Times*, paying special attention to their marvellous, long-since departed ‘foreign stations’ section, in search of some obscure cello concerto by Pipkov, Dukelsky or their like.

I suppose that there is always a danger of becoming too sentimentally attached to the first version of a piece of music that you hear. You fall in love with the music and get used to the quirks of that particular performance, clouding later judgement of what could well be equally fine accounts of the work. If that is the case then what follows is a very sentimental list indeed: these are recordings which I fell in love with on first hearing and which have never been replaced in my affections. Let’s start with Tortelier’s Elgar with Sargent, a performance seldom mentioned in Elgar Concerto round-ups, most commentators assuming that it was superseded by the same cellist’s later account with Sir Adrian Boult. Yet, for me, there has always been something special about the Sargent version. To start with, the sound is very good, both cello and orchestra being slightly distant yet ‘all there’, and this suits the nature of the work itself. Tortelier doesn’t play the Concerto in an ‘English’ way at all, but it is very convincing because he so obviously believes in the music himself. Perhaps the greater a piece of music, the more it can take very different interpretations. Certainly Tortelier plays the Elgar utterly



differently to the way that I do (and even more differently to the way Jacqueline du Pré does!) but, no matter, I love his Elgar with a French accent. Fournier’s Lalo is never likely to be superseded, even if his Saint-Saëns may have been. The Lalo suits Fournier’s *bel canto* style perfectly. Has any other cellist ever produced such a free, singing, yet strongly focused sound? I made sure that I studied this work with Fournier and will always be grateful that I was able to sit next to him as I repeatedly asked him to demonstrate huge chunks of the concerto! However, this experience did bring one serious – if unvoiced – disagreement. The Lalo

Concerto is, indisputably, over-marked. The last movement, in particular, contains a welter of instructions for every bar which are hard to follow and which almost seem to cancel each other out. Fournier, quite rightly, advised me to ‘ignore most of the markings and choose the ones you like’ but went on to ruin his observation by continuing ‘just as in the Elgar’. Now, here he was mistaken because, if you follow Elgar’s markings, I always maintain that you cannot go far wrong. For, from an amateur and self-taught background, Elgar became the ultimate professional, knowing exactly what he wanted, and how to convey this on paper.

The next disc was entirely my own choice. There had always been a huge amount of music to be heard in the family flat. My father had an electronic organ to practise on, my brother played amazing selections on the gramophone, and later John Lill practised endlessly on my father’s dulcet-toned little Chappell Grand. Both John, and particularly my father, were constantly extolling the virtues of Rachmaninov, a then (1961) very unfashionable composer. I heard John practise the second and third Piano Concertos and bought both of them on disc. I had no idea which versions to get but returned with two great recordings: No. 2 by Richter with the Sinfonie-Orchester der Nationalen Philharmonie Warschau under Stanisław Wislocki, and No. 3 by Byron Janis and the London Symphony Orchestra under Antal Doráti. Richter’s No. 2 had the added bonus of six of the piano preludes, brilliantly played. Of the two Rachmaninov concertos, I always preferred No. 3, finding the first movement’s second subject one of the most beautiful in music. The Janis recording is a marvel with superb Mercury Living Presence sound, sparkling accompaniment from Doráti, and Janis sweeping the Concerto along with great technique, crystal clear piano tone and an absence of sentimentality which mirrors Rachmaninov’s own performance of the work. I was extremely fortunate with my Rachmaninov recordings because my uncle also owned a fine account of No. 1 by



Peter Katin and the LPO under Boult which I would always ask to hear whenever I visited him.

Two years later (1963) I had discovered both Rostropovich and Shostakovich through Rostropovich's classic account of the Shostakovich First Cello Concerto. The work, and its performance, made a huge impression on me. I had never heard cello playing, or cello music, like it, and when Rostropovich came to London the following year for his cycle of more than thirty cello concertos at the Royal Festival Hall with the LSO, it was like manna from heaven. I went to all nine concerts, and my decision to become a cellist was almost certainly attributable to this unique event. I had heard many cellists in concert before but Rostropovich was something different. As he wrote in the concert-series programme: 'The cello has become in our times a tribune, an orator, a dramatic hero.' That was the way he played and it struck an immediate chord within me.

So did Shostakovich. I set out to discover as much of his music as I could. Of course Ormandy's account of the First Symphony was on the other side of the Cello Concerto recording and, again through amazing luck, I quickly acquired two of the finest accounts of Shostakovich Symphonies ever to be put on disc: Mravinsky conducting the Tenth Symphony on Saga (with that striking black cover and terrible sound!) and the Eighth Symphony on MK. I was stunned by both the works and their performances, and set about acquiring every Shostakovich symphony I could lay my hands on (No. 2 and No. 3 were still unavailable then). While never as unfashionable as Rachmaninov, I soon discovered that Shostakovich was not too highly thought of by the powers-that-be in the early 1960s, who seemed to find his tonality 'old hat'. Has there ever been a more stifling time for classical composers than the 1950s and 1960s when it seemed only permissible to write in one style? The West's own 'Politburo' was just as effective in stamping out composers as its Eastern counterpart. If any British symphonist comes near to equalling Shostakovich's achievement, it is surely Arnold in the slow movement of his No. 2 – and we all know what happened to him. What if Arnold had received encouragement instead of constant derision? We shall never know.

My love-affair with Shostakovich continued and I began a thorough exploration of the chamber music as well. The wonderful Smetana Quartet's rendition of the Third Quartet was the first to grace my shelves. Milan Škampa's viola playing entranced me and I would sit in my room listening to Shostakovich quartets and sucking limes (which I'd bought from the Kings Road Sainsbury's) feeling highly self-satisfied that I had discovered both music and a fruit which remained unknown to my friends at school. (And the first reader who sends that quote to 'Pseuds Corner' will undoubtedly receive ten pounds!)

Two other recordings I loved at that time also deserve more than a brief mention: Erik Tuxen's version of Prokofiev's Fifth (with the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra) on Ace of Clubs, and Rostropovich's coupling of the Schumann Concerto and Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* (with Rozhdestvensky) on Deutsche Grammophon. My father introduced me to the Prokofiev symphony – along with *Cinderella*, it was one of his favourite Prokofiev works – and Tuxen's account is one of the finest. The ending remains the best-balanced I have heard on disc, with the orchestral piano

emerging excitingly through the texture. Rostropovich's Schumann and Tchaikovsky speak for themselves – the Schumann, in particular, being a wonderful example of his playing at its greatest. In Rostropovich's hands, the finale takes on a new lease of life as an expressive entity rather than an exercise and, yet again, he set a benchmark for all future interpretations.

About the time that I first encountered Rostropovich in the concert hall, I also changed to a wonderful teacher named Douglas Cameron. He had taught a whole generation of British cellists from Florence Hooton (who premiered Frank Bridge's *Oration*) to the much-lamented Thomas Igloi, the Aeolian Quartet's Derek Simpson, the Gabrieli's Keith Harvey, the LSO's principal Douglas Cummings and the Nash Ensemble's Christopher Van Kampen among many others. His whole approach to teaching was based on the idea of trying to bring the best out of each individual rather than to impose any rigid style of playing. When Paul Tortelier arrived to judge a cello competition at the Royal Academy, where Cameron taught, he was interested to know who the competitors' different teachers were as the standard had been so high. He could hardly believe it when he learned they were all with the same professor. Yet by the time I began studying with him, Douggie's love-affair with the whisky bottle had reached fairly epic proportions and his 'laid-back' lessons were certainly better experienced in the morning, for the afternoons would disappear in a soporific haze.

A complete contrast to the avuncular Cameron was provided for me by Sidney Griller, who presided over the legendary Griller String Quartet. I made his acquaintance on a youth orchestra course in Vienna, and it was a revelation. Griller was an 'eight hours a day' man, and it showed, in both his precision and his respect for music. He coached a group of us in Mozart's G minor Viola Quintet. I will never forget his meticulous attention to detail and absolute regard for the music above all else. I bought the Griller Quartet's reading on Vanguard (with William Primrose) and, when it was re-released on CD, wrote to him to say that I believed he (and his fellow musicians) had made a recording that it was almost impossible to equal. He replied, in shaky handwriting, that my letter about 'those old recordings' had meant a great deal to him. He died a few weeks later.

John Barbirolli was a magical conductor, transforming nearly everything he touched into something marvellous. His way with Delius was very different to Beecham's yet just as heartfelt. Barbirolli's *In a Summer Garden* collection (for EMI) was my introduction to Delius and I wore my copy out. *La Calinda* is especially beautiful and I have never been able to get used to Beecham's romp through it at nearly twice Barbirolli's tempo. Likewise with Elgar's First Symphony. Other versions may be 'tighter', but Barbirolli finds room for heart-stopping moments without losing sight of the whole. His tempi are not 'slow' just for the sake of it – he really loves this music. His subtle change of gear for the second movement's 'down by the river' theme has never been equalled on disc.

We live in a different age now, when so many CDs pour forth – most of them just 'calling cards' for artists and orchestras – that it is as easy to miss a great recording as to find an indifferent one. The proliferation of recordings has brought both riches and embarrassments, but I can't help feeling that the same novice collector today would be miraculously fortunate to receive my beginner's luck! ●



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SOCIETY NEWS

Morecombe & Heysham

Morecombe & Heysham RMS provides members with the opportunity to actually LISTEN to pieces of music without any distraction. This happens in The Ascension in Torrisholme on a Wednesday evening. The Society has been going since 1958 but, although we may be old, I don't think any of us were members then! We used to meet at The George Hotel until the stairs became a problem, so moved just a few yards along the road to The Ascension, having searched far and wide!

We are rather fortunate to have a large membership, partly because the Lancaster Society had to close a few years ago because of lack of numbers. We also visit Kendal and Garstang who are both poorly supported. We think our success is due to not concentrating solely on classical music. In fact, these days anything goes. We have jazz, pop, G&S, musicals, films, ballet, opera – just about anything really. Oh, and occasionally our in-house technical expert comes up with a video presentation where it's good to see the music performed or danced to. We used to welcome presenters from the Federation, but now our members provide the programmes, sometimes two per evening, each very different with no clue as to what you're likely to be listening to.

Gordon Arkwright, secretary

Editor's note: this is an extract from a publicity notice spotted in a local paper by an eagle-eyed visitor to the area. It is reproduced by agreement with the Society.

Stockport's 70th birthday

This year, Stockport Recorded Music Society (formerly known as the Stockport Music and Gramophone Club) celebrates its 70th birthday. It was founded in 1945 by Mrs Edyth Walker. Being a music lover, she decided to investigate the idea of forming a club where people who also enjoyed music could meet regularly to share their listening together in relaxed surroundings. She placed an advertisement in the local press, inviting people interested in forming a club to come along to a meeting to discuss the idea. The response was immediate and about thirty people attended, most of them offering the use of their own records from which programmes could be arranged.

For a venue, Edyth was able to offer a room in part of the business premises she owned at 195a Higher Hillgate, in Stockport. Membership grew to about 40, with an average attendance of 25.

As the club approached its 10th anniversary, members decided to appoint a President, and chose Stephen Williams, who at the time was a well-known critic, writer, and broadcaster, especially of opera. As President, he was the principal speaker at the club's 10th-anniversary celebrations in 1955 at the Alma Lodge Hotel, in Stockport. The following year he presented a programme at the club, but sadly he died shortly afterwards. The Club has never appointed another President since.

In 1956 we moved to Wellington House which was owned by Stockport Council. The years spent

there were definitely the most successful in the club's history. Membership grew to more than 80, many members were very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about music, and programmes were generally of a high standard, with some outstanding programmes given by visiting speakers, including representatives of the leading record companies.

Wellington House closed in 1969, and for the next ten years we met in various venues, finally settling at the New Community Centre, Heaton Chapel, Stockport in 1979. We have remained there ever since, still meeting on Friday evenings for nine months of the year, and taking a summer break from July to September.

Today, most programmes, covering a very wide range of musical subjects, are presented by members themselves, and visiting speakers are invited to give programmes once every 4-6 weeks on average. In earlier years, presenters from other local musical Societies such as Romiley, Hazel Grove, and Bramhall have contributed, as well as some from further afield, e.g. Bolton, Blackburn, Southport, South Cheshire and Stoke-on-Trent. As recently as March this year a programme of British Popular Music (1900-1950) was presented by George Steele of Rochdale Gramophone Society.

During the summer break, some members present informal programmes on a casual basis. Although most of our programmes are of recorded music, it has always been our policy to encourage live performances and to invite players to come and entertain us. These have included members of the Stockport Youth Orchestra, and Wilmslow Symphony Orchestra, as well as pupils from Kings School, Macclesfield, Chethams School of Music, and the Royal Northern College of Music. Two local groups of musicians have been playing regularly for us for nearly 30 years. They are the Dulcian Wind Quintet, directed by their flautist Alistair Roberts, and the Telemann Ensemble led by their harpsichordist Peter Collier.

For many years we operated our own Record Lending Library (for members), efficiently managed by John Pollard – alas no longer with us. A few years ago we decided to update our equipment, and we successfully applied for a National Lottery grant which enabled us to buy our present equipment. Social events also contribute to our activities; these include attending concerts, dining out, day trips to places of interest, walks and rambles, cheese and wine parties, hot pot suppers, etc. Above all there is a strong bond with a love of classical music among members. Friendships have been formed, and marriages celebrated over the years.

Membership has dwindled somewhat in recent years, and there have been fears at times that the club – like many others – may fold. Present membership stands at 24, but with a firm core of 16 and a few newly-enrolled members in the last two years we seem to be fairly secure for the present. Major anniversaries have been celebrated over the years, and

as part of this year's 70th-anniversary celebrations, 23 participants, consisting of members and former members, met on April 19th for lunch, again at the



Alma Lodge in Stockport. After the meal, the chairman Mrs Eileen Walsh briefly outlined the club's history, and proposed a toast to 'absent friends'. She concluded by saying that were she still alive today, our founder would probably be astonished that our Society is celebrating its 70th anniversary

Alan Bassett

Rustington reaches 70!

Members of Rustington Recorded Music Society met on July 17th at a local restaurant to enjoy a lunch party held to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the formation of their Society. The chairman, Dr John Allen,



From left: John Allen, chairman; Peter Palmer, treasurer; Allan Child, chairman FRMS; Ann Palmer, committee member.

welcomed some 27 members and the guest speaker, FRMS chairman Allan Child. John Allen reported that the past year had seen a small but significant increase in membership, and attendance at meetings had been particularly buoyant of late. At a recent meeting addressed by the local composer and conductor, John Gibbons, there had been nearly 50 members and guests. Average attendance at meetings is currently about 20. Following a hearty lunch and a few glasses of wine, Allan Child gave an interesting and amusing talk about the work of the FRMS and his visits to member societies throughout the UK. The very enjoyable event closed with a presentation of flowers to Cathy Mitcheison who had overseen the restaurant arrangements, and a vote of thanks to our treasurer Peter Palmer for managing the RRMS funds so efficiently.

John Allen, chairman

Letchworth RMS 50th anniversary

Back in the 1960s we did not have CDs, digital downloads or iPads, but audio technology was no less

innovative. As records and hi-fi became more affordable, music clubs such as Letchworth Recorded Music Society were being formed. Many societies came into being shortly after World War Two had ended and at that time, records and equipment were out of the reach of many people because of the high cost. Thus the idea of clubbing together to buy records and equipment and listening to them in the company of like-minded people was born.

Letchworth RMS was founded in 1965 by Gordon Whitfield and Don Harbour, and together with friends they met at the Wilbury Junior School in Bedford Road. Regular talks were by members on classical, light and jazz music, illustrated with the latest mono and stereo LPs and reel-to-reel tapes. This, however, was not the best of venues with poor acoustics and small chairs! It was not long before the growing membership needed a better hall and the Society moved to Letchworth Settlement in 1970. Dame Thea King, the outstanding British clarinettist, who lived in Hitchin, agreed to become the Society's President.

Visiting guest speakers became a regular feature including John Amis, Steve Race and Roy Plomley. Social events included quizzes, cheese and wine evenings, and slide shows. Of note was an evening



given by the Letchworth Camera Club showing pictures of Letchworth and surroundings by the Clutterbuck sisters. The Society enjoys a discount on recorded music at David's Bookshop in Letchworth, one of the few remaining shops in the UK that still sells CDs, DVDs, etc. Now 50 years old, the Society still meets at the Settlement with a new President, Paul Adrian Rooke, the conductor of Hitchin Symphony Orchestra.

Philip Ashton

More than 50 years' service at Oswestry

At the Oswestry RMS 2015 AGM, I was delighted to present Honorary Life Membership to Dennis Edwards (pictured left) to mark his retirement from the committee. Dennis has served continuously for more than 50 years, including a period as chairman. It is stalwarts like this that are the lifeblood of societies such as ours and we wish Dennis many more years of happy listening with ORMS.



Paul Astell, chairman

FRMS 2015 Annual General Meeting

November 7th



4 Marine Drive, Paignton, TQ3
2NL

Tel: 01803 526397
www.redcliffehotel.co.uk

Hosted by Torbay RMS



The FRMS AGM takes place once again in a splendid seaside resort and provides an ideal opportunity for a weekend break. This event is open to any number of members from any affiliated Society.

1pm: Registration for AGM

2pm: Business meeting

4pm: Sibelius 150 - A recorded music recital by John J Davis, President of the Sibelius One Society and TRMS vice-chairman

5pm: Vintage gramophone demonstration by TRMS member Dave Roberts (also a member of the City of London Phonograph and Gramophone Society)

6pm: Evening meal

8pm: Recital by composer and pianist Nick Ray. Music to include Handel, Beethoven and Chopin

Hotel charges

Bed & Breakfast: £48 per person, per night. (No single room surcharge.)

Dinner: 3 courses £23.75

Important: when booking, quote the FRMS meeting.



Daventry photo extra

Left: Chloë Hanslip and Danny Driver; above: Chloë, Danny and pianist's assistant, Rita Davies; top right: Martin Jones; right: Daventry's all-important technical team: (l-r) Robert Swithenbank, Jim Bostwick and Philip Ashton





Torbay Musical Weekend

Friday 20th - Monday 23rd

November 2015

at The Palace Hotel
Torquay

Enjoy four-star hotel accommodation and a weekend of music and talks on a range of topics at the historic Palace Hotel Torquay.

The hotel is set in beautiful grounds within walking distance of Anstey's Cove and Babbacombe Bay and a short bus ride from the attractive town of Torquay on the English Riviera



Prices

Friends of Torbay subscription fee £50

Residents' Hotel Tariffs per person inclusive of VAT:

Option A @ £280 from Friday Dinner to Monday Breakfast inclusive

Option B @ £212 from Friday Dinner to Sunday Tea inclusive

Session tickets available from Kevin Ryland on 01 803 406754

(evenings or weekends only) or email kevinryland45@yahoo.co.uk

Day visitors very welcome

For more information please contact John Isaac (Chairman) on 01560 879359 or email Gillian Babbs at gillianbabbs@waitrose.com or visit www.fotl.org.uk

www.palacetorquay.com



NEIL COLLIER

'In Quires and Places' is the fascinating title of the presentation by Neil Collier of Priory Records



CHRISTOPHER FIFIELD

Kathleen Ferrer - Christopher Fifield looks at the life and voice of this remarkable singer



Wing Commander GILL SINGLETON

MCGL FRSA RAFVR(T) Principal Director of Music (ACOD) presents 'A Flyby of RAF Music'



KEVIN VALERIAN RYLAND

Torbay regular Kevin Ryland relives the days when the American Mercury label was a worldbeater in quality recordings



RODNEY GREENBERG

Emmy Award-winning producer and director of over 300 classical music programmes for television, Gershwin biographer Rodney Greenberg presents an audio-visual portrait including rare photos, vintage film and live piano, celebrating 'The Glory of Gershwin'



ANDREW BARNETT

'Every Note He Ever Wrote': Andrew Barnett delves into the BIS complete Sibelius Edition



LYNNE PLUMMER

The skill of the instrument maker is explored by Lynne Plummer



GWYN PARRY-JONES

'The French Bruckner?' Gwyn Parry-Jones introduces us to Albrecht Magnard



RICHARD LESTER

Celebrated harpsichord performer Richard Lester will give the Torbay Festival featuring Handel, Bach and composers connected to St Mark's, Venice



PETROC TRELAWNY & TONY SCOTLAND

In their joint presentation 'Lives in Music' Petroc Trelawny and Tony Scotland will reveal episodes in their lives that led to encounters with particular works



PLUS - For night owls, two late night sessions
Details correct at time of going to print

MUSIC WEEKEND SEMINARS

If you are looking for music weekends that are both stimulating and rewarding, held in peaceful, comfortable, congenial surroundings and reasonably priced, then you might like to consider the following.

Located in beautiful rural settings, weekend music courses begin on a Friday with an excellent meal, followed by the evening session. The course continues throughout the Saturday, time being allowed for music-lovers to get to know each other. The course concludes the next day after a substantial lunch.

Organised by **Professor Gerald Seaman**, formerly Professor of Musicology at the University of Auckland and subsequently on the staff of Oxford University, the courses are informative and stimulating though fully comprehensible to the non-musician. The venues for the next four courses are Stanton House, a beautiful manor house near Oxford which is situated in the village of Stanton St John, and Shallowford House near Stafford, which is easily accessible by train or by car.

The cost for each weekend, including full board and comfortable accommodation, is £250.00. The courses are as follows:

18-20 September 2015: *The Music of Eastern Europe*

Shallowford House

Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary all possess rich musical traditions. This course will examine the music of the Polish composers Chopin, Lutosławski and Penderecki, the Bohemians Smetana, Dvořák, Martinů and Janáček, and the Hungarians Liszt, Bartók and Kodály. The course will include DVDs of operas by Janáček and Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, together with discussion of folk music and the significance of great Hungarian performers.

6-8 November 2015: *Mozart: the Man and his Music*

Stanton House

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) is generally recognised as one of the world's most brilliant musicians. Illustrated with CDs and DVDs, including Rimsky-Korsakov's opera *Mozart and Salieri* based on a play by Alexander Pushkin written only a few years after the composer's death, the course presents a vivid picture of the composer as seen through his letters, literature and music.

29-31 January 2016: *The Great Mr Handel*

Shallowford House

Whether it be his great choral works, his organ concertos, his vocal and keyboard works, or his operas and oratorios, in every sphere Handel was a master craftsman. The course, richly illustrated with CDs and DVDs, provides a vivid portrait of one of the greatest composers not only of the Baroque period but of all time.

25-27 March 2016: *The Wonderful Legacy of English Music*

Stanton House

England possesses an unbroken musical history lasting over 1000 years. The music of the great cathedrals, the Age of Elizabeth, the keyboard works of William Byrd, the English madrigal school, Henry Purcell, Handel, Boyce, Gilbert and Sullivan, the English folk song revival, Vaughan Williams, Delius, Holst, Parry, Elgar, Walton, Benjamin Britten are only some of the outstanding names in the wonderful legacy that is English music. Illustrated with CDs and DVDs and live performance.

For further details and booking, please contact:

Professor Gerald Seaman, 60 Woodstock Close, Oxford OX2 8DD

Tel: 01865 515114

email: gerald.seaman@outlook.com

Comments about the lecturer

'Professor Seaman's lectures are always interesting and worthwhile. Full of information, not only about music but on culture in general, they sustain the interest and whet the appetite for more.' [Dr. J.A., Chorleywood]

The Great 30-Year Rock and Roll Swindle

Or why it's time to pension off the Compact Disc by Debbie Bilham

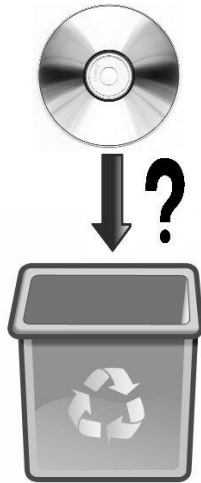
THE COMPACT DISC was introduced in 1981 to provide a high-quality alternative to vinyl and cassette tape, using the then embryonic digital audio and optical storage technology.

Logically, the relatively impractical vinyl and cassette formats should have died a death soon afterwards. The fact that both formats are still in use – and vinyl has seen a considerable resurgence in popularity in recent years – is testimony to the sonic inadequacies of CD. While cassettes of 70s and 80s pre-digital recordings can be bought quite cheaply second-hand, a vinyl recording usually costs considerably more than a CD nowadays. Audiophile pressings of classic LPs, which are sold as ‘mastered from analogue’, often sell for £20+ whereas the equivalent CD can be bought for about a fiver. At a recent audio show which I attended it was noticeable that the majority of exhibitors demonstrating high-end amplifier and speaker systems were using vinyl records as their source.

The problem with the CD format (16 bits sampled at 44.1 kHz) is that it utilises the lowest bit rate and sampling frequency possible for audio, according to the Nyquist theorem, simply because there were no alternative means available in 1981 to fit 78 minutes of stereo music onto a 5-inch disc. Indeed, compared to the very expensive magnetic hard-disk drives available at the time, CD was a remarkably effective and cheap form of data storage. The format, which was developed for audio use, was soon adopted by the computer industry for data storage purposes for this reason.

In an ideal world, we would simply record the movement in the air that is sound, and replicate it directly, rather than converting it into a series of numbers, storing them and then converting the numbers back into a representation of the original waveform. In other words, we would use analogue recording and playback. Analogue sounds closest to the original sound source but relies on very precise mechanical and electronic engineering to translate small movements or magnetic fields into the required sound. Consequently, high-quality analogue reproduction equipment is invariably expensive. Also, analogue storage media are easily damaged unless stored and handled very carefully. Since the stored signal on CD is in one of only two states (1 or 0), it is much less prone to its value being altered by damage or contamination.

Back in the 1980s, for the majority of the population who didn't have access to high-end analogue reproduction equipment, the CD was a revelation with its clean sound and absence of scratches, rumble, hiss, and wow and flutter. Not surprisingly, it quickly caught on. Within a few years,



portable players and in-car CD players were introduced, which provided a versatility which vinyl will never match. Of course, there were a few detractors, even then, who maintained that vinyl sounded so much warmer. As well as many hi-fi enthusiasts, these included some respected figures in the music industry.

Today, the CD finds itself stuck in a strange limbo; it lacks the convenience and portability of mp3 but does not provide the detailed sound quality demanded by audiophiles. For some years, CD was the best-quality format available where there was no analogue alternative. With the advent of 24-bit high-resolution FLAC downloads, SACD and Blu-ray audio, this

is no longer the case.

Like many, I too have spent many years believing that the CD format was as good as it gets. I first realised that we have been sold a pup for the last 30 years about 3 years ago when I was listening to that most maligned of analogue formats – a cassette tape. Four years ago, I realised a long-held ambition and bought a faulty Revox B710 broadcast-quality cassette deck from 1983, which I restored to its former glory. I bought a collection of pre-recorded cassettes and started listening to them.

When I got to the London Cast Recording of *Evita* highlights, I was in two minds as to whether to bother as I had heard the recording on CD so many times previously. I put it in the Revox anyway and pressed play. What happened next was something I didn't expect. I found I was hearing the recording with more clarity and detail than I had ever heard before. The music had a depth and ‘full body’ which wasn't present on the CD. I had discovered the true magic of pure analogue recording and I could finally appreciate the ‘warmth’ which the vinyl enthusiasts have been talking about all these years. Now, after 30 years, I had heard it for myself.

I soon found other cassettes from the 1980s which have been mastered from pure analogue master tapes and have the same rich, detailed sound which is quite unlike anything I have ever heard on a CD. I have since bought a high-end turntable and cleaned up my old vinyl records, many of which also sound so much better than CD.

Unfortunately, the use of digital recording became more prevalent throughout the 1980s and 1990s. More cassettes and vinyl records were being mastered from the same 16-bit digital sources as CDs, so consequently those records and cassettes sound no better than CD. They sound flat and disappointing compared to a real analogue recording; as though something is missing. I liken the sense of disappointment to that of travelling to an art gallery to see a great masterwork, only to find a photocopy of it pinned to the wall instead.

With a modern computer and software, it is easy to digitise the old analogue recordings at 24 bits with a sampling frequency of 96 kHz, or higher. Readily available software enables the removal of clicks and hiss and correction for poor equalisation. The higher sample frequency and bit rate results in a sound which is almost indistinguishable from the original analogue source. The 24-bit files can be burned to DVD or stored on a computer or high-resolution portable music player such as the FiiO X3 or the new Sony range of high-resolution Walkman players.

It should be noted here that in order to comply with copyright law, once you have digitised your cassette or vinyl record, you must keep the original recording. If you sell your record or cassette, you can pass your digital files onto the new owner but you must not keep copies.

In answer to the question raised in the last issue as to whether high-resolution digital recordings sound better than CD, I think they do. The differences which I notice are the clearer detail and stereo separation, especially in the bass. The middle and high frequencies are much clearer, without the graininess often heard on CD. When running a 24-bit recording and the commercial CD of various recordings together and switching the amplifier output between the two, the CD lacks detail and depth by comparison, as though it has been transmitted down a telephone line.

Another notable difference was pointed out by my hairdresser when we were listening to some tracks by Madonna in 24-bit, digitised from the analogue mastered pre-recorded cassette. 'It's really clear', she said. 'Just like you hear in a disco, on a DJ's big set-up'. Only, unlike in a disco, we were holding this conversation in our normal speaking voices, with the volume set low.

With low bit rate and compressed formats, such as

CD or mp3, some of the audible detail is invariably missing or reduced. The listener is often subconsciously aware of this and tries to compensate by turning the volume up. This is most noticeable when sitting in a railway carriage and hearing the tinny beat from someone else's headphones or earbuds. Meanwhile, I can listen to 24-bit recordings using a FiiO X3 and a basic pair of open headphones and hear all the detail I want with the volume low and without the sound from my headphones being audible to anyone else. Maybe a general move to using high-resolution audio could lead to a reduction in hearing loss caused by listening to loud music on headphones.

Since the industry has only recently started recording and releasing music in high-resolution format in earnest (typically 24bits @ 96kHz), we have had to endure nearly 30 years of dull, uninspiring recorded music. Hopefully we are now starting to emerge from this digital Dark Age, and the time when the best format we could hope for on a new recording was CD will soon be in the past. After all, nobody back in the 1960s would have been very impressed if, on going to their local record shop to buy a new recording, they were told that it was only available on a mediocre format which utilised 30-year-old technology, and were then handed a shellac 78. At least the 78 didn't have the dubious distinction of sounding worse than the format it replaced.

Debbie Bilham is a member of Loughborough RMS and has been interested in recorded music, both rock and classical, throughout most of her life. She worked as a maintenance engineer at Odyssey Recording Studios in London for a while in the mid-1980s and now enjoys restoring vintage hi-fi equipment and recordings as a hobby. ●

FRMS 2015 Annual General Meeting Paignton, Devon November 7th

Please see our feature on page 17 for details of the Federation's annual business meeting and associated activities. In the near future it is likely there will be vacancies arising for FRMS committee positions. Whilst some individuals have been approached, the Federation is always keen to hear from anyone who might be willing to put themselves forward for election at the AGM. By the time you are reading this, the FRMS secretary will have sent the necessary nomination forms to each Society.

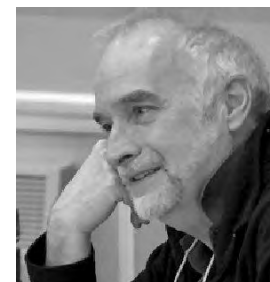
As an affiliated Society you are entitled to make nominations to the FRMS committee, as follows:

- You may nominate one of your own members as an ordinary committee member.
- You may also nominate one of your own members, or a member of any other affiliated Society, to each of the officer positions on the committee. The officers are chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and treasurer.

You may choose to nominate one of your own members both as an officer and as an ordinary member, in which case he or she will be eligible for the latter role if not elected as an officer.

Any responses must be received by the FRMS secretary by October 4th so that they can be included on the agenda. If you are interested, please contact your Society secretary in the first instance.

The article ‘Computer-Based Hi-Fi’ (*Bulletin* 162, p. 26), along with the potential for storing your music collection entirely within a computer’s memory, has generated some interest (see Letters & emails p. 28). As always with such things there are bound to be those for and against (or even some ‘don’t knows’). I can see both sides of the issue, since I generate many music files for my hobby/work, transferring out-of-catalogue material, usually from LPs, prior to making hard-copy masters. So I have thousands of such files on my computer’s hard drive and regular readers will recall a previous article, when I related what followed when a hard drive failed and the steps I had to take to avoid further panic! So retrieving music from a computer is very convenient and the quality of reproduction is excellent provided the links, software and audio hardware are all top notch. But the lesson I learned – the hard way – is that you must have back-ups of your collection, by way of either external or on-board hard drives.



However, all these devices are electro-mechanical, except for those very expensive solid-state models which have no moving parts, so they are subject to wear and tear, and they will eventually fail; the law of entropy guarantees it. The law of entropy? It’s a universal phenomenon and applies to everything, and put simply, it states ‘all things move from order to disorder’: machines ... and us too. Anyway, what will we put on all those empty CD shelves?

It’s also not a good idea to put your CD collection in the loft where ambient temperatures vary widely, depending on the time of year. The old adage ‘don’t put all your eggs in one basket’ applies here, I think.

Probably by the time this magazine goes to press and your copies arrive on the doormat, the 2016 FRMS Music Weekend’s content will be finalised. The Daventry venue remains the same but there are plans afoot to help with transport from at least one major railway station. But details of that will be available nearer the time. The date for your diary is April 22nd-24th 2016.

The first mailing for the FRMS Annual General Meeting will be going out in early September. This year our host is Torbay RMS and we will be meeting in Paignton, another seaside choice following on from last year at Southport. In Paignton, I think the sea will be nearer! Hope to see you at either event, preferably both.

Notable Anniversaries for 2017

50..100..150..200..250..

IN THE NEXT ISSUE of *Bulletin* we will be looking at notable anniversaries for 2017. Brendan Sadler has done sterling work over many years in tracking down anniversaries for composers and compositions both well-known and unfamiliar, and we are all grateful for his efforts in introducing us to some musical byways that we would never otherwise have explored.

Although it is important to be aware of the huge range of music that has been written over many centuries, it is the case that much of it has not been recorded and is therefore unavailable to presenters when they are planning their programmes. We have therefore decided to try a different approach to anniversaries next year and to focus on some specific compositions for which recommended recordings are available.

This is where you come in. Do you have a favourite piece that was composed or first performed in 1767 or 1817 or any of the other ‘significant’ anniversary years? Would you like to write a paragraph telling us about the piece, what you like about it, why it’s worth listening to, what recording(s) you would recommend, and perhaps suggesting how it might form part of a programme and some other compositions that might ‘fit’ with it? You might write something like this (or take a different approach altogether – it’s up to you!):

‘Prokofiev completed his Symphony No. 1 in September 1917 and gave it the nickname ‘Classical’. He was only 26 at the time and wrote most of it while on holiday in the countryside. He had Haydn in mind and wanted to compose something which that composer might have written if he had been alive at the time, so in a way it’s a view of the 18th century as imagined from the 20th. I like the blend of liveliness and elegance in the symphony; it’s very approachable, the tunes are memorable and it’s one of Prokofiev’s most popular works. It would make an interesting item to put in a programme on neoclassicism which might also include contrasting music by, say, Stravinsky, Hindemith and Ravel written during and after the First World War when neoclassicism became established. There are numerous recordings and I can particularly recommend the Naxos release with the São Paulo SO under Marin Alsop (Naxos 8.573353), where it is coupled with the very different Symphony No. 2 and the early Symphonic Tableau ‘Dreams’.’

Please send your ideas to the editor by deadline day (December 31st 2015). This format is experimental and we will be asking you to let us know afterwards whether you are in favour of it. ●

Computer-based hi-fi for beginners

May I congratulate you on the excellent article in the Spring 2015 edition of *Bulletin* describing the possibilities of using a computer in association with one's hi-fi system. I have encountered many of these issues, the first of which is the subject of digital-to-analogue converters (DAC). There is a very important secret out there which no-one alludes to – that just like loudspeakers, all DACs produce a different sound. This came as a revelation to me when I did a comparison of four. I took my speakers to the hi-fi shop and connected them up. I wanted a sound as close as possible to that produced by my speakers without the DAC, which to my ears produced the purest sound. This is different for all of us, of course.

The second issue is one of storing one's music. It seems to me that I will not keep my computer forever. I do not want to have to transfer stored music in the future, so I have bought an external hard drive, in my case a Synology. I store this in the loft, both to keep it out of the way and for security. Actually, my Synology unit holds two hard drives, which are linked to each other (RAID) so that if ever one drive failed, all my music is preserved on the other. I can then, without trauma, replace the one that fails.

There are then several methods of transferring the music held on my hard drives to my wholly analogue hi-fi system via the DAC. In my case, I am using some Sonos units. This also provides me with what seems like an infinite number of free radio stations around the world from which to listen to music, should I want a break from my own collection.

Looking ahead, I can see a time when it will be considered ridiculous to buy recorded music in CD, or other hard form, at all. In the future, recorded music will be streamed to us. There are already many streaming providers (e.g. Spotify, Deezer and others). Then there is high-definition audio, which some of these streaming services are already offering, albeit on a limited basis at the moment.

This then links in to another excellent article in the same *Bulletin* – the Berlin Philharmonic Digital Concert Hall. Surely it is only a matter of time before other orchestras provide the same facility?

For those of us that were brought up on LPs and who have settled into CD use, it's all very daunting. However, with assistance from the FRMS, its web site and *Bulletin*, we should all be looking at a greatly enhanced recorded music world at our fingertips.

Steven Jonas

Ed: Steven is not a member of a Society and the magazine came to him via a circuitous route, so it's interesting to learn that we reach beyond our core membership.

I read with great interest Dr Allen's article on computer-based hi-fi in the spring edition of *Bulletin*. Whilst I fully agree with the idea of computer-based hi-fi being convenient for many people, will it be in the future? I have long been a music enthusiast and I am also an engineer with many years' experience of hi-fi

servicing and installations. In my opinion the best musical reproduction is from vinyl records and a valve amplifier; to my mind there is nothing like it. Over the years we have seen many technologies come and go, including the likes of four channel CD4 (compatible discrete four channels). The system used a 19 KHz pilot tone recorded onto the record and worked in a similar way to the FM pilot tone; the system was around for a few years and then faded. We had Elcassette, a cassette tape that had a wider tape than the standard size and ran at a speed of 3.75 ips. This was also around for only a short time. There are many products on the market that will clean vinyl records – even companies that offer a cleaning service.

There is a more basic down-to-earth comment I would like to make and that is of physical ownership. There is nothing like reading the rear of an LP cover or the little booklet inside a CD. If you buy a CD or an LP you see something for your money, not so with a download. Within the last couple of months or so, Apple has announced that they will be offering a streaming service, and Classic FM propose something. It seems a little unclear what the sampling rate will be – the music will be streamed so it will certainly be compressed and, with compression, the harmonics of a musical instrument seem to somewhat disappear. As Dr Allen states, audio engineers have found a way of removing so-called 'unnecessary' information from recordings, but I am just wondering what bit of Vaughan Williams's *The Lark Ascending* is unnecessary! (I am playing this piece as I type.) I sometimes wonder what Peter Walker, the founder of Quad, would make of it all. After all, his slogan was 'the closest approach to the original sound', and the company still uses that quotation today.

David Lucas LCGI Eng. Tech. MIET, South Cheshire RMS

I read with great interest Dr John Allen's article on computer-based hi-fi. It does sound as if it could be a good way of tidying up shelves of CDs such as I have and, with the introduction of higher quality recordings, would be an improvement. I don't know, though, if my hearing now would detect that much better sound. What I am not sure about is that once I have put the files onto my computer, how long will that format be usable? I have had some CDs since the earliest days, which makes them about thirty years old, but I can still play them. Computing seems to age far more rapidly, it seems, and I wonder if I would have to repeat the exercise a year or two later. Can it be a case of just copying them once? I had a lot of my music stored on my previous computer hard drive, a job which was very time consuming, but that machine was so unreliable and its operating system, Windows 8, was so unstable that I bought something better, but with less storage. I wonder if many people will use computers to store and play music, or take the simpler route and continue with CDs?

Michael Henderson, Rushden CMS

Ed: Jim Bostwick comments on this subject on page 22.



IN THE 1960s AND 1970s we became accustomed to our LP purchases including substantial notes on the music, as well as texts and translations in multiple languages. In the case of boxed sets especially, the enclosed booklets gave us often very substantial essays on the subject – one thinks of the profusely illustrated set of Solti's *Der Rosenkavalier*, or John Tyrrell's magnificent examinations of the operas of Janáček for the Mackerras cycle, for example. With the advent of CD in 1983, most companies continued to provide this sort of information with their releases (even if sometimes condensed into undesirably small type) but there have been few recent issues which match the sheer luxurious scale of their predecessors (an exception being the limited issue of the Solti *Ring* a couple of years back) and in recent years there has been a definitely observable trend to cut back progressively on the information which is provided to purchasers of CDs.

This is not true of all companies. Hyperion continue to provide booklets with their issues which are a mine of information, often beautifully designed, and commendably reprint complete the booklets of their reissues at budget price. Chandos, although their cover designs are more variable, nevertheless provide full texts of vocal works with translations where necessary, and will provide a box to contain the booklet if it is too bulky to fit inside the standard CD jewel case. Nimbus also produce booklets that are a mine of information, carefully researched and generally comprehensive. And, just to show that this sort of consideration for purchasers is not just the privilege of premium-price issues, Naxos booklets come with full notes on the music as well as texts and translations provided online when these will not fit into the CD box.

What a woeful contrast is provided in this respect by other big international companies, as well as other smaller ones. Warner Apex long ago dispensed with any notes on the music, texts or other information with their budget-price issues, even when these had already appeared (and presumably been paid for) with the discs on their original issue. I suggested in a review of the Apex reissue of Roxanna Panufnik's *Westminster Mass* and other works that the composer should complain to the record company about the manner in which all information necessary to fully appreciate her music had been unceremoniously jettisoned. I don't know whether she did so, but the following year the Warner full-price release of her *Tallinn Mass* did appear with full texts and translations. EMI also started skimping even on their full-price reissues of operas, with the translations originally provided for Strauss's *Daphne*, *Die schweigsame Frau* and *Intermezzo* (all to a greater or lesser extent incomprehensible to non-German speakers) disappearing, with only texts in

German provided. Since then their bumper boxes of works by Elgar, Vaughan Williams, *et al* all started appearing with minimal notes or even none at all apart from track listings. Other collections such as Jochum's Dresden cycle of Bruckner symphonies, or the Klemperer edition, featured new notes of minimal length, often two or three pages to cover the contents of as many as ten discs. The companies subsumed under the Universal umbrella – Decca, DG and Philips – at one time continued to provide the full details originally given on their LP issues, but these have also been progressively whittled away on subsequent reissues.

Even worse are those instances where historical material has been given similarly shabby treatment. One perhaps might not object to instances where archive performances of standard repertory appear with simple track listings, since purchasers will presumably acquire these issues as supplementary to other recordings they already own. Indeed, some such issues, such as the Bayreuth 1950s *Lohengrin* and *Ring*, have been well provided with texts, translations, and critical reviews of the performances themselves, and Pristine Audio on their releases make available very substantial supplementary information available online. But recent issues of rare Russian operas and vocal material on Melodiya come with barely adequate synopses, and some of the rarer works again are meaningless without at least some idea of what is going on. Last year I was sent for review a Melodiya set of Molchanov's *The Dawns Here are Quiet*, which contained no information on the plot whatsoever, except an observation that the work was based on a 'well-known' short story. Well, maybe not so well-known, since I was unable to find anything about the scenario except a brief summary of the film version on the internet – which may well have differed wildly from the original – and no information whatsoever on the opera apart from a dismissive review from the 1970s when the work was given at the Met during a Bolshoi tour. This year *Opera* magazine, reviewing a Melodiya reissue of their 1950s recording of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Tsar Saltan*, regretted the absence of a text or translation but failed to note also the ridiculously brief synopsis of a complicated plot – even worse when there is no other complete recorded version available.

EMI/Warner have gone even further in this direction with some of their recent reissues of German operas and operettas from the LP era, many of them very obscure indeed. Last year I was sent for review a recording of Norbert Schultze's *Schwarzer Peter* which gave no information at all about the opera, its plot or its characters. Okay, you may think, you can get this sort of thing from reference books or the internet. No, you can't. The work is not even mentioned in *Grove*, the *Viking Opera Guide* or any of the standard books. You can find out something



A fine example:
Nimbus's Martin Jones
75th birthday 4-CD set

about the composer from his obituaries, but interesting questions – for example, how did a work which sounds so much like Kurt Weill find such favour with the Nazis? – simply go unanswered. Again, presumably this information may have been included in the original LP release, and should be available. Similarly many Melodiya sets were reissued by EMI in the 1970s, with full texts and translations as well as much additional detail – such as the full forenames of the singers – which have simply vanished in the new reissues.

Sometimes this practice enters the realms of farce. The EMI recording of Debussy's incomplete *Fall of the House of Usher* in the early 1980s originally came with very substantial and necessary information about the work itself, complete with full texts and translations. When this LP was transferred to CD in France, the whole of this was transferred – albeit in very small type – to the CD booklet complete with the English translation. But this CD was never made commercially available outside France. Some years later EMI reissued it as part of their L'Esprit Français series, and this was made available internationally. But all of the original material had vanished leaving just one page to mystify the purchaser. I managed to obtain a copy of the original French issue from a deletions box (how a disc that I had failed to obtain in the UK could be regarded as 'deleted' I never knew) but I wonder how anybody else might have fared.

I have continued to complain – sometimes at length – about these issues in my reviews of the relevant discs for *MusicWeb International*, and to do them justice some of the companies I have criticised have been interested and concerned enough to reply on the site's message board and privately by email. I will summarise some of their counter-arguments here, together with my observations:

The texts are copyright and permission to reproduce them cannot be obtained or would be unsustainably costly. This, I'm afraid, just won't wash. If a writer is having his or her text provided as part of an issue promoting their works, it is surely inconceivable that they would either refuse permission or seek to charge excessively for the same.

The costs of producing a booklet of the size required would be excessive. Well, one can understand this in the context of a reissue of an existing performance, especially if the reissue is being made available at bargain price. But many of these reissues derive from recordings which did have full texts and translations in their original format, so at the very least one would expect the existing material to be made available to purchasers, if necessary online.

The texts and translations are available online anyway. It is also true that there are sites on the internet which provide texts of operas which can be printed or downloaded. But, and most particularly in the case of full-priced issues, there seems to be no reason why purchasers of expensive sets should be required to do this.

Most people just want to listen to the music, and don't care about the dramatic context. If this is true (which I doubt) I find it simply incomprehensible as an argument. If I am listening to any dramatic

work, I want to know what is going on. If any listener is really not interested, one wonders what they are doing listening to operas (or operettas) in the first place. And no composer that I know of, no matter how light-hearted the music they are writing, has ever contended that the words are not important.

There simply isn't room for the material in a CD booklet, or the typeface would have to be unreasonably small. Well, some companies seem to manage all right, and even small typefaces are better than nothing at all. This was particularly germane in the case of a new Oehms Classics issue of Millocker's *Der Bettelstudent*, where a booklet of twenty pages found over ten pages available to provide bilingual biographies of the performers, but could make room only for a half-page synopsis which was not even cued to the tracks on the CD. The track listing was confined to the back of the box, with not even any indication of the voice ranges of the individual characters to enable the listener to tell who was singing what. The brief and chatty synopsis told us that the plot enshrined 'a somewhat confusing situation' – and never was a truer word written.

There is yet another trend becoming detectable, too. Some new issues come with minimal or no information on the music, but simply with a link to a downloadable booklet on the company's website or provided with the disc when it is loaded into a computer. Some of these booklets are very substantial indeed, even including complete scores of the works concerned (all the releases of this nature which I have come across have featured new music). But the sheer cost in terms of printing ink involved in printing out all this material would be substantial, and some of the booklets involve elaborately designed graphics which seem consciously to be designed to make the process as expensive as possible.

The fact that some companies are able to provide all the necessary information certainly shows that it can be done. And, I hasten to add, the fact that most of these commendable companies advertise with this publication has not coloured my observations in any way. On one occasion when I did complain about a Nimbus release of music by Richard Blackford omitting some useful information, the company gave me a polite and comprehensive reasoning for this which I was happy to add as a corrective to my criticisms; and more recently they actually reprinted the booklet for their Cameo Classics reissue of Douglas Young's *The Hunting of the Snark* to take account of some printing errors which I had noticed.

I do not know whether my consistent complaints in reviews of CDs (and DVDs) about adequate presentation are having any effect on companies, but I would imagine that poor sales of inadequately annotated material might certainly serve to concentrate the minds of some offenders. Possibly, too, letters from irate customers might help. Any thoughts?

Paul Corfield Godfrey is FRMS treasurer, a composer, conductor, writer and critic. He reviews concerts, operas, CDs and DVDs for MusicWeb International. ●

BACEWICZ Complete String Quartets Vol. 1

Lutosławski Quartet

Naxos 8.573229 (71:04)



The reputation of Polish-born composer Grażyna Bacewicz (1909-1969) has been growing steadily in recent years, thanks to her cause being taken up by some high profile performers, but more particularly thanks to some major record labels

doing her music full justice. Naxos now has a substantial body of her work in their catalogue, and this new series of her complete string quartets could be one of the most valuable. She created a wide variety of chamber music throughout her career, and as a virtuoso violinist herself, it's not surprising she wrote so well for strings. This excellent disc sensibly couples early and late works: Quartet No. 1 (1939); No. 3 (1947); No. 6 (1960) and her last, No. 7 (1965) and gives a very good picture of her stylistic trajectory. Broadly speaking, the earlier quartets inhabit the neo-classical world of her teacher Nadia Boulanger, with brighter textures and clearer contrapuntal lines. The later ones become darker, more concentrated and have a freer, more rhapsodic feel that flirts occasionally with serialism, glissandi and clusters, reflecting her growing interest in modernist trends. The music is challenging but rewarding, superbly crafted and full of abrasive energy that the aptly-named Lutosławski Quartet fully realise. They revel in Bacewicz's exploration of differing sonorities and seem fully alive to both the sensuous and haunting qualities that much of this music inhabits. If you have a taste for something more adventurous, this is well worth exploring.

BEETHOVEN Diabelli Variations; Piano Sonata in F minor Op. 57, 'Appassionata'

Nick van Bloss (piano)

Nimbus Records NI 6276 (79:33)



After hearing and being very impressed by Nick van Bloss's previous discs of the Chopin Preludes and Bach's Goldberg Variations, I looked forward to this new release with some anticipation. On the whole, it doesn't disappoint. He brings the

same level of contrast and fantasy to Beethoven's great Diabelli Variations as in those earlier outings, and makes one marvel afresh at Beethoven's inspiration. After a simple, no-nonsense dispatch of Diabelli's little tune, one is drawn immediately into van Bloss's range of nuances and pin-sharp articulations: in Variation 2's alternating chords, for example, or his flexible and buoyant response to Variation 4's *poco più vivace*, which leaves other versions sounding relatively earthbound. He is on the fast side throughout, but the rhythmic verve and sheer panache in, say, Variation 5's repeated note phrases, cannot help but inspire admiration. This Diabelli is easily on a par with my reference versions from Piotr Anderszewski and Stephen Kovacevich, and does not disappoint on any front. The *Appassionata* is also on the swift and mercurial side, and here one may have a preference for a more measured approach, at least in places, but there is simply no denying the thrilling rollercoaster ride of the finale, and van Bloss is at least being true to his

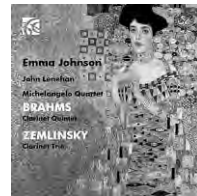
philosophy on the music, which is intelligently outlined in the liner note interview. If the coupling appeals and you like your Beethoven warmly recorded on a big, modern Steinway, you can't go far wrong with this disc.

BRAHMS Clarinet Quintet; ZEMLINSKY Clarinet Trio

Emma Johnson (clarinet), John Lenehan (piano), Michelangelo Quartet

Nimbus Alliance NI 6310 (67:15)

As lovely as the work is, do we really need yet another



recording of Brahms's autumnal masterpiece? I suppose in such a crowded market, the coupling might sway a potential purchaser, and here Nimbus have been clever. Zemlinsky was a fascinating figure, a composer

right at the centre of the old and the new in *fin-de-siècle* Vienna, and this early Trio for clarinet, piano and cello is brimful of Brahmsian touches, from the opening movement's main melody and harmonic contours through to the *allegro* finale. Zemlinsky became more adventurous as he was drawn into the Schoenberg circle, but never really escaped his old tonal roots, and this fascinating piece is worthy of anyone's time, especially in this mellifluous, flowing performance from Emma Johnson, joined here by the excellent John Lenehan and the cellist of the Michelangelo Quartet, Frans Helmerson. In the main work, Johnson's supple, plangent tone ensures that Brahms's textures are never clouded. The group observe a steadier first-movement tempo than some versions, but this gives the music a symphonic solidarity, and in the finale it's good to find Brahms's *non troppo presto* direction heeded as the music freewheels to its spirited conclusion. Altogether this is a fine addition to the catalogue, especially given the interesting coupling, and it's very nicely recorded, albeit with a balance that puts the clarinet firmly in the right-hand channel, something I've noticed with other Nimbus chamber recordings. It won't displace my own library choices from Schatzberger/Fitzwilliam and Shifrin/Emerson, but with good liner notes and Klimt's famous portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer beaming out, this will sit very happily alongside them.

SHOSTAKOVICH String Quartet No. 2 in A major; Piano Quintet in G minor

Marc-André Hamelin (piano), Takács Quartet

Hyperion CDA67987 (70:26)

There are plenty of good recordings of these individual



works in the catalogue, but as far as I'm aware, this is the first time they have been coupled together. It's a typically interesting idea from Hyperion, and the two pieces sit comfortably alongside each other yet reveal different facets of the

composer's art. The Takács Quartet are one of the most respected groups working today, excelling in many areas of the repertoire, but this is their first Shostakovich and could signal a new cycle of the quartets. I admire their total command of the mood swings that are so characteristic of the composer, from the haunting introspection of the *adagio* to the witty, scabrous scherzo, and the group's tonal weight and superb grip fully serve

the music. The popular Piano Quintet sees them joined by one of Hyperion's in-house virtuosos, Marc-André Hamelin, who tears into the arresting opening with steely aplomb before letting the music then unfold and breathe into life. Hamelin reins in his fearsome technique so as not to dominate proceedings in the wrong way, and the subtlety of the approach brings out the power in the music all the more forcefully. That's not to say there aren't fireworks aplenty where required, but it's obvious these wonderful musicians are really listening to each other and working for the good of the music. The recording, from Wyastone Concert Hall, is rich and detailed with good balance between the instruments, and mention must be made of David Fanning's authoritative liner notes. Highly recommended.

DREAM SHADOWS Works for Violin and Piano by Kelly, Bax and Somervell

Rupert Marshall-Luck (violin), Matthew Rickard (piano)
EM Records EMR CD030 (75:14)



Here is another beautifully packaged, intelligently programmed and superbly performed disc from EM Records. All the works here come from 1915 and the shadow of the Great War hangs over at least two of them. The major piece on the disc is

the Second Violin Sonata by Bax, which is seen as his best work in this genre. It has been recorded a number of times, most recently by Tasmin Little and Martin Roscoe. It's a big-scale, broodingly intense work lasting nearly 40 minutes and is brimful of the composer's characteristic thumbprints, most notably in the second movement, subtitled 'The Grey Dancer in the Dark', where the war's dark and grotesque shadow looms largest. It's given a suitably big-boned, Romantic reading by these excellent artists. The other works here are world premiere recordings, the most substantial of which is Frederick Kelly's Violin Sonata in G, 'Gallipoli'. Kelly was Australian by birth but made Britain his home, becoming a regular part of aristocratic and musical life here. The subtitle refers to the location where Kelly wrote the piece after his posting there in 1915; he was to die on the Somme the following year. It's not a groundbreaking or terribly adventurous work, but has interesting moments. I especially like the ruminative, modal harmonies of the slow movement, where Kelly seems, understandably, to be hankering for the tranquillity of the English countryside. The short fillers here are also premieres: Arthur Somervell's *Two Conversations about Bach* are for two violins and piano (here double-tracked by Marshall-Luck) and have a grace and elegance that would make them effective encores. Once again, expert performances and extremely helpful notes make this a desirable issue.

GRIEG Lyric Pieces (selection)

Stephen Hough (piano)
Hyperion CDA68070 (73:07)

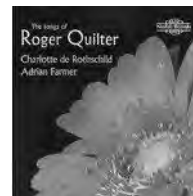


There are very few recordings of the complete Lyric Pieces, and most pianists prefer the sensible option of making their own selection for single disc release. This is certainly the case with the two previous recordings that have dominated the catalogue for some years: Emil Gilels's classic, though slightly shallow-sounding, recital on DG and Leif Ove Andsnes's more

generous and warmly recorded selection for EMI. The latter has the added interest of being recorded on Grieg's own Steinway at Trolldhaugen, adding a layer of 'authenticity' to the disc. Now Stephen Hough comes up with an even more generous selection. Twenty-seven of these exquisite little miniatures are featured, though like the others he frames his personal selection by starting with the very first from 1867, the famous 'Arietta', and finishing with 'Remembrances' composed nearly 40 years later but using similar melodic material. They really are glorious little gems, encompassing a very wide range of moods within their limited span, and it goes without saying that this is all meat and drink to an artist like Hough. He appears to favour slightly brisker tempos throughout compared to Gilels, but this invariably benefits the music. Indeed, Hough's virtuosity, range of nuance and expressive control seem to turn every one of these little 'songs without words' into masterpieces and it's really impossible not to be swept along and play the whole disc straight through. Highlights for me included a more muscular and dynamic 'Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen' than we are perhaps used to, and a dreamily impressionistic 'Summer's Eve', which has an almost improvisatory feeling laced with the introspection of older age. Beautifully recorded on a Yamaha concert grand, this is outstanding in every way.

THE SONGS OF ROGER QUILTER

Charlotte de Rothschild (soprano), Adrian Farmer (piano)
Nimbus Records NI5930 (63:32)



This reasonably generous recital gathers together twenty-eight settings from one of our most gifted songwriters, Roger Quilter (1877-1953). Those dates may span some of the biggest upheavals in musical modernism, but Quilter's

determinedly old-fashioned approach to his art meant that, like many British composers, he never embraced those modernist trends, preferring to stay within his own parameters and remaining a highly skilled Romantic miniaturist. This is in no way meant to be demeaning, as Quilter had an exceptional ear for word setting and produced some exquisitely crafted and melodically memorable songs. It's fair to say a recital such as this is best dipped into, as playing over an hour straight through can point up some of the unevenness, but at its best the disc is very enjoyable. The songs that made the biggest impression on me, at least on a first airing, were the three poignant settings of William Blake from 1916/17: 'Dream Valley', 'The Wild Flower's Song' and 'Daybreak', and two particular examples from the Op. 25 set 'An Old Carol' (anon.) and the lovely setting of Shelley's 'Music, When Soft Voices Die' from 1926. Though the quality of the music is not in serious doubt, I do find that Charlotte de Rothschild's bright, ringing soprano tends to harden a little at big climactic points, or when she is under pressure in the higher tessitura. This is not very often, though, and she shapes the words very intelligently, but it nevertheless detracts from maximum enjoyment at certain times, especially when compared to Lisa Milne's more warmly expressive singing on Naxos. Adrian Farmer supports very well on the piano and the sound is close but full.

Tony Haywood (Huddersfield RMS) works part-time at Huddersfield University and runs his own piano tuning and maintenance business. •

Technical Review

by FRMS Technical Officer Philip Ashton, based on his Forum at the 2015 Daventry Music Weekend

This last year has seen a great leap forward in what I would call ‘gadgets’. We now have smart phones and smart TVs with one brand collecting data and audio that is being stored on a manufacturer’s server somewhere.

Headphones

There are now at least 50 different manufacturers making headphones, some excellent with prices going up into the thousands of pounds. Personally, I have two pairs, a Grado SR80 (open back) which lets everyone within earshot know what I am listening to, but the sound is just so natural. Also, a pair of AKG closed-back models which are just as good. Neither of these is cheap (around £150).

Amplifiers

Amplifiers are now catering for internet streaming, especially those for theatre reproduction with up to seven channels. A new example has nine channels. Why do we need all these channels? Dolby Atmos is the answer. Not content with five-channel sound, Dolby has come up with ‘speakers in the ceiling’, i.e. two extra channels. Fitting these speakers in rooms we live in is not usually an option, so manufacturers are now producing upward-facing speakers to simulate the ceiling-installed versions. Will this catch on?

TV

3D vision for television has failed. It might have caught on if we did not need to wear glasses. Now we have curved screens, which are fine if we sit in front of the set, but not so good if we sit to the side. I have at last found out why plasma screens have been discontinued. They radiate directly from the screen due to horizontal bus bars across the screen. These are unterminated transmission lines that carry control waveforms with an amplitude of a few hundred volts with fast rise and fall times. The screen of a plasma TV resembles a wide-band comb generator which is capacity-coupled to earth. This causes circulating currents in the mains cable and other interconnecting cables which then act as antennas. Manufacturers have thrown in the towel as this problem is insurmountable. Some manufacturers have replaced such sets with LED versions. It may be possible to reduce ‘screen radiation’ to some extent using clip-on ferrite chokes in the mains cable, antenna cable, SCART or HDMI cables, but there are practical difficulties with this approach. Although clip-on ferrite cores can be useful at VHF, it is not usually feasible to wind enough turns to make them effective at HF. This radiation is only noticed by radio amateurs and short-wave listeners using frequencies between 1 to 30 Megahertz. So if you have not had any complaints, do not worry. 4K and Android TV is about to hit the shops. Super-smart TV will give superior picture quality on ordinary and high-definition transmissions, whilst the Android feature will allow the user to enjoy their smartphone and tablet experience on the big screen. Sony seems to be the leader in this exciting new development.

Recording equipment

Have you ever wondered how modern recordings are made? It may surprise you to know that analogue equipment is still used to make the digital recordings heard on many CDs. Despite the prevalence of digital technology in all aspects of our lives, in virtually all music recording studios – and plenty of semi-pro and amateur project studios – racks of analogue recording gear with their brightly lit meters remain firmly in place and are gaining ground on their computerised counterparts. They are often referred to by their model numbers: 1073, 1176 and 670 from Neve, Universal Audio (UA) and Fairchild respectively. So ingrained have these standards become that they have been used to record thousands of hit records across the decades. Their design continues to inspire present-day manufacturers, and recording engineers often prefer their sound, as opposed to digital units. Also, they have proved to be ‘bomb-proof’ owing to their reliability. A lot of the classics have endured because they’re ‘in our ear’. We’re familiar with the sound of analogue classics, whether we are aware of it or not.

Manufacturing

Present-day manufacturers have a problem when trying to source components. Sometimes they are just not available, as in, for example, transformer manufacture. They have to go back to old designs where, for example, the Williamson amplifier specified Partridge and Woden transformers and the expertise in the making of these has gone. Analogue audio equipment designed and built in the golden age of the 1950s to 1970s typically had a straightforward design edict: use the highest quality components to construct the most robust and reliable device that delivers the best sonic result. The result of this was to produce such devices as the Fairchild 670 ‘variable MU’ dynamic ratio stereo compressor/limiter, used in nearly every Beatles recording. It weighed more than 30 kg and used 14 separate transformers and 20 valves. All that transformer iron and valve warmth enabled Fairchild to impart its signature ‘Golden Glow’ to any sound that passed through it. To buy one today would set you back upwards of £20,000 – if you could find one for sale. The metals and the transistors required are often no longer available or permissible for use in manufacturing. World supply has simply dried up! It has become almost impossible to design such equipment due to constraints such as rising material costs. Years ago, gear was designed with a ‘no object’ build cost, but no longer. This partly explains why top-end hi-fi equipment is so expensive today

To sum up, we are going to see more of the computer being the controller whilst the analogue hardware processes the sound, with manufacturers trying to emulate analogue sounds with digital equipment. This will continue until our ears are no longer analogue! ●

CARMINA BURANA at the 1974 PROMS

by Brian Godfrey (Radlett RMS)

WHEN ARTHUR OLDHAM was chorus-master of the LSO Chorus it was his custom, at rehearsals, to get one of the better singers in each voice range to sing in any soloist cues that might occur in the music. For the performance in question, a Promenade concert under André Previn, it was Chris Hood's turn, and the work was *Carmina Burana*. It was a warm evening, made more so by television lights (much hotter in those days than now) which were in use for a television recording to be shown the

following Sunday. The promenaders were good-humoured, chanting 'Are you ready for the Orff?', as John Brown took his place as leader. The line-up for the concert was Sheila Armstrong, Gerald English and Thomas Allen, with the LSO, of course, the same as for a Festival Hall concert only five weeks earlier.

For some reason, poor Tom Allen found the heat too much for him during the performance. All went well up to 'Estuans Interius', but during that number he stopped singing and collapsed onto his chair. Then we did the roasted-swan piece with Gerald English, after which Tom Allen rose to his feet for 'Ego Sum Abbas' with its 'Wafna!s'. It was during this that he went down heavily onto the stage scattering music stands and chairs. At this point the performance came to a halt while he was carried off the platform (horizontally) by members of the orchestra. Previn obviously decided that the show must go on, although what he imagined would happen in the next baritone solo heaven only knows!

He certainly didn't expect to happen what actually did happen. Unseen by us, a member of the audience by the name of Patrick McCarthy, a baritone who had only been a professional singer for two-and-a-half weeks, left his place and went backstage. The *Evening News* said he was a promenader who had paid 50p; the *Telegraph* said he had been sitting!). McCarthy announced that he knew the music and was prepared to go on and finish the performance. The backstage authorities must have wondered if he was some kind



of nut-case, but decided to take a chance. They thrust a dark jacket on him, found a score from somewhere, and propelled him onto the platform. Previn said afterwards that, seeing this man advancing towards him, the thought flashed through his mind that it was some Albert Hall official bearing terrible news about Tom Allen's condition. But when he saw the man was carrying a score and showed signs of preparing to sing, he became a little more optimistic! Patrick McCarthy, a

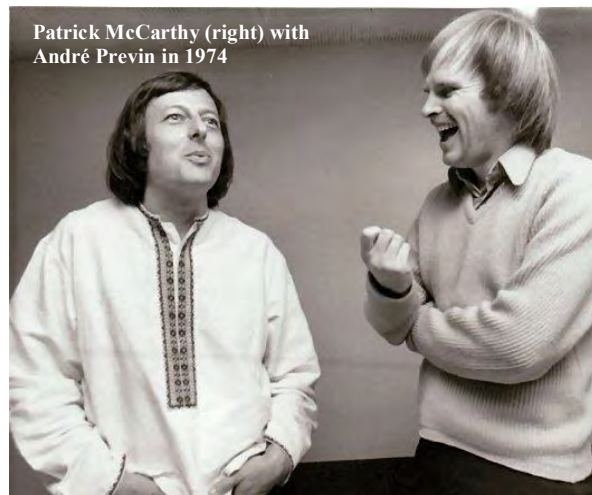
student from the London Opera Centre and an admirer of Tom Allen's (in fact, he had gone to the Prom specially to hear him) did a very creditable and courageous job, and at the end the audience, having been told that Tom Allen was 'fine', went really wild.

BBC radio was transmitting the concert live, and listeners who knew the work must have wondered what was going on. At Sunday's television transmission the announcer,

of course, explained to viewers what had happened. But what about Chris Hood? He was – and possibly still is – a doctor, and the press got hold of the idea of 'the doctor's dilemma': should he go backstage and tend the stricken soloist or should he go on and sing in his place? With all due respect to Chris, I doubt whether the latter course ever occurred to him as a possibility, after all, he had only been asked to sing the baritone cues at rehearsal, not complete numbers! Anyway Tom Allen, thank goodness, recovered completely and must have survived many a hot environment in his long operatic career.

Just as a footnote, when we went to Kingsway Hall to record *Carmina Burana* three months later (same cast) I happened to overhear Previn saying to Tom Allen, just before going back into the hall to record the *Wafna!s*, something like 'mind you stay upright this time!'. He did.

Brian Godfrey has sung in about 760 concerts with various choral groups, including the LSC at various times between 1966 and 2002, and also occasionally the Philharmonia Chorus as an 'extra'. •



Patrick McCarthy (right) with André Previn in 1974

Prom 20

Wednesday 7 August 1974

7.30pm

Royal Albert Hall

Ralph Vaughan Williams

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis
André Previn conductor
London Symphony Orchestra

Gordon Crosse

Ariadne, Op 31 Proms premiere
Sarah Francis oboe
London Symphony Orchestra
Michael Lankester conductor

Carl Orff

Carmina Burana - Patrick McCarthy replaced
Thomas Allen mid-way through the performance
Patrick McCarthy baritone
Thomas Allen baritone
Gerald English tenor
London Symphony Orchestra
Sheila Armstrong soprano
André Previn conductor
St Clement Danes Boys' Choir
London Symphony Chorus (pre-1976, London
Symphony Orchestra Chorus)

From the Proms archives

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OFFICERS

Chairman Allan Child *Presenters' Panel List*

12 Highfield Road, Derby DE22 1GZ
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Vice-Chairman Ron Beech *Organiser Daventry Music Weekend*

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Secretary Jim Bostwick *Daventry Weekend admin*

6 Oakroyd Close, Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 4BP
01484 717865 secretary@thefrms.co.uk

Treasurer Paul Corfield Godfrey

9 Heol y Mynach, Old Ynysybwl, Pontypridd, Mid Glam CF37 3PE
Tel: 01443 791117 paul.godfrey@thefrms.co.uk

Bulletin Editor Paul Astell

17 Boot Street, Whittington, Oswestry SY11 4DG
01691 662460 editor@thefrms.co.uk

Technical Officer Philip Ashton

27 Dunsby Road, Luton LU3 2UA
01582 651632 technical@thefrms.co.uk

COMMITTEE

Mick Birchall *Minutes secretary*

2 Burley Close, Desford, Leicester LE9 9HX
01455 823494

George Steele *Website manager*

The Cottage, 51 Pegasus Court, Rochdale OL11 4EA
01706 525630 webmaster@thefrms.co.uk

Denise Beech *Organiser Daventry Music Weekend*

96, Kenilworth Road, Coventry CV4 7AH
02476 418789 denise.beech@thefrms.co.uk

John Hardie *Bulletin Distribution*

13 Belmont Street, Southport PR8 INF
01704 530928 john.hardie@thefrms.co.uk

REGIONAL SECRETARIES

Scotland John Maidment

St Magnus, 61 Queen Street, Carnoustie, Angus DD7 7BA
01241 853017 johnmaidment@msn.com

Central Mick Birchall

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01428 605002

Yorkshire Jim Bostwick

6 Oakroyd Close, Brighouse, West Yorkshire HD6 4BP
01484 717865 james.bostwick@thefrms.co.uk

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Editor Paul Astell

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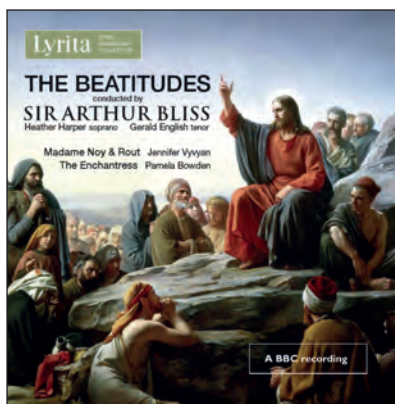


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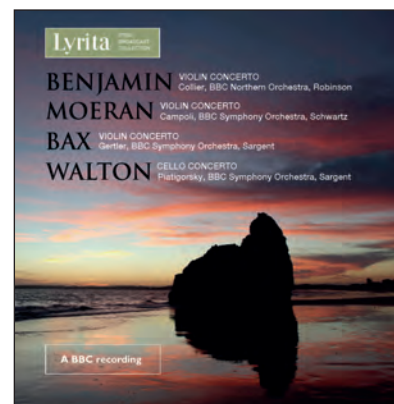
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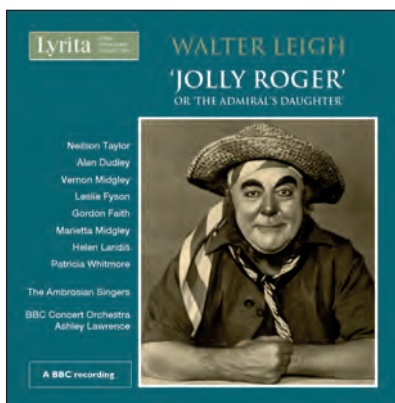
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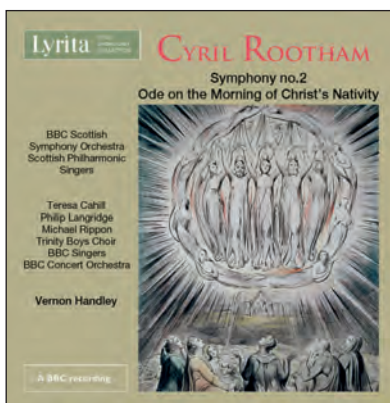
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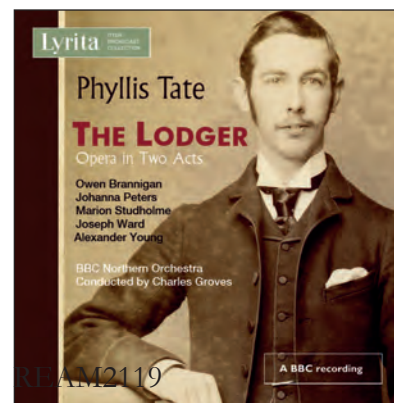
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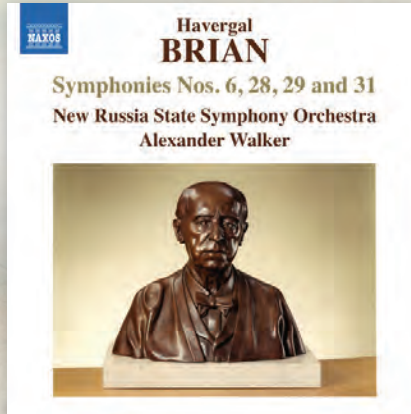
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