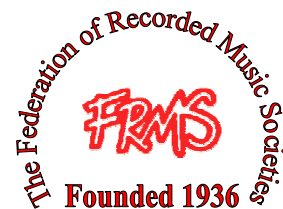


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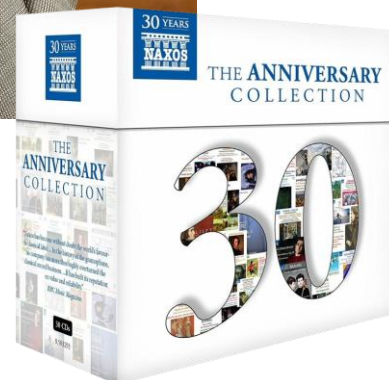


# Bulletin



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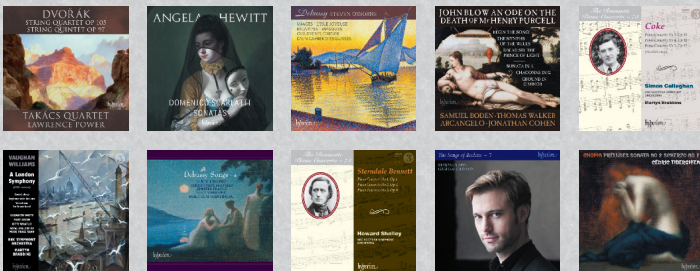
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## CONTENTS

<b>News and Comment</b>		<b>Features</b>	
Editorial	3	30 years of Naxos	13
2017 Daventry Music Weekend	4	Christopher Morley interviews Julian Lloyd Webber	19
FRMS statement – Daventry, committee, the future	9	FRMS AGM 2017 and committee elections	20
Chairman’s Chat	22	Presenters’ Panel update	22
Letters and emails	29	Bach to Basics – Sue Parker	25
<b>Regional Groups</b>		Cassette deck tips – Debbie Bilham	26
Yorkshire & Northwest Music Weekend	10	Technical Review	28
Scottish Music Day	12	<b>Officers and Committee</b>	30
<b>Societies</b>		<b>Index of Advertisers</b>	
News from Kircaldy, Maidstone, Rochdale and Orpington	14	Hyperion Records	2
<b>CD Reviews</b>		Torbay Music Weekend	16
Naxos The Anniversary Collection – various composers and artists	23	Naxos	17
		Retrospect Opera	18
		Arts in Residence	21
		Nimbus Records	31
		Watson Records	Back Cover

**Front cover:** Klaus Heymann, Naxos founder. Photo credit: Emily Chu

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](http://www.thefrms.co.uk)

**Forthcoming Events**

FRMS AGM, Nottingham, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2017 (Page 20)  
Torbay Musical Weekend, November 17<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> 2017 (Page 16)  
Y&NRG Autumn Meeting, October 7<sup>th</sup> 2017 (Page 14)  
Y&NRG Spring Music Weekend, March 16<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> 2018 (Page 9)

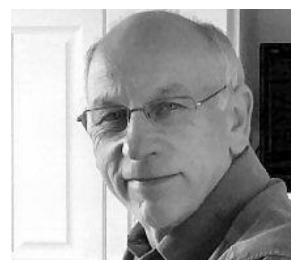
**EDITORIAL Paul Astell**

**T**HE FRMS HAS BEEN FORTUNATE over the years to have enjoyed the support of many organisations within the recorded music industry, as well as those whose activities depend on their products. The advertisements within these pages are proof that some of the major names in the business see us as worthy of their support, and the income from those adverts ensures the continued viability of this magazine in its current form. If you have dealings with any of our advertisers, please be sure to give this magazine a mention.

Those supporters past and present are too numerous to mention, but in this issue we do make a bit of a fuss over Naxos, who are celebrating their 30<sup>th</sup> year of tempting music lovers, just like us, to fill our record shelves with amazing music. I’m sure I wasn’t the only one to notice, back in the late 80s, the rather sniffy reception Naxos received from that other music industry – the critics. In those days I used to devour the pages of *Gramophone* – now retired, I don’t have the time! – and can well remember only brief comments or batch reviews being devoted to Naxos’s output. What I can’t remember is when, exactly, that attitude changed, but certainly from the outset the CD-buying public voted with their wallets to ensure the label’s continued success. Back then we may not have been familiar with many of the artists on Naxos’s books, but the bargain price of those CDs was much appreciated. Happy Anniversary Naxos!

Speaking of major names, also in this issue, we are delighted to carry an interview with our President, Julian Lloyd Webber. After Christopher Morley had delivered an enjoyable and successful presentation at Daventry (see page 4), I invited him to pen an article for this magazine. He came up with the suggestion of an interview with his friend, and we are grateful to both for taking the time to support the FRMS.

Now, referring back to my opening sentence, what of support for the FRMS from within? Society secretaries have had the letter, please read on... ●



# Daventry Music Weekend

**The FRMS President** was again this year busy with his work at the Birmingham Conservatoire, of which he is principal, and was not able to attend, but sent a message to delegates which included: *'The 2017 programme looks as intriguing as ever and I'm particularly glad to introduce you to the pianist Domonkos Csabay who is one of the Birmingham Conservatoire's most outstanding students. He is someone who will go far and it's always nice to be able to say you heard him first. I wish you all a wonderful weekend.'*

**Julian Lloyd Webber**



**The Friday pre-dinner drinks** reception was, as usual, the starting point for this year's Music Weekend. Having enjoyed dinner, the delegates retired to the auditorium for the first presentation. *Main report and photos by Paul Astell; thanks to those named for additional reporting.*

## Assessing Japanese orchestras

**Christopher Morley** is chief music critic of the *Birmingham Post*, and Midlands correspondent for *Classical Music*, *Musical Opinion*, *Opera* and other music publications. Earlier in the year Chris received an email from the Association of Japanese Symphony Orchestras inviting him to an 11-day visit to Japan where he, along with other writers, would listen to five Japanese orchestras and give honest assessments of their standards. The visit was part of the celebrations recognising 100 years since the formation of Japan's first symphony orchestra.



Chris's first musical example was a piece commissioned in 1939 to celebrate the 2,400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the imperial dynasty. Benjamin Britten dedicated his *Sinfonia da Requiem* to the memory of his parents, but the work has Christian movement titles and includes no references whatsoever to Japan. It was duly discarded. The *Sinfonia da Requiem* was, though, recorded last year by the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Tatsuya Shimono, and we heard the opening movement. In Chris's opinion, that performance plays all the notes – 'and in the right order!' – but does not show any character and misses a lot of the essence of the music. A Japanese conductor directing a Japanese orchestra is the major factor here, and this was a running theme throughout the visit.

The tour began in Tokyo with a concert by the NHK Symphony Orchestra conducted by a European, Paavo Järvi. The main piece was Sibelius's Symphony No. 2, which was performed admirably and with flexibility thanks to the conductor.

At a later concert, Chris heard Beethoven's Symphony No. 5 given by the Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra under a Japanese conductor. It was a careful performance, orthodox, and dull! These decent orchestras need an experienced international conductor. For a further example of this problem, we heard the opening movement of the same orchestra's recording of Mozart's *Jupiter* Symphony under Kazuyoshi Akiyama. Again, Chris thought this a fine technical performance, but one which left him cold.

Next stop was the city of Fukuoka and a concert by the Kyushu Symphony Orchestra, who gave an all-Scottish programme. Their conductor was the Taiwanese Shao-

Chia Lü, who had obviously benefited from his studies in the west. The whole thing was so fresh, and quite different from performances you might get from British orchestras who know these works so well. Chris demonstrated this by playing an excerpt from that concert, the slow movement from Mendelssohn's *Scottish* Symphony. The audience 'went beserk' at this performance, as opposed to the 'merely enthusiastic' reactions at previous concerts.

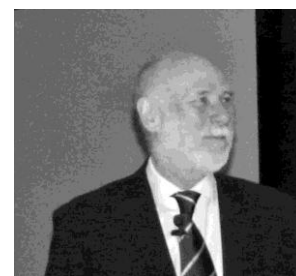
An excursion to the city of Kanazawa proved to be the most interesting part of the tour. Ensemble Kanazawa is a chamber orchestra with 25% international players, not normally the case with most Japanese orchestras. It makes a difference and Chris heard 'this extraordinary orchestra under their extraordinary conductor' Michi Inoue. We did too – the opening movement of their recording of Mozart's Symphony No. 32 – 'a performance of personality, verve and spirit'. A fantastic Japanese conductor, Inoue had worked a lot in the west before his potentially terminal illness.

Winding up his unique insight into Japanese musical life, Chris referred to a 'harrowing' concert he attended during a visit to Osaka, where Shostakovich's Eleventh Symphony was followed by the Twelfth! We heard an excerpt from that performance of the Eleventh. Chris thought that Inoue's vast experience of Mahler contributed to this fine performance – and he would like to coax him back to the west to conduct the CBSO!

At the symposium attended by the orchestras' managers, the final assessment was that the orchestras were technically superb, but they lacked personality, spontaneity and flexibility. Chris saw this as a reflection of the culture where people don't wish to step out of line and tend to stick to the rules.

## Cyril Bradley Rootham

**Dan Rootham**, who gave us a most interesting talk on Saturday morning, was never more than an amateur musician himself, *writes Graham Ladley*. His first career was in export sales and he later became a software engineer. However, nearing retirement he began to dedicate much of his time and energy to bringing to public notice the career of his grandfather.



Cyril Bradley Rootham (CBR as he was known) was born in 1875 into a musical family in Bristol. His father was a well-known singing teacher, whose pupils included Clara Butt and Eva Turner. He entered St John's College Cambridge in 1894 to study classics, but later took a second degree in music and continued his education at the Royal College of Music. He took up his first professional appointment in 1898 as organist at Christ Church, Hampstead, where he succeeded Walford Davies. In 1901

he was offered the post of organist at his old college, an appointment he held for the rest of his life. He later became lecturer in counterpoint and in musical form at St John's.

The first pieces of CBR's music we heard reflected his early upbringing. Both his mother and father were members of the Bristol Madrigal Society, so it was natural that he took to that form. We heard, firstly, 'Strew on her roses' a setting of words by Matthew Arnold. Dan then sang 'It was an English ladye bright', accompanied by a piano part he had digitally created using MuseScore software. These were both charming songs, as were the next two: 'A Shepherd in a Glade' (1904) and 'Daybreak at Sea', this being written towards the end of his life. This showed an obvious maturity, but still the same central place of melody in his work which was evident in everything we heard.

It was as a composer of choral music that CBR seemed happiest, and indeed achieved the greatest success. We heard an excerpt from his setting of 'The Lady of Shalott' which successfully conveyed the sense of foreboding in that poem, and an impressive command of writing for an orchestra. (Dan commented at this stage that characters in his grandfather's works often ended up badly!)

The next excerpt we heard was a setting of Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen.' Written in 1915, this came out slightly before Elgar's setting of the same words, causing controversy as to their respective merits, though not between the two composers. The other choral work heard was the setting of Milton's 'Ode on the morning of Christ's Nativity' which is often regarded as Rootham's masterpiece and won the Carnegie prize. The small excerpt we heard did indeed seem splendid. CBR also wrote an opera, *The Two Sisters*, which has been performed.

Next we heard excerpts from CBR's two symphonies. While these seemed essentially conventional, the masterly handling of the orchestra was evident in both. Of the Second Symphony – here conducted by Boult – it has been said that, if played at the Proms, it would receive a rousing reception, but perhaps not too many repeat performances. The 1936 recording of the First Symphony was of CBR conducting his own work.

It was, perhaps, as a teacher that CBR had his greatest influence. Among his pupils he counted Arthur Bliss, Armstrong Gibbs, and Patrick Hadley, the latter becoming a close friend and the orchestrator of the Second Symphony. CBR also had great influence as the conductor of the Cambridge University Music Society. In this capacity he revived much of Purcell's music, operas by Handel and symphonies by Mozart, as well as including modern works by a number of composers, including Kodály. CBR died in 1938 following a stroke several years before.

The last word must be given to Dan, whose presentation was professionally put together and was delivered with great charm and clarity. His affection for his grandfather was evident in every word, and also in the enormous task he has undertaken – transcribing the music and getting it into print, procuring performances and getting recordings made. Quite a lot is now available, and Dan is determined that more recordings will be made.

### The Hyperion story

The late Ted Perry founded Hyperion Records in 1980 and the current director, his son **Simon Perry**, ran through the company's history, along with some interesting facts

about one of the major independent record labels. Ted had set up the company on borrowed money in his semi-detached south London home, having become disillusioned with the record business when working with other labels.



Simon benefited from a musical education which began when he won a scholarship to Magdalen College Oxford at the age of nine where he spent four years singing Evensong six days a week. When his voice broke he returned to London and studied double bass. At the age of 20 he decided a career in music wasn't for him and instead travelled the world. He lived in the US for 12 years but eventually returned home and began working with his father in 1996. Despite no previous experience in the music business he soon took over the A&R (artists and repertoire) role which he occupies to this day. Simon has single-handedly executive produced around 1,600 recordings over those 20 years – 'the best job in the world'.

Ted died suddenly in 2003 and ever since then Simon has been charged with continuing the work his father had done to make Hyperion a significant force in the recorded music industry. Soon after Ted's death came a second major event for the company. A court summons arrived heralding the start of a legal dispute with Lionel Sawkins, a music editor whose editions of works by Michel-Richard de Lalande had been used in Hyperion's recordings by the choral group Ex Cathedra. Dr Sawkins sued the company for what he deemed to be royalties owed to him from his claimed copyright in his editions. Hyperion insisted the editions were not original compositions and not subject to copyright. Dr Sawkins had, in fact, received a fee from the performers for their hire of the music. The court found in favour of Dr Sawkins, as it did in the subsequent appeal. The resulting damages paid to Dr Sawkins were not particularly excessive, but the legal costs ran to a six-figure sum. The judgment was criticised by many in the music industry, many of whom offered financial support to ensure Hyperion survived the ordeal. The case was seen by musicians, consumers, and composers as setting a precedent for rewarding scholarship rather than creativity.

Hyperion is a small company, employing eight people based in a warehouse on an industrial estate in south London. Their success is based on the relationship with their artists and the quality of the product. They often feature unfamiliar, unjustly neglected composers and genres and are willing to persuade artists to take on projects that no other company will touch. Hyperion is also one of the few labels that pay artists for their recordings, if not the only one.

It is very difficult to sell mainstream music because there is so much of it already available. Hyperion has a very successful policy of reissuing from the back catalogue which entails no recording costs. 80% of Hyperion's output 'haemorrhages' money out of the business and will never make a return on the investment, but 20% does make enough profit to invest in new recordings. Some obscure music will never arouse sufficient interest to make money, but it's important to do it and to maintain an interesting catalogue. The balance currently is just about right. The internet is wonderful, but it does have a negative effect on Hyperion's ambitions. Streaming services like Spotify are a huge problem. Spotify pays about £0.0014 per stream, so when a pop

song attracts 20 million listens it provides significant returns, numbers classical recording can't begin to achieve. Commercial realities have to be considered and Hyperion doesn't participate in streaming services, but if this model which some are pushing continues, classical music will not survive the insufficient return on investments. Similarly problematical are video-sharing sites like YouTube, where one illicit upload of a recording that wasn't selling well had attracted four million views – so why would anyone buy it?

20 or 30 recordings a month are received from prospective artists and occasionally one will come along that has real merit. Simon's first example from Hyperion's catalogue was the music of Dimitar Nenov (1901-1953), a Bulgarian pianist and polymath. We heard the Ballade for piano and orchestra performed by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, the first orchestra outside Bulgaria to undertake Nenov's music. The pianist was Ivo Varbanov, the conductor Emil Tabakov.

Next came an excerpt from Volume 71 of the Romantic Piano Concerto series. Carl Czerny was active in every genre of music except opera and wrote hundreds of compositions. We heard the opening *allegro maestoso* of the Piano Concerto in F, Op 28. The pianist Howard Shelley directed the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. An early song by Robert Franz (1815-1892) with Robin Tritschler (tenor) and Graham Johnson (piano) was followed by Stanford's homage to Bach. Pianist Sam Haywood performed the Prelude XXXII *Allegretto* (No 8 in E flat minor from Twenty-four Preludes in all the keys for pianoforte, Op. 179).

Simon concluded his fascinating insight into a successful record company with a few more facts. High-quality downloads are increasingly important, and are popular because it's a speedy process where the sound quality of studio masters is amazing. It's the biggest area of growth and allows access to otherwise unavailable recordings, but CDs still account for 85% of sales.

### A composer's thoughts on recording

For her talk, Master of the Queen's Music **Judith Weir** gave us a composer's view of recording, *writes Sue Parker*. All composers want their music to be recorded, and for her first example she mentioned the piece she was asked to compose for the opening of the 2011 Proms season – 'something loud'! She had two or three hundred orchestral players and singers at her disposal, and the result was her short overture *Stars, night, music and light*, to words by George Herbert, which used multiple brass and woodwind, organ and two choirs as well as a big orchestra. Judith was grateful that this was recorded and subsequently issued by *BBC Music* magazine, and has noticed that works which have been recorded get many more live performances.

Judith is often asked to write short occasional pieces, which may be for unusual groups of instruments, and will record these on any means to hand. She now has a huge collection of odd bits and pieces, and as an example she played, from a DAT (digital audio tape), a recording made for the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Norman Platt, the founder of Kent Opera. His favourite poem was Thomas Hardy's 'The Darkling Thrush' and we heard her setting, which was



performed at his party by Gwion Thomas, baritone, and Rachel Brown, flute.

There is now generally little direct interchange between composers and record companies, and the challenge for modern composers is to find alternative ways of bringing their music to the listening public. Peter Maxwell Davies made his music available as downloads on his website, but Judith did have one CD as well, which included the short piano pieces *Stevie's Ferry to Hoy*, composed for young or amateur players. We heard these performed by Stephen Pruslin.

Choral recordings have greatly increased lately. For her next extract Judith gave the example of Merton College Oxford, which until quite recently had no proper choir. An endowment enabled them to form one, and students commissioned some 50 composers to write something to celebrate the college's 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Judith contributed an *Ave Regina Caelorum* which was recorded by Delphian prior to the first performance. This has given the piece a boost and it is now her most performed composition.

As the final aspect of the importance of recording to composers, Judith talked about education. The earliest recordings which students remember listening to, often become influential. Her example was the Cortot-Thibaud-Casals recording of the *Archduke* Trio, which was on in the background at home when she was three years old. She found she had remembered Casal's grunts when she heard it again later, and missed them when they were removed in the remastered version! Growing up in north London she went to school with the daughter of one of the Amadeus Quartet and was interested in their recordings. Scherzos appealed most for their energy, and the trio from Beethoven's Op. 127 in E flat with its serious and 'slithery' nature influenced her most as a composer. We heard the scherzo and trio performed by the Amadeus Quartet.

Judith's own compositions were influenced by her father's collection of trumpet records. He was a trumpet player and took part in performances of the Messiah and the music of Bach. She has worked with Helmuth Rilling whose use of modern instruments for Bach resembles her own writing. We heard the opening of Bach's Magnificat in D and Judith pointed out how her own Proms piece which we heard at the start of her talk similarly highlighted trumpets, oboes and flutes. Having first heard the Bach piece at the age of five or six, she believes that she has been trying to replicate that sound ever since with her interest in high brass and woodwind, energetic sound, fast tempi, and rich string textures. This concluded a most fascinating presentation, a unique insight into the relevance of recording for a working composer.

### Live recital: Mozart, Bartók and more

The Hungarian pianist **Domonkos Csabay** graduated from the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest in 2014 and is continuing his studies at the Birmingham Conservatoire, *writes Nigel Simeone*. He is no ordinary 'young pianist'. What stayed long in the memory after this recital was the maturity and refinement of his playing. The programme was substantial in every sense: there was nothing here that would merely show off a brilliant technique, but instead



the repertoire required musical insights of the highest order. Csabay produced these in abundance.

The first half was devoted to Viennese classics: Mozart's own arrangement of the Overture to *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* was crisply done, followed by a thoughtful and dramatic reading of the Fantasia in C minor, K475, that managed to be deeply expressive without ever losing its sense of Mozartian scale – something that is sometimes sacrificed when playing this extraordinary work on a modern grand piano.

Shubert's 'Wanderer' Fantasy was remarkable. Csabay gave a performance that showed a superlative control of the overall structure of the piece on the one hand, and a marvellous ear for rhythmic detail and impeccably balanced chords on the other. In the Scherzo, for instance, the rhythms were exciting without ever becoming remorseless – they always had shape – while in the Trio section there was poise and radiance, as there had been in the slow movement. The Finale was very well disciplined, the playing neat and tidy. Perhaps there could have been a shade more theatricality here, but as a whole this was an intensely satisfying account of a work that is very hard to bring off.

After a short interval, Domonkos turned his attention to Bartók, beginning with the *Improvisations on Hungarian Peasant Songs*, published in 1920. These short, highly concentrated pieces show Bartók distilling the essence of Hungarian folk music to produce something entirely fresh and new. Csabay produced a wonderful range of colour here, but – more importantly – he maintained the intensity of the musical lines, and these pieces were delivered with a combination of straightforwardness and subtlety that recalled Bartók's own playing. The Allegro barbaro was formidably controlled and what it maybe lacked in out-and-out wildness, it more than made up for in tension, energy and drive.

With Debussy's *Trois images oubliées* (the only work to be performed with a score), Csabay revealed the delicate colours of this music and played with lyricism and a careful ear for balance. The recital ended with Chopin: the *Trois nouvelles études* written for a new piano method by Fétis and Moscheles in 1839. These sometimes come across as poor relations to the Op. 10 and Op. 25 studies, but such was the flexibility and inventiveness of the playing that they made the best possible impression, especially the second of the set.

The programme ended with Chopin's *Barcarolle*, one of his most daring masterpieces, and a work that has inspired composers right up to Messiaen, who considered this one of the supreme examples of how to create sonority and resonance on the piano. The gentle but implacable repeating patterns from which the *Barcarolle*'s music derives were presented beautifully, the piece growing in power as it progressed, but never letting details disrupt its long-breathed phrases.

As a touching and tender encore, Csabay finished this splendid recital with an exquisite Hungarian melody by Schubert.

### Technical forum

This first session on Sunday morning included a presentation by Stuart Dunn of 3 Square Audio who talked about crossover speakers. There was also an interesting demonstration of different loudspeakers which is covered within Technical Officer Philip Ashton's Technical Review on page 28.

### The Czech Philharmonic

The writer, musicologist, teacher and conductor **Nigel Simeone** made a welcome return to Daventry to talk about 'this great orchestra' in as many different facets as possible. The Czech Philharmonic has a very long history, about 75% of



which is well documented by recordings. The orchestra grew out of Prague's National Theatre and made its debut in 1896 under the baton of one Antonín Dvořák who conducted four of his own works. In 1901, a strike against the head of the National Theatre Opera, Karel Kovařovic, led to the firing of many players who then went off to form an independent orchestra, electing Ludvík Čelanský as the first chief conductor. In January 1903, Vilém Zemánek became the orchestra's chief conductor. Under his successful 15-year tenure, Edvard Grieg was invited to conduct in 1903, and in 1908 Mahler conducted the premiere of his Seventh Symphony. During its history the orchestra, famously, seems to have found novel ways of dismissing its conductors, including Zemánek being sacked by the players on a railway station platform.

The violinist Václav Talich, a former leader of the Berlin Philharmonic under Nikisch, joined the orchestra as conductor in 1918, a crucial time in Czech history. Mid-way through a rehearsal, the Czechoslovak Republic had been proclaimed, ending a period of Austro-Hungarian domination. A successful premier of Josef Suk's *Zrání* in 1919 led to Talich's appointment as chief conductor, a post he held, apart from a one-year break, until 1941.

The orchestra made its first recording in 1929 under Talich: *Má Vlast* (My Country) from which we heard the well-known section 'Vltava' (Moldau).

During the next decade, Talich brought his orchestra to Britain for three very successful visits. The last of those, in 1938, came at a time when Czechoslovakia was in the process of disintegration under Nazi rule. Despite Britain's controversial role in that arrangement, the orchestra overcame any difficulties and attracted ecstatic critical reviews. While 'all hell was letting loose back home', they also made a marvellous recording, at the Abbey Road studios, of Dvořák's Symphony No. 7. We heard the end of the final movement. Nigel next played a recording of surely one of the most extraordinary events ever to be captured at a live concert. In 1939, at the very end of a performance of 'Blaník' from *Má Vlast*, in a hall decked in swastika flags, the audience spontaneously burst into the Czechoslovak national anthem. Spine-tingling!

During the war, Talich controversially took the orchestra to Germany, the conductor's defence being they only performed Czech music. After the war when the country was under Communist rule, Talich was considered a collaborator and forbidden to work with the orchestra, although the ban was later relaxed.

Rafael Kubelík was appointed chief conductor in 1941 and we heard the opening fanfare of Janáček's *Sinfonietta* from his recording of 1946.

There is lots of evidence of the fine work the orchestra did with non-Czech conductors. Richter described the next recording as the best ever, and Nigel doesn't disagree, telling us that the Czech Phil performs like a French orchestra except, er... they play the right notes! The conductor here is Roger Désormière in a 1950 recording

of *La Mer* by Debussy. This excerpt ably demonstrated the sensational results achieved by this conductor.

Nigel went on to offer a series of recordings showcasing many of the big names who have conducted the orchestra. First was a 1955 release of Erich Kleiber's performance of Beethoven's Symphony No. 6. Then came Karel Šejna conducting the final movement of the Double Concerto by Martinů in 1958. World War II was a terrifying experience for Karel Ančerl, having been incarcerated in Terezín and Auschwitz. Appropriately, perhaps, we heard an excerpt from his 1966 recording of Britten's *War Requiem*.

The Czech Phil was an exceptional Tchaikovsky orchestra. We heard them 'bringing the house down' in 1971 with the end of Symphony No. 4 conducted by Karl Böhm. We then heard them playing Elgar very well, too, with Leopold Stokowski, in 1972, conducting 'pretty much what Elgar intends!' in variations 6 and 7 of the *Enigma Variations*.

Now to a more obscure Czech composer: Otakar Ostrčil. The stern, stark, powerful opening of the *Calvary Variations* was conducted by Václav Neumann, the chief conductor during 1968–1989, who recorded an enormous amount of the repertoire with the orchestra. The orchestra also had a good relationship with Serge Baudo and we heard him in a live 1989 recording of 'La fileuse' from *Pelléas et Mélisande* by Fauré. Nigel thought Eliahu Inbal's 2012 recording of Mahler's Seventh to be 'phenomenal'. We heard the finale.

The chief conductor since 2012 has been Jiří Bělohávek\*, this being his second term, as he was in the post in the early 1990s. We heard the second movement of his 'lovely, lovely' 1993 recording of Brahms's Serenade No. 2. We ended with 'a masterpiece': the final movement of the *Asrael Symphony* by Josef Suk, which became a memorial to the composer's wife, daughter, and father-in-law, Dvořák. The conductor in this 2007 recording was Charles Mackerras who had a long and special relationship with the orchestra, but had always declined the many offers to be chief conductor throughout the comings and goings of others in that post. Mackerras was fluent in the Czech language, albeit delivered in an endearing Australian accent!

As Ted Pezarro said in his vote of thanks, Nigel had treated us to a veritable 'Vltava' of information in his expertly delivered history of a great orchestra.

\* Jiří Bělohávek sadly died on May 31<sup>st</sup> aged 71.

### From the Mersey to the World

Also making a return visit to Daventry was the Weekend's final presenter, **Jim Pritchard**, this time reviewing the life and music of the neglected tenor Alberto Remedios.

First, Jim was pleased to hear that some audience members had actually heard Remedios perform. He then confirmed that the singer's name was genuine, although he did speak with a strong Merseyside accent! His father was a Spanish seaman who had disembarked at Liverpool. Jim deemed that Alberto, who died in 2016, was probably the world's finest heroic tenor. Only a few recordings exist that chart his journey from ordinary lyric tenor to the demanding heights of Wagner's *Siegfried*. But there are just enough to appreciate his fresh-sounding, ringing and effortless voice. Born in 1935, Alberto's voice first came to notice in 1951



when he appeared as the Prince of Persia in *Turandot* at Liverpool's Grand Opera. At the time he was an apprentice welder for Cammell Laird at Birkenhead. In 1952 he auditioned for Sadler's Wells Opera – which became English National Opera (ENO) in 1974 – and once National Service was completed he was contracted to the company in 1955. By the early 1960s Alberto was one of the up-and-coming stars at Sadler's Wells Opera and began to conquer the world's great opera houses.

Jim's first musical example took us back to when Alberto took first prize in the Bulgarian International Opera Contest in 1963, singing the 'Flower Song' from Bizet's *Carmen*. 1970 saw another important role debut as Mark in Tippett's *A Midsummer Marriage*. We heard an excerpt with Colin Davis conducting from the Royal Opera House.

Alberto considered Wagner's music the most sensuous ever written and it affected him very deeply. He considered his cycling and football activities in his younger days had helped him develop the stamina required for the long periods of preparation essential for those Wagner performances. Alberto was indebted to Reginald Goodall for his guidance and persistence during those preparation periods, saying he would never otherwise have been able to tackle those roles. We heard Alberto sing 'Warm in the sunlight at dawning of day' in Goodall's Sadler's Wells production of *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. Remedios's participation in the Sadler's Wells highly acclaimed *Ring Cycle* began in 1970 and was completed in 1973 with a production of *Siegfried*, from which we heard the 'Forging Song'. The company then toured extensively for the next seven years.

Jim's next track was 'Veni creator spiritus', the opening of Mahler's Symphony No. 8, 'Symphony of a Thousand', recorded live at the 1975 Proms, conducted by Pierre Boulez. Remedios was joined here by, among others, Bernadette Greevy, Linda Esther Gray, Marius Rintzler and Elizabeth Connell.

Alberto added a number of leading tenor roles to his repertoire during the 1970s. Other than performing at Bayreuth, it was an invitation to sing the role of Siegfried at Covent Garden he yearned for the most and which would be the pinnacle of his career. He achieved that in 1980, becoming the first British tenor to sing the role since 1935. Edward Greenfield wrote in the *Guardian* that Alberto was 'a joy to the ear'. Remedios sang in more *Ring Cycles* at Covent Garden in 1982, again to critical acclaim. 1991 saw a wonderful performance of 'Siegfried's death scene' from *Twilight of the Gods* in a Reginald Goodall memorial concert at the Royal Festival Hall. The conductor was Sir Mark Elder. Alberto retired to Australia in 1999.

Jim's informative look at the life of a great tenor, interlaced with humorous anecdotes, came to a close with 'Zu neuen Taten', Brünnhilde's and Siegfried's entrance in *Götterdämmerung*, sung in the original German. This track, with Sir Charles Mackerras conducting the London Philharmonic, was an example of Alberto's great partnership with soprano Rita Hunter.

Thanks are due to all who contributed to yet another highly successful Music Weekend which closed on a somewhat downbeat note. Chairman Allan Child intimated that, given the continuing downward trend in attendance numbers, there had to be some doubt over the future of the event. *The outcomes of subsequent decisions are commented upon elsewhere in this issue.* ●



# FRMS STATEMENT

## DAVENTRY MUSIC WEEKEND

As secretaries of affiliated societies will have learned already from the FRMS statement previously sent to them, the Federation's committee has decided, with regret, that there will not be a Daventry Music Weekend in 2018 because of lack of support from FRMS affiliates. Since 2011 the number of people attending has fallen from over 100 to fewer than 50.

It is not reasonable to book high-class presenters for so small an audience. It is not fair to them and it does not reflect well on the FRMS. Should there be sufficient interest in a Music Weekend in the future the committee will be happy to reconsider this decision, but in the present situation we cannot justify carrying on.

## COMMITTEE VACANCIES

Within the same statement the chairman also expressed the committee's concern that for the last few years there have been unfilled vacancies on the committee and that there are likely to be yet more in the near future. This situation could eventually affect the Federation's ability to perform even its core functions of arranging PRS, PPL and insurance cover for societies, so it is essential that volunteers do come forward to seek nomination for election to the committee.

We can report that there have been some encouraging responses to the chairman's letter, but we will welcome further interest in committee membership. Both our secretary and chairman will be pleased to give more information about what is involved. Their contact details can be found on page 30.

Please contact your own society's secretary if you wish to see full details of this FRMS statement.

*FRMS chairman Allan Child has more to say on this on page 22.*

## YORKSHIRE & NORTHWEST REGIONAL GROUP SPRING MUSIC WEEKEND

MARCH 16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> 2018  
CRAIGLANDS HOTEL, ILKLEY

Our Presenters are:

**Paul Campion** – Kathleen Ferrier, previously unreleased recordings

**John Futter** – Putting the Record Straight

**Sandra Parr** (Artistic Planning Director, Royal Liverpool Philharmonic)

**Andrew Keener** – Sir Malcolm Sargent (50<sup>th</sup> anniversary tribute)

**Gordon Drury** – Abbey Road

**David Patmore** – Great Nights at La Scala

...and also **Nigel Simeone, James Murray and Allan Child**

Following the announcement that the FRMS Daventry Music Weekend is not going ahead in 2018, **the Ilkley weekend is now the only residential event in the FRMS calendar.**

**Our committee extends a warm invitation to ALL FRMS affiliated members, family and friends to support our event in this delightful spa town, and help secure its future.**

While this is a 3-night event, 1- and 2-night, and day only, options are available. Full programme details will be available in early October, when booking opens.

For further information, please contact the event co-ordinators  
Geoff Bateman (01274 783285) or Jim Bostwick (01484 717865)

## REGIONAL NEWS

## Yorkshire & Northwest Regional Group

*Blustery showers greeted delegates arriving at the Craiglands Hotel, nestling at the foot of Ilkley Moor, for the annual cornucopia of outstanding recorded music. Ron Cooper and Geoff Bateman report on another hugely successful weekend.*

Regional chairman Ron Cooper kicked off proceedings with a survey of **Otto Klemperer's London Years**. Leaving the introduction in the hands of Bernard Levin from a BBC radio broadcast from 1972, Ron then briefly highlighted the famed conductor's earlier career and mishaps before launching into a selection of famous recordings made with the Philharmonia Orchestra. Rumours that Klemperer could be too slow were quickly expunged by the final movement of Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony, which was followed by the final movement of Beethoven's *Emperor* Concerto from the famous cycle by the young Daniel Barenboim.

Two movements from Brahms's German Requiem put the IMF speakers through their paces, with the bass end projected with tummy-wobbling realism. The voice of Fischer-Dieskau was also gloriously captured in this famous Kingsway Hall recording.

Following the first movement of Mozart's less-frequently performed *Linz* Symphony, Ron ended his programme with more extensive excerpts from Mahler's *Resurrection* Symphony – this recording from 1961/62 has remained a top choice. The Kingsway Hall acoustic was again to the fore (and an aperitif to our Sunday afternoon programme). For the fourth movement, 'Urlicht', Ron strayed over to Amsterdam for Klemperer's recording with Kathleen Ferrier.

Back to the Philharmonia recording, and the final *Mit Aufschwung, aber nicht eilen* brought the programme to a triumphant conclusion – an all too brief survey of a colossus whose many performances are fortunately preserved for posterity.

Gary Midgley (Barnsley and Huddersfield RMSs) explored **70 years of BBC radio's Desert Island Discs**. With more than 3,000 castaways, choices had to be limited. Gary highlighted poignant moments from the series, starting with the voice of the creator, Roy Plomley, on the origins of the idea. From the only castaway to select all eight choices of their own recordings, we heard pianist Moura Lympany in the third movement of Rawsthorne's Piano Concerto No. 1, with Menges and the Philharmonia in a superb-sounding recording from 1956.

Michael Tippett chose the first movement from his own Symphony No. 2, the pounding Cs splendidly captured by Argo engineers in the Colin Davis/LSO recording. Dame Judi Dench chose Maxwell Davies's *Farewell to Stromness* played by the Philharmonia strings, while Alfred Brendel (who had described the show's theme music as 'mercifully short') opted for the second movement of Bach's Concerto for Harpsichord No. 5 in F minor, played on the piano by Edwin Fischer. Gary reflected on some of the more amusing moments from the series, in particular, when Roy Plomley interviewed Alistair MacLean, unaware this was not the author of *The Guns of Navarone*, but

an official from the Toronto Tourist Board. This edition was not aired! The programme ended with *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, conducted by Sir Charles Mackerras in a 1956 recording. This is the theme music for a programme whose formula will never age with the passage of time.

In a welcome return to Ilkley, Nigel Simeone was in his usual ebullient mood for his presentation **Delving into Dvořák** where he explored some of Dvořák's less familiar compositions, ranging from opera, chamber music and folk song arrangements, to an autobiographical tone poem.

Covering a period of some 30 years from the early 1870s, the selection of works from this 'benign, genial composer', as Nigel described him, traced a steady development from an early Nocturne of 1871 through to his final completed work, the opera *Armida*. The delightful first movement of his Symphony No. 3, somewhat Wagnerian in flavour, was followed by the Scherzo from Symphony No. 5, both pieces played by the Czech PO, under Václav Neumann and Karel Šejna respectively'. The role of Brahms, who had recommended Dvořák to his own publisher, was pivotal and eventually underpinned a close friendship between the two.

The next three items dated from 1878: the Moravian Duet No. 2, Bagatelle No. 5, and the Sextet Op. 48, which were all based on folk song and dance idioms. Delicate woodwind, with the flutes prominent, and the warm textures from brass and strings made the Romance from the *Czech Suite* of 1878 a delight. In complete contrast, the finale of the *Husitská* (Hussite) Overture was a muscular, martial composition of thrilling power. The *Svatá* (Saint) *Ludmila* oratorio of 1886 featured an aria beautifully sung by the mezzo Věra Soukupová, and, as a historical footnote, we were told of a Yorkshire connection - the 1887 Leeds Festival where the performance of the work was greatly appreciated by the audience.

Radoslav Kvapil was then heard in the finale of the Suite in A major for piano, Op. 98, 'American' on Dvořák's own Bösendorfer piano, an extract showing the familiar folk tune and dance influences of his earlier works. His final tone poem, *A Hero's Song*, composed in 1898 after his return from the USA, and conducted at its premiere by Mahler, was not always favoured by contemporary critics, but Nigel mounted a spirited defence of it. The finale was a vibrant, full-blooded affair with strong brass and string performances. From what was to be his last composition, the opera *Armida*, we heard the finale, a tenor/soprano duet supported by a superb chorus in this rarely-performed work.

The programme was, as usual, thoroughly researched, intelligent, well-informed and showed how seriously passionate Nigel is about his love for Dvořák, who, as a music student, was considered

‘mediocre’. We were left in no doubt that this judgement was proved to be erroneous and that Nigel’s opinion that Dvořák’s music ‘raises the spirits’ was borne out.

Alan Sanders knew Elisabeth Schwarzkopf for over 25 years and has written about her extensively. His programme **The Real Elisabeth Schwarzkopf** explored lesser-known aspects of her life (dispelling inaccuracies by other writers) and the musical examples steered away from the more obvious choices.

Schwarzkopf, thinking she wasn’t good enough, was always very critical of her own recordings and few gave her any satisfaction. She was, though, very generous in her opinions of other artists. Gerald Moore, who worked with her as accompanist for many years in concerts and recordings, wrote that he sometimes thought the only way of getting a record passed for publication was to ‘at all costs prevent her from hearing it’.

We heard Schwarzkopf’s first ever commercial recordings in Telefunken’s East Berlin studios (1939) – a selection from Lehár’s operetta *Paganini*, in which she was partnered by the then well-known radio tenor Rupert Glawitsch. We were pre-warned that we might not identify her voice at that stage of her career.

Schwarzkopf’s best studio recordings were sometimes those for which she had little preparation. In April 1955 she made an LP of Mozart songs with Walter Gieseking. At the end of the sessions there was some spare time, and Gieseking asked her if she would record some of his own short songs for children, *Kinderlieder*, which he had not originally intended to publish. Elisabeth agreed and 35 years later the tapes were located and the recordings were then published as part of an edition to celebrate the singer’s 75<sup>th</sup> birthday. We heard the first two songs from this unexpected treasure.

Walton wrote the role of Cressida in his opera *Troilus and Cressida* with Schwarzkopf in mind. She was due to sing in the 1954 premiere, but withdrew. She did however record excerpts from the role of Cressida in an LP of highlights of the opera conducted by the composer, a year or so after the premiere. We heard the aria ‘How can I sleep?’ – ‘it’s really some of my best singing’ she had said.

We also heard her in Sibelius’s *Luonnotar* and Beethoven’s *Fidelio*, and the final scene from Strauss’s *Ariadne auf Naxos* ended the programme, a fascinating insight into a recording legend.

Gordon Drury made a welcome return with a second instalment of **The Kingsway Hall Remembered**. Many of the finest sound recordings ever made were taped here and the venue was a favourite of Decca and EMI. Rather than introduce them, Gordon challenged the audience to identify his choices, of which there were 25, so space will only allow reflection on a few of them.

We had the LPO’s very first recording from 1932 – Sargent conducting Haydn’s *The Creation*. Another first was EMI’s stereo release of Prokofiev’s Seventh

Symphony on pre-recorded tape, which still sounded superb for a February 1955 vintage. The orchestra was the Philharmonia under Nicolai Malko, one of several conductors brought in by EMI when Karajan was unavailable. Another was Alceo Galliera in a 1956 performance of *Pines of Rome* with the same orchestra, a model of detail and balance.

From the Decca catalogue, we heard a young Vladimir Ashkenazy in Mozart’s Piano Concerto No. 9, with Kertész conducting the LSO, followed by an older Ashkenazy conducting his own orchestral arrangement of *Pictures at an Exhibition*, this very much à la Stokowski with the Philharmonia in 1983. We heard the Gabrieli Quartet in Beethoven’s String Quartet Op. 59, and András Schiff in Bach’s *Goldberg Variations*, demonstrating that the Hall was equally ideal for smaller forces. Sousa’s *Liberty Bell March*, played by the Philip Jones Brass Ensemble, brought the programme to a rousing conclusion.

Clarity, depth, perspective and detail were to the fore in all the selections played, regardless of vintage. This was an era when recording teams really knew their job – some of today’s recording engineers who produce such tame efforts would be well advised to listen to how a recording really should sound!

For our Sunday evening entertainment, Kevin Paynes (Barnsley RMS) explored music linked with trees in **Musical Arboretum**. The programme opened with ‘Renouveau’, the second movement of Roussel’s Symphony No. 1, ‘Poem of the Forest’. Here, the shimmering strings, which seemed to owe much to Debussy, featured the Royal Scottish National Orchestra. Other orchestral works included *The Happy Forest* (Bax), *The Wood Nymph* (Sibelius) and Butterworth’s *The Banks of Green Willow*.

The vocal items which Kevin played included recordings of songs by Schubert, Britten, Stanford and Ivor Gurney, sung by Ian Bostridge, Jamie MacDougall, Stephen Varcoe and Stephen Roberts. In humorous contrast, we had an appearance from Laurel and Hardy to ‘log off’ the day’s events.

Geoff Bateman’s concluding programme, **The Argo Story**, charted the birth, and eventual demise, of yet another record label, which was founded in 1951, but released its last recording in 1998. The founders’ original intention was to record ‘British music played by British artists’. Firstly we heard the American Michael Torke’s *Javelin* overture for orchestra, a thrillingly vibrant composition with prominent woodwind and expansive, strong-driving rhythms, a splendid opening piece written in 1994 to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Atlanta SO. This was followed by the first movement of Bizet’s Symphony in C, written in 1855, as a student piece by the 17-year-old composer. The melodic *allegro*, driven by superb strings, is a surprisingly mature work and was played by the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, conducted by Neville Marriner. As a contrast, we next heard Jack Brymer playing the *adagio* from the Quintet for Clarinet and Strings in E flat major by Heinrich Baermann (1784-1847), a work which was

erroneously attributed to a young Wagner! It was only in the 1960s that Baermann was credited with the work, a flowing, subtle piece with lush, harmonic strings. The American Amy Beach (1867-1944) was a virtuoso pianist and composer of over 150 works including piano and chamber music, songs and symphonies. She provided a link to the previous work, in that she studied under Carl Baermann, grandson of Heinrich. Beach's *Fireflies* is a short but technically challenging virtuoso piece for piano. We next heard Samuel Barber's *Essay for Orchestra No. 1*, written in 1937 and premiered by Toscanini, a keen champion of Barber's music. The Baltimore SO under David Zinman gave a superb rendition – of special note was the languid, mournful *andante*.

The Overture and first scene of Britten's *Gloriana*, premiered in 1953 as part of the celebrations for the Queen's coronation, were given a rousing rendition by the Welsh National Opera under Mackerras. In another complete contrast, which emphasised the eclectic nature of the Argo label, we next heard the American John Harbison's *Remembering Gatsby* – a foxtrot for orchestra, splendidly played by the Baltimore SO, again under Zinman. This is an attractive piece with bright dance themes and vibrant syncopated rhythms in a 'period' atmosphere. Walton's *Coronation Te*

*Deum*, written to mark the Queen's accession to the throne in 1952, is an energetic work featuring his signature fanfares, here performed by the Bournemouth SO under David Hill, and a superb choral performance by the Winchester Cathedral Choir. The final piece, the ever popular 'Hoe Down' from Copland's *Rodeo*, again featuring the Baltimore SO, was a rousing conclusion to a wide-ranging, eclectic programme, presented by Geoff with his usual panache and an eye for the hidden gems from this now defunct label.

This final programme brought the successful weekend to an end and, on behalf of the organising Y&NRG committee, I would like to thank the participants for their hard work and entertaining presentations.

With the announcement that the Daventry Music Weekend is not going ahead next year, the Ilkley event is now the only residential festival in the FRMS calendar. Daventry supporters are cordially invited to Ilkley over the weekend 16<sup>th</sup> -19<sup>th</sup> March 2018. A warm Yorkshire welcome is assured and the latest programme details will be placed on the FRMS website. Further information is available from the event co-ordinators, Jim Bostwick (01484 717865) and Geoff Bateman (01274 783285).

## Scottish Regional Group

The Smith Art Gallery and Museum was the setting for the Scottish Group's annual get-together on Saturday May 6<sup>th</sup>. President Pat Leishman thanked Stirling RMS for hosting the event and welcomed fellow music lovers from Stirling, Falkirk, Dundee, Carnoustie, Kirkcaldy, Sunderland and Derby (Allan and Ruth Child).

After a buffet lunch, Alison Green from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra presented **A Musical Journey** telling us of her wide and varied musical career to date. Alison was born in Edinburgh and studied bassoon at the RSAMD (Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow, now the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), where she won the Governors' Recital Prize and the Choral Conducting Prize. On completing her studies in Glasgow, she was awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Silver Jubilee Scholarship, enabling further study at the Conservatoire de Musique in Geneva. While in Switzerland, Alison gained a lot of orchestral experience. This continued on her return to Scotland where she freelanced, and for



Pat Leishman (left) and Alison Green



Pat Leishman and Elaine Young

several years was principal bassoon of the Scottish Ballet Orchestra. Since

1990, Alison has been sub-principal bassoon of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. She thrives on the variety of work which the orchestra undertakes and has appeared as contrabassoon soloist in the Strathclyde Concerto No. 9 by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. She was also part of the experimental SCO LAB ensemble which culminated in Alison being one of the soloists for the 2009 SCO tour of India with the Indian classical musician Amjad Ali Khan who plays the sarod. An important part of Alison's life in the orchestra is her work with SCO Connect, the orchestra's creative learning team. For ten years she was part of the very successful Bear Hunt project. More recently she has been working with other SCO musicians on the ground-breaking ReConnect project which

involves interactive music-making for people living with dementia. She has also expanded her interest in exploring music with dementia patients by taking part in 'Train and Sustain', an initiative of Enterprise Music Scotland.

Following the Annual General Meeting, the second speaker was Elaine Young, a lifelong Kathleen Ferrier enthusiast, who spoke about the contralto's all too short life. **John Maidment, secretary** •

# THE NAXOS STORY

## 30 CDs To Celebrate 30 Years – The Anniversary Collection

**N**AXOS WAS LAUNCHED in 1987 as a budget classical CD label, offering CDs at the price of an LP when CDs cost about three times more than LPs. The focus was on recording the standard classical repertoire in state-of-the-art digital sound with outstanding, if unknown, artists and orchestras, initially mainly from Slovakia and Hungary. The parent company's existing rarity label, Marco Polo, had been producing recordings in these two countries since 1982. Having recorded the most popular classical works, Naxos started to tackle complete cycles, beginning with the complete Haydn string quartets performed by the Kodály Quartet. This cycle was the first to bring the fledgling budget label international critical acclaim. Once the label had established a

reputation for sonic and artistic excellence, it attracted interest from orchestras and artists in Western Europe and elsewhere. Recording the complete works by all the most important composers became one of the missions of Naxos. From the beginning, the label established close relations with artists willing to commit to the Naxos mission. These became Naxos house artists, starting with Jenő Jandó, the prolific Hungarian pianist who made the first Naxos recording in 1986, and continues to record to this day. Others include the violinists Takako Nishizaki, Ilya Kaler, Henning Kraggerud and Tianwa Yang, the cellist Maria Kliegel, guitarist Norbert Kraft, and pianist Idil Biret. Naxos also established close relationships with many conductors and their orchestras. Among these, we find Antoni Wit with the Polish National Radio Symphony and the Warsaw Philharmonic, Helmut Müller-Brühl and his Cologne Chamber

Orchestra, and Jun Märkl with the MDR Leipzig Radio Symphony and the Lyon National Orchestra. Partnerships from across the pond include Marin Alsop with her Baltimore Symphony, Leonard Slatkin and the DSO, and the Nashville Symphony under both Kenneth Schermerhorn and Giancarlo Guerrero.

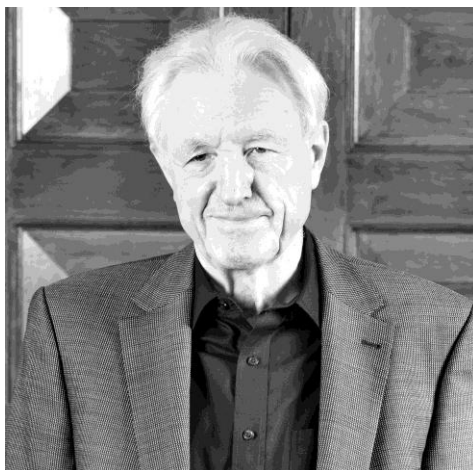
Other orchestras are based further afield, in New Zealand, Brazil and Canada for instance, and many conductor/orchestra pairings fruitfully cross boundaries not only between countries but also between continents. All of these examples represent only a fraction of the relationships that Naxos fosters. Today, it has a catalogue of over 9,000 titles and releases about 200 new titles per year, covering a wide range of often unique

repertoire, recorded in more than 30 countries. The humble budget label has morphed into one of the most respected classical labels, regardless of price. Parallel to the growth of the label, Naxos built a worldwide distribution and marketing infrastructure for its own and most other independent classical labels. In 1996 the complete catalogues of Naxos and Marco Polo were made available for streaming. In 2002, the company launched Naxos Music Library, the industry's first subscription streaming platform.

Naxos's 30<sup>th</sup>-anniversary box set offers a representative selection of landmark recordings from the label's history but is also a tribute to the artists and orchestras with whom the label is identified and who are identified

with the label. See page 23 for Tony Haywood's review of this box

*This article is adapted from a Naxos press briefing. •*



Naxos founder Klaus Heymann



The Anniversary Collection

## SPECIAL OFFER FOR FRMS BULLETIN READERS!

Go to [www.naxosdirect.co.uk](http://www.naxosdirect.co.uk)

At the checkout, use code FRMS2017 to get £5 off your purchase of the '30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Collection'

One coupon per customer. Offer ends 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017

See the Naxos advertisement on page 17

# SOCIETY NEWS

## Kirkcaldy closure

Kirkcaldy Recorded Music Society ceased to exist after an EGM on October 29<sup>th</sup> 2016. As chair I deeply regret it has come to this on my watch, but ageing members and our inability to attract enough newcomers, despite our best efforts, has brought this about. This has been a Kirkcaldy institution for over 73 years, evolving from the Nairn Gramophone Society, which was set up for the employees of the Kirkcaldy linoleum manufacturers. Our last musical meeting was on October 15<sup>th</sup> when our good friend John Maidment from Carnoustie RMS entertained us with a programme of film music from the 30s, 40s and 50s. We could not think of a better way to sign off.

**Douglas Paton**

## Margery Pears (1920-2017) - a tribute

Members of Maidstone Music Appreciation Society are much saddened by the recent death of our President Margery Pears, at the age of 96. Margery and her husband joined the precursor society in its first year of existence (1966) and she became an enthusiastic, loyal and supportive member serving as both committee member and secretary, ultimately becoming Life President in 1998.



Brought up in London, she and Andrew went to many concerts and recitals. Their romance began at a memorable recital by Dame Myra Hess in the National Gallery. Two of her favourite composers were Gustav Holst, who was her father's friend and whom Margery remembered well, and Benjamin Britten. She and Andrew attended the first performance of his opera Peter Grimes. As well as her love of music, Margery was fond of the spoken word, including poetry, drama – especially Shakespeare – and folk songs.

Her presentations to the society often featured this blend of music and words, together with references to childhood, fairy tales, bird song and the English countryside. She also gave full support to the meetings in members' homes, our music festivals, trips to local musical events, visits to the Proms and our annual dinner.

Over the years we have enjoyed her friendship, her wide musical knowledge, her lively personality

and her great sense of humour. You will be greatly missed Margery but for now may God hold you in the palm of His hand.

**Gordon Sladen, Hon. secretary**

## 80 not out for Orpington

Less than 18 months after the inaugural meeting of the NFGS at Abbey Road studios in west London, a group of enthusiasts gathered at the County Branch Library, 225 Orpington High Street, on Tuesday November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1937, to form a society of their own, with Mr Eric Young of the fledgling National Federation in the chair.

The founders of the new society, Miss A Pickles and Mr HE Spencer, became secretary and chairman respectively, and the annual subscription was set at 5/-. Following business, the first notes of music heard at the new ORMS were the strains of the Overture to *Alceste* by Gluck. The programme concluded with what was described as the 'March from a Symphony in D, Op. 25, The Love for 3 Oranges' – mind you, since the opera was less than 20 years old, the secretary could perhaps be excused.

Programming was enterprising from the start. Less than a year into its new term, an *alfresco* meeting was organised in nearby woods, members being given these quaint directions: 'take the 241 bus from Station Road then alight at Warren Road, where Boy Scouts will direct you to the woods'. This story has now lasted some 80 years and along the way has been included in many memorable programme evenings by various personalities.

## YORKSHIRE & NORTHWEST REGIONAL GROUP

### 2017 AUTUMN MEETING

At New North Road Baptist Church, New North  
Parade, Huddersfield, HD1 5JU

Saturday October 7<sup>th</sup>

Hosted by Huddersfield RMS

10.30 to 4.45, doors open 10.00 for tea/coffee

This is a good central venue, close to the train station and bus services, with parking nearby.

Cost, including excellent 3-course lunch, is £15.

Everyone is welcome to attend: members of RMSs, their friends, and anyone else who enjoys music and friendly company.

Booking closes September 30<sup>th</sup>. For a booking form, see: [www.thefrms.co.uk/otherevents/otherevents.htm](http://www.thefrms.co.uk/otherevents/otherevents.htm)

or contact Ron Cooper, 12 Downs Crescent, Barnsley S75 2JE, email [velvetrlc@hotmail.com](mailto:velvetrlc@hotmail.com)

### PROGRAMME

André Previn - 'All in a Night's Work' - Tony Haywood

Sullivan without Gilbert – Peter Smart

Do let's ask for the moon! – Sue Parker

A brief dip into our programme archives must suffice. Quita Chavez (then representing Decca) visited in 1958, Donald Aldous in 1965, John Lade in 1967, Ted Perry and John Shuttleworth came in 1980 to introduce Meridian Records, albeit that Ted was soon to depart to create Hyperion. Meanwhile, not neglecting institutions, players from both the LSO and RPO have entertained us. The director of Blackheath Halls outlined the background to the (then) new concert venue, whilst Caruso and Company, Cloakes of Croydon and, very recently, Classical Bargain Records of New Eltham have represented the record retail business.

I will name just two events that I have experienced as a member for almost 30 years. Firstly our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, which was marked by a splendid day-long event at nearby Farringtons School, and graced by our much-loved President, Malcom Ruthven. There was also a fascinating presentation by that great and much lamented Wagnerian, Alberto Remedios. Secondly, in 2001, when Anthony Payne not only shared the secrets of Elgar's Third Symphony with us, but also showcased some of his own music.

As well as its own activities, Orpington has also been represented at the highest level of Federation affairs too, not least in the person of Gilbert Parfitt, a long-serving chairman of NFGS, and an early and staunch member of Orpington, and his immediate



An earnest conversation between two long-serving Orpington members, Lawrie Smith (left) and Ian Walker. Lawrie celebrates 60 years as a member this year. His first programme, 'Elgar', was given on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 1957.

successor Roderick Shaw. Although he had moved by then to the West Country, Rod had been a long-serving member at the society too, before steering the Federation through the transition to the FRMS.

However, despite these many and varied achievements, it was a proud story which very nearly came to an end barely two years ago. After decades of meeting amongst the splendours of Orpington Priory (dating in part back to the mid 13<sup>th</sup> century), Bromley Council's decision to close the building to the public put our activities into a spin. Loss of a venue must be amongst the most deflating and difficult circumstances for a society to face. Nevertheless, thanks particularly to the tireless and prompt action of our then chairman, Tony Bradshaw, a new venue was found – the village hall in central



Local headlines: 'Dennis Nicholas, Tony Bradshaw and Phillip Gray are part of a classical music listening group who use the museum'.

Orpington – only to be rejected since the available halls proved to be either claustrophobically small or cavernously large. But, not disheartened, Tony and the committee started again on the process of auditioning more venues, finally to settle on the meeting room at the Orpington Conservative Association, who continue to be our hosts to this day. Since the days of my first programme to the society

in 1988, about Boccherini (well at least I found it memorable!), membership has undoubtedly declined, but the spirit certainly hasn't. We could easily have folded a couple of years back, but we didn't. Instead we're proud to continue as the third oldest society within the FRMS and look forward to being active in the years ahead.

**Ian Bailey, Vice-Chairman & Programme Secretary, Orpington RMS**

#### 60 years at Rochdale



Roy Smithson is currently our longest-serving member at nearly 60 years. At our AGM in May he celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. The picture shows Roy about to sample the fancy cakes provided for his celebration.

**George Steele**

# Torbay Musical Weekend



Friday 17th - Monday 20th  
November 2017

at The Grand Hotel Torquay

Enjoy a weekend of music and talks on a range of topics at the historic 4 star, Grand Hotel.

The Grand Hotel occupies pride of place on the Torbay seafloor, commanding majestic views over the bay and out to sea. Whatever the weather, the comfort and luxury of the Grand has something to offer everyone.

## Prices

Friends of Torbay subscription fee £50

Residents' Hotel Tariffs per person inclusive of VAT:

Option A @ £289 from Friday Dinner to Monday Breakfast inclusive  
Option B @ £221 from Friday Dinner to Sunday Tea inclusive

Session tickets available from  
Kevin Ryland on **01803 406754**  
or John Watt on **01803 606489** or **07751 885703**  
or email **johnmwatt@me.com**  
Day visitors very welcome

For more information please contact **John Isaac (Chairman)** on **01580 879359**  
or email **Gillian Babbs** at **gillianbabbs@waitrose.com** or visit **www.fot.org.uk**

[www.grandtorquay.co.uk](http://www.grandtorquay.co.uk)

The Grand Hotel, Sea Front, Torbay Road, Torquay TQ2 6NT



**MARILYN BOYLE**

For night-owls, Marilyn Boyle, will present an hour or so of easy late-night listening. She will feature piano and oboe music, excerpts by The Hallé Orchestra, snippets from the time of the Viennese Strauss Family, and recordings from The City Varieties Music Hall in Leeds



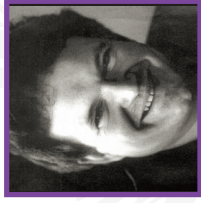
**KAY JORDAN**

Maybe you think singing G&S is easy, maybe not. Professional soprano Kay Jordan will explain what is involved in studying, teaching and performing their works and in a semi-recital / presentation will sing her way through some of the repertoire to illustrate her points



**PRIMAVERA**

Three members of the renowned music ensemble Primavera (Jonathan Barritt (viola), Martin Smith (violin) and Paul Manley (violin)) will give the Torbay Recital which will include works by Beethoven, Kodály, Ysaÿe and Dvořák



**GERAINT LEWIS**

'Haydn the Versatile' will be demonstrated by Geraint Lewis as he presents Haydn as Master of Church Music and Director of an Opera House



**NIGEL SIMEONE AND CATHY MACKERRAS**

Reminiscences and anecdotes of Sir Charles Mackerras, and much more, will be brought to us by his biographer Nigel Simeone and his daughter Cathy Mackerras



Friday 17th -  
Monday 20th  
November 2017



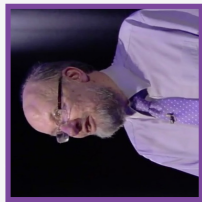
**BARRY STERNDALE-BENNETT**

Not much is known about the English composer-pianist William Sterndale Bennett. His great, great, grandson Barry Sterndale-Bennett will tell us more



**LYNNE PLUMMER**

Who were the composers who perhaps had the misfortune to be around at the same time as Mozart? Lynne Plummer will reveal some real talent!



**IAN BAILEY**

The romantic composer Joachim Raff 'the man who wrote too much' - Ian Bailey explains



**ANDREW COLLINS**

What's it like to be in the classical music retail business in 2017? Andrew Collins will talk not only about the challenges but also regale us with some amusing anecdotes



**MIKE PRICE**

After a day of travelling, de-stress and wind down in the leisurely company of Mike Price who in his inimitable way will guide you through an evening of relaxing music and DVDs. But no falling asleep on his watch!



**JONATHAN WILLCOCKS**

Being the son of a famous father, and then following him into a similar career might have been daunting but Jonathan Willcocks says that certainly was not the case. In his presentation Jonathan speaks of his father's musical legacy and then tells us about his own life in music



**HEDD THOMAS**

Welsh National Opera's dramaturg, Hedd Thomas, takes us through Verdi's chaotic tale of *La Forza del destino*, one of his under-performed operas, but which the WNO is taking on tour in the UK in Spring 2018



30 YEARS



# NAXOS CELEBRATES 30 YEARS



8.503293

## 30 CDS TO CELEBRATE 30 YEARS

This limited edition anniversary boxed set comprises thirty CDs spanning the wide range of the label's repertoire and featuring many of the artists and orchestras with whom the label is identified.

"In celebrating Naxos' 30th anniversary, my hope is that we can all strive to adapt, evolve and reinvent ourselves in the same way that Klaus has done at Naxos. I am proud to be a Naxos artist!"

– *Marin Alsop*

### COMPOSERS INCLUDE

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GRIEG • HANDEL • HAYDN • LISZT • MOZART • RACHMANINOV  
RIMSKY-KORSAKOV • RODRIGO • ROSSINI • SARASATE  
SZYMANOWSKI • TALLIS • TCHAIKOVSKY • VIVALDI

"Listening to these discs I have been reminded of the delights on offer even within the confines of this set and this is only an infinitesimal proportion of the music-making that Naxos has presented to the world." – *MusicWeb International*



© Emily Chu

Klaus Heymann

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BULLETIN READERS!**

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YOUR PURCHASE OF 'THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION'

ONE COUPON PER CUSTOMER. OFFER ENDS 31ST OCTOBER 2017.



[WWW.NAXOSDIRECT.CO.UK](http://WWW.NAXOSDIRECT.CO.UK)

Retrospect Opera is a small organisation established in 2014 with the aim of recording 18th-, 19th-, and early 20th-century opera, representative of the heritage of British opera.

It brings together top performers and researchers, and its recordings aspire to high professional standards of both performance and presentation.

We have had some great reviews of our initial releases – including Ethel Smyth's *The Boatswain's Mate*, which was reviewed in the last issue of *The Federation of Recorded Music Societies Bulletin*!

On *The Boatswain's Mate*: “exceptional ... exactly how ‘revived’ operas should be presented”

– John France, *MusicWeb International*

On *The Boatswain's Mate*: “a must for any self-respecting Smyth collection or collection of British music”

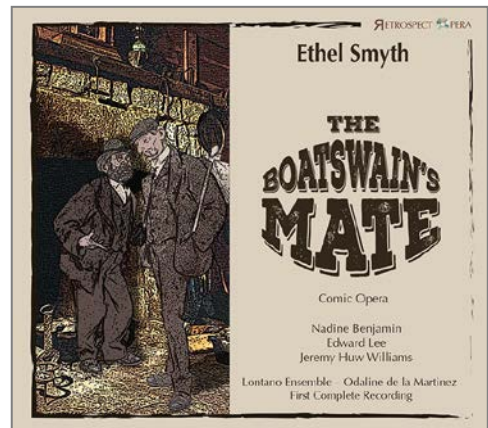
– Kate Kennedy, *Building a Library*, BBC Radio 3

On *Pickwick* and *Cups and Saucers*: “A highly recommendable CD for lovers of Dickens and of Gilbert and Sullivan style operettas, superbly recorded and packaged”

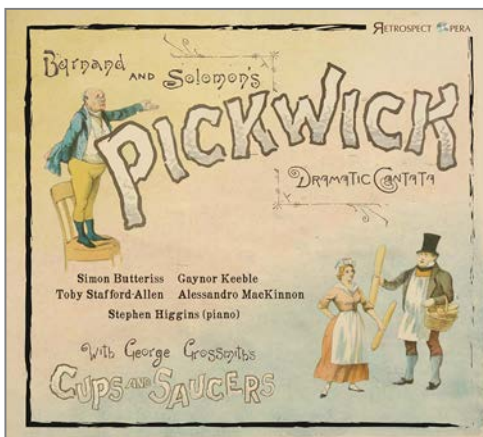
– Dan Adams, *Light Music Society*

On *Pickwick* and *Cups and Saucers*: “there are delightful things here ... Simon Butteriss has a lot of fun ... stylishly presented”

– Jonathan Woolf, *MusicWeb International*



*The Boatswain's Mate* was Ethel Smyth's most successful opera in her lifetime – a laugh out loud piece with a farcical plot!



The first great Dickens musical, full of catchy tunes, and puns from the librettist of *Cox and Box*

Our current releases are as follows:

- Ethel Smyth, *The Boatswain's Mate* **£14.95**
- Solomon and Burnand, *Pickwick* and George Grossmith, *Cups and Saucers* **£8.95**

And our forthcoming releases include more fascinating, but sadly neglected works:

- Edward Loder, *Raymond and Agnes* – a gloriously Gothic masterpiece, with a wicked Baron, a ghost, and an ill-treated heroine **£17.95**
- Charles Dibdin, *Christmas Gambols* (with *The Musical Tour of Mr Dibdin*) – two of his famous one-man shows **£8.95**
- Ethel Smyth, *The Wreckers* – re-release of the 1994 Proms performance **£17.95**
- Ethel Smyth, *Fête Galante* – the fascinating dance-dream opera **£8.95 (tbc)**

We rely on crowdfunding to make our recordings possible – any donation, large or small, by cheque, BACS, or via Paypal, will make you part of this marvellous enterprise.

Various levels of donation bring various “perks”, including a CD, for a minimum donation of **£25** for *Fête Galante* or *Christmas Gambols* (£30 for *Raymond and Agnes*).

For more information, to donate, or to buy one of our recordings, please visit [www.retrospectopera.org.uk](http://www.retrospectopera.org.uk) or e-mail us at [contact@retrospectopera.org.uk](mailto:contact@retrospectopera.org.uk), or contact Dr Valerie Langfield, Retrospect Opera, 82 Queens Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, SK8 5HH, UK.

# FRMS President Julian Lloyd Webber

in conversation with Christopher Morley, exclusively for *Bulletin*

**T**HIS IS A BUSY PERIOD for FRMS President Julian Lloyd Webber. In 2015 he was appointed Principal of Birmingham Conservatoire, and he is currently supervising the institution's move to a state-of-the-art new building at Birmingham City University's campus on the city's rejuvenated Eastside.

But he is nothing if not generous with his time, and he told me how he came to make the decision to give up cello-playing and take up conducting.

'I really didn't have a choice. I experienced a sudden lack of power in my bowing arm in the middle of the first half of a recital. It was frightening – I could hardly hold onto the bow. I knew immediately that there was something badly wrong. I saw a specialist two days later, and then I saw at least ten further specialists!

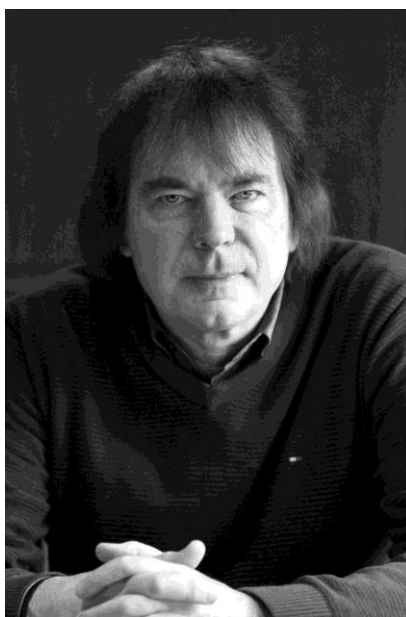
'I had tests, scans – you name it, I had it. But there was one thing I was not prepared to do and that was have a risky operation on my neck. For various reasons I didn't even think it would solve the problem. I have my own ideas as to what really happened – I believe it was due to being given an injection wrongly – but I would never be able to prove it and I've moved on now. I was actually due to make my first recording as a conductor BEFORE the injury happened.'

Julian has a lovely CD, *And the Bridge is Love*, already under his conducting belt, to add to his countless releases as a cellist. Will his recording career on the podium continue?

'It might if someone asks me! It would depend on the repertoire. I must say I've discovered that I really enjoy conducting soloists – perhaps it's something to do with the unsympathetic accompaniments I've sometimes had over the years! I feel an empathy with my soloists. I've always felt there should be a reason for making recordings – that you have something to say with the music that hasn't been said before.'

**J**ULIAN HAS CONDUCTED the CBSO, and the increasingly international Orchestra of the Swan, operating from its home base in Stratford-upon-Avon. What does his conducting portfolio look like?

'I would hardly call it a portfolio!' he points out. 'I haven't pushed it at all – especially as I am so busy at the Conservatoire.'



Julian Lloyd Webber  
Photo credit ©Thousand Word Media

Julian's wife Jiaxin Cheng maintains an active performing career as a cellist. He tells me how he copes with the pangs of observing from the sidelines.

'It is sometimes hard for me to hear her practising pieces I played many times – but she is a very fine cellist and all my contact with cellists keeps me in touch with what I always loved doing.'

Becoming Principal of Birmingham Conservatoire seems to have happened at exactly the right time for Julian. And the move to the new building is so exciting, I observe.

'Both these things are true! I've arrived at the Conservatoire at the most exciting time in its history. It will be the first purpose-built UK Conservatoire in a generation and I personally believe there will never

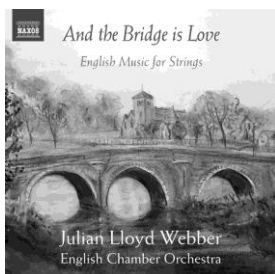
be another one. I have a duty to make it work at what is a difficult time for music education in the UK. We will have a state-of-the-art music college with every facility a music student could possibly wish for. The job of being Principal at a music college really feels 'in my blood'. My father taught at the Royal College of Music all his life and was also the Director of the London College of Music so I heard stories all the time! And I have always kept in touch with the RCM where I enjoyed four happy years as a student.'

**M**Y LAST QUESTION is deeply personal. 'I know your interests outside music include real ale and football. Sadly, your beloved Leyton Orient have just slipped out of the Football League. Can you bear to comment?'

'Not so much 'slipped out' as 'crashed out!', Julian declares.

'Joking apart, it is appalling that one man can be allowed to come in and completely destroy something that has been an important part of many people's lives for over a century. Three years ago Leyton Orient were a penalty kick away from the Championship and then a new Chairman

arrived and ruined the whole thing. There is supposed to be a 'fit and proper' test before someone buys a football club. Obviously it doesn't work.' ●



Christopher Morley is chief music critic of the *Birmingham Post*, and a correspondent for other music publications.

# FRMS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2017

## Best Western Plus Nottingham Westminster Hotel

Saturday November 4<sup>th</sup>

312 Mansfield Road  
Nottingham NG5 2EF  
Tel: 0844 387 6066

[www.bestwestern.co.uk/hotels/best-western-plus-nottingham-westminster-hotel-83383](http://www.bestwestern.co.uk/hotels/best-western-plus-nottingham-westminster-hotel-83383)

The FRMS AGM this year is hosted by Wollaton RMS. It provides an ideal opportunity for a weekend break in one of England's most historic cities. This event is open to any number of members from any affiliated Society.

1pm: Registration for AGM  
2pm: Business meeting  
4pm: Recorded Music Presentation by John Hawes  
7pm: Evening meal  
8pm: Recital by No Added Sounds - a string quartet of students from Nottingham University Music Dept



### Hotel charges

**Bed & Breakfast: Friday - £45 pp; Saturday - £50 pp**

**3-course dinner £19.95**

Further details available from the hotel

## FRMS 2017 Annual General Meeting *Nottingham*

November 4<sup>th</sup>

This year there will be a number of vacancies arising for FRMS committee positions. Whilst some individuals have expressed interest, the Federation is keen to hear from anyone else who might be willing to put themselves forward for election at the AGM.

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 4<sup>th</sup> so that they can be included on the agenda. If you are interested, please contact your Society secretary in the first instance.



# Arts in Residence

CULTURAL BREAKS IN BEAUTIFUL PLACES

Enjoy music more by meeting other music lovers at a weekend or midweek house party. Arts in Residence offers themed musical events discussing and exploring the music of the great composers while staying in characterful houses and hotels, with lectures illustrated by music examples on excellent hi-fi equipment.

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> – Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> February**

**Ocean Beach Hotel, Bournemouth**

The **Ocean Beach Hotel** is located close to the town centre, directly on the seafront atop the prestigious East Cliff of Bournemouth with its spectacular sea views.

**GUSTAV MAHLER: The Wunderhorn Years**  
**with Terry Barfoot**  
**and a concert by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra**

In his symphonies **Gustav Mahler** explored the essential issues at the heart of man's existence: the conflict of the life force and the death force. In this ambitious pursuit his Second, Third and Fourth Symphonies employ imageries from the collection of folk poetry entitled *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, settings of which so obsessed the composer during the earlier phase of his creative life. Our event will explore this visionary music, with CD and DVD examples on excellent hi-fi equipment, and a performance of the Fourth Symphony at Lighthouse in Poole, the largest arts centre in the UK outside London.

Price: £289.00 per person (twin/double rooms), £315.00 (single rooms) to include all meals, wine with dinner, course fees and accommodation.

**For further information and booking contact:**

**Arts in Residence, 25 Mulberry Lane, Cosham, Portsmouth, PO6 2QU.**

**Telephone: 02392 383356**

**[www.artsinresidence.co.uk](http://www.artsinresidence.co.uk)**

**email: [info@artsinresidence.co.uk](mailto:info@artsinresidence.co.uk)**



## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT Allan Child

**I**T WAS ONLY IN *BULLETIN 166* that I suggested 'Don't panic!' would be a better motto for the FRMS than 'We're doomed'! So it may seem rather odd, not to say contradictory, that so soon afterwards I was writing to all societies with the news that there would be no Daventry Music Weekend in 2018, and to express the FRMS committee's concerns for the future of the Federation (see FRMS's statement on page 9). There are, however, two distinct if related issues here. Although society closures are a matter for concern there are still around 150 within the Federation – societies which need the Federation's core function of providing Performing Right (PRS) and Phonographic Performance (PPL) licences, together with affordable insurance for equipment and public liability. But the provision of those services is in the hands of the committee and it is the seeming reluctance of members of affiliated societies to put themselves forward for nomination to the committee that is causing concern.



At the time of writing, the next meeting of the committee is still several weeks away but editorial and printers' deadlines mean that this issue of *Bulletin* will have gone to press before then. However, although you will not find any report of that meeting in these pages, it will be possible to provide an update on the situation when the preliminary notice for the AGM is sent to societies in early September.

We are right to be concerned that people are not coming forward to join committees, whether in their own societies or regionally or nationally within the Federation. But is it necessarily a bad thing that the membership of our affiliated societies is generally drawn from the older generation? You may have read earlier in the year of Nicola Benedetti's defence of the older audience. Interviewed on Canadian radio, she suggested that older people may naturally be at the stage when they can better appreciate classical music and said that it was wrong to criticise the classical music audience for being old, as if that was something negative. It was, she claimed, offensive to categorise a group in such a way and to encourage a generation gap. Her words echo those of Stephen Hough who has said that with old age comes wisdom, patience, subtlety, contemplation – all qualities needed to appreciate great and complex music. Not everyone will agree; Australian pianist Anna Goldsworthy, for one, is concerned that younger people are not there to become the older audience of the future. But maybe the idea gives us some food for thought.

### FRMS Presenters Panel – update

*Societies are invited to recommend successful presenters for inclusion in this section, the full version of which appears in every Spring issue. Please note, there is a modest charge of £10 per entry per annum for presenters who charge a fee (as distinct from reasonable expenses). A free entry on the FRMS website is also offered. Reasonable care is taken to ensure accuracy of the details given but neither the FRMS committee nor the editor can accept responsibility for any circumstances subsequent on the use of the supplement.*

#### New entry

#### **THE HAVERGAL BRIAN SOCIETY**

[www.havergalbrian.org](http://www.havergalbrian.org)

**Dr John Grimshaw, chairman**, 37 Leylands, 2 Viewfield Road, London SW18 1NF; 0208 870 0591; email: [chairman@havergalbrian.org](mailto:chairman@havergalbrian.org)  
Havergal Brian is one of the most intriguing of British composers, with a flourishing Society promoting his life and works, with many commercial CDs to its credit. Brian's works range from the simplest of songs for children up to the massive and, some would say, notorious *Gothic Symphony*, the first of his impressive series of thirty-two symphonies written over a remarkably long composing lifetime of more than 70 years. The chairman is willing to give an overview of the wide range of Brian's output across many genres or to present on the symphonies alone. No fee, only modest travel expenses.

Has your Society an anniversary or special occasion to celebrate?

Do you have any burning issues you want to share with our readers?

Do you have something to say?

You may wish to submit an article relating to a special interest in a particular composer or musical genre.

We are keen to hear from you. Contact details can be found on page 30.



### A message to Society Secretaries

We appreciate all those hard-working secretaries who ensure their Society's copy of *Bulletin* is distributed as widely as possible among its membership. We would also ask them to occasionally encourage their members to consider subscribing to their own copies. Please see contact details on page 30.

Also, does the Federation have full and up-to-date details of your Society? Do you have new officers, or does the secretary now have an email address, or has it changed? Is your FRMS website entry up to date? Please keep us informed.

### **NAXOS – THE ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION**

30 CDs to celebrate 30 years. Various artists

*Naxos 8.502393* (30 CDs; c.35 hours)

Full track listings, notes and texts can be found on the Naxos website [www.naxos.com](http://www.naxos.com)

**IS IT REALLY 30 YEARS** since Naxos was founded? Well, yes it is, and to celebrate here is a handsome 30-CD box at budget price with a very generous selection of the label's titles handpicked and introduced by Mr Naxos himself, Klaus Heymann. As any classical collector knows, Naxos dominated the budget field for many years, and although things have evened out somewhat, they are still a major presence in the market, with over 9,000 current titles. We must all have some on our shelves, and this present collection is as much a celebration of the many artists associated with Naxos over those 30 years as the music itself.

The booklet has an introductory note from Heymann, then a short paragraph for the individual discs which are neatly presented in single cardboard sleeves. The collection is roughly alphabetical by composer, and I reckon I must already own at least a third of these. Naxos is well known for duplicating within their catalogue, but this is still an impressive roster of performances of mainstream repertoire. Space and time have been a limiting factor, but here is a brief critique of each disc.

#### **CD 1 Bach: Four Orchestral Suites**

These are solid, reliable 'old-school' performances from the Cologne Chamber Orchestra under Helmut Müller-Brühl, who eschews any period practice but keeps rhythms well-sprung and lively. The flute playing in Suite No. 2 is particularly attractive.

#### **CD 2 Beethoven: Piano Sonatas 'Moonlight'; 'Pathétique'; 'Appassionata'**

This was the first Naxos disc I ever bought, and indeed was the disc that started everything. It also introduced us to their longest-serving artist Jenő Jandó (or 'JJ' as Heymann affectionately has it). I was impressed enough to purchase the whole cycle, and Jandó's clean, no-nonsense approach still pays dividends. Some have found him bland, but not me; Jandó's virtuosity is always at the service of the music. He went on to record an enormous amount for the label, and is still doing so, but his Beethoven will always have a special place, for me at least.

#### **CD 3 Brahms: Cello Sonatas and Songs**

This is a new one for me, and another re-recording for Naxos using their latest young house cellist Gabriel Schwabe, with pianist Nicholas Rimmer. Thoughtful, rich-toned playing in the sonatas, and the song transcriptions are a delight. The earlier version from Maria Kliegel is by no means eclipsed, but this is very good indeed.

#### **CD 4 Bruckner: Symphony No. 5**

This was part of a major Bruckner cycle from Georg Tintner that was widely praised, and rightly so. Various orchestras were used, this one being the Royal Scottish National, and while the strings are not quite Berlin or Vienna, the brass rings out gloriously in the various chorales. Tintner shapes the whole with distinctive

character, including a nicely free-flowing adagio, all beautifully recorded.

#### **CD 5 Chopin: Piano Concertos Nos 1 & 2**

It's a pity that this was chosen to showcase the talents of house pianist Idil Biret. Though she plays with admirable poise and sensitivity, the over-resonant acoustic and rather workmanlike accompaniment mean this can't really compete, especially when Naxos has two other superior accounts of both concertos in their catalogue.

#### **CD 6 Copland: Rodeo and other works.**

Leonard Slatkin and the Detroit Symphony give fizzing, exuberant accounts of Copland's orchestral works. Recorded live, the disc is notable for a complete *Rodeo*, where the extra music includes 'Ranch House Party' with its riotous honky-tonk piano bursting in on the familiar music, and the rarely heard ballet suite *Dance Panels*, quintessential Copland and well worth hearing. *El Salón México* gets perhaps a touch more rhythmic swagger from Bernstein – what doesn't? – but *Danzón Cubano* rounds the disc off in sparkling style.

#### **CD 7 Michael Daugherty: Metropolis Symphony; Deus Ex Machina**

This Superman-inspired phantasmagoria is great fun, music that is a weird cross between John Adams, Danny Elfman and perhaps a dozen others. It is said to 'express the energies, ambiguities, paradoxes and wit of popular American culture' and is played absolutely to the hilt by the Nashville Symphony under Giancarlo Guerrero.

#### **CD 8 Debussy: 24 Preludes (orch. Peter Breiner)**

This is a strange choice, given how much 'authentic' Debussy is in the catalogue. Enjoyable on its own terms and well played by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra under Jun Märkl if not as convincing to my ears as Colin Matthews's orchestrations, which Märkl has also recorded for Naxos.

#### **CD 9 Dvořák: Piano Trios No. 3 & No. 4 'Dumky'**

Dvořák composed lots of chamber music and these trios are very substantial works. Indeed the Brahmsian Third is almost orchestral in scale and is the more dramatically charged of the two, while the famous 'Dumky' is tinged with bitter sweetness throughout. Lovely pieces, full of Dvořák's best traits and given warmly idiomatic performances by the Tempest Trio, house violinist Ilya Kaler and colleagues Amit Peled on cello and Alon Goldstein on piano.

#### **CD 10 Dvořák: Symphony No. 9, 'From the New World'**

Another re-record here, but well worth it when the results from Marin Alsop and her Baltimore Symphony Orchestra are this convincing. Intensely dramatic, with weighty, sonorous playing, this is as good a 'New World' as it gets, similar in thrusting momentum to the old Rowicki, and the disc includes a glorious filler in the *Symphonic Variations*.

#### **CD 11 Dvořák and Elgar: Cello Concertos**

House cellist Maria Kliegel tackles the two most famous concertos in the repertory to very fine effect. The Elgar

perhaps comes off best, but with first-rate support from Michael Halász and the RPO, Kliegel's sure tone and superior technique ensure this is far more than an also-ran.

#### **CD 12 Elgar: Marches**

80 minutes of Elgar marches and not as samey as you might think! Seasoned Elgarian James Judd keeps his New Zealand forces on their toes with brisk speeds and they play to the manner born. The find here for me is *Polonia*; dedicated to Paderewski and using Polish nationalist themes, it suggests far more about circumstance (World War I) than pomp.

#### **CD 13 Glière: Symphony No. 3 'Il'ya Muromets'**

I've had this since it came out and admire the way JoAnn Falletta keeps this sprawling epic in check. The Buffalo Phil really delivers the orchestral goods, and though it's hardly the 'towering masterpiece' the booklet mentions, when played with the right sweep and commitment, as here, it feels firmly in the great Russian symphonic tradition.

#### **CD 14 Górecki: Symphony No. 3**

You can't blame Naxos for jumping on the bandwagon with this symphonic chart-topper. I'm not convinced the material sustains the 56-minute span, but the second and shortest movement is most moving and house conductor Antoni Wit and his Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra sustain the tension and soulful atmosphere admirably.

#### **CD 15 Grieg: Peer Gynt Suites, etc**

This may be as familiar as it gets, but in demonstration-quality sound this is hugely impressive from Bjarte Engeset and the Malmö Symphony, with a generous selection of songs as fillers.

#### **CD 16 Handel: Water Music (complete); Music for the Royal Fireworks**

Another re-record that blows some cobwebs away. One-time John Eliot Gardiner protégé Kevin Mallon and his Toronto-based period orchestra the Aradia Ensemble keep things energetic to say the least, though his brisk speeds and smaller forces won't be to everyone's liking. I happen to like Handel played as exhilaratingly as this, and when the orchestra is beefed up for the *Fireworks* music there is certainly grandeur aplenty. The recording quality is excellent.

#### **CD 17 Haydn: String Quartets Op. 76, 4-6**

This is another staple of my collection for many years. There may be more high-powered accounts around, but the Kodály Quartet's traditional (in the best sense) playing has its rewards. Whilst they may miss the last ounce of vitality and humour in some outer movements, the warm tonal blend gives slow sections an almost Beethovenian pathos. Their ensuing cycle was another very early effort but, like Jandó's Beethoven, quickly became the backbone of the Naxos catalogue and is still very recommendable.

#### **CD 18 Liszt: Piano Concertos.**

It's interesting that Heymann chooses this over the Chopin concertos to showcase one of his new young stars, Uzbek pianist Eldar Nebolsin. Still, it's a tremendous, rip-roaring achievement, helped enormously by strong support from Petrenko and the Royal Liverpool PO, who went on to

record the award-winning Shostakovich cycle for the label. The flashy *Dies Irae* fantasy *Totentanz* rounds off the disc in flamboyant style.

#### **CD 19 Mozart: Flute Concertos**

The two solo flute concertos are pleasant enough, but they rarely grab my attention compared to so many of Mozart's other concertos. This disc is as good as I've heard, mainly due to the superb balance created by star soloist Patrick Gallois and the Swedish Chamber Orchestra. The performance is sprightly enough to have a period feel but lets the excellent flute playing emerge naturally from the orchestral texture. The wonderful flute and harp concerto is more inspired as a work in my opinion, and is here equally vital and engaging.

#### **CD 20 Nordic Violin Favourites**

This disc includes the only Sibelius (*Six Humoresques*) in the box, but the rest of the programme is very attractive, featuring a whole raft of Romantic Scandinavian composers such as Stenhammar, Olsen, Halvorsen and Sinding. Nothing too memorable but a collection of lollipops that is nice to dip into.

#### **CD 21 Rachmaninov: Etudes-Tableaux Op. 39; Moments Musicaux Op. 16**

A real jewel in this anniversary collection, this is the Naxos debut for Russian-Israeli star pianist Boris Giltburg. These glorious works are played with a dark intensity that recalls his great predecessors in this repertoire. It's a pity he didn't couple the companion set of Op. 33 Etudes, but in some ways the more youthful *Moments Musicaux* act as a foil to the dark introspection of Op. 39, where the composer at times flirts with a Scriabin-like chromaticism that borders on atonality. The piano sound in the Wyastone Leys concert hall is of demonstration quality.

#### **CD 22 Rimsky-Korsakov: Orchestral Suites from The Snow Maiden, Sadko, Mlada and Le Coq d'or**

All the main concert suites are here from Rimsky's quirky operas, played with powerful directness and relish by Gerard Schwarz and the Seattle Symphony, another big-name American collaboration for Naxos. Rimsky's exotic orchestral colourings are given their full due and captured in superb sound.

#### **CD 23 Rodrigo: Guitar Concerto, etc**

Another Classic FM speciality, this is a lively, characterful reading from Norbert Kraft and the Northern Chamber Orchestra under Nicholas Ward, who also give us the very engaging concertos from Villa-Lobos and Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Kraft often acts as a producer on other Naxos discs, so the sound here from Manchester is excellent.

#### **CD 24 Rossini: The Barber of Seville (highlights)**

This is the only opera in the box, but was one of the very best that the Naxos Opera series produced. Will Humburg, who gave us a very fine *Falstaff*, directs the Hungarian Radio Chorus and the Failoni Chamber Orchestra with flair and freshness and this 1992 recording sees future star Ramón Vargas in an early role as Count Almaviva. He is in superb form, a true Rossini tenor, and while the Figaro of Roberto Servile may be a tad gruff, it is in keeping with his characterisation. The 79-minute selection is generous and well chosen, though as with other discs in this box the texts have to be accessed via the Naxos website.



**CD 25 Sarasate: Music for Violin and Orchestra, Vol. 2 (of 4 discs)**

These unabashed pyrotechnical showpieces may not plumb any depths musically, but then the real idea is to show off the skill of the violinist, and here we have the dazzling talents of the young Chinese virtuoso Tianwa Yang. The famous *Carmen Fantasy* is simply sensational and the other short concert works, such as *La Chasse*, are dispatched with such aplomb it's difficult not to be swept up by it. Ernest Martínez Izquierdo conducts the Navarre SO. This is another disc that's great for dipping into!

**CD 26 Szymanowski: Stabat Mater, etc**

Here, a masterly score is given a masterly performance by Antoni Wit and the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir. The *Stabat Mater* contains some of the composer's most intoxicating music, and Wit controls the ebb and flow perfectly, creating just the right balance between rhapsodic passion and outright ecstasy. The other choral fillers are excellent bonuses.

**CD 27 Tallis: Spem in Alium, etc**

House artists Jeremy Summerly and his Oxford Camerata have many superb choral discs in the catalogue, and this 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary tribute to Tallis does not disappoint. The opening of his masterpiece *Spem in Alium*, with its cumulative build-up from a single voice, is thrilling, and the grave beauty of his early but very substantial motet *Salve intemerata* is no less effective.

**CD 28 Tchaikovsky: Manfred Symphony**

A real blockbuster of a performance. Petrenko gets the measure of the sometimes-discursive structure, keeping a tight rein and getting superlative playing from the RLPO. The finale is particularly impressive, and to my mind this is the best we've had for this piece since Muti.

**CD 29 Tchaikovsky: Violin Concerto, etc**

The old romantic warhorse is given another Naxos makeover with this new recording from Ilya Kaler and the Russian PO under Dmitry Yablonsky. It's a big, bold reading that does not stint on fire when needed but majors on lyricism and poetry, and Kaler's technique and intonation are flawless.

**CD 30 Vivaldi: The Four Seasons**

The ubiquitous *Four Seasons* brings us full circle, and in many ways is like disc one, straightforward old-school Baroque. It's pleasing in its own way, but tempi are rather slow, the orchestra is a bit big and vibrato-laden, and when we've become aware of revelatory Vivaldi from the likes of Fabio Biondi or Rinaldo Alessandrini, the whole suddenly seems too stodgy and old-fashioned. The solo playing is probably the best thing here, and indeed this is the first we get to hear of Mrs Naxos, violinist Takako Nishizaki, who played such a central role in the early recordings, many of which have now been re-done. Heymann ends by telling us that, perhaps predictably, this is Naxos's best-selling disc. ●

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## Bach to Basics

Sue Parker

**E**ARLIER THIS YEAR I PRESENTED a programme on the music of Bach and its influence on subsequent generations of composers. I always like to learn as much as I can about any topic on which I present, for my own benefit as well as – hopefully – making what I say more interesting for the audience. I'm sure I'm not alone in seeing the exploration and enjoyment of music as a process of discovery that lasts a lifetime, and as Jim pointed out in the last issue of *Bulletin*, research has been made much easier with the advent of various online tools. One such tool that I used was YouTube, and those of us who were at Daventry this year will have heard different views about the value of this resource from Simon Perry and Judith Weir. Without wishing to take sides on this matter I will just say that I find YouTube very useful in my research for specific purposes such as illustration and comparison, but that I would not expect to use it as an alternative to buying CDs or downloads of music that I want to keep.

YouTube doesn't just let us listen to music but also gives us the opportunity to submit our comments on what we hear – and to read what other people have written. What does this have to do with Bach? Well, when I was sampling the many different versions of the wonderful aria 'Vergnügte Ruh' from Cantata 170, to see if there were any that I might prefer to Janet Baker's landmark 51-year-old recording with Neville Marriner (there weren't, though some of the competition was of a very high standard), I came across some interesting comments. They were generally articulate and polite and many of them developed into exchanges of views, which isn't unusual. But what struck me more was how heartfelt and revealing they often were. Here is just part of one thread, which is attached to Monica Groop's fine performance of this aria:

"When I die please play this Music for me... Thank you, Bach." "I know what you mean, but I ask in a spirit of humor, how can you choose this over other Bach arias? The Cantata playlist on my iPhone is over 5 hours now, any one of the arias would be inspirational at my funeral." "You're really right: it's very difficult choosing one aria among all Bach's Cantatas ... I cannot find the most beautiful piece for my funeral." "Are you seriously looking for the perfect Bach aria for your funeral? Or is this just a metaphor?" "Yes, I'm absolutely sure that I'm looking for a perfect Bach's aria to be sung in my funeral. It would be as reaching the heaven in the last moment ... Sometimes I think that J.S. Bach is this grandfather that I never had."

And so it goes on (and I should perhaps point out that by no means all the comments are about death and funerals, but the music we choose for such occasions is probably quite significant). There were at least two lessons for me here. First, that it is not only subsequent generations of composers for whom Bach remains a powerful influence, but also generations of listeners, and that the influence, for all the composer's canons and fugues and technical mastery, is a profoundly emotional one. Second, that I was wrong to refer to alternative performances of his music as 'competition'. The comments on YouTube reminded me that while I'm allowed to have my favourites, so is everyone else. Music is something that can and should join people together in a spirit of sharing and learning. Isn't that why the RMS movement began? ●

# Basic cassette deck set-up and maintenance tips by Debbie Bilham

Debbie 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.

**F**IRSTLY, I APOLOGISE if this article comes about 30 years too late. That said, there does seem to be a bit of a cassette revival taking place, even if not on the same scale as the vinyl revival. It is most noticeable by the prices which cassette decks, and some pre-recorded cassettes, are now fetching on eBay. Cassette versions of sought-after albums often fetch more than the CD version, but not as much as the vinyl issue.

A cassette deck is a complex mechanical device which, like a turntable, will only perform well if it is properly set up and maintained and if the medium which is played upon it is of high quality, as with vinyl records. Here I am going to concentrate on some of the basic set-up and maintenance tasks which can make a big difference to how your cassette deck sounds.

## Principle of operation

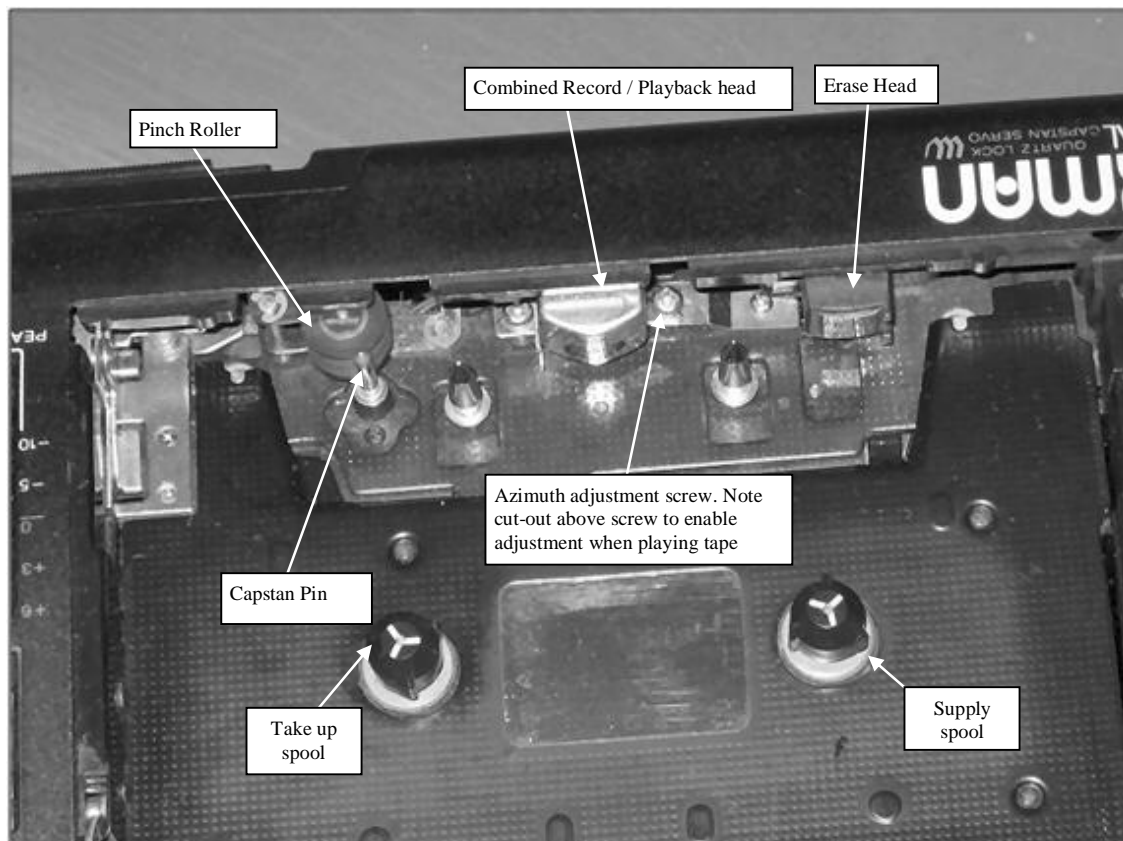
While the take-up spool applies a tension to the tape, via a clutch mechanism, the capstan pin controls the speed at which the tape travels past the heads. On high-end decks, the capstan is often directly driven by a quartz-locked motor to maintain a stable and accurate speed. The pinch roller presses the tape onto the capstan to ensure that it travels at the correct speed as determined by the speed of the capstan. If

the tape plays at the wrong speed, or the speed varies, known as ‘wow’, this may be due to the capstan drive belt having deteriorated and become loose over time, and requiring replacement. A fast variation in speed, known as ‘flutter’, in which the beat of the music seems to play at the correct speed but the detail seems fluttery, is often due to a hardened or barrelled pinch roller – again this will need to be replaced.

## Cleaning the heads and tape path

This should be done after every use, rather as you would clean the fluff from your turntable stylus after every play. During a long session, such as a society presentation, I’ll clean the heads more frequently. During playback or record, some of the oxide from the tape will become deposited on the head; as these deposits build up, the high frequency response will suffer and the tape will sound muffled. The tape heads and capstan should be cleaned, using a cotton bud and isopropyl alcohol (IPA). Don’t use methylated spirit as the purple dye will leave a residue on the heads as the alcohol evaporates.

The pinch roller doesn’t need to be cleaned so often. Use warm water with a little detergent, again using a cotton bud. Using IPA on a pinch roller can cause the rubber to harden and become barrel shaped which will shorten its life.



Sony WM-D6 Professional Walkman in play position – showing main deck components.

In some cases, with older tapes, the binder, which holds the oxide recording medium to the tape, breaks down; this is known as sticky-shed syndrome. This is rare on cassettes (but more common on reel to reel tapes) and will quickly leave a brown, cement-like deposit on the heads. In such a case you can clean the heads with IPA but it will take a lot longer. Don't try to play the tape again. If it is one which you wish to preserve, then you will need to send it to somebody who can restore it by baking the tape at a carefully controlled temperature, which will render it temporarily playable, and then digitise it.

### Demagnetising the heads and metal objects in the tape path

This should be carried out occasionally to remove any magnetic field which may have built up, which can partially demagnetise tapes. You should use a wand-type demagnetiser, which can be purchased for around £15 on eBay. Get one with a plastic sheath covering the tip to avoid scratching the heads.

- Make sure the cassette deck is switched off otherwise you will send a massive 50hz signal through the heads and through the amp.
- Plug in the demagnetiser well away from the deck (3 feet or more) and move it slowly towards the heads.
- Move it around the heads and metal components then slowly move it away from the deck and then switch it off or unplug it.

### Ensure the playback equalisation and Dolby are correctly set

Normally tapes are clearly marked if they are Type I – Ferric, Type II – Chromium Dioxide, Type III Ferro Chrome or Type IV – Metal. Some decks sense the correct playback equalisation setting automatically, using cut-out notches on the back edge of the cassette. If the deck does not do this, make sure it is set correctly for the tape type. Most pre-recorded tapes should be set for Type I – Ferric.

Dolby B encoding was first used on pre-recorded cassettes around 1970, so there are some around from that vintage or earlier which are non Dolby. I have also bought some more recent tapes from the 1990s, imported from countries such as Turkey, which are not Dolby encoded. Don't always assume that because a cassette has the double-D symbol on it that it is Dolby encoded – I've come across some that aren't.

On replay, Dolby expands the dynamic range, making the loud parts louder and the quiet parts quieter. When playing a non-Dolby tape with the Dolby switched on, you can hear a characteristic lumpiness to the sound during quiet passages or fade outs. Many people believe that leaving the Dolby switched off on a Dolby encoded recording will boost the high frequencies and sometimes a recording does sound brighter with the Dolby left off. If everything

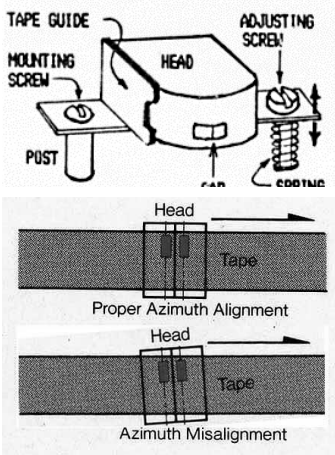
else is set correctly then the sound will be too bright – uncomfortably so.

### Ensure the azimuth is correctly set

It is surprising how few people have even heard of azimuth, yet when incorrectly adjusted it is a major cause of loss of high frequency when playing back tapes. It is also very easy to adjust.

The azimuth is the angle of the head gap relative to the direction of travel of the tape. Ideally it should be 90°, but in practice this is not always the case. For playback, the head needs to be set at the same azimuth angle as the recording head was set, otherwise the playback signal will be out of phase and will lose some high frequency response. This is why you could record a cassette on one deck and it would sound fine on that deck, but would sound muffled when played on another deck.

On most decks, the azimuth adjustment screw is on one side of the head mounting block and there is usually a cut-out in the plastic surround so that you can get a screwdriver onto it to adjust it during playback. This is not always the case.



The Revox decks have the azimuth adjustment hidden away in the belief that it should be set to exactly 90° using an alignment tape and then should not be fiddled with. If this were the case with all tape decks then there would be no azimuth misalignment problems and the world

would be a happier place. In practice, in portable decks and car players, where the mechanisms get shaken about a lot, the azimuth adjustment will move and will therefore need correcting. Nakamichi take the opposite approach to Revox with a motorised adjustment mechanism which azimuth obsessives can tweak from the comfort of their sofa using the remote control.

To set the azimuth for the cassette you are playing, adjust the azimuth screw on the side of the head block while the tape is playing. Adjust the screw slowly and carefully, 1/8 or 1/16 of a turn at a time. While doing this, listen to the mix, paying particular attention to the high-frequency components such as cymbals or hi-hat, brass or detail on vocals. You may find this easier whilst listening through headphones.

While these tips will help you to get the most from a deck which is in good condition, they are no substitute for having the deck serviced, with belts and pinch rollers and idler tyres replaced as they become worn and stretched over the years. ●

# Technical Review

by FRMS Technical Officer Philip Ashton

**THE 2017 DAVENTRY MUSIC WEEKEND TECHNICAL FORUM** included a presentation by Stuart Dunn of 3 Square Audio who talked about crossover speakers. I also provided a broad view of the audio frequencies we can and cannot hear, along with pictorial diagrams of how crossovers basically work. Fellow Weekend engineer Robert Swithenbank and I regularly swapped-out audio cables so that we were able to make a direct comparison between 3 Square Audio's Translator speakers and those from PMC, specifically their Twenty.26 model. There then followed an interesting discussion where delegates commented on which pair they preferred, and why. It remains to be seen how many will be willing to part with the four-figure sum required to own either of these magnificent products!

In my previous review (*Bulletin 165*, page 28) I mentioned MQA or Master Quality Authenticated, which aims to replicate in our listening environment what would be heard in a recording studio. A wide variety of content from labels and artists, including Warner Group's music catalogue, is now available in 'master' quality across all of TIDAL's markets worldwide.

According to their website, TIDAL 'delivers master-quality audio recordings directly from the source to HiFi members – an audio experience exactly as the artist intended – in partnership with MQA'. Titles from Coldplay, David Bowie, Beyoncé, Fleetwood Mac, The Eagles, Bruno Mars and Aretha Franklin are amongst those on offer. The service will initially be available on the desktop version of Tidal. NAD and Bluesound offered demos of several MQA-enabled products at the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas. TIDAL is currently available only via the internet – see [tidal.com/gb/masters](http://tidal.com/gb/masters). AudioQuest has announced MQA implementation in its USB DAC products.

Amazon is now selling 'smart' speakers. These can be used to control just about anything that is connected to the internet such as garage doors, fridge-freezers, house alarm systems – the list is endless.

Audio giants such as Sonos have announced a partnership with Spotify to allow seamless integration between

its music streaming service and Sonos's own app. This will mean users can manage their music without having to switch between apps. Likewise, Naim's newest UnitiLite all-in-one systems feature compatibility with all streaming services via the built-in touch screen. I expect this sort of user-friendly brand integration to be a major theme throughout the audio industry in 2017. 11% of the UK population have a Spotify account and this is likely to grow, according to industry sources.

Readers' classical music needs are

mostly served by CD and, once again, vinyl discs. According to the British Phonographic Industry there were 45 billion audio streams in 2016. This equates, by my reckoning, to 27 million households each listening to 1,500 songs over the course of the year. Streaming and vinyl are driving the audio market and this is giving the consumer electronics industry a much-needed shot in the arm as CD sales continue to fall. As far as serious music is concerned, CDs will still play a part, although the continuing existence of the format will be reliant on the sales of pop, easy listening and country and western material, bought in the main by the younger generation.

It's a shame, but the majority of vinyl LPs will not be heard to their full advantage by most listeners of the younger generation who buy cheap turntables. Their interest will fall away and it will be the purists with significant amounts of money to spend who, although buying a smaller number of discs, will keep a steady market flourishing. Will it last? With MQA and FLAC and Blu-ray material joining the fray, it's hard to say. Interestingly, Morrisons and Aldi supermarkets are selling vinyl discs and purchases of LPs have overtaken digital downloads for the first time. £2.4 million worth of LPs were sold by the end of November 2016, compared with £2.1 million spent on digital downloads. (Source: British Phonographic Industry.)

On the equipment side, there are many new amps and loudspeakers, too numerous to mention here. If you are in the market for new purchases, then look no further than those companies that offer excellent after-sales service such as Richer Sounds, John Lewis and Grahams in London. I have to add that these are my recommendations and not necessarily those of the FRMS. ●



3 Square Audio's Translator (left) and the PMC Twenty.26



Naim's UnitiLite all-in-one system

### **Complaint to the editor**

The latest edition of *Bulletin* has been received and copies were available at our Society's meeting last night. Not every member comes to every meeting (as I'm sure you'll appreciate) but our members are encouraged to take a copy home, with the proviso they bring it back to next week's meeting for others to share. In this way all our attendees get the chance to view the magazine and read it in the comfort of their own home.

It continues to annoy me, however, when I read the notice published on page 19 of this issue (No. 166) 'A Request to Society Secretaries'. This has now appeared in several past issues. If you are 'told about' this in future could you not take it up with the society concerned, rather than tar all us secretaries with the same brush? Anyone reporting from Morecambe & Heysham will be taken out and beaten with all nine of our latest copies! (Well, perhaps not the free copy!) I hope this meets with your approval.

**Gordon Arkwright, secretary**

Editor's response: Many thanks, Gordon, for your letter and I'm sorry to hear that we have been a source of annoyance to you. As our notice implies, a while back we were hearing from some members that they rarely, if ever, got to see the magazine. Given the amount of effort that goes into producing the magazine – all voluntary work, as you know – we felt justified in prodding secretaries to do the right thing. However, I take your point that the offending notice has appeared unchanged for some time now, during which, hopefully, the message has got through. You will observe, therefore, that a modified version appears in this issue (page 22) which I trust meets with *your* approval.

### **SCRMS closes its doors**

It is with some sadness that I heard of the demise of the South Cheshire Recorded Music Society. As perhaps the only remaining founder member left, I happily recall how it all started in the early sixties, with Bert Shotton and I meeting up in a Crewe-based hi-fi shop where we, along with an invited number of enthusiasts, attended a demo of the new stereo sensation. Bert had been a member of a gramophone society in Staffordshire many years back and it was decided that we would place an advert in the *Crewe Chronicle* with the intention of starting one here.

Ron Cooper, John Mee and Jack Locker showed interest and along with one or two others a plan was laid to borrow some equipment from the hi-fi store and find a suitable venue. We originally met in each other's houses, and then utilised the public library.

What we should call ourselves was also causing concern. Some said we should be Crewe, others said Nantwich, but as our members came from several neighbouring hamlets, we finally hit on South Cheshire RMS.

Finally, we found a home in the Vagrants Clubhouse, a cricket social club just outside

Nantwich, and at one time boasted a membership in the seventies. We approached Jack Oliver to be our President but he already had other commitments, so we asked Roger Fisher of Chester Cathedral fame who kindly accepted and attended many of the Society's meetings.

**Colin Jessop**

### **How long to speak?**

I would take issue with Jim Bostwick's advice on page 10 of the Spring *Bulletin* (No. 166). Is Jim advocating spending at least three minutes [speaking] per item on a programme? If that is the case then on, say, a 5-item programme at least 15 minutes is to be spent in listening to someone speak. Is that what the members really want? I would have thought the main focus should be on actually listening to the music. If an item is a short, well-known piece there doesn't seem to be a case for mentioning anything other than the composer and the length of the piece, although for less well-known items more information may be welcome. The whole business of imparting information to the audience can be got round by giving out more detailed information on slips of paper that can be perused by the audience, or not, as they see fit, as happens on occasions at my Society.

**Alex Harrison, Olton RMS**

Editor's response: Many thanks for your message. Jim's article referred to the Federation's guide 'Presenting a Programme', which suggests spending at least two to three minutes to introduce each piece of music, even if you are a beginner. In our experience, many audience members find that the insights offered by enthusiastic presenters greatly enhance their enjoyment of the music. What do other readers think?

### **Philharmonia Orchestra - a new discography**

I have recently compiled a new discography of the Philharmonia Orchestra. From the CRQ Editions website ([crqeditions.co.uk](http://crqeditions.co.uk)) the spiral-bound A5 format costs £25 including postage, or it is available as a free download in PDF format. However, I am prepared to send the latest version as an email attachment to individuals, if preferred. Please contact me at [jbpgodfrey@gmail.com](mailto:jbpgodfrey@gmail.com). Two forms are available. One is what I call the loo-roll version – a continuous roll with no pagination (currently 653 pages) – and the other is a page-formatted version which (in theory) one can print without 'orphans' and 'widows'. I found the chronological part, 590 pages, just goes into one four-hole binder, whilst the three indexes go into another. The Philharmonia has a long and distinguished recording history and I am in favour of as wide a distribution as possible, if only so that 'keen types' may spot errors that can then be corrected! Of course, the discography is never 'finished' - after all, they are still making records, although not many these days, sadly. So it will be updated from time to time.

**Brian Godfrey**

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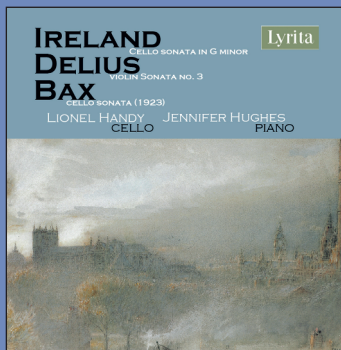
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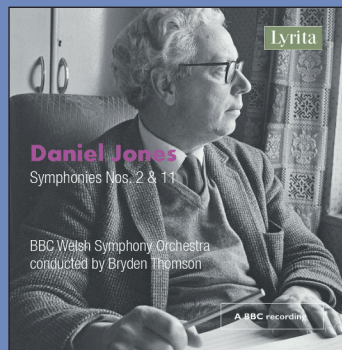


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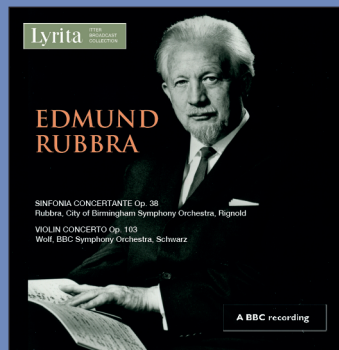
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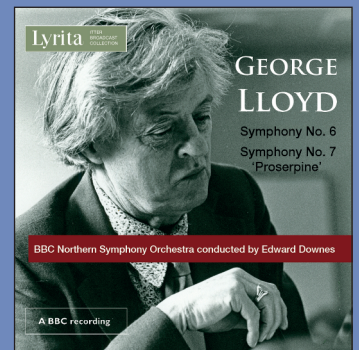
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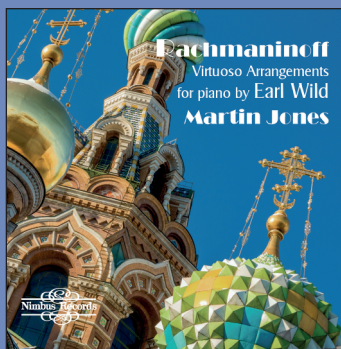
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