



Bulletin

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NEW RELEASES

www.hyperion-records.co.uk

ALKAN CONCERTO FOR SOLO PIANO TROISIÈME RECUEIL DE CHANTS

Alkan's *Concerto for solo piano* is one of the great pianistic high-wire acts — an epic work which demands unprecedented levels of technical ability and physical stamina. *Troisième recueil de chants* is a delightful rarity, rescued here from oblivion by the wonderful Marc-André Hamelin, who is simply one of the greatest living performers of this intoxicating music.

MARC-ANDRÉ HAMELIN piano

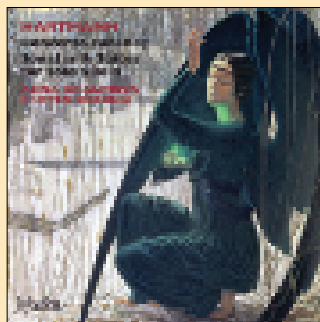


CDA67569

HARTMANN CONCERTO FUNEBRE SONATAS AND SUITES FOR SOLO VIOLIN

Hartmann's *Concerto funebre*, composed during the outbreak of World War II, is an extraordinary work, containing conflicting messages of hope, desperation and foreboding at the times ahead. Making her recording debut for Hyperion in this disc of important repertoire is the spectacular young Russian violinist Alina Ibragimova.

ALINA IBRAGIMOVA violin
with BRITTEN SINFONIA



CDA67547

GOMBERT TRIBULATIO ET ANGSTIA

This is The Brabant Ensemble's third disc for Hyperion. Under their director, eminent musicologist Dr Stephen Rice, they continue to excavate jewels of the sixteenth-century choral repertoire which have until now remained under-performed. Gombert's motets are the heart of his writing and this selection allows the range of his musical accomplishments to fully emerge.

THE BRABANT ENSEMBLE
STEPHEN RICE director



CDA67614

SPOHR SYMPHONIES 1 & 2

In his lifetime, Spohr ranked as one of the great composers alongside Mozart and Beethoven; his music played and loved by thousands. The indefatigable Howard Shelley conducts the Orchestra della Svizzera Italiana in stylish performances of two of his greatest symphonies, which demonstrate all the originality and individuality which contemporary listeners found in Spohr's music.

ORCHESTRA DELLA SVIZZERA ITALIANA
HOWARD SHELLEY

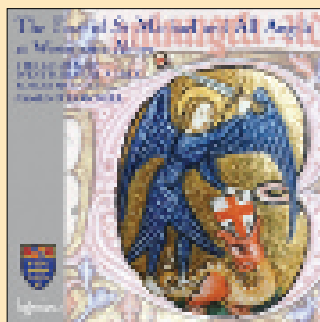


CDA67616

THE FEAST OF ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY

Hyperion is delighted to present this latest CD from The Choir of Westminster Abbey. The texts for Michaelmas are uniquely dramatic and visionary, and have inspired musicians throughout the centuries to create settings of thrilling immediacy. This fascinating disc presents the best of these works from a range of composers.

THE CHOIR OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY
ROBERT QUINNEY organ
JAMES O'DONNELL



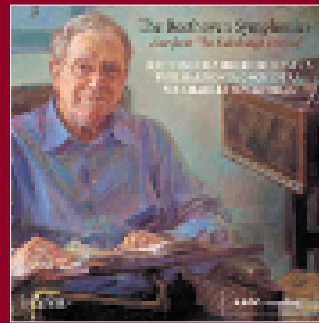
CDA67643

hyperion

THE BEETHOVEN SYMPHONIES LIVE FROM THE EDINBURGH FESTIVAL

'This Beethoven Five was a seamlessly integrated interpretation and performance which refreshed the best known of all symphonies. That's why it was special. This performance was suffused with the shock of the new' (*Glasgow Herald*)

SCOTTISH CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
PHILHARMONIA ORCHESTRA
SIR CHARLES MACKERRAS



CDS44301/5

BACH THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER BOOKS 1 & 2

'Hewitt has set a new benchmark. Her touch is admirably clear and light ... and she is uniquely attuned to Bach's supple, sprightly rhythms. A '48' of exceptional grace and beauty. I know of no musician whose Bach playing on any instrument is of greater subtlety, beauty of tone, persuasiveness of judgement or instrumental command than Hewitt's is here' (*BBC Music Magazine*)

ANGELA HEWITT piano

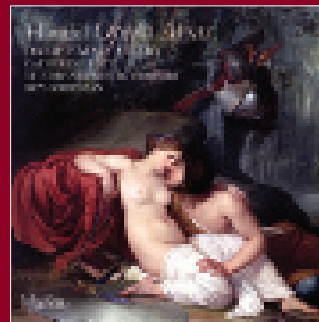


CDS44291/4

HANDEL OPERA ARIAS

'Kirkby's talent for matching brilliant coloratura with dramatic urgency remains unparalleled ... A compelling interpretation of rarely heard masterpieces' (*International Record Review*) 'Performances are fluent and stylish' (*BBC Music Magazine*) 'An artist of unique vocal personality and intelligence' (*Gramophone*)

EMMA KIRKBY
THE BRANDENBURG CONSORT
ROY GOODMAN

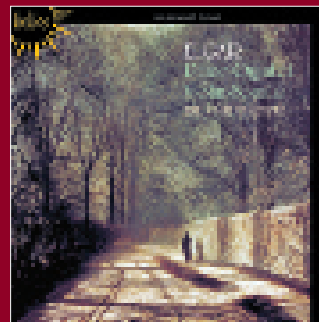


CDS44271/3

ELGAR PIANO QUINTET VIOLIN SONATA

'As ever the playing of The Nash Ensemble evinces consummate refinement and total dedication; their heartwarmingly eloquent reading communicates strongly ... No true Elgarian could fail to derive considerable satisfaction from such effortlessly idiomatic music-making' (*Gramophone*)

THE NASH ENSEMBLE

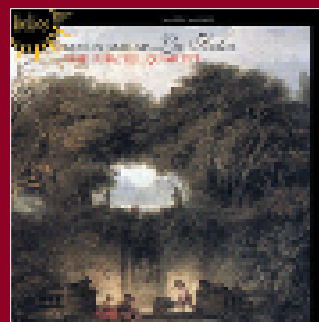


CDH55301

MARAIS LA FOLIA

'Marais' music is full of interest, and the strong contrasting characters of individual movements are well served by the Purcell Quartet' (*Which CD*)

THE PURCELL QUARTET



CDH55235

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Editor Thelma Shaw
15 Cann's Lane
Hethersett
Norwich NR9 3JE
Tel: 01603 812996

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Front cover: Picture in The Consort Suite, The Crown Hotel, Scarborough
(*Photograph by Tony Pook*)

Please note that the address of the FRMS website is
www.thefrms.co.uk

Something in the air



I felt a bit like Mole and Ratty in *Wind in the Willows* while I was looking through the material for this issue! Remember how those creatures

of the riverbank felt a frisson of exhilaration as they sensed the first stirrings of Spring and remarked that there was 'something in the air' worth celebrating with a picnic? I wasn't stirred to pack a picnic and rush out to the river, but felt the same sort of high spirits as I read the news from societies, reports from those who were at the various events during the past six months and recalled general comments about what's going on in the Federation.

Rising expectations

There is no doubt that the Winter of restlessness felt as an undercurrent a few years ago has given way to a much more productive and well-motivated Spring. The concept of regeneration seems to have caught on and there is no longer an air of despondency about the future as long-term expectations improve. It is true that, inevitably in the older societies, membership declines but there is also good evidence that, overall, this fall in numbers is beginning to be largely offset by new recruitment.

Adaptation, a wide net and innovation

Also, societies are considering ways of adapting to changing requirements, spreading the net of interest wider and increasing their catchment area by innovative means. A good example of this is the outreach venture planned by Derby Music Circle (p15). With this novel idea, the plan is for the Music Circle to go out to groups of potential new members instead of waiting for them to come to the Derby venue.

Catch 'em young

A constant cry is the need to attract younger members and how to appeal to the younger generation. One idea that drifted through my mind in that period of suspended animation between waking and getting up was by way of a

question to the effect: "I wonder if anyone has ever thought of starting a junior RMS?" In the first instance this would need to be a music appreciation exercise, with a very wide base and started at an age when the young are receptive to new experiences. Is this feasible or just pie in the sky? Just a fleeting thought but, if it is a reasonable idea, how could it be realised? Any volunteers?

It's all about confidence

One of the secrets of success is self confidence, and belief in ourselves generates confidence on the part of others. It is obvious from the increasing advertising that the recording companies believe that the FRMS, represented by the Bulletin, as part of its shop front, and the vehicle through which it reports its activities and progress, is worth their support as a quid pro quo. We are extremely grateful for this support and hope that readers will, in their turn, extend their collections with the outstanding CDs reviewed.

Friends of the FRMS

There are a number of people who, for various reasons, are not able to join an affiliated Society but are keenly interested in the Federation and its activities; many subscribe to the *Bulletin*. The Committee is keen to foster such contacts on a firm footing and at the 2006 AGM, the proposal to implement a **Friends of the FRMS** category was carried unanimously.

For an annual subscription of £5.00, a Friend of the FRMS will receive two issues of the *Bulletin* and the Newsletter (normally sent twice a year to affiliated Societies) and advance details of the annual Music Weekend and the AGM. Friends will be welcome to attend the AGM (as non-voting observers) and the usual accompanying entertainment. Details of regional events will be supplied on request. A Friend who wishes to do so can also be put in touch with other Friends in area. Who knows, if a few Friends get together they could end up starting another Society! For more information, please get in touch with **Allan Child**. Contact details are inside the back cover of the *Bulletin*.

OUT & ABOUT

Daventry Music Weekend April 2007

Some 100 residents from all parts of the British Isles converged on the Daventry Hotel for the FRMS Music Weekend from 13th 15th April. I regret that I couldn't attend but I am very grateful to members of the committee who supplied copy for the following summary of the events and to George Steele of the Rochdale RMS and FRMS committee for the pics. Ed.

RICHARD BAKER



Richard Baker with Chairman John Davies (L) & Diane & Graham Kiteley

With his instantly recognizable voice, Richard Baker was the perfect choice for our first presentation.

London born Richard was educated at Kilburn Grammar School and Peterhouse, Cambridge. He graduated in History and Modern Languages but spent much of his time acting or playing the piano for the Footlights.

We learned that Richard served in the Royal Navy during World War II and subsequently in the Royal Naval Reserve: he holds the Reserve Decoration (RD). After brief periods as an actor and teacher he joined the BBC in 1950 as an announcer on the Third Programme.

Many remember him for his 28 years as a newsreader but music lovers also remember with joy and gratitude his many contributions to music.

These include the programmes *These you have loved* and *Baker's Dozen* as well as his introductions to the New Year concert from Vienna and the

last night of the Proms, which he presented for 32 years.

And who will ever forget *Face the Music* with fellow panellists: the delightful Joyce Grenfell, Robin Ray with his encyclopaedic knowledge of opus numbers and Joseph Cooper at the dummy keyboard?

These personalities and the programmes that they made so popular were recalled as Richard introduced his items of music.

Richard has written nine books, five of them about music, including biographies of Mozart and Schubert. In 2005 he edited *Music of the Sea* for the National Maritime Museum. He ended his presentation with a recording of Joyce Grenfell telling of Richard's experience in a shop somewhere in Wales.

As he browsed, he was aware that he was under close observation by the shopkeeper and a customer. He realised that he had been spotted and waited for the inevitable question: *'Excuse me but are you Richard Baker?'*

With characteristic modesty he admitted that he was. There was a long pause before the shopkeeper said: *'We are very disappointed.'*

Far from being disappointed, the Daventry audience was absolutely delighted, not only with the music presented by Richard Baker but also with the charm of the man himself.

ANTONY HODGSON

Saturday began with recording producer Antony Hodgson, who discussed the issues involved in the refurbishment of early recordings and gave some notable examples.

There are several types of recordings: acoustic, early electrical, wartime tapes, post-war 78s and eventually LPs, so there is no 'one-size fits-all' refurbishment technique.

Acoustic recordings require special care, particularly orchestral music, and it is essential not to overdo things. Eliminating too much hiss and crackle will also eliminate too much sound. We heard an extract from Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique Symphony*, recorded in 1914, as an example of a refurbished acoustic recording. With electrical recording came a big improvement in sound quality.

But recording was still direct to disc and had to be in takes of about four minutes, and some conductors adopted an extremely fast tempo, illustrated by an extract from the first ever recording of Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony*.



Only a few seats left for the next performance!

OUT & ABOUT

Stereo pre-empted by accident

As a precaution against faults a backup disc was made using two microphones and two recording machines. This disc was usually scrapped once the master had been made, except on one occasion when both discs were kept inadvertently. Years later it was realised that because the two microphones were some distance apart the recordings on the two discs were in effect the right and left channels of a stereo recording. Thus we heard part of Elgar's *Cockaigne Overture*, recorded in stereo in 1933, long before stereo was invented!

Vintage years

The 1930s were vintage years, with many fine recordings, notably by Telefunken and exemplified by an extract from *Eine kleine Nachtmusik*, conducted by Erich Kleiber. The Decca ffr (full frequency range response) system had been developed during the war for training sonar operators; later it was used to improve the sound quality of traditional 78 rpm records. Coupled with mastering onto tape the result was a revelation. Antony illustrated post-war 78s with Mogens Wöldike's recording of *Haydn's Symphony No 91*.

Swansong of the 78

But the days of the 78 were numbered. The LP record soon complemented tape, first in mono followed by stereo in 1957. But there are mono recordings whose sound is superior to later stereo recordings. They are well worth seeking out if they

reappear on CD. As an example we heard an excerpt from Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony* recorded in 1953 by Erich Kleiber with the Concertgebouw Orchestra.

Stereo was pioneered in the UK by Pye. An excerpt from Antal Dorati's recording of *The Rite of Spring* with the Minneapolis orchestra on the Mercury label showed that Mercury's *Living Presence* tag was no idle boast.

Overcoming the pitfalls

When recording directly to disc the speed of a disc-cutting machine sometimes differed from the nominal 78 rpm, giving a change in pitch and tempo when the finished disc is played at 78rpm. Adjusting the playing speed when making the transfer to CD corrects this.

But what of the more modern recording that has been put together from a number of takes, one of which the artist took at a different tempo? Antony's advice would be to leave well alone.

When working from vinyl LPs there is a loss of quality in the inner grooves as the effective speed of the recording is reduced. The only way to avoid the problem is to select discs that are little worn.

How far to intervene?

Antony addressed the problem of retakes and applause in live recordings and considered how far the engineer should intervene.

How valid is it to include the applause from a single performance if a live recording has been polished by using retakes to cover minor blemishes?

And what about the audience who applaud too soon, notably in the pause just before the end of Tchaikovsky's fifth symphony? Stokowski famously avoided that problem by omitting the pause! On balance, Antony would take out applause. But whatever the engineer decides, it must be done with sensitivity; in the end it is the music that matters.

The well-deserved applause for Antony's presentation indicated how much we had enjoyed learning while listening to superb music.

PAUL WESTCOTT



A relaxed Paul Westcott gives his thoughts on all things French

Paul is well remembered at Daventry for his last minute cameo appearance in 2005, when he stepped into the breach in Richard Bonyngé's absence; and last year he was here in excellent company on a watching brief. This year, Paul was here in his own right, as he gave us a particular slant on French music.

All Things French

He began with the *Valse des Rayons* from Offenbach's ballet *La Papillon*. The delicate version we heard seemed oddly out of place until the centime dropped: this was the piece that had been adapted into the brutal Apache Dance in the early 20th Century.

OUT & ABOUT

On this occasion Offenbach's gentle original set the scene for a morning of less familiar music of the 19th Century French theatre. Pleasing reminders of music by popular composers that is often neglected in favour of their better known works were:

- ❖ The delightful *Oriental Dance* from Saint-Saens' *Henry VIII* - sounds incongruous, but the dance takes place at a banquet organised by the King to celebrate his new liaison with Anne Boleyn.
- ❖ Adolphe Adam's *La Poupée de Nuremberg*, (*Dolly Dance*) from his opera *Si j'étais Roi*.
- ❖ The introduction to Act 2 of Massenet's *Thérèse*.

New to many was the music of Alexandre Lecocq, at one time regarded as Offenbach's successor, and whose operettas such as *La Petite Mariée* and *Le Petit Duc* delighted and cheered-up a demoralised Paris being occupied during the 1870-71 Franco-Prussian war.

Of particular interest was the unusual voice of Huguette Tourangeau. This flexible mezzo-soprano adapts equally to Rossinian coloratura, the robust trouser roles of German opera and the lyricism of French heroines. Her unusual intonation, familiar to French ears, was new to many in the audience.

To test the popular belief that French conductors are not the best interpreters of German music, Paul played Charles Munch's lively and colourful rendering of the Venusberg Music from *Tannhäuser*, which left many unconvinced. However, Philippe Entremont's

work in Vienna and Munich seems to support Paul's view.

The Finale of *La Vie Parisienne* ended the morning as it had begun - with music of the 19th Century French theatre. A very appropriate choice as Jacques Offenbach is widely considered a musical version of the great Henri Toulouse Lautrec.

This was Paul's debut and his engaging and droll presentation ensured his return.

CONVERSATION PIECE

This year, **Edward Greenfield**, FRMS President, talked to **Peter Alward**, recently retired as President of EMI Records after 34 years with the company and for his services to classical music on disc was awarded The Gramophone Special Achievement Award.

Peter described how a series of, often chance, encounters with key figures led to successful contracts for those artists with EMI. The impressive list of people with whom he had worked included Herbert von Karajan, Sir Simon Rattle, Anne-Sophie Mutter, Nigel Kennedy, Itzhak Perlman, Daniel Barenboim, Yo Yo Ma, Angela Gheorghiu, Roberto Alagna and so on!

He also spoke of how many of those people, especially Daniel Barenboim, often recommended to him new artists who later became stars.

With his usual skill and patience, Edward Greenfield teased out information that showed the great importance of Peter's role in EMI, despite being unknown to the many

music lovers who benefited from his work. The interview lifted the veil on the classical music recording industry and was very well illustrated by musical excerpts chosen by both Peter and Edward.

MARIANNE OLYVER

As a violinist of the highest calibre, Marianne Olyver has done much to keep alive the tradition of a small orchestra playing popular music. She did not bring her orchestra but talked about her life in music.



Marianne Olyver acknowledges applause after playing

She began to play the violin at the age of twelve, an age considered to be old to begin such an instrument. A year later she was accepted into the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and became the first girl to lead the orchestra. She continued her studies in London and Geneva with Max Rostal, Alfredo Campoli and Emanuel Hurwitz CBE.

Marianne has also toured with the Rambert Dance Company as a solo violinist in programmes that included her acclaimed performance of the *Sonata for Solo Violin* by Bela Bartok.

Now and then Marianne elaborated a point in her amusing anecdotes by playing her prized violin.

OUT & ABOUT

The heyday of the light music orchestra

In the late 1800s light orchestras proliferated in the resorts and spas of Europe and flourished until WW2 and beyond. For example, the chain of Lyons Corner House restaurants spent over £150,000 each year on their orchestras and 160 recordings by The Piccadilly Grill Room orchestra enabled its leader to buy a Stradivarius violin.

Light music broadcasts took up more time than any other programme, having twice as many hours devoted to it compared to classical music.

At one time the BBC had eight full time light orchestras and in the 50s promoted a hugely popular annual international festival of light music at the then new South Bank complex.

But changes in fashion and

broadcasting policy left the sizeable audience for light orchestral music neglected. Fortunately, Marianne and her orchestra keep the flames burning with their renditions of tunes that we remember so well and which give nostalgic listening pleasure to all of us of a certain age. Two CDs of Marianne and her orchestra are available:

Dark Eyes: No: - MO 9596

Serenade: No: - MO 9597

AMIROV PIANO TRIO



Sara Wilander piano;
Lisa Martinsson violin
William Duncombe clarinet

Following Daventry custom, Sunday morning was given over to live music. The Amirov Piano Trio is a group of international musicians in their final year at Birmingham Conservatoire but their appearance at Daventry was beset with unforeseen problems. First, their cellist had to withdraw just before the recital and a revised line-up was hastily arranged.

Then the digital piano developed a fault and failed to respond to the expert efforts of our technicians. The musicians quickly adjusted their plans and we had a surprise programme of music for clarinet and violin.

Two movements from Bartok's *Contrasts*, featured violin and clarinet. Thereafter the items were for solo instruments. William demonstrated his talent with:

*The challenging *Theme and variations* by Jean Francaix

*Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto*.

Lisa delighted us with:

Canzonetta from Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto*

**Meditation* from Massenet's *Thais*

*Monti's *Czardas*

*Schubert's *Standchen*, *Handel's *Ombra mai fu*

*Tchaikovsky's *Chanson triste*.

Lisa and William performed the hastily re-arranged programme with great musicianship and skill and their respective talents were very obvious.

We were disappointed not to hear the full ensemble, but can report that the Amirov Trio with William Duncombe have been engaged by the Classical Music Society for a recital in Kidderminster Library on

Crack of dawn Forum for technical enthusiasts

Sunday morning began early with a Forum presented by Philip Ashton, FRMS Technical Officer, always a popular draw for the enthusiasts. As ever it covered current technical issues, which seem to have advanced at least 10 years since last year. Philip explained how the switchover to digital TV will affect every TV viewer in the U.K. He also explained other digital modes such as High Definition transmissions for TV and DRM for radio. The latter is a new method of transmission for radio reception and has had a slow take up.

Philip gave details of IPODS and other MP3 players and demonstrated their high-quality with the last movement of Tchaikovsky's 4th symphony played over our HIFI system in use during the weekend.

He briefly mentioned Blue ray and HDDVD, two competing systems for improving sound and vision playback. At present both are expensive and eventually only one will be commercially viable.

Philip ended with the observation that only one company had produced a player that is capable of playing both SACD and HD DVD but not ordinary CDs.

He implored us to remember the battle between VHS and Betamax formats. The technically inferior VHS won the day. It seems that the companies with the most clout finally win! The same will surely happen with Blue Ray and HD DVD.

OUT & ABOUT

Friday November 23rd 2007, starting at 7.30 pm.

All affiliate members are welcome. Anyone who would like to attend, please contact Graham Kiteley (details at back of the *Bulletin*).

ALLAN CHILD

Allan Child, Chairman of Derby RMS, former FRMS Chairman and current committee member ended the weekend with *Rose of the Shires*. This programme related to four Northampton-born composers: Edmund Rubbra, William Alwyn, Malcolm Arnold and Trevor Hold. Trevor was the least known of these and we were pleased that his widow, Sue, was with us.

Trevor Hold

Trevor attended Northampton Grammar School before reading music at Nottingham University. His output of music was vast. He once said: "I compose because I have to. It's a part of my everyday living, like breathing, eating and sleeping." After playing a Trevor Hold arrangement of the traditional song *Oliver Cromwell*, Allan revealed another Northampton connection: according to legend, Oliver Cromwell is buried on the battlefield at Naseby.

Edmund Rubbra

Rubbra was taught by Holst at the Royal College of Music. He did not discard past traditions but rather sought to reinterpret them. Alan's examples of Rubbra's work were:

**Prelude and Fugue on a theme by Cyril Scott*

**Benedictus and Agnus Dei from Missa in Honorem Sancti Dominici.*

William Alwyn

Alwyn is probably best known for his large output of film music. He has been described as 'a successful avant-garde composer' or 'an unashamed romantic'. Allan represented him with:

*The first movement of *Sonata alla turca* for piano

*An excerpt from *Symphony No 4.*

Malcolm Arnold

A generation later than Rubbra and Alwyn, and in contrast to them, Arnold had a privileged upbringing as the son of a wealthy shoe manufacturer. As did Alwyn, he wrote extensively for films but is also well known for his symphonies, overtures and English, Irish, Scottish and Cornish Dances. Allan opted for some less well-known music and thus we heard:

**Epilogue* from the *John Clare Cantata*

**Polka* from *Solitaire.*

We ended as we began, with the music of Trevor Hold:

*Excerpts from *Six Kaleidoscopes.*

*Songs from the *John Clare songbook.*

At the time of his death Trevor Hold was working on the three Northampton composers that Alan presented: Arnold, Alwyn and Rubbra.

Allan suggested that, in his modest way, Trevor would be delighted to be remembered as the fourth composer of the county with which he had such an affinity.

We all thoroughly enjoyed Allan's well-researched and well-delivered programme.

Until next time

Congratulations to all who contributed to the success of the wonderful weekend of music. Particular thanks to Graham Kiteley, the Weekend Organiser, and Tony Baines, the Weekend Co-ordinator. They have begun planning already for 2008.

CENTRAL REGION MUSIC DAY Saturday 3rd November 2007

To mark the 150th anniversary of his birth, the theme is

ELGAR & CO.

The presentations will focus on: Elgar, the man and his music; his relationship with Sir Granville Bantock; and his influence on other composers, from Vaughan Williams to Adès

VENUE: St. Margaret's Church Hall, Olton

TIME: 10.30 am reception to 5.00 pm

COST: £12.50 (includes buffet lunch + drinks)

CONTACT: Sec. Mick Birchall, 2 Burley Close, Desford, Leicester LE9 9HX. Tel: 01455 823494

BOOK EARLY! Limit of 56 delegates

REGIONAL & SOCIETY NEWS

SCARBOROUGH MUSIC WEEKEND 2007



The Yorkshire Regional Group Committee decided to give this year's programme a British Music theme. We wanted to pay homage to Elgar in the 150th anniversary of his birth, without being too exclusive. With a British theme we could offer an interesting balance in the talks and include the music of other composers.

[Many thanks to Gordon Allatt, of Ossett, for his delightful drawings of various (imaginary) delegates.]



Elgar's Yorkshire

Dennis Clark of Horsforth RMS is Yorkshire Regional Group Secretary and an Honorary Member of the Elgar Society, with which he has been associated for over 30 years. Who better to open the weekend, combining his photographic skill, love of music and knowledge of Elgar?

Elgar's Yorkshire connection started 125 years ago when he spent the first of many enjoyable holidays in the Dales. He was the guest of Dr Charles Buck who had a medical practice in Settle and who also played the 'cello. They met when a British Medical delegation visited Worcester and Elgar invited Dr Buck to join in with a local amateur orchestra.

Dennis showed slides of Settle and Giggleswick and the surrounding area: places where Elgar stayed, the views he would have seen and the walks he shared with Dr Buck. These were accompanied by Dennis's expert commentary, full of anecdotes about the visits, with excerpts from Elgar's early music.

Take a Pair of Sparkling Guys

Raymond Wood is well-known in Yorkshire for his pre-concert talks and society presentations. He has conducted many productions of Gilbert and Sullivan operas, holds them in great affection and obviously has an intimate knowledge of them. He began with a 1941 disc of Webster Booth singing *Take a pair of sparkling eyes* with Leslie Howard and the Hallé.

Gilbert and Sullivan were brought together for an opera called *Thespis*, which didn't do too well. Most of the music disappeared but enough was found and

revived to make ballet in the 1990s, and from that we heard the *Introduction* and *Waltz*.

Richard d'Oyly Carte asked Gilbert and Sullivan to write *Trial by Jury*, the second of the fourteen *Savoy Operas*. They were named after D'Oyly Carte's theatre and are still popular today. Although G & S did not always get on well, they stimulated each other to produce some of the wittiest stage productions of their day.

Ray then played (and mimed word-perfectly) patter songs from *The Pirates of Penzance*, *The Sorcerer* and *Ruddigore*, finishing with *We hope that we leave you with feelings of pleasure* from *The Gondoliers*.

Out of the Twilight

Sue Parker was so impressed with the English Music Festival in Dorchester-on-Thames in October 2006 that she decided to learn more about the life and music of the composer Arnold Bax.



We followed Bax from his early years; through his time in Russia; the inspiration of various romantic attachments and the great influence of Irish myth and folklore on both him and his music.

Tintagel and *November Woods* apart, the music was unfamiliar but never a problem to listen to. Bax composed in all genres and we heard excerpts from *In the Forest* (from a symphony, *Spring Fire*, written for the 1913 Norwich Festival but never performed during his lifetime), the *First Piano Sonata*, and one of *Five Irish Songs - I Heard a Piper Piping*.

Bax was a brilliant pianist and wrote a lot of music for the piano, most of it for Harriet Cohen, who was one of his lovers and a noted interpreter of contemporary British music. We heard *The Theme and Variation III - Strife*, from Bax's *Symphonic Variations*. This was written for Cohen and she demanded exclusive use.

In 1917 Bax wrote a sextet for harp, cor anglais and strings; this was *In Memoriam*, his response to the political events of the previous year. His ideals were shattered by the Irish Easter Rising, when the Republicans tried to break away from Britain. We heard excerpts from orchestral and choral works, written in the post-Irish period when Bax took more inspiration from his English roots.

To end her talk, Sue played the first movement of *Symphony No. 5*, which Bax dedicated to Sibelius.

OUT & ABOUT

Calling the Shots

Alan Tongue is co-ordinating all the Elgar Society events in this celebratory year. An ideal person to talk about Elgar you would think, but in fact he came to show DVDs of programmes made in his time as a BBC Radio and Television producer.

First the *Finale* of Schumann's *Fourth Symphony* in 1986 with Kurt Masur and the Leipzig Gewandhaus, then the Elgar *Violin Concerto* from the 1988 proms, played by Ernst Kovacic with Jan Pascal Tortelier conducting the Ulster Orchestra.

Alan described the preparation for a music relay for which he needed a detailed plan. The score was the least of his problems when trying to manage the 40-50 staff involved in an Outside Broadcast, probably with TV and radio having different interval talks.

Alan showed the Montreal and USSR symphony orchestras playing Bartok's *Concerto for Orchestra* and the *Finale* of Tchaikovsky's *Sixth Symphony*.

We then had three encores:

*A clever, multilayered film with Derek Bell, an Ulster musician, playing the harpsichord, the Irish harp, the tiompan, the oboe and the bodhran in a medley of tunes by Turlough O'Carolan;

*Evelyn Glennie demonstrating all the percussion;

*James Johnston, a famous Belfast tenor, being shown a 1948 film of himself as Adorno in the Covent Garden première of *Simon Boccanegra*.

Four Englishmen of 1905

This programme featured four composers who were born in 2005: William Alwyn, Alan Rawsthorne, Constant Lambert and Michael Tippett.

Graham Kiteley, the FRMS Treasurer, started with William Alwyn's *Fanfare for a Joyous Occasion*. Graham's wide selection of works made no concessions or compromises to popularity. Thus, as well as entertaining us, he challenged our ears with some unfamiliar music.

Alan Rawsthorne was a most unlikely person to be a successful composer as he studied architecture and dentistry before turning to music.

He wrote music for 27 films and had 70 other works published. We heard *The Prelude and Nocturne* to the film *The Cruel Sea*, the *Second Piano Concerto*, *Divertimento for Chamber Orchestra* and the *Country Dance* movement from his *Second Symphony*.



Constant Lambert and Alan Rawsthorne were great friends, sharing passions for drinking and fishing. After Lambert's premature death his widow, Isabel, married Rawsthorne. We heard the *Dance for the Followers of Leo* from Lambert's ballet, *Horoscope*, written in 1937 for his long-term very close friend, Margot Fonteyn, and for Frederick Ashton. After his setting of *Summer's Last Will and Testament* (Thomas Nashe's view of Elizabethan London), we heard Lambert conducting the Hallé, with Hamilton Harty as pianist, in the *Finale* from *Rio Grande*.

The best-known of the four composers is Michael Tippett, but it took him thirty years to achieve any success. An imaginative composer, he is highly individual, surrealistic, complex and can be difficult.

From Act II of *The Midsummer Marriage* we heard the *Ritual Dances*, then a fast and percussive movement from the *Third Piano Sonata* and the *Adagio* from *The Concerto for Double Orchestra*.

To end his programme, Graham returned to William Alwyn, with a resumé of his career as a writer of classical and film music. He played *Libera me*, from the film *Svengali*, and the final minutes of his *Fourth Symphony*.

More Dutton Magic

Michael Dutton of Dutton Laboratories made a welcome return visit. He spoke of current computer techniques that owed much to advances in forensic science and described the Cedar system used to refurbish old recordings.

We heard historic recordings of Meta Seinemeyer in Verdi arias and Albert Sammons playing Rubbra's *Second Violin Sonata*. The new and controversial reconstruction of Elgar's *Piano Concerto* might not please the purists, but it sold 15,000 copies, which showed the great and continuing interest in Elgar and also provided the funding for many other recordings.

Minor composers represented were Richard Arnell (*Piano Concerto* and *Symphony No. 2*); Bainton and

Boughton with extracts from symphonies, and Julius Harrison (*The Worcestershire Suite* and *Bredon Hill Rhapsody*).

Popular records included Robert Farnon, Billy Meyerl and Billy Cotton. Interval record sales were brisk and reflected the great interest that exists for old and new music in the excellent labels covered by Michael and his team.



OUT & ABOUT

Elgar: Untutored Genius

Professor Brian Newbould explored Elgar's work and development in the context of Elgar's lack of a formal musical education.

Elgar's father kept a music shop in Worcester and young Edward could read books, study scores and play the instruments in stock. He had formal violin lessons but, with great self-discipline, he taught himself harmony and counterpoint.

In the birth-place museum, at Broadheath, all Elgar's text books, except one, show signs of heavy usage. Elgar used to stuff his pockets full of bread and cheese and walk in the fields to study, notably music by Brahms, Beethoven, Dvořák, Mozart and Schumann.



Elgar was a competent violinist and this shows in his compositions, for example, *Sospiri*, for harp, strings and organ, dedicated to W H (Billy) Read, leader of the LSO. This intense, lamenting piece may have been written in memory of a close American friend.

Elgar lectured on Brahms's *Third Symphony*, which probably influenced the writing of his own *First Symphony* and we heard and compared the endings of Brahms's *Third* and Elgar's *First* symphonies.

Professor Newbould examined the influence of Bach and Cherubini, and compared details from Brahms's and Elgar's *Violin Concertos*. To conclude this most informative talk he spoke of Elgar's themes and their development in the *First* and *Second* symphonies.

A Journey with the Shropshire Lad

Valerie Langfield, from Manchester, has written an authoritative book on Roger Quilter, but her subject on Monday was the poet A E Housman and the composers who have found inspiration in his poetry.



Two of his *Shropshire Lad* poems, *Loveliest of Trees* and *When I was One and Twenty*, have each been set at least 35 times and there are other poems, such as *With Rue My Heart is Laden* with more than 20 settings. Many settings of Housman have not been recorded but Valerie illustrated their merit in a private recording, which she, as pianist, has made with Matthew Wilson, a singing student at RNCM.

Arthur Somervell was the first composer to set any of Housman's words and we compared his setting of *Loveliest of Trees* with those by two little-known composers, Janet Hamilton and John Raynor.

Alfred Housman was born near Bromsgrove in 1859. His mother died when he was twelve and his father,

a solicitor, re-married, but took to drink. At Oxford, Housman fell in love with another student, Moses Jackson, who did not return this homosexual affection, although they remained friends.

Housman failed his Oxford finals and had to get a job. In 1881 he sat the Civil Service exams and went into the Patent Office, where he remained for ten years. Moses Jackson also worked there, but in a more senior position, and for a while they shared lodgings. Housman left after a quarrel and Jackson got married but didn't tell his friend until afterwards.

Housman studied at the British Library, published 25 papers and successfully applied for the Latin chair at University College, London. In 1911, he became Cambridge Professor of Latin, where he lived until his death in 1936. He was buried in Ludlow.



This fascinating talk included many examples of the settings inspired by Housman's poems, which encouraged us to explore this music further.

Scarborough Music Weekend 2008 starts with dinner on Friday 4th April and finishes with lunch on Monday 7th April. In between the excellent meals there will be a little music!



Tony Pook, Chairman YRG

FRMS YRG MUSIC WEEKEND 2008

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Maggie Cotton – Former Percussionist CBSO
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OUT & ABOUT

Rochdale 3/4 century celebrations

On 21 April 2007 about 150 members, friends and visitors from other FRMS societies attended the final event in the RGS 75th Anniversary celebrations, held at Bamford Chapel, Rochdale. The audience was entertained by a presentation from John Summers, Chief Executive of the Hallé Concert Society. He described the history of the Hallé Orchestra, its various famous conductors and outlined how the Hallé started recording in the late 1920s. He illustrated his talk with early examples.

In those days recordings had to be tailored to the length of time available on a 78rpm record (about 4 minutes per side). This time greatly increased with the advent of LP recording and later tapes. The Hallé now has its own recording label and also a sub-set of reissues of its early recordings under the label *Halle Traditional*.

The Society's first gramophone player, used at the first meeting in 1932, was displayed. It is an EMG Mark 9 (early '30s), which has a large papier maché horn and was the first electrically driven model.



Rochdale GS's two most valuable possessions: the original gramophone and longest serving member, Honorary President Jack Tattersall (Jack is the one on the left!)

End of term at Ulverston Jazz

The June 28 meeting at Ulverston Jazz Appreciation Society was, as usual, the last before the summer break; jazz sounds will be renewed in September.

Fittingly for this end of term meeting, the music ranged across the jazz spectrum, from early New Orleans to Ornette Coleman:

*Guest presenter Bruce Carnaffin, a clarinet player and longtime stalwart of the Cumbria jazz scene, gave us *From Roots to Fats*. Illustrating how jazz evolved through the 20s and 30s, he mentioned all the big names, including, of course, Fats Waller.

*A club member presented *The Swing Era*, featuring items from Time-Life's LP 60s series of more than 350 recreations of well known Big Band pieces. These recordings have never reappeared on CD and are a huge, albeit rather eccentric, collector's item.

**Oh! Is for Ornette* was the aptly-titled presentation about avant garde saxophonist (and occasional trumpet player

and violinist) Ornette Coleman, who has delighted and outraged jazz enthusiasts since the late '50s. This year he infuriated the classical world by winning the treasured Pulitzer Music Prize. Now in his late 70s, he is still cheerfully playing - and still an *enfant terrible* of the music scene. Catch him if you can!

Ulverston Jazz Appreciation Society meets every month except July and August, at 7.30 pm at the Old Brewery, Hart Street, Ulverston.

The Autumn season starts on September 27th with the first of a diverse set of programmes featuring notable jazz recordings with expert commentary. The modest charge of £2 includes refreshments. Newcomers, of whatever jazz persuasion, are assured of a friendly welcome. For more information visit our website at www.geocities.com/ulvjazz.

Holcombe Brook & District RMS celebrate 40 years

The society began as the result of an item in the local newspaper inviting music lovers to the home of the late Mr Billy Hall (the writer's uncle) on Thursday 31 August 1967. Of the nineteen attending, three are still members. Another was a local headmaster who offered us our first meeting place; later he became the secretary of the FRMS.

Almost 40 years to the day on 30 August 2007, there was a special meeting with members and invited guests who have an association with the group. The evening started with music and readings that mark events in our history and ended with refreshments and a celebration cake.

The society has about 40 active members, many of whom prepare and present programmes for ourselves and other like-minded groups. They also write press reports, make refreshments and organise an annual dinner in May. We also have group membership for concerts in Manchester. *Richard W Hall, Gen. Secretary*

Walton Music Circle - a history by John Holt

As the Circle celebrates its 30th anniversary this year it is interesting to look back at our beginnings. In the Autumn of 1976 Bill Mayger and Bob Taylor knocked at the door of the bookings secretary of Walton Village Hall, to ask about the cost and availability of the hall for a musical venture. They were given the information and told that John Holt, the husband of the bookings secretary, might also be interested in a recorded music group.

The three men contacted the NFGS and got a copy of the model constitution, which they adapted to the needs of the proposed Walton Music Circle. The term 'gramophone' was considered old-fashioned

OUT & ABOUT

and the initials of WMC amused the three as it was synonymous with Working Men's Clubs !

Publicity by word of mouth and the parish magazine resulted in an inaugural meeting in January 1977 when the three were appointed Chairman, Secretary and Programme Secretary respectively. The Chairman gave the first recital in February and the Programme Secretary gave his first recital *Ludwig from the Beetroot Garden* on 29th March 1977, almost 150 years exactly from Beethoven's funeral.

To begin with, the Chairman used his own equipment pushing it in a wheelbarrow to the Village Hall. Numbers increased but matters did not always run smoothly. At fairly short notice, the Society raised money from fund-raising efforts and members' loans to buy its own equipment from a local supplier. The original items have needed very little maintenance and still perform perfectly today, supplemented obviously by a CD player.

The season's programmes consist of recitals by our own members interspersed with visits from friends from neighbouring societies. In the 1980s, we began regular visits to concerts in Birmingham, Hanley and Wolverhampton, given by internationally acclaimed orchestras. We also organised live music in a local church presented by the Polysinfonia (linked with North Staffordshire Polytechnic), a concert by a local male voice choir and a string recital at the local theatre. Our geographical situation means we have the privilege of meeting many of the FRMS national officers on a regular basis.

The membership reached its peak of 85 in the mid-eighties and we moved from the small room to the main hall. But, as with many societies, it proved difficult to recruit younger folk. As age took its toll and people left the area, numbers declined and we returned to the small room. By the late 90s, numbers were down to the low twenties. However, the majority is there for every recital, there is a pleasant atmosphere and we are determined to carry on.

We are fortunate that two of those founding fathers, Bob and John, are still with us and spearheaded the celebration recitals. Bob gave us a nostalgic evening *30 Not Out* on 27th February and a fortnight later we welcomed the National Treasurer, Graham Kiteley from Kidderminster.

The grand celebration came on 27th March. On that occasion we had guests from our neighbours at Stafford RMS and Stone RMS. John Holt presented *Roman Finds*, almost 30 years to the day since he first gave the recital and a special cake was cut by two of the founder lady members.

We extend a warm welcome to any music lover who might be in the area on Tuesday evenings from September to May. *Roland Lemon, Secretary*

W. Surrey Reunion at Bookham

Bookham Recorded Music Club continues to enjoy fortnightly meetings from September to April, despite what appears to be an inexorable decline in membership.

Usually, the last programme of our year is a special fund-raising event for a local charity, but this year we hosted the Reunion of West Surrey Region.

Our Chairman, Mrs Sheila Morley opened the meeting and introduced our guest speaker, Mr. John Humphries, ARIBA CA. Mr. Humphries is also a baritone singer and speaker and his subject was the great, but as yet unknown, British composer, William Yeates Hurlstone (1876 - 1906).

It is easier to understand this apparent neglect of him knowing that when he died, his compositions were left in manuscript. There was a lack of recording equipment at the beginning of the 20th century and coupled with the intervention of two world wars, there was not much time to devote to transcribing the composer's manuscripts.

However, five of Hurlstone's orchestral works are now on CD and we heard extracts of his chamber and orchestral music.

After a light luncheon in the beautiful old Bain Hall in Bookham, Mr. Humphries resumed his fascinating insight into the life of Hurlstone. Now that we have been made aware of this composer and his music, we hope that what we have heard will encourage the sale of his discs as they become available.

Les Warner, Regional Secretary of the W Surrey arm of the FRMS, expressed thanks for his invitation as a representative of the Region, with the added bonus of hearing Mr. Humphries' talk. Our Chairman closed the meeting and thanked everyone, including Mr. Humphries, who had contributed to such a successful and happy reunion. *Mary Chandler Publicity*

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OUT & ABOUT

Golden Jubilee for Ealing RMS

This was a milestone not to be missed and visitors from other societies in the West Middlesex Group (Ruislip, Ickenham, Hayes and Perivale) were invited to the celebration evening, together with a good number from Surbiton RMS, which has a close connection with Ealing.

Alan Ball, Ealing Chairman arranged and presented a programme of light entertainment, beginning with the overture to Lionel Monckton's *The Arcadians*, followed by extracts from *Rose Marie*, *The Merry Widow*, and *Showboat*. The classics were represented by the music of Haydn, Grieg and Rameau, interspersed by observational poems by Gervaise Phynn.

Refreshments and drinks and the cake cutting by the longest serving member, Vivienne Norry, ensured a festive atmosphere. The Flanders and Swann sketches *By Air* and *Slow Train* ended the evening, which was topped off by their delightful *Hippopotamus Song*.



*Members of Ealing RMS at the Golden Jubilee celebration
L to R
Mary Agnew,
Secretary;
Alan Ball,
Chairman;
Ctee member
Jane Mundy*

Hail and Farewell

At its AGM in April Eastbourne RMS elected **Brian Braby** as Secretary. He succeeds **Eileen Howell** who, after ten years yeoman service, felt the time had come to hand on the baton. Eileen did a wonderful job and brought a very high standard to her role, for which The Society is most grateful. All good wishes to her in her retirement and to Brian Braby in his new capacity.

A Feast for West Wickham RMS

With its 1,049th programme coming up on March 22nd, WWRMS decided to loosen its belt and celebrate on 17th March with a sumptuous 40th anniversary buffet supper and concert at Adams Hall, Bencurtis Park. The mouth-watering menu contained almost 10 different savouries, four salads and five puddings – not to mention wines, fruit juices, tea and coffee!

After supper, the Neptune Ensemble, a group of five highly talented young musicians: Min-Hyung Cho, bassoon; Chris Bishop, horn, Marielle Way, flute;

Naomi Bristow, clarinet, and Julia White, oboe, gave a splendid concert of music by Handel, Debussy, Mozart, Fauré, Francaix and Ibert.

Five days later, longstanding members recalled the Society's many activities. Namely, early days; outings to concerts, opera and ballet; large screen video and DVD presentations; jazz club meetings, musical weekends at Pyke House, Battle and Imperial Hotel, Eastbourne, and musical holidays at home and abroad.

The saying goes that 'It all begins at forty'. If the past is anything to go by, members of WWRMS have a wonderful future ahead!

New Name for Derby Society

Derby RMS is now **Derby Music Circle**. Members decided on a change of name as part of a drive to raise the profile of the group and, it is hoped, to attract new members. When Derby RMS was founded, back in 1945, it was probably among the first societies to use the *Recorded Music* tag rather than *Gramophone*; the Federation did not adopt it for almost another half-century!

In the 1940s *Recorded Music* probably implied that the society was more concerned with the music than the machinery. By now, to some people, it signifies the opposite – that we are a group of techno-freaks, more interested in sampling rates and subwoofers than in Saint-Saëns or Sibelius. And, of course, the new name trips off the tongue more easily.

And also a brand new venture

The Circle is also starting a new venture under the banner **Let the Music Come to You!**, With this we offer to take programmes of recorded music to other organisations and venues in the area.

Social groups that have speakers on a variety of topics might well enjoy a music presentation and our visit would generate interest in the Circle. Other potential audiences might be in retirement homes, where residents are either less able or unwilling to venture out to a meeting elsewhere, particularly at night, but might welcome the opportunity to hear a programme brought to them.

At the time of writing we are setting up the venture, but will report on progress in a future issue of the *Bulletin*.

Our regular meetings continue at the Friends' Meeting House close to the city centre, on the first and third Mondays in the month (September - April). Members of other FRMS societies are welcome – several will be giving programmes for us this season. Details are on the FRMS website. AC

OUT & ABOUT

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Arnold Bax, Arthur Bliss and Malcolm Williamson.

This talk was first given to members of the Cirencester
Recorded Music Society in November 2006. They found
the talk "a most enjoyable evening."

Fees: £150 plus travel and overnight expenses if a
journey is over twenty miles from West London.

Over 40 years service to Newport



Rita Plucknett at her presentation on retirement as secretary of
Newport RMS

At this year's AGM, our Secretary Rita Plucknett
decided to lay down her quill. Rita, who first served
the Society as Press Secretary for four years, was
then elected Secretary, a post that she filled
admirably for 39 years. Society members marked
her retirement with a presentation of gifts and
flowers.

In recognition of her sterling contribution to the
Newport Society, she was elected an honorary life
Vice President, only the third person to be offered
that distinction in the Society's 49 seasons.

Many who attended the Federation's AGMs will
probably remember Rita and her late husband Jack,
who attended regularly for some years. He was also
our Chairman for 35 years.

J. A. Gower

60 Musical Years

Guildford RMS started life in 1947, affiliated to the
local Co-Op as a *Music Appreciation Group*. It
celebrated its Diamond Jubilee on 18th July in
Guildford's Barn Park Centre, when Mark Lowther
from BBC Radio 3 presented an enjoyable talk on
Milestones in Music Recording.

Mark covered the history of acoustic recording from
the early voice of Edison with Edith Clegg singing *Ave
Maria* in 1897, to the invention of 'electric' recording
with Dame Nellie Melba's tearful farewell at Covent
Garden in 1926.

He illustrated the great strides made in technical
development in the 1930s with a 1933 recording of
Elgar and the BBC SO at Abbey Road and a 1934
recording made by the LSO disguised as the
Glyndebourne Festival Orchestra. The huge advances
made in electronics during the 1940s not only
improved the quality of recorded sound but made it
more accessible. Telling us of the rivalry between
EMI and Decca and the latter's successful
championing of the LP, Mark played an extract of the
first commercial LP, Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, made in
November 1949.

Mark closed with reference to the advent of stereo,
including the matchless 1954 recording of Richard
Strauss's *Ein Heldenleben* by the Chicago SO under
Reiner. A most appropriate *Champagne Galop* by
Lumbye set the scene for a champagne buffet, at
which our Chairman, Roger Hard, proposed the good
health of Guildford RMS, wishing it well for the next
sixty years.

Ron Porter, Sec. GRMS

OBITUARY

David Laffin, Derby

Members of Derby Music Circle, formerly
Derby RMS, were saddened by the sudden death
on 18th July of David Laffin, the Circle's
Secretary. David had joined the then Derby
RMS in 2002 and was elected to the committee
the following year. He brought to the rôle of
Secretary his interest in a wide range of music
and was always keen to expand his knowledge,
not only at society meetings but through local
WEA classes.

But David's particular interest was in English
song, and it seems fitting that his last
programme for the society was devoted to
Finzi's settings of the poems of Thomas Hardy.
We shall miss him, and extend our sympathy to
his family and wide circle of friends.

Allan Child
Chairman and acting Secretary, Derby Music Circle

REVIEWS

Don't give up – try Dutton

If you think you've come to a dead end in a search for a recording that's rare, unusual or one that you think is out of print, don't give up. Go to Mike Dutton who, more than likely, will be able to supply the seemingly unobtainable. At his laboratories in Watford he specialises in remastering old and historically important recordings.

With the aid of modern forensic techniques and using the CEDAR process, Mike has brought remastering to an extremely high level of excellence. With great expertise he can transfer a crackly soundtrack with heavy background noise into a flawless recording.

The extensive catalogue caters for all tastes; it includes not only classical but also all categories of music, ranging from big bands and dance bands, light orchestral, jazz, Latin and rock and roll.

I have listened to impressive before-and-after demonstrations, including the remarkable transfer reviewed here which, apart from the music, will appeal especially to those interested in the history of recording.

The CD contains four Mahler works, first recorded by Columbia on some 16 sides of 78rpm and played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. Three were conducted by Bruno Walter and recorded live at concerts in the Musikvereinsaal. The producer was the legendary Fred Gaisberg with recording engineer Charles Gregory. Also, Malcolm Sargent conducts the VPO recording Abbey Road with producer Joe Batten. An immensely satisfying 75 minutes is given by:

❖ *Das Lied von der Erde*, first released in 1936. The Swedish mezzo, Kerstin Thorborg, was the soloist and her interpretation, captured here, is deeply moving with a fine balance between moments of tension and otherworldly ease. Although Walter takes this at a noticeably faster tempo than is heard in modern performances, it is interesting that the work loses nothing of its impact but, if anything, is even more poignant. At the same concert on 24 May 1936 Thorborg also sang *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen*, another song of goodbye, from the Rückert Lieder.

❖ *Ich atmet einen Linden Duft*, also from the Rückert Lieder and recorded on a 10" disc at Abbey Road in 1938 as part of Columbia's *History of Music* with Malcolm Sargent conducting. Tenor Charles Kullman sings in English with perfect diction and delicate appeal.

❖ *Adagietto from Symphony No. 5* recorded live at the Musikvereinsaal in 1938. Again, Walter conducts at a faster pace than is often given to this piece but with such empathy and understanding of the composer that the result is, if anything, more telling.

I thoroughly recommend this superb CD. I am not technically inclined but recognise quality when I hear it and am grateful to those who make it possible to listen to great performers of the past with such clarity.

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New releases on Epoch label

First recording of York Bowen works

In a first recording of Edwin York Bowen's *Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 3* and *Symphonic Fantasia*, Dutton Epoch champions a composer whose works have not been heard for over 80 years and who greatly deserves to be brought out of the shadows.

Born in 1884, Bowen was among a succession of formidable young prodigies who studied at London's Royal Academy of Music under Frederick Corder (composition) and Tobias Matthay (piano). Bowen developed rapidly as a pianist and composer and appeared in a Dussek piano concerto when just eight years old.

Bowen was a flamboyant extrovert and by the time he was in his teens he was playing his own piano works on the concert platform and writing prolifically for orchestra. Henry Wood included his tone poem *The Lament of Tasso* at a prom concert in Queen's Hall in 1903. He made a major contribution to works for stringed and wind instruments, and also concertante works for harp.

The first major concerto was *Piano Concerto No. 1*. Written and performed by him at Queen's Hall when he was 19, it received great acclaim. In 1906 the prestigious Philharmonic Society invited him to première his *Piano Concerto No. 2*. He had made his mark and his compositions and performances were prominent for the next 15 years. He played the same concerto at a prom concert conducted by Sir Henry Wood in 1921 but thereafter it gradually fell into oblivion. For some reason Bowen's star had begun to wane, although he composed prolifically to the end of his life.

This CD is of the second and third piano concertos and also a tone poem, *Symphonic Fantasia*. The latter is a wonderful succession of orchestral contrasts with brilliant effects, written when Bowen was 21 and already showing his musical maturity. Pianist Michael Dussek, with the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by Vernon Handley, gives a shining and effortless performance. **CDLX7187**

Richard Arnell Symphonies

Richard Arnell is an important, albeit sometimes neglected composer and with this release Dutton Epoch is up front in the revival of British classical music. Here the Royal Scottish National Orchestra conducted by Martin Yates gives a breathtaking performance of Arnell's symphonies nos. 4 and 5.

Arnell began his *Fourth Symphony* in the USA in 1948 and completed it in London the same year. The composer's response to post-war devastation, it is powerful and dramatic, in contrast to the much lighter fifth, written almost 10 years later. I strongly recommend both these new Epoch releases, especially to societies wanting to try new pastures and extend their music library. **CDLX7194**

DUTTON EPOCH

NEW RELEASES

YORK BOWEN
 Piano Concertos Nos. 2 & 3
 Symphonic Fantasia
 MICHAEL DUSSEK
 BBC CONCERT ORCHESTRA
 conducted by VERNON HANDLEY
CDLX 7187

JOSEPH HOROVITZ
 FOUR CONCERTOS
 Fiona Cross clarinet
 Steven Mead euphonium
 Andrew Haveron violin
 David Owen Norris piano
 ROYAL BALLET SINFONIA
 conducted by JOSEPH HOROVITZ
CDLX 7188

DAVID MATTHEWS
 FROM SEA TO SKY
 Lucie Špičková
 Rachel Nicholls
 Gillian Keith
 ORCHESTRA NOVA
 conducted by GEORGE VASS
CDLX 7189

OVER THE WATER
 MUSIC FOR RECORDER AND STRING ORCHESTRA
 Crosse – Butterworth
 Reizenstein – Hopkins
 Cooke – Jackson – Hedges
 Hurd – Pehkonen
 JOHN TURNER
 MANCHESTER CAMERATA ENSEMBLE
 conducted by PHILIP MACKENZIE
CDLX 7191

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Naxos' 20 glorious years

When the costs of manufacturing CDs dropped in 1986, an enterprising music lover with an electronics equipment company based in Hong Kong saw the opportunity to produce CDs for the same price as LPs. That man was Klaus Heymann. He decided to issue classical music on a budget-price label, recording standard repertoire with young or little-known artists, at first limiting the catalogue to fifty releases. And so Naxos began.

Earlier, Heymann had organised classical music concerts in Hong Kong with two significant results. One was that performing artists discovered that their records were not on sale in Hong Kong, prompting Heymann to undertake record distribution. The other was his marriage to the international Japanese violinist, Takako Nishizaki, whose recording of *The Butterfly Lovers Concerto* immediately sold hundreds of thousands of copies across Asia.

Thus began HK Records, a label devoted to Chinese symphonic music, followed by the Marco Polo label, with a Western repertoire of rare symphonic music of the late 19th and early 20th century.

And the rest is history. Just like Topsy, Naxos grew and is now no longer a small budget-priced label, with all that implies, but a leading producer and distributor world wide, with many awards to its credit. As well as its original labels, Naxos now records under other umbrellas: Books (both manuscript and audio), Educational, Historical, Jazz Legend and Nostalgia, while the pioneering Naxos World catalogue includes international music of many cultures and genres. In short, in a highly competitive field, Naxos has gone from strength to strength to become a leading label, regardless of price. Many happy returns!

Exclusive edition marks anniversary

A limited edition boxed set of six award-winning CDs, all selected as Gramophone's CD of the Month at the time of release, marks Naxos 20 successful years. It is barely the tip of the iceberg that constitutes the company's wide and exciting range and includes:

❖ Stokowski's transcriptions of works by Mussorgsky, with The Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra conducted by José Serebrier.

❖ Barber's *Summer of 1915*, with its sultry mood beautifully captured by Karina Guavin, soprano and the Royal Scottish National orchestra under Marin Alsop. The second and third *Essays for Orchestra* and the rarely recorded *Toccata Festiva* for organ and orchestra make up this satisfying selection of Barber's works.

❖ Marin Alsop conducts the Bournemouth Symphony Chorus and Orchestra in a stunning performance of Bernstein's powerful and exciting *Chichester Psalms*, coupled with his symphonic suite for the film *On the Waterfront* and three dances from his musical *On the Town*.

❖ *A Colour Symphony* by Bliss, and his allegorical ballet, *Adam Zero*, which portrays man's progress through life, from birth to death, with David Lloyd-Jones conducting the English Northern Philharmonia.

❖ Four works by Walton: *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue*; *Sinfonia Concertante*; *Hindemith Variations* and a march written for (but never used) for the TV series *History of the English Speaking Peoples*. English Northern Philharmonia is conducted by Paul Daniel.

❖ Anthony Payne's highly acclaimed completion of Elgar's sketches for *Symphony No. Three*. Paul Daniel conducts the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Collectively, the works in this commemorative set describe a wealth of musical emotion, richly and sympathetically portrayed by highly talented musicians under expert and sensitive direction. If you haven't bought it already, this collection is worth searching for – but hurry! As a limited edition it's in great demand.

Radiant and famous Deutsches Requiem

On its Historical label, in the Great Conductors series, Naxos has issued a deeply affecting and uplifting version of Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, composed while grieving for his mother and also his friend Robert Schumann. The emotions expressed are less of sorrowful bereavement than of solace to the living, reconciling them to their loss.

It was recorded originally in 1947 in the Musikvereinsaal under extreme political and economic difficulties, with Herbert von Karajan conducting The Vienna Philharmonic orchestra, The Choral Society of the Friends of Music, Vienna with the legendary soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Hans Hotter, baritone. This transfer was made from the best sections of two original pressings and is a remarkable testimony to the sensitivity of Karajan, soloists and chorus.

The whole performance is given with warmth and feeling but outstanding are Schwarzkopf's *Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit* (*And ye now therefore have sorrow*) ringing with comforting maternal reassurance and Hotter's urgent *Herr, lehre doch mich* (*Lord, let me know mine end*). The slight fuzziness in the louder sections does not detract from this recapture of a remarkable recording. *Naxos Historical 8.111038*

First recordings of versatile Alwyn

William Alwyn was prolific composer, equally at home in all genres: chamber, vocal, orchestral, instrumental and even film music. Unashamedly romantic, Alwyn wrote more for the heart than the intellect and much of his work is evocative of nature. This CD covers 50 years with eight examples of his chamber music and songs, five of which are world première recordings. With Madeleine Mitchell, violin, and the Bridge String Quartet, there are some lovely moments, making this is a disc well worth exploring. *Naxos 8.570340*

Hyperion stamp of quality

Two recent releases that carry Hyperion's renowned hallmark of quality include an exciting reading of the Bach *Cello Suites* and a recording of a piano concerto by a virtually unknown English composer.

Steven Isserlis plays Bach with joyous ease

In myth and legend it is said that God asked for Bach when He wanted music in heaven. If that is so, then this latest version of the *Cello Suites* must be near the top of the repertoire.

In the review section last Autumn I mentioned having heard Steven Isserlis play all six suites at a live recital over one weekend. It was a delight to hear such a dancing and, at times, almost impish, interpretation of the work, which Isserlis played with effortless ease and obvious joy. It is an equal delight that Hyperion has issued a 2-CD set of Isserlis playing the same works.

It seems impertinent to comment on such a scholarly and flawless performance by an artist who knows every note and nuance of the suites and who has studied the extant early manuscripts in detail. Isserlis has been involved with the suites since the age of 11 so that he knows the music like the back of his hand.

Each suite consists of a prelude and five dances and, apart from Isserlis' passion for and complete mastery of the music itself, what comes across in his interpretation is this dance element, which can be lost too easily in a bid for technical virtuosity.

Another point of interest in this recording is that he uses scordatura (unconventional tuning) for the fifth suite. For this he changes from a Stradivarius to a Guadagnini cello, whose darker tone is more suited to the suite's minor key. In a live concert this is not practical so, in this CD, we have an instance of one (rare) advantage of a recording over a live performance!

Also included are three different readings of the first Prelude from the earliest three manuscripts and a short Catalan folksong arranged for cello by Sally Beamish. In the accompanying notes Steven Isserlis gives the history and comprehensive analysis of the suites and his own thoughts on their meaning.

There are many recordings and interpretations of these *Cello Suites*, each with its own quality and merit. But this latest version gives a new and exhilarating dimension captured in a superb recording. For lovers of Bach this is an issue absolutely not to be missed. *HyperionCDA 67542*

Piano Concertos by W S Bennett and Bache

William Sterndale Bennett and Francis Edward Bache were master and pupil, Sterndale an established member of the British musical establishment and his pupil a potentially brilliant star in that firmament but who died at the age of 22 before he had the chance to shine. On this CD are

Bennett's 4th piano concerto and Bache's only piano concerto, opus 18. Bache was born in Birmingham in 1833, was playing the piano at the age of four and performing as a violinist in the orchestra at the Birmingham Triennial Festival in 1846.

Both composers had associations with Mendelssohn and Bache's parents intended him to study under Mendelssohn in Leipzig but with Mendelssohn's death in 1847 Bache became instead a pupil of Bennett, whose influence is evident in the first theme of the first movement of his pupil's piano concerto. However, there the similarity ends and the rest of the work contains strong references to Mendelssohn. That said, Bache's individual style and skill in orchestration are unmistakeable.

Bache revised his piano concerto several times between 1851 and there is no evidence that the final version; which was completed in Leipzig in 1856 (and the one recorded here), was ever performed. It is a masterly work, consisting of three movements linked by piano cadenzas that create the impression of a single movement. Strong vivace passages alternate with lyrical elements, the overall work showing a freshness, undoubted musicality and skill in orchestration.

The distinguished pianist/conductor Howard Shelley with the BBC Scottish Symphony orchestra gives an impeccable performance that will surely stimulate interest in a composer whose early death was a great loss to the English tradition and whose work deserves to be explored. *Hyperion CDA67595*

Unheard Mozart

It is always exciting when previously unheard works of long-dead composers come to light. Mozart left many unfinished fragments but musicologists have focussed attention on completing major works. From **Divine Art** comes a delightful collection of works for piano solo, realised, arranged and performed by Britain's Anthony Goldstone. Described by the *New York Times* as "a man whose nature was designed with pianos in mind", Goldstone is a sixth generation pupil of Beethoven. He has enjoyed a glittering world wide career as a performer and in the last few years has been acclaimed for his masterly completions and realisations of piano works, first by Schubert and now Mozart.

The five completions and four realisations were all written for keyboard, so there is no transcription from another medium. Of particular interest are two 'new' sonatas, in F major and G minor respectively. The accompanying notes by Julian Rushton give a comprehensive analysis of the background and completion of all the items, played with consummate ease and lyrical sensitivity by a master of his instrument. For lovers of Mozart and/or piano music this is a must. *dda25051*

The Federation of Recorded Music Societies Ltd

Invites you to our 71st

Annual General Meeting

Hosted this year by The Huddersfield Recorded Music Society on

Saturday 27th October 2007 at

The Castle Hill Suite

The University of Huddersfield

This is the most important date in the Federation's calendar
It is your opportunity to assist directly in the running of the Federation, to meet old friends and make new ones, to meet members of the Committee, to relax and enjoy the hospitality of a fellow Society.

It is not just a business meeting, but a recorded music recital

'A Few White Roses' presented by Jim Bostwick of the Huddersfield RMS

a Dinner

and a recital of live music by

Arioso

Anne Fallon (soprano), Roger Betterton (tenor), Susan Marshall (violin, viola) Caroline Goddard (violin, viola), Lisa Colton (viola da gamba),
Martyn Hodgson (lute, theorbo, baroque guitar)

Tickets (£20 each) for the dinner and recital (£6 recital only)

Bookings and details of the day from FRMS Secretary,
Tony Baines, 18 Albany Road, Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent, ST4 6BB
(01782 251460 frms.sec@ntlworld.com)

Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope with your application.
All cheques to be payable to the Federation of Recorded Music Societies Ltd.
Accommodation details are available from the Federation Secretary

Thanks to those who have faithfully attended this important meeting year after year, and
A word to those who have never been –

Your Federation needs you!

FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

You will find in this edition of the Bulletin a summary of the report by Sarah Polfreman on: "*An investigation into the perception of declining membership of the FRMS and of its Member Societies; and management action for the long term future*"

I am sure that all of us would wish to thank Sarah for this report, which was a B.Sc (Hons) research study. We extend to her our best wishes for the future and congratulate her on gaining a first class honours degree.

We also thank all those societies who demonstrated their interest; sixty per cent responded to Sarah's initial questionnaire.

What's in it for you?

The committee urges you, the affiliates, to read this report and consider whether you can usefully apply its conclusions and recommendations. The report deals with membership but the scope has been widened, possibly, we suggest, for academic reasons but also because there are indications that you supplied such a wealth of information in your responses.

This debate is, for some societies, merely academic; they have a stable or even flourishing membership and can reasonably assume that their present bill of fair suits the customers' needs. Sadly for others this is not the case. They have declining membership and worry from year to year whether they will have the necessary numbers and income to continue.

Look for the signs

To begin with, a decline in membership might be imperceptible but soon the seepage becomes a torrent. A problem has become a crisis. It calls for eternal vigilance. We could have a respectable number of members on the books but we should have noticed that average attendance is declining, interest is waning. Members are voting with their feet but why? Are the programmes too esoteric or are they too predictable? Do the members have the opportunity to air their views other than at the AGM?

As a rule, the first information the FRMS receives about a society with problems is that it has already closed. We also hear of societies with a healthy membership but who have decided to close because they cannot get the necessary officers to run the society.

Can we help you?

Without prejudicing your autonomy, the members of the FRMS committee are able to provide advice by virtue of the fact that they have visited many societies and have witnessed good practice. However they can visit your society only if they are invited. The FRMS respects your independence. We can encourage and recommend but we cannot compel.

Don't give up

The quest for new members is never easy. A couple of years ago members of my own society did a leaflet drop on around 750 houses on a new housing estate in Nantwich. The next season we acquired four new members but not a single one of them was from the new housing estate.

Some would say that this type of activity is a waste of time but the optimist would say that just because it did not work last year, it might very well work next year.

So again I urge you to read the report, to debate its conclusions and recommendations and, above all, be vigilant.

John Davies, Chairman FRMS

WHAT'S IN THE SECRETARY'S POSTBAG?

Recently I received an email from a gentleman wanting contact details for the Loughborough RMS.

Enquiries by post and telephone are always welcome, although my postbag is mainly electronic. This means of course that, like the post and the telephone, it is subject to 'unsolicited' messages. Surprisingly few could be classed as 'nuisance' and none are of the obnoxious variety.

My most persistent caller, sometimes more than once a day, is one Max Clark, who seems to be a sort of electronic Steptoe and Son, who buys and sells second-hand electronic equipment. No hard feelings Max as you pass unopened to the trashcan. I am sure there is a call for your services, although I don't need them myself.

Many callers mistake the nature of our movement and offer conference venues, refresher courses for Company Directors, advice on maximising our profits etc.

My most interesting regular 'unsolicited' contact is from the *Musical America Newsletter*. This is very informative on what is happening in our world of music. I find that Placido Domingo, no less, has convinced Woody Allen to direct an opera – he is to direct *Gianni Schicchi* at the Los Angeles Opera in September 2008. I shall save *Manager cuts links with jailed conductor* for later. Details of the New team for the Vienna Staatsoper, and the trials and tribulations of Italy's Spoleto Festival are also featured.

You will be pleased to know that Marin Alsop is taking Baltimore by storm and, by the way, Richard Strauss's heirs are to share the Royalties from *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Elektra* with the heirs of librettist Hugo Von Hofmannsthal. Quite right too.

Anyone for Sweden?

By post, I get a newsletter from time to time from STIM Svensk Musik. I do not know when this contact originated, but it is of very long standing. If anyone is particularly interested in Swedish music and would like information on this, please get in touch and I will send you the details. The Newsletter is in English.

On the website front

Many people find out about the movement from our excellent website. George Steele, FRMS Committee member, has now taken

this over from ex-Committee member Bob Astill (who kindly volunteered to manage it after he left the Committee) and is bringing it up to date.

The website is one of the brightest stars of the Federation. It tells people who we are and what we do. It promotes the Bulletin and the Music weekend. It lists towns that have a society and allows societies to list their annual programme on their own page.

This brings me back to where I started. I had an enquiry from someone asking if a certain society was defunct as its web page had not been updated since 2003. This of course is down to the society, not the website manager. I was able to tell the enquirer that the society did indeed still exist and put him in touch.

Still on the subject of contacting societies, the most interesting enquiry I have had recently was from someone representing the son of Heddle Nash, who was anxious to contact the Newark Society, where his father gave a talk many years ago.

Exchanging ideas

In the last two Bulletins I talked about exchanging good ideas between societies. You will see elsewhere in this issue that this discussion is now being opened up on a wider front. We do hope that those with something to contribute will do so.

In the meantime I would like to thank the Nelson RMS for their ideas on 'breaking in' new members. They are invited to submit pieces for a Christmas Choice, with the option of introducing it themselves and the possibility of presenting a whole programme at a later date. I was most interested to learn that they use the leaflet *Be a Successful Presenter*, devised by the FRMS many years ago. But by whom I do not know.

There is no doubt that the more involved its members are, the more likely a society is to flourish and survive. You might be surprised to know that we have lost societies with anything up to 50 members because there was no one willing to take the responsibility for running it.

At this year's Daventry Weekend I was talking to members of the Ealing RMS, who are regular attenders. This year there were no fewer than seven of them present. I was amazed to learn that this was almost half of their total membership. Small can be beautiful. *Tony Baines, FRMS Secretary.*

Letters to the Editor

Ed's note: Letters to the Editor, or extracts from letters, are published verbatim and unedited. Members can reply to letters through these pages.

Thanks to Dinmore Records

It was gratifying to receive the following letter from a Society using the Bulletin to record the thanks of a grateful customer.

Dear Thelma,

DINMORE RECORDS

Tavistock Recorded Music would like to record in the next issue of the *Bulletin* on the very good and courteous service recently received from this company.

Several of our members ordered CDs at £5 each and were delighted to receive the order promptly and found them to be of high quality at this very discounted price (plus 10% discount when ordering five or more).

Yours faithfully, Mrs Edna Bailey (Secretary)

FROM ME TO YOU!

I was very surprised (and pleased!) to receive several comments of approval on the short article on the saxophone in the last issue. One lady even asked if I could make this a regular feature, focussing on a different instrument each time.

I have to confess that the saxophone item was by way of a filler! I had a page to spare and a convenient photograph and so it was an obvious thing to do. But I will certainly repeat the exercise, space permitting. In the meantime, many thanks for all the encouragement. ED.

Eddie White, Programme Secretary of Tavistock RMS, reports that further to his letter in the last issue, concerning an evening of light music, the event was very favourably received and another (including jazz) might be in the offing.

WEEKEND RESIDENTIAL COURSES 2008

Organisers: John Gilks and Gavin Mist (CLPGS Board Member)

(1) FROM CYLINDERS TO CD (AND NOT FORGETTING THE IPOD)

4th – 6th JULY AT HIGHAM HALL IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

Discover the story of recorded sound, from its invention by Thomas Edison (cylinders in 1877) and Emile Berliner (discs in 1888) to the present day. Learn how artists bellowed into horns, then used microphones. How broadcasting began (the need to record on tape and use equipment outdoors) and how cine-film came to talk. Tape recorders then followed and then LP with mono, stereo and digital sound. The CD provided new sound and historic recreations. Famous artists, opera singers to crooners, and symphony and dance orchestras will provide the illustrations.

VENUE: Higham Hall, Bassenthwaite Lake, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 9SH

Telephone :017687 76276

e-mail: admin@highamhall.com

(2) RECORD REVOLUTION FROM SHELLAC TO VINYL (DAN LENO TO BILL HALEY)

8th – 10th AUGUST AT FARNCOMBE ESTATE IN THE COTSWOLDS

Today music is on tap. From radio, TV, tape, computer and IPOD. We take it for granted. But not so before 1900. How did this transformation come about? This course will examine the period covered by the 78 rpm and the long-playing record (not forgetting the cylinder!). More than a century of music, both classical and easy listening, will be demonstrated. We will focus in part on dance bands in the 78 era and the Academy of St Martin-in-the-Fields when LPs were universal. Plenty of nostalgia using archive equipment – the real thing!

VENUE: The Farncombe Estate Centre, Broadway, Worcestershire WR12 7LJ

Telephone :01386 854100

e-mail: enquiries@FarncombeEstate.co.uk

PLEASE MAKE BOOKINGS DIRECT WITH THE RESPECTIVE COLLEGES

Digest of Sarah Polfreman's Individual Management Assignment

“An investigation into the perception of declining membership of the Federation of Recorded Music Societies (FRMS) and of its Member Societies; and management action for the long-term future.”

Foreword by FRMS Chairman John Davies

Sarah Polfreman carried out this study as part of her Honours Degree Course in Management at the University of Central England. She has subsequently been awarded a first class honours degree.

The commission to Sarah was to "investigate the perception of declining membership in affiliates". Anyone who studied her questionnaire will have immediately detected a widening in the scope of the enquiry and the result has produced a report that includes challenging conclusions and recommendations that extend to the structure and management of both the Federation and its individual affiliates.

It is appropriate that we should consider some aspects at an early opportunity whilst others demand a quieter and lengthier reflection. We send our thanks and appreciation to all those affiliates that replied to Sarah's questionnaire - a 60% response rate was a remarkable result for any survey of this kind.

In the meantime we now offer for affiliates' consideration this digest of the main points of the report with our preliminary responses to the issues contained in the first section re membership. Most of the text is extracted directly from the report and are therefore in Sarah's own words. The Committee's responses are in italics.

REPORT DIGEST

Review of Published Literature

The membership issue pertaining to the FRMS and Societies is viewed in the context of research on the experiences of other member-benefit, non-profit-making organisations. The issues raised by these reports can be categorised:

An ever-ageing current membership and inability to attract younger members

Difficulties recruiting volunteers to hold office

More competition for members from greater diversity and availability of leisure activities

Financial difficulties

Research undertaken into the membership of societies, clubs, social engagement activities etc indicates that 'social capital and participatory involvement are less valued in society than in previous generations'. Some authorities suggest that there remains a strong social and participatory interaction among the older age groups i.e. those who in their 20s valued the social contact available in clubs/societies after the war years.

Other authorities have researched non-profit organisations; their assessment of 'member-benefit' organisations, e.g. music societies, appeared to move from 'a nice but trivial benefit to a few members who don't serve the community. They only serve their members to a more positive view that they provide 'community building'. Others concur 'older people contribute to their local communities, in particular through their involvement in formal and informal social and support networks'.

A combination of poor self-belief with waning energy and drive is indicative of a spiral of decline; the

remaining few members, reluctant to volunteer for office, do not inspire newcomers and closure seems inevitable.

The Membership Issue

1. **Size of catchment** area has no effect: two of the most successful Societies are located in a small, isolated country town and in a densely populated area of London respectively, and the same is true of failing Societies.

2. **Economic state of the location** appears to have little effect. The sample may be too small related to the number of variables, but particular local circumstances rather than general economic conditions appear more important. A major difference between rich and poor areas is in cost of sound reproduction equipment; those perceived as 'wealthy' tend to have 'top-of-the-range' equipment. However, more fundamental factors probably determine success; it would be natural for a Society to operate equipment comparable with that used in its members' homes.

3. **Competition from other leisure activities** was cited as a major factor by some ailing Societies, noticeably though, several of the most successful actually embrace these by becoming integrated into the cultural life of the locality and taking part in a range of events involving music in the wider sense.

One Secretary commented that 'perhaps the concept of recorded music has had its day'. Cheap availability of high quality recorded music and reproduction equipment has removed one of the reasons for Societies' existence, i.e. sharing an expensive resource, (a set of concertos and the hardware probably now cost a tenth of the 1950s amount in real terms) but it does

not invalidate others e.g. experts speaking on musical or technical recording matters; members entertaining the Society with illustrated talks or introductions to music; the enjoyment of live music sponsored by some successful Societies, and the social contact that many Societies rank very highly.

Horizons are extending to greater possibilities in programme innovation as mentioned, for example: it was commented some 'classical' societies are not interested using DVD technology for their presentations, but one Society is already encountering positive feedback from DVD inclusion and sixteen others have been identified from the Questionnaire as 'interested'.

Private discussions allude to a stultifying effect 'limiting' Society titles can have upon members' own perceptions and, thereby, upon organisational and individual programme development. For example, an 'irate member' questioned the appropriateness of playing jazz, commenting that 'this is a classical music society'. The piece was 'classical jazz', fitted the context of the talk, and was obviously enjoyed by the majority of the audience. Puritanism or political correctness can have a devastating effect upon a Society's fortunes.

4. **Attractiveness of programmes** offered is an obvious factor but some Societies seem unaware of the need for critical self-awareness. Concerning recruitment, there is no mention of a follow-up when newcomers have attended a meeting and claimed to have enjoyed it, but were never seen again; this mirrors private verbal communications. It is inevitable that this will sometimes happen but none of these respondents seems to see any message in its repetition.

Analysis yielded a wide variation in range of programme content but the sample was too small to offer a statistical relationship with membership returns. It could be postulated that adhering to a narrow span of content would reduce the potential for recruitment, while branching out into new fields could alienate existing members comfortable with the historical format.

The image portrayed by Societies aligns somewhat with Bulletin articles debating programme style indicate intolerance between those advocating 'Friday Night is Music Night' and the alternative 'Elitist educative' standpoint; a contrast with the inclusiveness of a wide range of material offered and joyfully described by some of the more successful Societies.

5. **Quality of sound reproduction** is important: a contentious issue between those to whom the music is

of prime importance and quality of reproduction is secondary, and those who agree but find that their enjoyment nevertheless depends upon the technical quality of reproduction. Defective hearing of ageing members may prevent them from appreciating younger people's need for quality reproduction, and this could tie in with (3) above. An important point often overlooked.

This was the most fragmented and unsatisfactory area of response, suggesting that insufficient attention may be paid to it. The very existence of individuals demanding 'quality' reproduction should ensure use of equipment of a suitable standard. The FRMS Technical Officer can provide advice.

6. **The age range** of the Societies' membership is generally 65+. The few with younger membership do not appear to perform significantly differently from the norm but the sample is too small to yield much of use.

7. Committee makeup; an informal scan revealed no practical difference from that of the membership in general, nor did it relate to performance of Societies – except perhaps that the most successful Society has the youngest Chairman.

8. **Recruitment:** word of mouth appears to be the most effective medium with 47 favourable mentions. Only one Society gave newspaper advertising a high rating, while 52 described it as ineffective or not cost-effective. Others mentioned novel or ingenious schemes e.g. ensuring every CD in the local library carries the Society's pamphlet; an example of innovative thinking generating a bright idea for targeting advertising where it is likely to find a receptive audience.

The Regeneration Officer found the media apathetic towards the Societies and the FRMS. His main focus was on making the public aware of the Societies' existence and activities, but repeated failure of organisations to reply to enquires or act on promises made, must indicate lack of interest in FRMS activities, a telling comment on Societies' impact on local consciousness for what paper doesn't have at least two full pages devoted to the local football team! The overall results suggest that the problems go much deeper than public awareness, and that there needs to be fundamental review of some aspects of FRMS operations.

A tongue-in-cheek suggestion that Societies should divert money from formal advertising to paying subscriptions for members to join other local societies, e.g. horticultural, archaeological, civic, etc, was on further consideration thought not so crazy! Inserting a

'mole' into societies having membership of similar backgrounds could prove a wonderful word-of-mouth recruitment tool for the Societies.

9. **Ambition** does not appear among most Societies' attributes; the general impression is that many would like to plod on as they are, but are anxious about loss of membership.

A few have been labelled 'defeatist'. This may be unkind for they seem to be smaller Societies with ageing membership who meet in each other's homes to socialise, listen only to recorded music, and appear to have little ambition for the future. Such people should be treated sympathetically but there is no point in expending significant resources on their 'regeneration'. In organisational lifecycle theories it represents the stage, 'consensual, controlled closure' when agreement is reached that organisation's purpose has been fulfilled.

A few Societies seem to have boundless ambition – even towards taking over the cultural life of their locality! It should give pause for thought that one of the most successful of all says that the FRMS offers nothing more than provision of discounted Performing Rights; although another takes the opposite view, praising the organisation for its helpfulness in dealing with managerial matters.

10. **The breadth of vision** of Officers is difficult to quantify, but reading respondents' comments beyond the confines of the set questions often gives a 'feel' for the character of the Society, as does imaginative reading of the recruitment/promotion in the questionnaires. (Caution: 'interpretative bias' by the researcher can adversely distort the image portrayed) Useful results may be obtained by comparing two Societies with similar mid-range membership in 1987 but widely differing now; the one is now in the bottom group with below twenty members whereas the other has risen steadily to the top group with over fifty.

For the former one can see a quiet resignation to extinction; nothing works: advertising in the local press, editorial, nothing! One Secretary even directed a diatribe at young people in general '...drugs...alcohol...pop music...' and so on; a genuine 'Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells' character! Other responses were more guarded but carried a similar message. It is difficult to see how newcomers, particularly from wider backgrounds and interests, can be retained within such an uncomfortable and intolerant environment.

For the latter the responses were cheerful and positive: Society literature was sent describing the

exciting, all-inclusive programmes and relationships with other local bodies both music-related and otherwise. It was uplifting and presented a picture of what 'could be' in almost any location – given the right leadership.

11. **The place of Societies within the community** will depend upon the local circumstances but, as noted above, some of the most successful have deliberately adopted a policy of engagement with other leisure interest groups. This can have two-way benefits for all:

It opens up a large pool of potential recruits by word of mouth, the most effective method.

Sharing members' expertise and facilities, particularly in management of local events.

The public perception of the Society as part of the community can only be good for its image and generate goodwill towards it.

Membership Decline

1. While the fortunes of individual Societies vary considerably, the overall membership decline is 2.5% from 1987-2006, an insignificant 0.13 % p.a. There is therefore no validity to the perception of "declining Membership" to warrant the level of concern within FRMS.

The study only considered figures from affiliates who responded; the number of affiliates fell below 300 in 19984; in 2001 the number was 249, it is now just over 200. The Federation is right to be concerned, and is anxious to try to improve the situation.

2. A rapidly changing environment requires constant monitoring; there is a need to identify trends for good or ill, and react appropriately. Apparently successful Societies have suffered catastrophic membership loss without awareness within FRMS, demonstrating the inadequacy of its Knowledge Management.

Data on membership numbers are supplied to the FRMS Treasurer annually in order to calculate the appropriate fees for affiliation, copyright licences and insurance, and are based on the previous year's membership - i. e. they are a year old. The Affiliates are autonomous; they are under no obligation to tell the Federation if they are in difficulties, nor can the Federation demand that they do; The Federation does not send inspectors to report back on the affairs of affiliates. As a rule the first information the FRMS receives is that the society concerned has already closed.

The FRMS cannot guarantee to preserve an ailing society, but the Committee members are all experienced members of their own societies, and also

visit other societies where they can see examples of successful practice. The fruits of this experience will be willingly passed on to those who wish to use it. This can only happen if FRMS is advised of a deteriorating situation before it becomes terminal.

3. Member retention is as vital as recruitment; factors influencing the attractiveness of "the package" therefore demand the same level of attention as recruitment.

This is in the hands of individual Societies; a balance must be sought between the "highbrow" and "dumbing-down" in programming; the provision of social activities not directly related to recorded music has proved effective in promoting loyalty.

4. Engagement and relevance within the community are the Keys to success.

Competition from other social organisations should not be feared; these can often prove to be a 'fruitful source of new members. The engagement of Affiliates' members with other local groups has a good track record in this respect. Word of mouth recommendation is widely and rightly viewed to be the most effective recruitment method of all.

5. An attempt should be made (by FRMS) to establish an informal, open and friendly relationship with all the Societies, particularly those demonstrating a high level of success, in the format of a "Learning Organisation" with a "bottom up" rather than a "top down" style.

Rationale: a. Reduce the selfish hubris of "go it alone" Societies that has proved catastrophic in the face of difficulties and the absence of friendly expert help.
b. Promote an altruistic attitude by "sharing your talents ", to everybody's benefit.

The current FRMS Committee has always recognised that the Federation is a "bottom up" organisation (this may not always have been true in the past). We happily acknowledge the sovereignty of the affiliates, and would wish to have open and friendly relationships with all of them (we actually believe this to be true on the whole). We are here to help societies in need of it, and we do welcome the help of successful affiliates to the less successful.

6. Consider recommending the removal of restrictive elements in Societies' titles, e.g. "Recorded", "Classical" etc.

As the Federation is mindful of the autonomy of Societies, we would not presume to recommend any such thing. However, affiliates may wish to give the matter some independent thought.

Management

1. There is no integrated Knowledge Management, which is needed to provide the Committee with the means of making appropriate decisions through Action Research.

2. The structure of the organisation is unclear, particularly with reference to the Regional Secretaries

3. Clearly articulated strategy, modus operandi and actionable objectives, reviewed regularly, are needed to provide a focus for study and decision making.

4. Member Societies have created FRMS but seem unwilling to relate to it in a manner that could be of maximum mutual benefit.

Clear strategy and structure, awareness of the environment and a willingness to engage with the community are prerequisites to the success of FRMS; all the above points need attention and the following Recommendations point the Committee towards appropriate action, both short- and long-term:

Strategy

1 Note that many positions within the organisations need not be filled by people having a particular interest in recorded music; what is needed is skill, personality and a general sympathy with the objectives. Anybody looking for a new challenge, for example, could qualify.

2 There is no need for urgent action: FRMS Committee should take its time to work through this report which has been produced by an inexperienced researcher having a modest understanding of FRMS and its history. Any omissions or inappropriate inclusions should be noted for discussion; the Committee should also perform their own PEST, SWOT analyses.

(PEST = Influences:
Political/Economic/Social/Technological)
(SWOT=Strengths/Weaknesses/
Opportunities/Threats),

3 A clear plan of action should then be formulated, incorporating objectives, methods, personnel and time scale.

4 Consideration should be given to the appointment of FRMS 'Data Analyst', responsible for that function. Preferably a Committee member and appointed *before* the reviews.

5 A comprehensive review of Knowledge Management should be undertaken, to ensure that information is collected, analysed and delivered, in a useful format, to those who need it.

6 Appoint a member to every committee within the Organisations, to act as 'devil's advocate', visible and vocal at all FRMS and Society meetings, to prevent 'groupthink' mentality.

7 Consider introducing further 'classes' of membership of FRMS, to reduce costs and target resources by meeting the needs of individual Societies.

8. Institute measures to ensure that Societies already experiencing 'decline' should receive priority for Committee attention.

9. Remember! The keys to membership retention and recruitment: LEADERSHIP and ENGAGEMENT

Regional Secretaries

1. Develop the Regional Secretaries' role to 'bring on board' inspirational/innovative individuals who already transform their Societies at local level so that they can apply their gifts more widely.

2 Redirect the work of the Regeneration Officer responsible for general oversight at this level. FRMS must view positively the failure of the publicity initiative i.e. that it suggests a need for innovative local marketing tactics rather than sliding into negative, 'defeatist' mind-sets that are unattractive to prospective members.

3 Engage with successful Societies declaring no need for, or no interest in, FRMS activities, to enable the whole movement to benefit from their expertise.

Regional Secretaries Structure

It was noted that the Regional Secretaries occupy an anomalous position; they form no part of FRMS although their title suggests a position that would be of value as a level of management between the Committee and the Societies. Their function is mainly organisation of Regional events and it is suggested that:

1. They be re-titled 'Events Secretary' to more accurately describe their function, and made responsible to the FRMS Committee.

2. An appointment be made by Societies within every Region

3. They be charged with organising musical and social events within their Region, e.g. the 'Music Weekends' that are obviously well received in some Regions but do not appear at all in others.

The purpose of these recommendations is to offer the Regional Events throughout FRMS, country-wide. The advantage of having the function at FRMS level is that resources can be more effectively shared (tacit knowledge, contacts, equipment etc.)

The title Regional Secretary should then be applied to a new position within the Societies/FRMS structure with a strategic operational role (details to be determined by the Committee) e.g. disseminators/administrators in a regeneration-related remit etc. They could:

1. provide a conduit for communication between FRMS and the Societies in their region, and reduce the workload of the FRMS Secretary

2. be more effective than their National counterparts in determining regeneration needs and introducing changes; many areas of the country are surprisingly parochial and somebody speaking with a local accent and aware of local problems could well establish a more effective relationship than the remote 'they' of the main Committee when changes need to be introduced.

3. could observe/investigate/support their Societies; picking-up on and sharing with the FRMS - signs of decline; exceptional results; inspirational and effective leadership etc; and, encourage and develop members and contacts, particularly with an eye to succession planning and leadership for organisational renewal.

4. hence, perform a 'Development Officer' role at regional level to 'bring on board' inspirational/innovative individuals who transform their Societies at local level so that they consider the wider context in which their local Society operates.

Please send your comments on this report either to the FRMS Secretary Tony Baines for discussion by the Committee or, if for publication, to The Bulletin Editor. Full contact details of these can be found on the Officers and Committee page in the Bulletin.

AMENDMENTS TO PRESENTERS PANEL

Lord Aberdare – The Berlioz Society

E-mail address:
aberdare@probusbnw.com
(i.e insert 'b' after probus)

Clifford Occomore

New address & telephone no:
37 Attlee House, Lansbury Road
Broadfield, Crawley, W. Sussex RH11

FRMS OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE



Federation of Recorded Music Societies Ltd

Registered Office: 18 Albany Road, Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6BB

Registered in England: No. 700106 Website: www.thefrms.co.uk

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Edward Greenfield OBE MA(Cantab) Hon GSM

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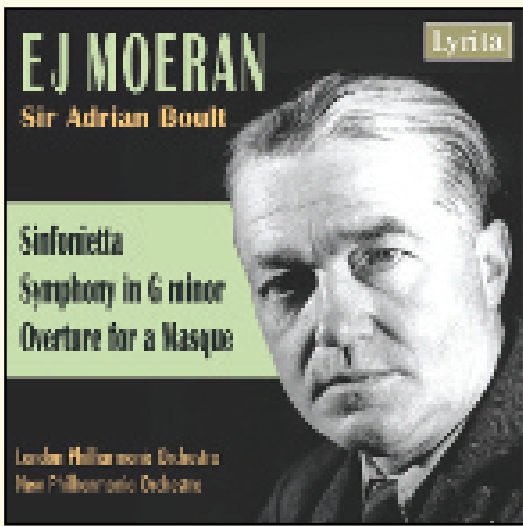
Chairman	John Davies, 18 Hellath Wen, Nantwich CW5 7BB j-rdee@tiscali.co.uk	01270 627269
Vice-Chairman	Mick Birchall, 2 Burley Close, Desford, Leicester LE9 9HX	01455 823494
Secretary	Tony Baines, 18 Albany Road, Hartshill, Stoke-on-Trent ST4 6BB frms.sec@ntlworld.com	01782 251460
Treasurer	Graham Kiteley, 11 Ragley Crescent, Bromsgrove B60 2BD graham.kiteley@talktalk.net	01527 870549
Bulletin Editor	Thelma Shaw, 15 Cann's Lane, Hethersett, Norwich NR9 3JE	01603 812996
Technical Officer	Philip Ashton, 27 Dunsby Road, Luton LU3 2UA g0dcs.phil@ntlworld.com	01582 651632

Committee

Ronald Bleach	48 Ravenswood Road, Redland, Bristol BS6 6BT	07866 307874
Keith Cheffins	4 Morningside Courtyard, Prestbury, Cheltenham GL52 3BU <i>Equipment insurance</i>	01242 571810
Allan Child	12 Highfield Road, Derby DE22 1GZ <i>Bulletin distribution & Presenters' List: archil12@aol.com</i>	01332 332649
John Maidment	St Magnus, 61 Queen Street, Carnoustie, Angus DD7 7BA <i>Regeneration: johnmaidment@aol.com</i>	01241 853017
Tony Pook	1 Lower Friargate, York YO1 9SL <i>Bulletin advertising: tpook@globalnet.co.uk</i>	01904 642407
George Steele	The Cottage, 51 Pegasus Court, Rochdale OL11 4EA <i>Website management: pegasus51@btinternet.com</i>	01706 525630

Regional Secretaries

Central	Mick Birchall, 2 Burley Close, Desford, Leicester LE9 9HX	01455 823494
North East	Ted Shepherd, 35 Elmfield Gardens, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 4XB	01912 857003
Scotland	Stephen Gray, 35E Forth Street, Dunfermline, Fife KY12 7PP	01383 724290
W Middlesex	Mrs P Jiggins, 140 Holylake Crescent, Ickenham UB10 8JH	01895 634485
W Surrey	L C Warner MBE, The Stiles, 22 Marshall Road, Godalming GU7 3AS	01483 417119
Yorkshire	Dennis Clark, 6 The Belfry, Windmill Lane, Yeadon, Leeds LS19 7GB	01132 508136



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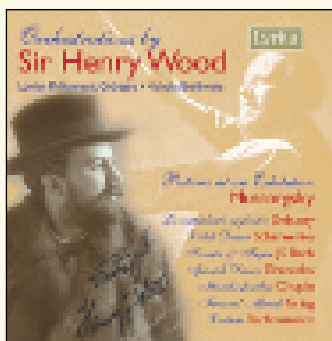
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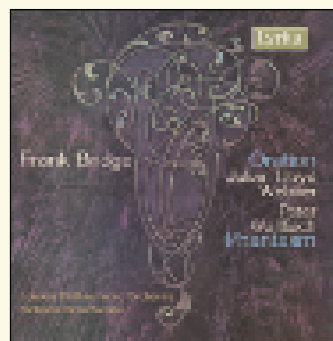
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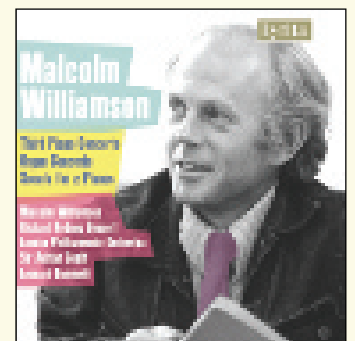
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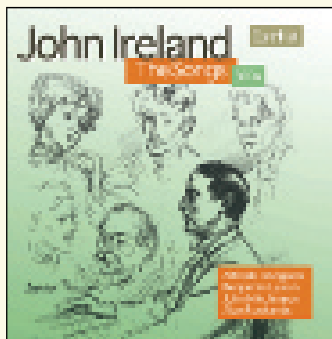
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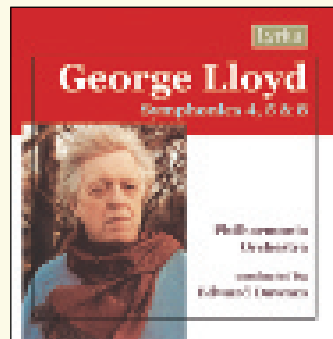
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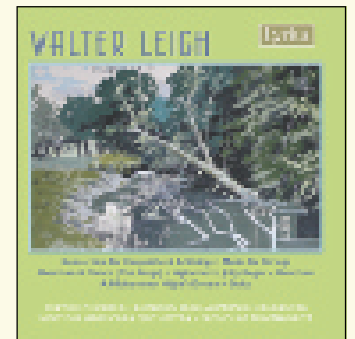
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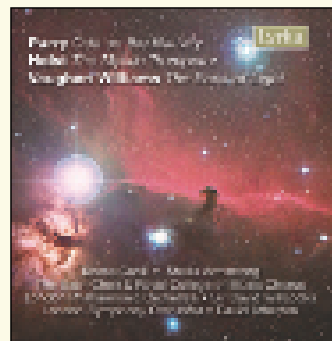
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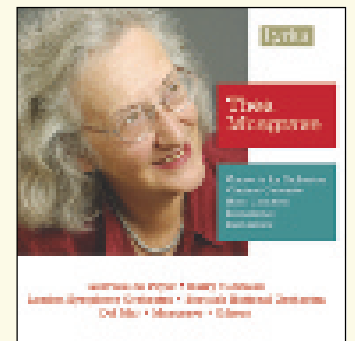
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