



NEWSLETTER

December 2012 CHELTENHAM MUSIC FESTIVAL SOCIETY VOL. 31, NO. 3

Chairman's Christmas Message

When the Society was founded in 1952 its objective was 'to promote and further the work of the Cheltenham Music Festival' and this remains the object today.

We remain one of the Music Festival's principal sponsors. In recent years members have benefited from various understandings with the organisers of the Festival including discounts on the booking of tickets for the events. At present we have the arrangement that paid-up members of the Society qualify as founder members of the Membership scheme for all four of the Cheltenham Festivals. This concession remains in place for the next Festival, in 2013, but not beyond. After next year, therefore, the Society will return to its roots and will concentrate on its prime purpose – to provide support for the Music Festival.

We made changes to the constitution last year in order to ensure that its wording was consistent with present situation. Since then your Committee has been considering the best way forward to continue to be a means by which support can be channelled directly to the Music Festival. Members want to be seen to make a difference and have confidence that their support will not disappear in a general melting pot of funding. We shall therefore make it our priority to support aspects of the Festival that otherwise might not happen; in particular, the support of young artists, and of new compositions and their performance. As last year we may also support the production of the programme book, which has been struggling in recent years to pay for itself. We shall, of course, continue with our traditional activities, the Reception and Benefactors' Lunch during the Festival, with the

Newsletter and the range of activities, opera and concert visits in the rest of the year.

In order to strengthen the Society and to encourage more people to join, we shall be more visible at next year's Festival than we have been able to be recently and we hope to recruit some members of the musical 'establishment' to give the Society a higher profile. We have the power to appoint a president and vice-presidents, and this may be a way forward.

I am pleased to announce that the CMFS website – www.cmfsoc.org.uk – is now up and running. Here you will be able to find the latest news, updates on the Festival programme and forthcoming events, contact details for your Committee, etc. You can also use the site to renew your Membership or to send us a donation at any time. Please do visit the site, and send comments or any feedback to Richard Smith at webmaster@cmfsoc.org.uk.

In the meantime we have next year's Festival to look forward to and this Newsletter gives some advanced information about what is being planned. The Society is here to support the Festival, and we are, as ever, grateful to Meurig Bowen and his team for producing an event of the high standard and diversity which is the tradition of the Cheltenham Music Festival.

I take this opportunity of wishing everyone a Happy Festive Season, with the anticipation of the delights of the 2013 Festival too.

Jim Harrison (chairman@cmfsoc.org.uk)

A Note from Meurig Bowen

Thank you again to all of you delivered your thoughts about the 2012 in the August newsletter. I am glad that, overall, a broad range of the festival's offerings counted as highlights. Just a couple of explanations and comments from me in return:

I completely understand DD's view that a new piece, premiered in the festival, should ideally have some explanatory notes in advance. We do this in the programme book as often as we can. Hannah Kendall did write a note about her new piece, *Shard*, and Stephen Johnson did incorporate most of what she wrote into his own essay on the London Marathon concert. But Hannah's note was short, so some audience members such as DD may well have felt, well, short-changed. Of course, the alternative would be to have Hannah talking a little from the stage about her piece just before it was played. We are doing this more and more in the Festival. However, I was concerned that such a London Marathon might have got dangerously marathonesque if Hannah had done this – so we didn't ask her on this occasion.

I agree with NF & AH that the pairing of Henning Kraggerud and Christian Ihle-Hadland in the Janáček Sonata was a festival highpoint. The suggestion of them returning to do the Brahms

sonatas is an interesting one. It wasn't possible to consider this for 2013, but many thanks for mentioning this. Perhaps another year.

ABC's concern about the Festival Academy not appearing in 2012, and perhaps not appearing again, is something that I must respond to. Clearly, much of the work by the Festival Academy since its inception in 2005 was hugely valuable to the students and rewarding for audience members. In an ideal world it would not have been 'rested' in 2012. The main reason it didn't happen was because we had a very disappointing take-up by student players – something beyond our control. Funding the Festival Academy, however, remains a challenge, despite the generosity of many CMFS members (the numerous charitable trusts we apply to don't seem to get it). It also places particular demands on us administratively – from the auditions to the festival project itself – which other organisations such as Aldeburgh and the Southbank Sinfonia, delivering similar 'professional development' projects, are far better funded and resourced to deliver. Depending on the outcome of a recent funding application, we are hopeful that a different form of Festival Academy, re-focused around young composers rather than performers, will be piloted in 2013.

Membership Renewals

Subscriptions for 2013 are due on 1 January. Life Members should find their membership card enclosed with this mailing (I will be posting cards to those Life Members who do not normally receive postal mailings).

If you pay by standing order, you need take no action. I will send you a membership card once I have had confirmation of receipt of your payment from our bank.

Would other Members please complete the enclosed renewal form and, if appropriate, the Gift Aid declaration. The Committee would like to encourage Members to use an electronic payment method if they feel able – either bank transfer or PayPal. You may now also renew through our website at www.cmfsoc.org.uk/membership.htm if you wish. **If you wish to change to paying by standing order,** please also fill in the standing order mandate, or, preferably, set one up electronically directly with your bank. Please return all the completed forms to me (Richard Smith), either by post or by email, together with any payment. If you are mailing your form, please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope and I will send you your membership card by return.

Those Members who are also Founding Members of Cheltenham Festivals should note that, to enjoy their Founding Member benefits at the 2013 Cheltenham Festivals, they will need to continue to **pay a subscription to the Music Festival Society, and to renew as described above now.** (There is no need to subscribe to the Cheltenham's Membership Scheme too.) You will then in due course receive your new Founding Membership card and details of all four 2013 Festivals by post directly from Cheltenham Festivals. **Please note that priority booking for the 2013 Music Festival is expected to open in the middle of March, and therefore that you should please renew as promptly as possible, and no later than the end of January.**

As always, please feel free to contact me by telephone on 01242 578172 or by email at treasurer@cmfsoc.org.uk in case of any problems.

Benefactors

I am sure that our Members will appreciate that, in the present financial climate, raising adequate funding for the Music Festival is becoming ever more difficult. To this end, the Committee would like to encourage more of our Members to become Benefactors of the Society. Benefactors are acknowledged by name in the Festival programme book, and are invited to an annual Lunch during the Festival, which is normally also attended by artists from that morning's concert; last year, the Benefactors' Lunch was held at the Ellenborough Park Hotel, and was a most enjoyable occasion. But the main reward of becoming a Benefactor is the knowledge that you are really helping the Festival to continue and to thrive.

If you pay an ordinary subscription by standing order, or if you are a Life Member, it is still easy to upgrade to a Benefactor for this year – simply send me a cheque to top up the difference between annual Benefactor and Ordinary subscriptions (ie £29 for single member, or £45 for joint members).

Gift Aid

The Society would like to encourage UK income tax payers to help our funds by completing the Gift Aid form. If you do so, it means that, **without any extra cost to yourself**, the value of your subscription (and of any donation) is increased by the amount of standard rate income tax levied upon it, currently 25 pence in the pound, which we can recover. Please do not fill in this form if you do not pay UK income tax.

Donations

The Committee would also like to encourage Members to add a donation to their basic subscription. We have decided this year to put all additional donations towards a share of the commissioning of a new *Concerto for Violin, Viola and Strings* by David Matthews; we shall be very grateful to all those who feel able to contribute.

Richard Smith, Membership Secretary & Treasurer

The 2013 Music Festival in Prospect

There must be something in the air or water of Egham that encourages excellence in singing. We shall have an opportunity to experience this phenomenon when the Royal Holloway College Choir comes to the Festival accompanied by one of their alumnae, Dame Felicity Lott. Dame Felicity studied French at the college and will be putting her linguistic skills to good use when she sings Poulenc with the choir on Friday 12th July. And they will be including the premiere of a work written especially for them by Gabriel Jackson.

The next day the Choir will join forces with Trinity College Choir from Cambridge at Gloucester Cathedral to perform Poulenc's Gloria; while at the Parabola Arts Centre the Cheltenham born diva will give a master class.

Poulenc is one of a band of composers (including Wagner and Verdi) who have important anniversaries in 2013; he died 50 years ago. Benjamin Britten was born a century ago, and both composers will feature in this concert. Both will also feature prominently in the Festival schedule.

Have you noticed how The Tallis Scholars have been making

waves on the choral front; indeed, their recording of Spem in Alium (by Thomas Tallis – who else?) made it to the top of the UK classical singles charts this year. These chart-toppers will be singing works by Palestrina, Allegri, Byrd, and Tallis in Tewkesbury Abbey. The Swingle Singers, on the other hand, will be purveying music in a lighter and more contemporary mood.

Stage Works and Premieres

At the last Festival the silent film *Salomé* with a percussion score by Charlie Barber was a *succès de scandale*. So I am looking forward to his contribution to the 2013 Festival – *Michelangelo: Drawing Blood*. With a line-up comprising three male dancers, four musicians, video, animated drawing, living sculpture and manipulated images, this exploration of the process of creativity and creation looks set to make a huge impression – but I am advised that this event is not suitable for children or those who are easily offended.

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The premiere of David Sawer's *The Lighthouse Keepers*, a claustrophobic tale of a father and son, should also create a frisson of excitement – and will herald the return of the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group directed by Martyn Brabbins. This is a co-commission by BCMG and the festival, and is in part paid for using the Martyn Brabbins Half-Marathon Fund

Among the other premieres will be Kenneth Hesketh's *Horae*, played by its dedicatee Claire Hammond, and Dai Fujikura's *Three Miniatures* performed by Joseph Tong and Waka Hasegawa. Brothers Colin and David Matthews feature in a recital by the Schubert Ensemble, while Roxanna Panufnik's intriguingly titled *Orchestraepedia* gets its first English performance from Welsh Sinfonia.

New works by the Latvian composer Eriks Esenvalds, Michael Zev Gordon, Simon Holt, Marton Illes and David Onac complete the portfolio of premieres.

Mornings at Pittville

The morning series of concerts at Pittville Pump Room looks as strong as ever starting on Wednesday 3rd with the Belcea Quartet who are joined by Till Fellner in Dvorak's *Second Piano Quintet*.

Those of you who admired Christianne Stotjin's interpretation of Mahler songs at an earlier Festival will be pleased to learn she is coming back - this time with Imogen Cooper. - to perform Mussorgsky, Schubert and Britten.

Violist Lawrence Powers with Simon Crawford Philips at the piano takes to the platform on Sunday, and there will be a big viola collective taking place the day before, led by Lawrence. All players, rusty and virtuosic, are welcome to this!

The latest recruits to the BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artists scheme will make their Cheltenham debuts starting with the Signum Quartet from Germany. Igor Levit (piano), Leonard Elschenbroch (cello) and Mark Simpson (clarinet) perform the next morning, and many of them will contribute to a concert featuring mezzo-soprano Clara Mouriz in songs by Poulenc and Ravel.

London Conchord Ensemble, who have already delighted

Cheltenham Music Society members, will perform Poulenc as well as Barber, Mozart and Beethoven.

The Pump Room has some enticing evening events, too. Boris Giltburg will be back with a “waltzing piano”; expect something Mephistophelian! Nicola Benedetti's Piano Trio is coming to play Tchaikovsky, and the Elias Quartet will be playing the last of Britten's string quartets, all of which they have recorded to great acclaim.

Orchestras of Note from Four Cities

Movie buffs will doubtless be turning out in force for the opening concert by the CBSO compered by film critic Mark Kermode. Three days later young musicians of the future take to the Town Hall stage when the Symphony Orchestra from Chetham's School in Manchester plays Britten and Shostakovich.

I have already mentioned the visit by Welsh Sinfonia under its conductor Mark Eager; they will be unveiling two new pieces: David Matthews' *Concerto for violin, viola and strings* as well as the Panufnik work. But we'll also be having visitors from further afield when the Belgian Baroque Orchestra from Ghent make their Cheltenham debut with music by Locatelli, Gemignani and “the usual suspects”.

The final visiting orchestra, the City of London Sinfonia, will be here for the final weekend of the Festival starting with a “club night” on Friday evening – but somehow I don't think it will involve darts and skittles! There are rumours however that Welsh songstress Elin Manahan Thomas will put in an appearance. Watch this space.

On Saturday the Sinfonia will accompany the choirs and organist David Briggs in Gloucester Cathedral, and then play a leading role in the Festival Finale on Bastille Day. Anyone who heard Toby Spence's remarkable performance of Janáček's *Diary of One who Disappeared* in 2011 will be snapping up tickets to hear him sing Britten's *Serenade for tenor, horn and strings*.

On a quite different note, I see that *Noye's Fludde* is to be performed twice in Tewkesbury Abbey six years on from the severe floods which threatened to submerge the town. Do the Festival organisers know something the rest of us are blissfully unaware of?

Opera Trips

Tickets are still available for *The Minotaur* (Harrison Birtwistle) at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden on Monday 21 January. Robert Padgett, Chairman of the Cheltenham Opera Society, will talk about the opera at 7.00 pm on Thursday 17 January at St Andrew's Church. This is free for members of the Cheltenham Music Festival Society.

Tickets are also still available for *Medea* (Charpentier), a French Baroque version of the mythical story, by the ENO at the Coliseum in London on Thursday 28 February.

Tickets have now been booked for *Lulu* (Berg) by the WNO in Cardiff on Friday 8 February. Booking forms will be sent out in January for *Lohengrin* (Wagner) by the WNO in Cardiff on Sunday 26 May 2013.

The Cheltenham Opera Society will continue to organise joint trips with the Cheltenham Music Festival Society, going to the WNO in Cardiff or Birmingham, the Royal Opera House or the

ENO. However, the Opera Society also has other activities, including operas by the English Touring Opera in Malvern and Cheltenham as well as talks and DVDs of operas. Members of the Cheltenham Music Festival Society can join the Cheltenham Opera Society at the preferential rate of £20 for individual members and £35 for two or more people with the same address. For this or to get on the mailing list for opera trips, send your address, phone number and e-mail address to Robert Padgett, robertpadgett@btinternet.com., 14 Century Court, Montpellier Grove, Cheltenham GL50 2XR, 01242 571802. Further information about the Opera Society is available from www.cheltenhamoperasociety.org.uk.

CMFS will be organising a number of social events in the New Year for its members – **A Twist on Desert Island Discs** on the evening of January 29th and **Tea and Talk with Timothy Keasley** on 10th March. Details are available on the enclosed booking forms.

Memories of 2012 – I

I /we had tickets for 28 concerts /talks. I decided against Tango & Klezmer, not without some regret, for I have not so much an interest in Klezmer as a curiosity about it, but I decided instead to support the Philip Langridge Mentoring Scheme Showcase, having very fond memories of his recitals at, in particular, the Wigmore Hall. This is an interesting concept assisting aspiring young musicians in coping with the trials and tribulations of settling into professional careers.

I was tempted too by *African Sanctus*, but I had attended not only a performance but also a whole afternoon of rehearsals under the direction of David Fanshawe at Norwich Cathedral on 16 May, 1980. I have his signature and date on my LP of the work to prove it! So I gave precedence to *WWI Piano and Poetry*, the latter played by Charles Owen, a long-standing acquaintance, whom I had promised to support when I saw him at Naunton in May. We heard some interesting [and rare!] pieces, such as Stravinsky's *Souvenir d'une marche boche*, and *Marche Militaire* by Granados.

Another temptation which I resisted was "Nige" performing *The Soldier's Tale* for two reasons: "Nige", and the fact that I had seen my old friend, Anthony Marwood performing it during his tour of the work in staged performances several years ago. So I decided instead to support other old friends in the form of the Kungsbacka Piano trio at Naunton that evening. Later Anthony himself told me during his festival in June that "Nige" had withdrawn and that he, Anthony had been recruited in his place! But I enjoyed the Kungsbacka concert!

Concerts which I had expected to be the highlights of the Festival were Henning Kraggerud performing the Ysayë *Opus 27 Sonatas for solo violin* at Quennington and, next morning at Pittville the Janáček *Violin Sonata*. He was superb in both these technically demanding works. An unexpected pleasure was Kathy Gowers' performance immediately after the Janáček of the Kodály *Opus 7*

Violin and Cello Sonata with Adrian Brendel. I hadn't realised that she was so good.

It was an excellent idea to do the 1914-1918 concerts - all fine performances with many works I hadn't come across before, and probably wouldn't have chosen. But that is what all festivals should aspire to.

All the morning concerts at Pittville were good, Jean Efflam Bavouzet, in particular. But it was a pity that he didn't have as much time as he [and we] would have liked for his customary highly amusing commentaries on the works and composers. It was good see Melvyn Tan again despite the absence of his sartorial displays of the past. HSBC is to be praised for its initiative in promoting the visit by the vast and enthusiastic young Orchestra of the Musicmakers.

I also enjoyed the silent films, *Salome* was rather twee, and - at the other extreme - the 1917 film of *The Battle of the Ancre* showed in close-up all the activities related to a major battle. It was introduced by a speaker from the Imperial War Museum and had a piano accompaniment following the original score.

I was less happy with **Before Life and After**, songs by English 20th Century composers performed by James Gilchrist and accompanied by vague geometric patterns weaving over a large screen. First Gilchrist was seated at his desk with a pipe; then, partway through, he went for a walk off-stage. Nor was I happy with his voice which seems to have acquired a hard aggressive edge.

Il Fagiolini's concert at Tewkesbury Abbey was excellent, as expected, and the BBC Singers were absolutely superb in their concert in Cheltenham College Chapel entirely of contemporary works which we probably would not have bothered with, were it not that we live just across the road). This turned out to be a most [mostly] fascinating Festival, teaching us yet again not to be frightened of the unknown.

Richard III

Memories of 2012 – II

This was another well-constructed Festival, which gave me a greater understanding and appreciation of Debussy, Delius, Ravel, Holst and others of similar periods. This was helped by the BBC film about *La Mer*, and the talk about Orientalism. I also very much enjoyed the two talks I attended in the **Musical Athletes** series – informative, clearly presented and well chaired.

Other highlights included:

* **Royal Musical Treasures**, with excellent performances by local choirs, including a brilliant choirboy solo, though the exuberant brass band sometimes failed to bring out musical nuances.

* Bach's *B Minor Mass* by the Utrecht student choir and orchestra. In spite of a few weaknesses in the men's parts, the big choruses in the second half were truly glorious, with good performances also by the solo singers and players.

* Milos Karadaglic and the Carducci Quartet, individually and especially together in Boccherini's *Guitar Quintet*.

* The Nash Ensemble with the only Mozart piece in the Festival and then the fascinating contrast between the Goehr and Brahms horn trios; I preferred the Brahms.

MW

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