

The Spirit of England

Newsletter of The English Music Festival

Issue 5 - Autumn 2008



THIRD FESTIVAL IS ON ITS WAY!

The third English Music Festival will take place in Oxfordshire from Friday 22nd to Monday 25th May 2009.

Some exciting new additions to the Festival next year include the acclaimed Early Music band *Joglaresa*, the Musicians of All Saints, and Oxford Leidertafel.

Returning to the EMF after their amazing performances at our previous Festivals are *Vox Musica*, the Bridge String Quartet, the Cannons Scholars under John Andrews, and the City of London Choir under Hilary Davan Wetton.

Pianist David Owen Norris is back by popular demand performing works by Elgar and Billy Mayerl, and James Bowman and Andrew Plant return with "Songs from Dowland and Purcell to Quilter and Britten".

The BBC Concert Orchestra will be returning with conductor David Lloyd-Jones and another EMF regular, violinist Philippe Graffin.

Other treats in store for those attending EMF '09 include Holst's Hymns from *Rig Veda* and his *Fugal Concerto*, Elgar's *Serenade*, Ireland's *Concertino Pastorale*, Havergal Brian's *In Memoriam*, Britten's Choral Dances from *Gloriana*, Vaughan Williams's *Mass in G minor*, Bridge's Piano Quintet and *Lament for Strings*, and Parry's *Lady Radnor Suite*.



Composer / pianist David Owen Norris, EMF VP Roger Scruton and Em

As well as these gems, and many more from the twentieth century, there will be performances of some of the most exquisite early music, including works by Purcell, Arne, Blow and Linley. In keeping with EMF tradition, we are also featuring new music, including a Housman setting composed specially by Tom Rose for James Bowman's EMF recital.

The full programme for EMF '09 is being drawn up and will be announced soon. Keep checking our website, and make sure you get the benefit of our EMF Friends' discount scheme.

STOP PRESS

EMF Founder-Director Em Marshall has been elected the new Chairman of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society.

Em has been a member of the RVW Society since its formation 14 years ago and is a Trustee of the Society. She takes over from Stephen Connock MBE, the Society's founder-Chairman. Stephen will continue his involvement with the RVW Society as a Vice-President and as the Chairman of the Society's highly successful recording arm, Albion Records.

EMF President: Boris Johnson MP

Vice-Presidents: Lord Armstrong of Ilminster - Lady Bliss - Lord Chadlington of Dean - Paul Guinery - Jeremy Irons - Sir Simon Jenkins
Henry Kelly - Michael Kennedy - Julian Lloyd Webber - Professor Sir Patrick Moore - Sir Roger Norrington - The Most Hon The Marquess of Salisbury
Professor Roger Scruton - Leonard Slatkin - Patrick Stewart - Ursula Vaughan Williams† - Terry Waite CBE - Lady Whitehead

Reflections

It was entirely due to the encouragement and enthusiasm of the audience at the first EMF back in October 2006 that a second one was organised - without your unceasing support and demands for the EMF to continue, I am not sure I could have faced it again! Yet, thanks to the commitment of the musicians themselves to this project, and to the immense generosity of many of you, we held the second Festival in May 2008.

The Festival opened with a pre-concert press reception in Dorchester Abbey's cloister gallery, where we were delighted to see an array of composer relatives (Boughton, Bantock and Holbrooke!), as well as several eminent music critics. Boris Johnson, EMF President, opened proceedings with a rousing speech welcoming, and praising, the second Festival. As we all rose to sing *Jerusalem*, he muttered to me: "Now this is how every Festival should start!" The BBC Concert Orchestra, under the baton of Barry Wordsworth, played its heart out in a programme of Holbrooke's *Birds of Rhiannon*, Mackenzie's gorgeous *Benedictus* and Rawsthorne's deeply nostalgic and moving *Practical Cats*, with Jeremy Nicholas as the evocative narrator. In the second half, Bantock's *Celtic Symphony* was extremely well received by an enthusiastic audience.

On Saturday morning we headed over to Keble College, Oxford, for a service of Sullivan's sacred music in the imposing Chapel. The Sullivan Singers were directed by David Owen Norris, with David Bednall on the organ, and Ian Partridge tenor soloist. This was followed by a talk by Revd Dr Ian Bradley, the Preacher for the service, on Sullivan's hymn tunes and sacred music. The afternoon concert took place at All Saints Church, Sutton Courtenay, and featured Vox Musica and the Southbank Sinfonia, directed by Michael Berman and Thomas Jackson. The church was packed with an audience who had flocked to hear choral and chamber works by Elgar, Holst, Finzi, Vaughan Williams and Howells, such as Vaughan Williams's *Concerto Accademico*, with Thomas Jackson the masterful soloist, Finzi's intense *Welcome, Sweet and Sacred Feast* and Vaughan Williams's *Lord, thou hast been our refuge*. Finzi's *Magnificat* concluded a concert of outstanding music-making.

In the Abbey Guest House, Giles Easterbrook gave the pre-concert talk on "Bliss – The Consummate Anthologist" before Hilary Davan Wetton conducted the Milton Keynes City Orchestra and City of London Choir in Holst's *Brook Green Suite*, Norman O'Neill's rarely-heard *Pastorale*, the lovely *Bridge Suite for Strings*, Vaughan Williams *Te Deum* and Bliss's alluring *Pastoral - Lie Strewn the White Flocks*, with Heather Shipp (soprano) and Ileana Ruhemann (flute). Another audience went home touched and uplifted by excellent renditions of some splendid works - those, that is, who did not stay on for the late night event. We held this in the side chapel, creating an intimate atmosphere that was perfect for the irrepressible David Owen Norris's sparkling and vivacious performances of (and anecdotes about) Billy Mayerl.

On the rainy Sunday morning a damp procession made its way to the Chapel of Radley College for a concert by the Bridge Quartet, consisting of the Britten/Purcell *Chacony*, Alwyn's appealing *Sonatina*, Bridge's *Rhapsody Trio*, Delius's *Late Swallows* and Bridge's Second String Quartet. The quartet played with conviction and expertise, and the audience were impressed by both venue and music. In the afternoon the Amaretti Orchestra played in the Silk Hall: a popular programme of Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, Finzi's Clarinet Concerto (with David Campbell the superb soloist), Ireland's *Downland Suite* and Elgar's much-loved *Introduction and Allegro*.



The Carducci Quartet



The Sullivan Singers at Keble

Back in Dorchester, the pre-concert talk was given by John Leeman on the influence of English Literature on European Romantic music, before a concert by the Cannons Scholars, conducted by John Andrews. This commenced with Thomas Arne's Fourth symphony, followed by Linley's *In Yonder Grove* - gorgeous music, and expertly conducted by John and sung by soprano Elena Xanthoudakis. Arne's *Judgement of Paris* was then given a radiant performance by soloists Elena Xanthoudakis, Sara Jonsson, Sonya Prentice, Ed Lyon and Peter Mitchell. The day closed with the Dufay Collective presenting music from Mediaeval England.

On Monday morning, the renowned counter-tenor James Bowman, treble Andrew Swait and pianist Andrew Plant delighted an audience in the Abbey with works by Britten - including several premieres (*The Owl*, *Diaphenia*, *Goldenhair* and *the Witches' Song*), Sullivan, Quilter, Elgar, Purcell, Boyce and Wood. It was a deeply moving concert, with Andrew Swait's air of purity and innocence complementing Bowman's more theatrical manner. Over then to Sutton Courtenay, where the Carducci Quartet thrilled us with passionate and polished renditions of Vaughan Williams's two string quartets and Moeran's glorious String Quartet in E flat. A talk by Paul Spicer on George Dyson and his *Agincourt*, entitled 'Oh! For a Muse of Fire!' preceded the final concert of the day, with the Andover Choral Society singing Elgar's *Banner of St George* and Dyson's *Agincourt*.

on EMF '08

By Em Marshall



James Bowman (left)

Conductor Barry Wordsworth and Em (below)



Composers at the Garden Party



Panagiotis Trochopoulos (above)



Andrew Swait (left)



Composers and Em at New Commissions concert

The final day started with a recital of premiere performances of works by Josef Holbrooke, excellently played by the talented young pianist, Panagiotis Trochopoulos, and warmly received by the audience. The afternoon concert, in Radley's Silk Hall, saw acclaimed violinist Philippe Graffin perform Delius's *Legende* and second violin sonata, Alwyn's *Sonatina* and Britten's *Suite*, with intensity and flair. Barry Marsh gave the final, lively, talk of the Festival on E.J. Moeran. The sun graced us then with its presence - just long enough for the garden party, held in the gardens of Dorchester Manor House, to which eminent musicologists, critics, artists, authors, composers and composer relatives, lecturers, musicians, EMF Vice-Presidents and members of the EMF Friends scheme had been invited, and which was a thoroughly congenial affair.

The last event of the Festival was my most ambitious and complicated enterprise, and yet also the most exciting. Ronald Corp conducted the Southern Sinfonia and the London Chorus in an entire programme of works commissioned for this event. From the very first note of Matthew Curtis's *Festival Overture*, I realised that this was going to be an unforgettable concert. The Overture was a wonderfully rousing piece, and the perfect opener. It was followed by Paul Carr's Oboe concerto, with Nicholas Daniel as the virtuosic soloist - a lyrical, beautiful, and yet original and interesting work. Cecilia's McDowall's striking *The Skies in their Magnificence* ensued, and Corp's attractive *Jubilate* ended the first half.

After the interval, Philip Lane's *Lyric Dances* comprised a set of charming and expertly composed movements. It is perhaps not the place of the dedicatee to so laud a work, yet the Piano Concerto that concluded the concert was undeniably brilliant. It is a masterful, tightly-constructed combination of effervescent fire and energy, with some deeply moving passages - an innovative, unusual and, like its author, completely idiosyncratic piece. It was directed from the keyboard by the composer, David Owen Norris, who allowed his virtuosic showmanship free reign in an exhilarating conclusion to a highly-charged, and excellently performed, concert.

The second EMF proved that this venture is going from strength to strength in terms of audience numbers, profile, and standard of music-making - so please help us to continue spreading the word about this worthwhile, and much-needed, Festival!

on Vol 4 of his orchestral works on Campion.

Our other 2008 EMF composers, Cecilia McDowall and Ronald Corp, are also continuing to enjoy further recordings and performances of their works.

Those of you who enjoyed Panagiotis Trochopoulos's Holbrooke premieres recital, or the concert given by James Bowman, Andrew Swait and Andrew Plant, may like to know that both programmes have now been released on CD. 'Songs of Innocence', with works by Britten, Berkeley, Warlock and Quilter, is available on the Signum label, and Cameo Classics has issued the Holbrooke piano works by Panagiotis.

MORE SUCCESSES

Since being premiered at the 2008 Festival, several of the works we commissioned for our grand finale have had further performances and been recorded.

David Owen Norris's Piano Concerto had a repeat performance recently at the Turner Sims Concert Hall in Southampton. Paul Carr's Oboe Concerto has now been recorded and features on British Light Music Premieres vol. 5 on the Dutton Epoch label, with Nicholas Daniel as soloist. Philip Lane's *Lyric Dances* and Matthew Curtis's *Festival Overture* were both recorded in September at Angel Studios with the RBS and Gavin Sutherland. Philip's piece is due to feature on a compilation CD next year and Matthew's will be

