

# The Spirit of England

Newsletter of The English Music Festival

Issue 6 - Spring 2009



## FESTIVAL BOOKING OPENS

Booking has opened for the third annual English Music Festival (Dorchester-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, 22-25 May 2009).

Our Box Office gives you the option to buy advance tickets either on-line or by phone. During the Festival itself tickets will also be available on the door – though due to limited seating at some events it is advisable to book in advance in order to guarantee a seat.

Tickets are on sale for all EMF concerts, recitals and the seminar (tickets for talks, however, are only available on the door) and we are also offering Festival Passes which allow unlimited access to all events, as well as Day Passes for the Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Children under 16 are half price, and members of the EMF Friends scheme enjoy generous discounts on all ticket prices. (So, if you haven't already signed up as a Friend, please do so and enjoy the benefit of reduced-price tickets, as well as showing your support for the EMF cause in a tangible way.)

### HOW TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS FOR EMF '09

Call: **0300 030 3003**

(Lines are open 2pm-7pm Mon - Fri; 2pm-6pm Sat)

Book on-line at:

[www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk](http://www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk)

Tickets:	£ 15.00	main evening concerts
	£ 12.50	afternoon concerts
	£ 10.00	morning concerts
	£ 7.50	late evening concerts
	£ 8.00	lunch and seminar

Festival Pass: £ 100.00

Day Pass:	Saturday	£30.00
	Sunday	£35.00
	Monday	£22.50

There's much to look forward to at EMF '09 - from the world premiere concert performance of Delius's *Hiawatha* and Vaughan Williams's gorgeous *Willow Wood* through to a celebration of Purcell's anniversary and a concert of mediaeval music entitled 'A Harp of Bones'. Our innovation this year is a seminar on the future of Choral Music in Britain. Experts will present their points of view, and then the discussion will be opened up to the floor. A light lunch and wine are included in the ticket price.

Enclosed with this newsletter are copies of our new leaflets – a full programme leaflet for this year's Festival, and a Friends Scheme leaflet. If you cannot use these yourself, it would help us so much if you could pass them on to friends or colleagues who may be interested. If you would like more leaflets please let us know - we need help from our supporters to distribute EMF leaflets as widely as possible.

You will also find in this mailing one of our brand new EMF window stickers. We hope you like it, and that you will feel able to display it in the window of your car or home. Again, if you can't, please pass it on to someone else who might be able to do so!

I look forward to seeing you at EMF '09 – which promises to be the best yet!

**Em Marshall**

Founder – Director, The English Music Festival



Em Marshall and the Sullivan Singers at last year's English Music Festival

## A song in my heart

Olivia Rowland looks forward to the third English Music Festival and its sterling work to keep the English song tradition alive

The English Music Festival has been a long time in coming. It's been a genuine labour of love for festival founder Em Marshall, who admits that English vocal music has been an inspiration to her for most of her life. 'I first got into English music through my father singing "Linden Lea" to me as a child,' she says in a rare moment away from co-ordinating this year's festival. 'Since then I've tried to discover all the English music I can. I sang with the school choir (I went to St Paul's Girls' School because of the Holst/Howells link) and with the chapel choir at my Oxford college, and I've listened to and written about English music (and particularly song) as often as possible.'

But perhaps it's slightly unfair to suggest that the festival has been the result of decades of research. In fact it's just one of a range of projects its dynamic founder has worked on since leaving Oxford University in 2002. Inspired by conductor Hilary Davan Wetton, Marshall dreamed up the festival while still a student. 'Hilary told me: "It would be utterly crazy to set up an English Music Festival. Impossible, my gal. Do you know how many people have tried and failed? There's just not the money or interest in it. But if anyone can do it, you can, so you ought to have a go!"' Marshall recalls. 'I have had times I've thought "What am I doing! This is crazy!" but I just need to listen to some Holst or RVW or Quilter and I'm convinced by what I'm trying to do again.'

It was the combination of words and music – plus the sheer craftsmanship of some of the English songwriters – that proved so irresistible to Marshall, and which prompted her to come up with the concept of a festival celebrating English music in

the first place. 'The setting of the words is so brilliant, and so is the way they capture the atmosphere of the words. I also love the fact that music is so often nostalgic and evocative – it's really beautiful stuff but it can be very striking and forward-looking and unusual too.'

And Marshall has done her best to capture the full range of these emotions, as well as 700 years of musical history, in the festivals. The 2008 event – held last May at a variety of venues in and around Oxford – featured music ranging from Dufay to commissions by contemporary composers such as Cecilia McDowell and Ronald Corp. by way of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, Howells, Bliss and Finzi.

Vocal music has been an essential element of the festival from the beginning, not just because of Marshall's love for it but also because of its place within English music now as well as over the centuries. 'England is a country very given to choral societies and to festivals and amateur music-making – and choral music is a huge part of it,' Marshall comments. 'Much of this music was written for amateurs and large-scale choral societies,

and these bodies still exist and love to sing the music composed for them.'

The choral tradition has certainly featured heavily in the festival programmes so far. The 2008 festival included a whole morning service devoted to the music of Sullivan performed in the gloriously English Keble College chapel, as well as performances from vocal groups such as Vox Musica, the City of London Choir and the London Chorus. And while the programmes may feature a few inevitable crowd-pleasers to draw in passing trade, Marshall has focused on promoting the less well known gems of the English repertoire. In addition to the commissions, the 2008 festival included James Bowman singing the first public performances of songs by Britten, and concert performances of rarely heard works by Arne and Linley. In fact, these proved the highlights of the event: 'Many people said this wasn't the sort of thing they'd usually go to but they were stunned by how lovely it was,' Marshall reports.

If the whole festival set-up sounds a bit like one person's crazy dream – albeit a rather self-restrained, English one – then the genuinely enthusiastic audience reactions ought to quash the thought. Marshall herself admits that she might have given up had audiences not been so encouraging. Likewise, the scholarly aspect of the festival underlines listeners' interest in English music. A seminar programme on the choral music tradition in Britain looks likely to feature in the 2009 festival, as do talks on the future of choral singing in England and pre-concert presentations on composers included in the programme.

Vocal performance will be top of the bill at the next festival, to be held once again in 'middle England' – Oxford and its environs, with all the connotations of glowing Cotswold stone, college quads and rambling country roads. Marshall hopes that Vox Musica and James Bowman will return, while Hilary Davan Wetton and the City of London Chorus, who will perform Holst and Britten choral music, have already confirmed their availability. Plans are also afoot to include Oxford Liedertafel singing English part-songs. With such a diversity of artists, Marshall has already planned programmes focusing on early music (featuring the Cannons Scholars), choral music, soloists and contemporary works.

While some of the planned artists are now friends of the festival, others are as yet untried, having got in touch with Marshall after hearing about her aims. Some of the featured artists have a taste for the unexpected too: for example, Marshall has already planned a late night programme by medieval music group Joglaresa.

Marshall is the first to admit that none of this is likely to be easy. Funding for 'English' ventures remains elusive as trusts and companies ring-fence money for youth projects and world music rather than the sounds that are on their doorsteps and in their heritage. 'Funding is a struggle,' Marshall confides. 'We have no core funding, no budget for staff and the artists play for reduced fees because they are committed to the aims of the festival.'

Funding hurdles aside, Marshall remains positive. 'English music is not the anachronistic, fuddy-duddy "cow-pat" stuff that the unjustified image it has been given presents,' she says. 'It's exciting, forward-looking, striking, unusual and extraordinarily beautiful. It really should be given a chance, and I plan to spread the word.' And who would dare disagree! ■

The 2009 English Music Festival will run from 22-25 May.  
[www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk](http://www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk)



## It's YOUR Festival!

Would you like to become more involved in the EMF? We are also looking for more active members to help us make the Festival an even greater success. Could you volunteer to help in any of the following ways?

1. Distributing leaflets and posters in different parts of the country. We urgently need supporters to help us spread the word by putting leaflets (and/or posters) in their local libraries, tourist information centres, pubs, art galleries, post offices - anywhere that will take them! Could you please help us, at least with a handful of leaflets?
2. Stewarding / helping at the 2009 Festival itself. There is always a multiplicity of tasks to be undertaken during the Festival, from checking tickets and selling programmes to making tea!
3. Helping us to organise and run local fund-raising and awareness-raising events around the country, in-between Festivals. These could be anything from coffee mornings through to weekends of music! The EMF, while rooted in Oxfordshire, is a national project, and we need regional organisers who are willing and able to campaign for us and promote awareness and appreciation of English music in different parts of the country. Would you like to run an event in your area?

# The Third Annual ENGLISH MUSIC FESTIVAL

## – The Festival Programme

THE ENGLISH MUSIC FESTIVAL

22-25 May 2009

FRIDAY 22ND MAY	SATURDAY 23RD MAY	SUNDAY 24TH MAY	MONDAY 25TH MAY
	11:00 DORCHESTER ABBEY Vaughan Williams <i>Notturmo after Bach</i> Elgar <i>Concert Allegro</i> Moeran <i>Irish Love Song</i> Bax <i>Second Sonata</i> Quilter <i>Three Studies</i> Quilter <i>Three Pieces for Piano</i> Lambert <i>Sonata</i> David Owen Norris	11:00 RADLEY COLLEGE CHAPEL <b>Paradise on Earth</b> Spofforth <i>Hail smiling morn</i> , Bishop <i>Forresters sound the cheerful horn</i> , Anon <i>England be glad</i> , Henry VIII <i>Time to pass</i> , Webbe <i>My pockets low and taxes high</i> , Frederick <i>Bridge Two snails</i> , Elgar <i>As torrents in Summer</i> , Vaughan Williams <i>Through bushes and through briars</i> , Macfarren <i>Orpheus with his lute</i> , Cornish <i>Adieu, adieu</i> , Bennet <i>Weep O mine eyes</i> , Horsley <i>Slow, slow, fresh fount</i> , Morley <i>April is in my mistress's face</i> , Purcell <i>Winter</i> , Stanford <i>Hush sweet lute</i> , Sullivan <i>The long day closes</i> , Campion <i>Never weather beaten sail</i> , de Pearsall <i>There is a paradise</i> Oxford Liedertafel	11:00 DORCHESTER ABBEY <b>No Sad Songs</b> Purcell <i>Crown the Altar</i> , Butterworth <i>Look not in my eyes</i> , Sowing the seeds of love, <i>Is my team ploughing?</i> , Rose <i>White in the moon</i> , Whiteley <i>Drop, drop slow tears</i> , Swayne <i>No sad songs</i> , Grainger <i>The merry king</i> , Britten <i>The nurse's song</i> , Gant <i>Epitaph on S.P.</i> , Phibbs <i>The moon's funeral</i> , Maxwell Davies <i>Farewell to Stromness</i> , Britten <i>If thou wilt ease thine heart</i> James Bowman, Andrew Plant
	14:30 RADLEY COLLEGE SILK HALL Elgar <i>String Quartet</i> Rawsthorne <i>String Quartet</i> Bridge <i>Piano Quintet</i> Bridge <i>Quartet</i> , Michael Dussek	14:30 RADLEY COLLEGE SILK HALL Parry <i>Lady Radnor's Suite</i> Bridge <i>Lament for Strings</i> Holst <i>Fugal Concerto</i> Elgar <i>Serenade</i> Ian Copley <i>Divertimento</i> Ireland <i>Concertino Pastorale</i> Musicians of All Saints, Andrew Sherwood	13:30 DORCHESTER VILLAGE HALL LUNCH AND SEMINAR – Is there a Future for The British Choral Tradition? Hillary Davan Wetton, Brian Kay, James Bowman, Dr Andrew Plant
	17:15 ABBEY GUEST HOUSE Some versions of pastoral – Havergal Brian's <i>English Suite</i> Malcolm MacDonald	17:15 RADLEY COLLEGE SILK HALL A Summer Evening – Writing Quilter's Biography Valerie Langfield	
19:00 DORCHESTER ABBEY Finzi <i>God is Gone Up</i> Vaughan Williams <i>Silence &amp; Music, Greensleeves</i> Howells <i>Salve Regina</i> Harris <i>Faire is the Heaven</i> Holst <i>St Paul's Suite</i> Finzi <i>Magnificat</i> Tippett <i>Little Music for Strings</i> Howells <i>Nunc Dimittis</i> Harris <i>Bring us O Lord God</i> Berkeley <i>Serenade</i> Dyson <i>Hierusalem</i> Vox Musica, Southbank Sinfonia Strings, Michael Berman	19:30 DORCHESTER ABBEY Parry <i>Jerusalem</i> Curtis <i>Festival Overture</i> Havergal Brian <i>Reverie</i> Vaughan Williams <i>Willow Wood</i> Elgar <i>Sanguine Fan</i> Delius <i>Hiawatha</i> (World Premiere Concert Performance) Cliffe <i>Violin Concerto</i> BBC Concert Orchestra, David Lloyd-Jones, Philippe Graffin, Jeremy Huw Williams	19:00 RADLEY COLLEGE CHAPEL Purcell <i>Rejoice in the Lord</i> Boyce <i>Symphony No. 4 in F</i> Purcell <i>Te Deum and Jubilate</i> Eccles <i>Hymn to Harmony</i> Cannons Scholars, John Andrews	17:00 Note earlier starting time DORCHESTER ABBEY Vaughan Williams <i>Sun, Moon, Stars &amp; Man</i> Holst <i>Hymns from the Rig Veda</i> Britten <i>Choral Dances from Gloriana</i> Foulds <i>Keltic Lament</i> Vaughan Williams <i>Mass in G minor</i> City of London Choir, Hillary Davan Wetton
21:45 DORCHESTER ABBEY Piano music by Billy Mayerl David Owen Norris		21:45 RADLEY COLLEGE CHAPEL <b>The Harp of Bones</b> (A programme of mediaeval and traditional English song – as ancient as the hills of faeries – demonstrating concerns of life, love and death that remain disturbingly contemporary) Joglaresa	

The EMF reserves the right to adjust the programme if necessary.

Book on-line at: [www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk/booking.html](http://www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk/booking.html)

Phone Bookings: 0300 030 3003 (Open 14:00–19:00 Mon-Fri; 14:00–18:00 Sat)

## EMF SPECIAL EVENTS

This year, in addition to the Festival itself, there will be two local events – one in London and one in Yorkshire – to give audiences a flavour of what's on offer at the EMF. Both have been organised by local supporters of the EMF.

### EMF Yorkshire Festival Day

Saturday March 21st 2009, 10.00am – 5.30pm

Clothworkers' Centenary Concert Hall,  
Leeds University

Coinciding with an evening performance of Delius's *Mass of Life*, this event includes talks by EMF Director Em Marshall and internationally acclaimed pianist David Owen Norris on 'Elgar at the Piano', as well as performances by local musicians of a variety of British composers, including Bax, Bowen, Britten, Elgar, Finzi, Armstrong Gibbs, Ireland, Purcell, Quilter and Vaughan Williams.

Tickets for the full day are £23, £18 (adult concessions) and £10 (students and young people under 18). Morning tickets (10.00am to 1.00pm) are £10, £8, and £5. Afternoon tickets (2.00pm to 5.30pm) are £17, £13, and £7. All proceeds will

go directly to The English Music Festival. Tickets can be obtained from [emfyorkshire@parker1.plus.com](mailto:emfyorkshire@parker1.plus.com), or by phoning Kevin Paynes on 01423 872651.

### London Festival Evening

On Thursday 2nd April, at 6.30p.m, there will be a special concert at St. Giles-in-the-Field, a beautiful eighteenth century church in London's West End. The Syred Consort, conducted by Ben Palmer, will perform works by Vaughan Williams, Stanford, Finzi, Britten and Howells. We are delighted to announce that the internationally acclaimed lutenist Elizabeth Kenny will be our guest soloist. Admission is free but with a suggested donation of £10, and all are welcome to join us at a short reception afterwards. Call the EMF office on 0203 274 1054 or email [em.marshall@btinternet.com](mailto:em.marshall@btinternet.com) for further details.

# Audite!

This is our new section devoted to recordings – new or old – of English music. If you would like to recommend a recording to other EMF supporters please send in a review of no more than 450 words.

Holst is a prime example of a composer celebrated for one work only, while the rest of his equally good output lies overlooked and neglected. The disproportionate success of the *Planets* Suite upset the composer, who shunned the lime-light and could not comprehend the public thus latching on to that one work in particular. Holst composed a huge range of music in a variety of genres – yet all with that distinctive, immediately recognisable voice; a trademark that elevates a composer above the level of mere competency to a master.

There are several excellent discs that would seek to rectify the imbalance by presenting his other works, including a recent disc from Chandos (CHSA 5069), with the late, much-lamented Richard Hickox conducting the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and the Joyful Company of Singers. The disc commences with the ballet music that opens Holst's comic opera, *The Perfect Fool*. Hickox's performance is a lively and buoyant one, just about as good as any you'll find on disc, and with a real sense of excitement in the *Dance of the Spirit of Fire* – exhilarating stuff!

As well operas, Holst wrote music for several ballets, and this disc also includes the *Golden Goose* and *Morning of the Year* choral ballets. The *Golden Goose*, written for Morley College, where Holst was Director of Music, is based on the Grimms story of a Princess who couldn't laugh. The more serious *Morning of the Year* was the first work commissioned by the BBC's Music

Department and, dedicated to the English Folk Dance Society, evokes rites of spring time and celebratory folk dances. Both of these choral ballets are available on CD with Hilary Davan Wetton conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra and Guildford Choral Society, and the two discs make interesting comparison. Hilary's disc of 1995 is less polished than Hickox's; the sound and words are muddy and indistinct compared to the crystal clarity of the newer recording. Yet Hilary's gripping renditions have more drama, fire, and possibly a greater understanding of the music - he makes more sense of the ballets, allowing them to flow, whereas Hickox's slightly more bitty versions do not hang together so well as wholes. Both recordings, therefore, have their benefits - Hickox's is a good version, with superb sound and clarity, whilst Hilary has the greater spirit.

Hickox's disc also features the ballet music *The Lure*, depicting a moth drawn to a candle flame. Both *The Perfect Fool* and *Lure* music hold shadows of the *Planets*, the *Lure* in its martial opening. As with all the works on this disc, it is given a vibrant, energetic performance.

Although the choral ballets do not plumb the depths of Davan Wetton's renditions, this is nonetheless a superb disc, with some excellent performances from the orchestra, and some exciting conducting. Anyone who only knows Holst's *Planets* should buy this disc and explore further!

## EMF Friends – Have you joined yet?

The EMF Friends are the heart and soul of the Festival. We need your continued support, this year and in the years ahead, in order to survive and prosper. As a charity entirely dependent on supporters, concert-goers and the generous backing of some key individuals and charitable trusts, we are run on a shoestring budget and rely heavily on our Friends. If you are not already part of this scheme, please join it if you can – we *need* your support!

### A Gift for the Future

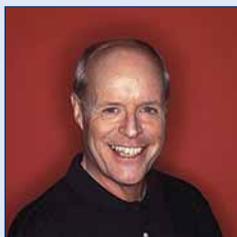
If you share our passion for English music and believe that our nation's glorious musical heritage should be preserved and nurtured for the benefit of future generations, please consider leaving a gift to the EMF in your will. Your legacy, no matter what the amount, will help us ensure that the music we love will still be performed, recorded and broadcast in the decades ahead, and that there will still be

an English Music Festival for future generations to enjoy.

With the advice of a solicitor, writing a will or changing it in order to include a gift to the EMF is very simple. For a legacy form, please write to: **Em Marshall, The English Music Festival, 36 Forest Road, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3BZ**, or email [em.marshall@btinternet.com](mailto:em.marshall@btinternet.com)

### Do we have your details?

It's important that we are able to communicate with our members in the most efficient manner, so we need to make sure we have accurate, up-to-date contact details for you. Please let us know any changes of address or email addresses. Similarly, if you would like to be removed from our mailing list, or know someone whom you think would like to be included in our mailings, please call or email Em and let us know! Many thanks.



### Brian is Our New Vice-President

We are delighted to announce that Brian Kay has joined the ranks of the EMF's Vice-Presidents. Brian will be well-known to you all as a conductor, broadcaster and founder member of the King's Singers.

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