



THE SPIRIT OF ENGLAND

NEWSLETTER OF THE ENGLISH MUSIC FESTIVAL – SPRING 2010 – ISSUE 8



The Fourth English Music Festival

I do hope that the dates Friday 28th May through to the following Bank Holiday Monday, 31st May are inked firmly in your diaries, for the Fourth English Music Festival! A programme leaflet for the Festival is included with this newsletter (if you would like any more copies I'd be delighted to send you some – please let me know), and I hope you will agree with me that this year's events are the most exciting thus far. This year's innovation is our major "Come and Sing" concert with Brian Kay. I am very much looking forward to seeing all you budding singers there, and to discovering the performing talent that the EMF has among its supporters! It is bound to be a popular event, however, so please do book your tickets swiftly if you wish to take part.

The Festival opens on the Friday evening, with a concert featuring what we believe to be the world premiere professional performance of York Bowen's First Symphony. One movement from this work was played at the Queen's Hall shortly after its composition in 1901, and the reviewer from the Musical Times lamented the fact that it was only a single movement – he wished, rather, that other works had been omitted in favour of the complete symphony! We will also hear the first modern performance of Quilter's *Serenade*, and a rare performance of Montague Phillips's superb First Piano Concerto, performed by EMF regulars David Owen Norris and the BBC Concert Orchestra. We look forward to welcoming Gavin Sutherland to conduct for the first time at the EMF.

The three other concerts that I am personally most thrilled to be putting on are a semi-staged performance of Holst's staggeringly powerful opera *Savitri*; a concert of violin sonatas by young and talented violinist Rupert Luck – including a premiere by Sir Henry Walford Davies; and the *Coming of Christ*, by Gustav Holst. This incidental music to a mystery play by John Masefield was one of the works whose neglect encouraged me to first establish the EMF – so it has always been a deeply held ambition of mine to be able to bring this work to you in a live performance.

One of the main EMF developments that I am delighted to announce is the formation of a record label, E(nglish) M(usical) Records, and we plan to record both the *Coming of Christ* and the Walford Davies violin sonata on this label – so watch this space!

Despite the fact that the EMF is continuing to develop and expand, we are still a small (basically one-man) organisation,

and desperately require your continued support and help! If you can join our Friends scheme, you will not only be able to enjoy a range of benefits (from free tickets / Festival passes, through to exclusive parties and recitals), but you would also have the satisfaction of knowing that you are playing a major part in the success of the Festival.

As well as financial support, we also need physical help in terms of stewards and helpers during the actual event. Many other Festivals charge people to take part as stewards, and, given that the majority of our stewards of previous years have also bought Festival passes, we have this year decided to offer all our stewards half price passes (just £50 for all Festival events). If, however, you sign up as a helper (which could involve anything from assisting me with administration work, through to helping to man our on-site box-office, or the shuttle bus, depending on your preferences and abilities) you will get a pass giving you free access to all concerts – and, of course, the knowledge that you are significantly contributing to the smooth running of this important Festival!

We also urgently need your help in distributing leaflets, to spread the word further about the EMF – whether just by passing them on to friends, or displaying them in your local library, post office, tourist information centre or pub. Please do let me know if you can help!

I would also like to draw your attention to our gala concert at St John's, Smith Square in London at the start of May – the Bridge Quartet will be joined by Charles Daniels and Michael Dussek (all of whom I hope might be familiar to you from previous appearances at the EMF) in a splendid programme.

Whether you come as a singer, a steward, a helper, or just a member of the audience, your presence at the EMF this year would be warmly welcomed, and I do very much hope to see you there!

Em Marshall,
Founder-Director

Please support the EMF at a special gala concert in London

1st May 2010 7.30pm
St John's, Smith Square, London
The Bridge Quartet
Charles Daniels (Tenor) and
Michael Dussek (Piano)

Purcell - Two Fantasias
Vaughan Williams - On Wenlock Edge
Britten - Quartet no 1
Bridge - Rhapsody Trio
Bridge - Piano Quintet



Tickets available now through St John's: www.sjss.org.uk
or by telephone on 020 7222 1061

Theatrical clarity; dramatic intent

The A major Violin Sonata of Walford Davies

My acquaintance with the A major Sonata for Violin and Piano by Henry Walford Davies began in June 2009, when I was invited by Dr Peter Horton, Head Research Librarian at the Royal College of Music, to edit this composer's three hitherto-unpublished Violin Sonatas, the manuscripts of which are held in the RCM Archive. I felt, of course, delighted and privileged to receive such an invitation; especially so when, looking through the manuscripts, it became clear that editing the works for performance would raise intricate challenges, as well as presenting the exciting opportunity of enabling these works to be heard in recital for the first time. Only two of Walford Davies's five Violin Sonatas – the third and fourth – have been previously published, by Novello during the early years of the twentieth century; and these, in E minor and D minor, were designated as Sonata no. 1 and Sonata no. 2 respectively. Accordingly, and with the kind permission of Dr Anthony Wilson, I began the process of translating the other three Sonatas from the handwritten manuscript.

Although this Sonata's key is formally designated by the composer as "A major", the first movement actually opens in F-sharp minor; and the juxtaposition of these two keys establishes a dramatic tension which imbues the entire work. Furthermore, the opening motif, with its distinguishing sequence of semitones, plays an important unifying role across the four-movement

structure, most notably in the finale, the first two bars of which are, note for note, identical to the opening two bars of the first movement. Overall unity is also imparted by the use of D-flat major as the tonic key of the third movement: enharmonically, this is equivalent to C-sharp major; so the three principal keys of the Sonata – F-sharp minor, A major, and C-sharp major – form a symmetrical structure with the work's tonic at the centre.

Formal considerations aside, however, this is a work in which characters and emotional landscapes are delineated with theatrical clarity. From the innocent, limpid clarity of the first movement's *Allegro semplice*, which develops into ardent dialogue; through the darkly agitated *Scherzo*, redolent of intrigue and shadowy watchfulness; the fiery outbursts and devotional tranquillity of the third movement; and the turbulent passion and virtuosic bravura of the Finale – this Sonata is vivid proof of the fact that English composers wrote music that is as full-blooded and emotionally charged as any. This is not a work of comfortable, indolent pastoralism, but one which boldly confronts and expresses deeply-seated and sincerely-felt emotions and which, therefore, pulses with the vital life-force of humanity.

Rupert Luck

In the news...

The EMF has continued to keep a high profile in the news, with appearances on a number of radio stations, websites and magazines. Information Britain invites viewers to vote for their "favourite British event" at

www.information-britain.co.uk/listevent.php?id=3926

– so please do support us by voting for us if you can!

We have also appeared recently in the BBC Music Magazine, Musical Opinion, International Piano Magazine, and in many local papers.

HOME TRUTHS

Surrey hits right note

As chairman of the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, which celebrates Dorking's most famous composer, Em Marshall, who lives in Kew, near Richmond, is well-versed on the best things about Surrey. Also the founder-director of the English Music Festival, here we put her under the *Surrey Life* spotlight

What was it that brought you to Surrey? I'm fairly new to Surrey – I came here just three years ago. I lived in the heart of the city most of my life but was always drawn to the Richmond area.

What's your favourite thing about living in the country? I came here to escape the hustle and bustle of the city, and particularly to be by the river. I love being beside the river, and enjoy long leafy walks with my dog. I like the fact that it's easy to get into town for meetings, but the environment in Kew is more 'villagey'. At the same time, there's the convenience of Richmond's shops and restaurants, and easy access to the countryside.

Is there anything you don't like? Aircraft noise. It's a huge problem in Kew. It can really spoil the atmosphere, especially when walking in Kew Gardens, or just sitting in my own back garden reading. I once tried to hold a meeting in my garden for the board of trustees of one of my charities, but we had to give up after 20 minutes because of the constant noise.

How would you choose to spend a 'day' (Sunday morning)? Walking in the Surrey Hills. Box Hill, in particular, makes me nostalgic for my childhood, as it was one of the places my parents used to take me when I was young. I also have one rather unusual memory of a school trip there – I'll never forget meeting the actor Nigel Havers and being patted on the head by him and told that I was 'a good boy' – due to my tomboyish short hair!

If you were heading out for a pub lunch yourself, where would you choose? I would choose somewhere like the Running Horses or the William IV in Mickleham, or the Owlsway Arms in 'Glandon'. What a good country pub needs – and these three have – is old-world character and charm.

It's your partner's birthday coming up... Where would you go for a meal? It really depends on the time of day – if it's for lunch, I'd ideally like to be sitting outside at La Buvette, a delightful French restaurant tucked down a lane in Richmond. Lunch there would be pork filler with lentils, and a Kir Royale. An alternative would be Chez Lindsay, also in Richmond, for a crape and a Normandy cider. For the 'classy' option, I'd go for an early dinner at The Glasshouse, which is next to Kew Gardens station, or a late meal at Wine & Mouska, on Kew Green – with some giggle-inducing Revival!

You decide to go for a country walk... Where would you choose? I especially like the walk along the old Pilgrims Way from just above Denbies Vineyard, up on to Ratmore Common and then down to Poleston Lacey. An area like this, in the heart of the Surrey Hills, is glorious at any time of year.

What's your favourite hidden treasure in the area? Leith Hill Place, now owned by the National Trust, was the home of the great composer Ralph Vaughan Williams and was bought by his grandfather Josiah Wedgwood of the

Wedgwood pottery family) in the mid-19th century. Charles Darwin, the naturalist, was 'Vaughan Williams' great-uncle and used to visit for holidays. A little known fact is that there were once kangaroos skipping around on Leith Hill, which the Evelyns, the Lords of the Manor, who were keen naturalists, had introduced! The church in nearby Coldharbour is the final resting place of a number of the Wedgwoods and Vaughan Williams.

What do you think is the biggest single issue facing the area today? There is too much development, and I notice London sprawling out into Surrey a little bit more all the time. We need to protect the green belt, but it is being nibbled away at, bit by bit, due to the demand for new houses. Soon, if we are not careful, we will lose many of our most precious green spaces – and once lost they'll be gone forever.

Finally, if Surrey had a symbol, what do you think it should be and why? How about the 'per berries'! Until recently they used to grow in prolific numbers all over the Surrey Hills, and we still have some junipers around today, especially around Box Hill. Making the juniper Surrey's emblem would symbolise the importance of protecting our precious heritage and natural environment. Surrey, like the juniper, is endangered, and we need to fight to protect it.

For more information on the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society, visit their website at www.rvws.org



Photographed with her dog, Krishna, at Waverley Abbey near Farnham. The old organ pipes together at over Surrey Youth Arts Festival.

Letters to the Editor

If you have any views, opinions or thoughts that you would like to share with other readers of The Spirit of England, please send them to Em Marshall (contact details on back page) – all are welcome!

To the Editor:

GREAT SAVINGS ON CLASSICAL RECORDINGS

My interest in English composers dates from my acquaintance with classical music in the late 1960s. In 1991, I joined the Havergal Brian Society, because of a desire to support this neglected composer.

I began purchasing recordings from mail order outlets in the UK and USA in the 1970s. I first purchased recordings from the Berkshire Record Outlet in 1989, and today this is my only source. This business sells recordings, which have been deleted or failed to achieve their sales targets. These are purchased from manufacturers at cut rates, and sold to customers at half or less of normal retail prices. By perusing a regularly updated catalogue on its web site, www.berkshirerecordoutlet.co

m, customers can select from thousands of classical recordings ranging from early music to film scores. Over the years, I have bought numerous recordings of works by well-known, as well as obscure, English composers.

Owner Joseph Eckstein established the business in 1974 at Lee in the Berkshire Hills of western Massachusetts. Finding it difficult to maintain the business on standard retail trade, Eckstein began a catalogue of deletions in 1977. Today, the business sells CDs, CD-ROMs, LPs, DVDs, cassette tapes and NTSC videotapes manufactured by 840 recording companies.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Watt, Hobart, Tasmania

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Leith Hill Musical Festival 2011;

dates announced!

13th March: Bach, St Matthew Passion
19th March: Youth Day
7th - 9th April: Festival

The Festival was founded in 1905 by Lady Evangeline Farrer and Margaret Vaughan Williams. Ralph Vaughan Williams, Margaret's brother, was the Festival conductor from its founding until retiring in his eighties in 1954.

Choirs compete against each other, coming together with a professional orchestra and soloists for an evening performance and presentation of prizes.

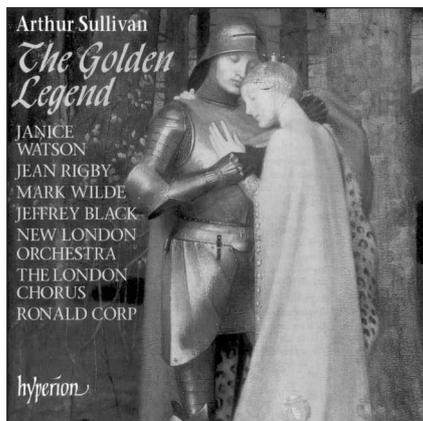
Next year's festival will include works by Dowland, Vaughan Williams, Sterndale Bennett, Rutter, Howells, and Finzi.

To find out more, please visit the Festival website www.lhmf.co.uk

AUDITE

Ronald Corp's pioneering professional recording of *The Golden Legend* on Hyperion in 2001 revealed to all who cared to listen that this was not only a great work but also very enjoyable.

It was also a pioneering work in that, for the most part, it had cast aside the vice like grip of Mendelssohn on Victorian Oratorio. Listen to the *Prologue* to see what I mean! Repeated listening also suggested that it opened the door to works such as Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*, a work which some now assert could not have been possible without the path laid out 14 years earlier by *The Golden Legend*. Even Edward Greenfield is his *Gramophone* review seemed to be pleasantly surprised, as much by the music as by the fact that for many years following



its premiere it was second only to the *Messiah* in popularity.

Listen particularly to the *Prologue*, *It is the Sea* and the haunting obligato *cor anglais* accompaniment to the soprano in *My Redeemer and my Lord*. The conclusion of

the first part, *The Night is Cloudless*, is a marvellous combination of soprano and chorus which Sullivan handles expertly. Janice Watson (to be heard in Holst's *Savitri* in this year's EMF) is in wonderful form. I find the final duets, *Dear Elsie* and *In Life's Delight* prior to the closing *Choral Epilogue* intensely moving when heard in context to what has gone before. Although the duet was described by a German critic using the derisory term "disquieting triviality" it was actually encored at the Berlin premiere. This was an audience, remember, that had not yet been subjected to the rather sugary duets of Puccini!

Are the fates finally beginning to smile on Sullivan? Now we have a truly professional performance of his Grand Opera *Ivanhoe* ...but that's another story!

Dr DW Green

EMF Friends' Quiz

Win two tickets to the semi-staged performance of Holst's *Savitri* at the EMF this year, or one of five copies of EMI Classic *Libera Peace* album, by answering these easy questions about British composers, performers and their music!

- Q1** Elgar was so bad at playing a particular instrument of his that he gave it away to the YMCA. What was it?
- Q2** Only one English work was ever recorded by the great conductor Herbert von Karajan on LP for Deutsche Grammophon. This was?
- Q3** Outside the Dorking Halls in Surrey there is a life size bronze statue of which composer wielding a baton?
- Q4** Gerald Finzi's *Magnificat* was performed by Vox Musica at the 2009 EMF at Dorchester. It was, however composed in 1952 for a choir in which country?
- Q5** John Field was an Irish composer and John Ireland was an English composer. True or False?
- Q6** The National Youth Orchestra has how many players – 90, 112 or 156?
- Q7** What was the late conductor Vernon Handley's nickname?
- Q8** Both Rowan Atkinson and Tony Blair attended the Chorister School in Durham, but did either of them sing in the choir?
- Q9** Which veteran British conductor was honoured in 2009 with the Queen's Medal for Music?
- Q10** Why did Delius's tone poem *Hiawatha* remain unplayable until it was performed at last year's Festival?
- Q11** Which British orchestra has recently sued its former financial director after an external audit revealed that £560,000 had gone astray?
- Q12** Which composer's 50th birthday is to be celebrated in Aldeburgh this June with a performance of his one-act opera *Into the Little Hill*?
- Q13** Which great choral work was disastrously premiered at Birmingham Town Hall in 1900 with the composer present?
- Q14** Which city, boasting (possibly) Britain's oldest symphony orchestra, has announced that it is bidding to become the UK's first UNESCO City of Music?
- Q15** Fourteen poems on a single subject are gathered together in which extended work by Benjamin Britten?
- Q16** Which English composer, particularly interested in Irish culture, spent the last years of his life living above the White Horse Inn in Storrington, Sussex?
- Q17** Frank Bridge's *Oration for cello and orchestra* was performed at the first EMF in 2006 by which artist?
- Q18** Who was the first British composer from whom the Russian impresario Diaghilev commissioned a ballet at the age of 19?
- Q19** Which ardent admirer of Elgar was part of a noble family living at Madresfield, the original setting for Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*?
- Q20** Gustav Holst was the music director at which girl's school (also attended by EMF's founding director) for 29 years until his death in 1934?
- Q21** Which English composer's compositions include a much-loved *Requiem*, *Shepherd's Pipe Carol* and *Gaelic Blessing*, as featured on the recent EMI *Classic Libera Peace* album?"

Answers to Em Marshall (details below) – winners will be drawn from a hat on 10th May. Questions set by EMF Friend, Philip Mitchell.



Special offer for EMF supporters

Copies of the excellent *Songs Discovered* disc are available to readers of the *Spirit of England* newsletter at a reduced price of £9 + £1.40 p&p, and to Friends of the EMF at £7 + £1.40 p&p. Performed by Judith Buckle and pianist Peter Bailey, the disc includes songs by a range of British composers including Thomas Dunhill, Ivor Gurney and Ian Venables – all of them world premieres.

Please make cheques payable to "Wright Music" and order from:
Dr David C F Wright, Elvington House, 24 Belvedere Street, RYDE, Isle of Wight PO33 2JW.

Help us!

Last year you rose to the occasion by helping us to get an unprecedented number of leaflets distributed!

Can you do the same again this year?
Please contact Em if you can help!

Are your details correct?

We are constantly updating our mailing lists and databases, and hope that we have full and correct details for you – please let us know if not, or if you would like to be removed from the list (or even recommend a friend to be added!). We are considering making the *Spirit of England* Newsletter an on-line publication in the future (with hard copies sent only to our Friends and to those who specifically sign up to request it) – so we'll need your email address if you've not already provided us with one!

The English Music Festival

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