



FINZI FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

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Joy and Gerald Finzi

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Gerald Finzi

Foreword

Our thoughts are primarily focused on your wellbeing in these unprecedented times and we hope, therefore, that you have managed to stay safe and well. Also, that you have successfully negotiated the long periods of lockdown, without social contact or live events, and preserved your sanity. We hope that our newsletters and bulletins have enabled you to feel in touch with *Finzi* friends and that the videos on the website, which have proved popular, with viewings in the hundreds, have provided diversion. There have been no opportunities for *Friends* to meet at events and we hope to redress that this year, despite the uncertainties, with the confidence of the vaccination programme and optimistic foresight, together with safety consciousness.

As you can imagine, events arrangements and timescales have been thwarted, but determined to return to some normality we have decided to arrange our scheduled Chosen Hill event for September this year and have already booked St Andrew's Church for 4 September 2021. More details are given in Section 5 and you will be kept informed as the lockdown restrictions are lifted and we can confirm the details. This will be our opportunity to once again hold an AGM and hope that you will participate. We will be formalising the 2020 AGM proceedings at the same time.

The unusual circumstances that have prevailed for so long have left us bereft of events to report here, the successes and achievements we like to acclaim. Consequently, in this issue we have brought to you reports of other achievements and sharing with you those of the Finzi Trust with whom we keep closely associated in promoting Finzi.

We have, however, also taken the opportunity to keep you abreast of our spending programme through the Grants Deployment programme in Section 3 and have also detailed some encouraging and grateful feedback in Section 4.

We now look forward to meeting up again in September but in the meantime hope that you will continue to take care and stay safe.

Eric Hazelwood

1. News from the Committee

1.1 Committee Undertakings

The Committee has remained as positive and proactive as possible during the lockdowns and the ability to meet via Zoom meetings has meant that the Committee has conducted its business as normal in a virtual sense. This has also applied to the Grants Disbursement Sub-committee and we are pleased that we have been able support events and projects as usual. Our Treasurer Adrian Williams has given an account of these activities in Section 3 and in addition we have had feedback from recipients and are pleased that they have taken time to respond which we share with you in Section 4.

AGM

Under the restrictive circumstances the Charities Commission relaxed the rules for carrying out formal AGMs and consequently, as you will be aware, we sent out relevant documents for the AGM for the financial year ending 2020 to the Membership, either via the Website or mail for those not yet signed up. There were no comments or objections either to our Progress Reports or Accounts and therefore they will be adopted at our 2021 AGM as representing the undertakings of the Society for that year. It is our intention to hold a formal AGM this year at our Chosen Hill event detailed in Section 5 and an Agenda is included with this Newsletter announcing this.

1.2 Donation *in memoriam* Professor Angus Hawkins

We record with sadness the death of *Friends* member Professor Hawkins, in whose memory a donation was recently made to the *Friends* by Joyce Fraser. His daughters write:

"Our father, Professor Angus Hawkins, was a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society, Director of International and Public Programmes at the Department for Continuing Education and Director of the Research Centre in Victorian Political Culture at Keble College, Oxford.

He was a brilliant and talented Historian but was equally so a musician. His passions were playing the viola and violin, but he loved listening to

music in all its forms. He had always been very fond of the works of Gerald Finzi, taking particular interest in his instrumental works, his favourite of which being the '*Eclogue*' for Piano and Strings. As someone who was a fan of Finzi's work, an academic and a musician, he took a particular interest in the scholarships and grants awarded by the Finzi Trust and *Finzi Friends* with their aim of expanding opportunities, promoting creativity and encouraging artistic vision."

Emma and Kate Hawkins

2. Finzi Trust Report 2020

Report by Andrew Burn, Hon Secretary, Finzi Trust

Like so many other music organisations, the coronavirus pandemic and the lockdowns have, inevitably had an impact the Finzi Trust during 2020.

Before the first lockdown, several grants had been offered towards performances and projects which were subsequently unable to take place: The Trust will be honouring these when it's possible for them to be reinstated. Grant offers have been extended for a performance of Finzi's Cello Concerto in memory of Christopher Finzi, to be played by Daniel Benn with the Elgar Sinfonia, conducted by Adrian Brown; to Resonus Classics for a recording of piano concertos by Kenneth Leighton and Elizabeth Maconchy, and to the English Music Festival. Continuing support to the Ludlow English Song Weekend, postponed to this coming October, is also pledged. Other grants were awarded to the trumpet player, Jo Harris, for a recording and music video of Judith Bingham's *Enter Ghost* and to Riot Ensemble's 'Zeitgeist' scheme towards the commission and performance of a new work by Laura Bowler, a former Finzi Trust Scholar. Applications for Finzi Trust scholarships got as far as the "shortlist" stage before being put on hold and plans are now underway to make the 2020 awards later this year when the pandemic restrictions are lifted.



Through Jean Finzi's legacy, the Trust was able to respond to the hardship fund appeals of the Royal Academy of Music, the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama and Trinity Laban. Daria Papsysheva, a lyric soprano undertaking her first year of postgraduate study, is the Royal Academy of Music's Finzi Vocal Scholar for the 2020-21 academic year. Other grants awarded through the legacy to young people aged 25 and under included the Stockton Concert Series, Orchestras for All, two schemes for young composers - (Sound and Music's summer school, and the National Youth Choir initiative) and a CD recording of Alex Woolf's Requiem. In addition,

there were individual grants to help with the purchases of instruments, to provide opportunities to attend masterclasses and for purchase of music.

In July, jointly with Finzi's publisher, Boosey and Hawkes, the Trust launched Sing Finzi 21, a major international, online singing competition to celebrate the 120th anniversary of Finzi's birth. Its distinguished jury is comprised of the German lyric soprano, Anna Schwanewilms, the American bass/baritone Eric Owens, the UK's Roderick Williams, the pianists Iain Burnside and Joseph Middleton, Helen Lewis, Executive Producer, Decca Records, and Michelle Williams, Head of Casting at English National Opera. The prizes are £5000, and £2000 for the first placed singer and pianist, respectively. Due to the pandemic, the closing for entering the competition has been extended to 31 December 2021, with the winners being announced in May next year. Full details at: www.boosey.com/singfinzi.

Another consequence of the pandemic has been the delay in the publication of an album of Finzi's works, arranged for saxophone, including two of the *Five Bagatelles*. With the cancellation of major publishing fairs in Germany and the USA, Boosey and Hawkes, advised it was not prudent to launch the album at this time.

Among recordings of Finzi's music released during 2020, Michael Collins's masterly performance on the BIS label of the Clarinet Concerto, in which he both plays and directs the musicians of the Philharmonia, was the third time he has recorded the work. From March to September live performances of Finzi's music were few and far between; however, during the autumn, there were two welcome high-profile performances of Finzi's *Let us garlands bring*, the first, in October, with Roderick Williams in one of the BBC Symphony Orchestra's concerts marking its 90th birthday, and the second in November, at the Barbican, with Sir Bryn Terfel and the Britten Sinfonia.

In December 2020, the Trust was sorry to lose a long-standing trustee Judy Digney, who stepped down after eleven years. We will all miss her wise counsel and her valuable skills as a fundraiser. Although not a Trustee, Tony Flynn, who had undertaken devoted care of the Trust's accountancy responsibilities for many years, indicated his wish to retire from this role after posting the 2019-20 accounts with the Charity Commission. The Trustees are most grateful to him for his dedicated work.

Two new trustees were appointed in 2020, Aileen Thomson, who brings not only her skills as a professional fundraiser to the Trust, but also her musicianship, and the music educator, workshop leader and conductor Jonathan James. Jonathan has plunged into his trusteeship with aplomb producing a series of marvellous podcasts with previous Finzi scholars, as well as one with Paul Spicer discussing Finzi's *Lo, the full, final sacrifice*. They're fascinating and well worth exploring at:

geraldfinzi.org/podcast.html

Of course, the Trustees, like everyone else in the music business, are hopeful of some return to normality during 2021, a year in which Diana McVeagh's greatly anticipated edition of Finzi's Letters, 1915 – 1956 will be published on May 21st by Boydell and Brewer. Full details may be found on the publisher's website at:

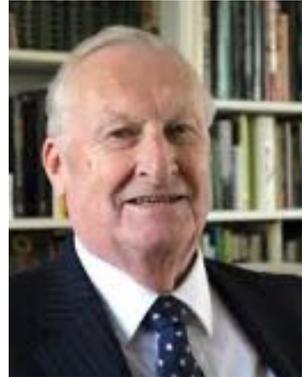
www.boydellandbrewer.com>gerald-finzis-letters-1915-1956.

Enhanced by Diana's impeccable scholarship and insight, this volume will undoubtedly provide fascinating insight, not only into Finzi's life and music, but also about the other composers, writers, and artists with whom he corresponded.

3. Reserves Deployment

A Report by Adrian Williams – *Finzi Friends* Honorary Treasurer

Way back in July 2016, when I had the honour of rising to address the *Friends* as our newly-elected Treasurer at the AGM held in St James' Church Ashmansworth, I was able to make my report to the meeting in the knowledge that the *Friends* had the backing of more than £30,000 in the bank – much more than was necessary to support our ongoing programme for the future.



When it came to 'Questions?', member Dr Laurence Whittaker asked, "Do the *Friends* have a policy on Reserves?" Crikey, I thought, or possibly, Blimey. Whatever the answer I gave him, it should have been, "No, but I will look into it." And he subsequently sent me a helpful steer towards what was the Charity Commission's view on the need for a policy on Reserves.

Putting it bluntly: a Charity should have enough money to conduct its affairs satisfactorily. But it must not have too much either, or questions might be asked as to whether the Charity is honestly discharging its obligations as declared in its Objectives. For the *Friends*, those Objectives begin thus: 'To advance the education of the public in the art and science of music in particular by promoting the knowledge of, appreciation of the life of, and performance of the works of Gerald Finzi...' So it's not just a case of organizing fun activities for the members, then. Out of that realization was born the concept of Reserves Deployment .

The Committee discussed the proposal with care and, by degrees (and through the creation of a subgroup to which I gave the pompous title The Reserves Deployment Working Party – RDWP), the *Friends* entered on a programme of inviting individuals and organizations to apply for grants. Our first announcement appeared in the Spring issue of *HighNotes*, the magazine of the organization 'Music Matters' (of which the *Friends* are a member), whose purpose is to promote the interests of amateur music-making groups and kindred organizations.

The consequence of our announcement was both interesting and encouraging. The RDWP (Martin Bussey, Geoffrey Allan Taylor and I) quickly learned to distinguish the applications that had merit from the ones that merely sought to reduce a deficit – an expected deficit or, in one case, a deficit resulting from a performance that had already taken place. The first two offers for grants that we made were in April 2018, to the Ealing Choral Society and the English Baroque Choir (both of whom were proposing to perform *Requiem da Camera* in November 2018, to commemorate the Centenary of the end of The Great War).



Since we began the programme of grant-making, we have received 38 enquiries. Ten of those went no further, and eight of the formal Applications subsequently made were declined. The *Friends* have made 18 offers of grants; there are two applications currently under consideration. The amount offered has generally been in the range £150 - £500, with one outlier at £1,000. When I write ‘the amount offered’, I have to record with sadness that several applicants to whom we have offered a grant have had to decline the offer subsequently because the restrictions imposed on account of the coronavirus pandemic have prevented a planned performance.

The criteria that interest the Working Party are unsurprising. A proposal for a concert or recital that includes the performance of a substantial piece by Finzi is clearly likely to attract our attention. But we want to avoid the implication that the *Friends* have to give out money to get people to play Finzi, so the phrase in our HighNotes announcement, ‘...a registered charity whose declared aims...extend to encompass an interest in Finzi’s musical world’ is interpreted imaginatively. For example, support for the production of a CD to give prominence to the music of William Busch might seem a surprising decision – until you look for William Busch in the index of Diana McVeagh’s biography of Finzi. We suggest to applicants

that they explain how the *Friends*' financial support will improve what they otherwise propose to do: for example, might they be able to engage a soloist of distinction, or might they be able to distribute publicity of higher quality, and more widely? Applications looking for a grant to plug a hole in the draft budget for a future performance do not excite us: an observation that is worth noting by anyone contemplating seeking financial support from charitable trusts. Being specific about the use to which a grant will be applied makes a lot of difference to grant-makers.

One grant that gave me particular pleasure was the grant we made in July 2018 to the Community and Youth Music Library section of the Hornsey Library in north London. The library applied for support to supplement its current holding of five Finzi choral works so as to bring the total for each work up to 40 parts. This application was irresistible: we could give 'the gift that keeps on giving,' as the phrase has it. We made a grant of £500 – about half of the amount applied for, which the library used to buy 40 copies of *Lo, the Full, Final Sacrifice*, 23 copies of *God is Gone Up*, and three copies of *For St Cecilia*. We suggested that, if the library were to apply again in a year's time, the *Friends* might be able to see their way to making another grant. And so it turned out – a smaller grant this second time, to purchase 19 copies of *Intimations of Immortality* and nine further copies of *For St Cecilia*. Each one of the copies purchased with the help of the *Friends*' grant carries an inscription recording the *Friends*' support, an inscription that will be read by every singer who performs from that copy for as long as the pages hold together.

The RDWP doesn't impose difficult conditions on the acceptance of a grant, but due acknowledgement is one condition that we make. The inscription in the library copies was a case in point. Publicity fliers and programmes need to carry a mention of the *Friends*' support, as do CD notes; we supply the GF Silhouette logo for inclusion. We also ask that organizers of performances supported by a grant from the *Friends* be willing to give free admission to members, an entitlement that we announce from time to time in the Newsletter. I don't know that this entitlement has ever been claimed, but it is a courtesy that costs the organizers nothing.

There have been a few changes since the scheme's inception. The revamping of the *Friends*' website in 2019 enabled us to include a section labelled 'Grants' which announces our policy on grant-giving and gives guidance on how to apply for one. Whereas our announcement in

HighNotes attracted applications in waves following each publication of the magazine (three times a year), the presence of the announcement on the website means that applications arrive continuously throughout the year. As well as eliminating the expense of advertising, this change has had the benefit of enabling the RDWP to reach its decisions more quickly; we reckon to come to a conclusion within four to six weeks of receiving an application.

The composition of the RDWP has changed, too: Martin Bussey has stepped down, his place being taken by Gavin Roberts. Gavin, like Martin, has the professional musical experience to enable him to examine each application from the point of view of the applicant, and to judge whether the amount being applied for is reasonable in relation to its intended purpose. What is a reasonable fee for a quality-tenor to sing *Intimations*? It's good to have someone on the team who can give a view from the sharp end.

The RDWP sees itself as dealing with 'Grants: small end'. The *Friends* has dealt in 'Grants: high end' too – infrequent but larger sums than the average RDWP grant, discussed by the full Committee and made to the Ludlow Festival of English Song, and to New Paths, the organization behind music festivals held in Beverley, East Yorkshire. As well as being successful in terms of the support we have given to musical ventures, the *Friends* can demonstrate to anyone who cares to enquire that, yes, the *Friends* have discharged their charitable obligations in fine style. Our reserves have reduced from more than £30,000 when I became Treasurer to about £18,000 now.

...yes, it was inevitable that a discourse on the value of money and the pleasure that can be had from spending it on ventures of merit would eventually reach the point where I write, "Of course, this can't go on indefinitely." We need to slow down the programme gradually while encouraging ourselves to build up the reserves once again. I am always touched and impressed at this time of year, as I begin to prepare the annual accounts for the Annual General Meeting, to see how many members have been willing to add something to their annual subscription by way of a donation. If you are one of those members, please continue to do so, thus helping the *Friends* to fulfil our charitable objectives.

And if you are *not* one of those members...come to think of it, *I'm* not. Yet my wife and I find, in common with many at this time of coronavirus pandemic, that we have an unusual amount of money in our bank account: no eating out, no holidays, no going to the opera and concerts. I think I'll just pause and make a donation...

...there, that's done. Bank transfer – didn't take more than five minutes. Lloyds Bank: Finzi Friends: 30-93-45, 00173275. Your donation will be much appreciated – by all those applicants for grants in the future who will benefit from your thoughtful gesture.

Adrian Williams

4. Grants Promotion and Experience

Two recent applications to the Grant Allocation Scheme are highlighted below, one a forthcoming event and the other a welcome expression of gratitude for a successful outcome

4.1 Promoting Finzi, The Eblana String Trio

A recent application was considered from the City Music Foundation. We approached this positively and we have been pleased to support one of their musical endeavours as their objective states that “Our mission is to turn exceptional musical talent into professional success by equipping outstanding musicians with tools, skills, experience, and networks to help them make a living from making music.”

In this instance the Foundation is providing the platform for a group of three young artists who have formed a string trio, calling themselves the Eblana String Trio. The Foundation has sponsored them in the production of a new CD featuring works by Sally Beamish, Hugh Wood and naturally Gerald Finzi, the catalyst for our involvement and this potential Finzi promotion. Details are given below.



Being City Music Foundation artists has given them access to both high-level performance opportunities as well as world-class professional and artistic mentoring. The Trio are Jonathan Martindale – Violin, Lucy Nolan – Viola and Peggy Nolan – Cello.

Since its formation in 2006, the Eblana String Trio has been performing regularly for music societies and festivals throughout the UK and beyond, winning praise from audiences and critics alike for the depth and insight of their performances of this often neglected repertoire. Recent seasons have seen the trio giving acclaimed performances at both the Wigmore Hall for the Park Lane Group and at the Bridgewater Hall for the Manchester Midday Concerts Society, as well as performing live on Radio 3’s ‘In Tune’ programme. Please visit their website for a more in-depth overview.



Returning to the *Finzi Friends* promotion, this is in the form of a new CD entitled ‘The King’s Alchemist’, produced by Willowhayne Records. This album is due to be released in May and a promotional video can be found at: <https://youtu.be/AnPrdbw1FEc>

However, there is an album launch event on 9th June in the Foundling Museum and there is an invitation from the Trio as they kindly offer “We would be delighted if you and others from *Finzi Friends* would like to come, Sally Beamish and Hugh Wood will be there.”

Details can be found at:

<http://www.citymusicfoundation.org/events/eblana-string-trio-16/>

Join the Eblana String Trio on this special evening as they celebrate the launch of their debut album released on Willowhayne. The evening begins with a reception from 6:30pm in the presence of two living composers

whose works will be performed that evening; Sally Beamish and Hugh Wood. Music begins at 7:30pm

The programme of works from their album includes Finzi's Prelude and Fugue for String Trio, Beamish's The King's Alchemist and Hugh Wood: Ithaka. They will also be performing the Beethoven Trio Op.9 No.1 in G major.

Supported by City Music Foundation, with additional financial support from *Finzi Friends* and the Maria Bjornson Memorial Trust. This concert will have a socially-distanced audience, abiding by all guidelines relevant at the time of the performance.

4.2 Finzi Friends Sponsored London Song Festival

We are delighted to hear when recipients express their gratitude by providing a feedback on how successful the promotion was through a report on the proceedings of concert performances. A recent request and subsequent grant allocation was made to the London Song Festival for a concert entitled 'He that dwells in shadows - An exploration of the life of Ivor Gurney' which took place on 15 December 2020 in the Hinde Street Methodist Church.

The London Song Festival's mission is to "fly the flag" for the wonderful art-form of song but we were particularly impressed by the educational and outreach part of their organisation which takes the form of master classes and workshops in schools. Master classes have been given by Ian Partridge CBE (2014), Roger Vignoles (2013), Sarah Walker CBE (2013), Simon Keenlyside (2012), Dame Ann Murray (2011) and Louise Winter (2010), who have worked on the Song repertoire with students and young professional singers. These masterclasses are open to all singers under the age of 30.

Nigel Foster, the London Song Festival Director and Founder, approached us for support and following the event very kindly gave us a report of its success. He is an Associate of the Royal Academy of Music and is now a concert pianist and was happy to write:



“I just wanted to write with a final report on the London Song Festival’s Ivor Gurney concert that *Finzi Friends* helped to support, and to thank you for that support.

The concert, entitled “He that dwells in shadows”, was originally to have taken place on Saturday 7th November, performed by Olivia Boen (soprano) and Camille Lemonier (piano), the winning duo of the 2019 London Song Festival BASC (British Art Song Competition). Camille is currently based in Germany, working for Hamburg Opera, and unfortunately Covid-related restrictions and quarantine regulations meant that she was unable to travel to London. The concert was postponed twice in the hope that restrictions might be lifted, but sadly they were not, so the concert eventually took place on Tuesday 15th December with me (at very short notice) taking Camille’s place as pianist. This was a hard decision to make, as Camille and Olivia won the competition as a duo, and all of us were very reluctant to break up this duo for the purposes of this prize-winners’ concert, but as restrictions and lockdowns now seem set to last until well into 2021, we felt this concert should go ahead, sadly without Camille.

The programme included Finzi’s setting of Gurney’s ‘Only the Wanderer’ and performances of seven unpublished songs by Gurney, edited and transcribed, in several cases specially for this concert, by Ian Venables and Philip Lancaster. The ‘new’ songs we performed at this concert were:

Dinny Hill
Nocturne
World Strangeness
The World’s Great Age Begins Anew
The Return of the Heroes

O Dreamy, Gloomy, Friendly Trees
Western Sailors

I am delighted that the London Song Festival was able to play a small part in disseminating these songs – I hope they will be performed by an ever widening number of singers and pianists and enjoyed by more and more of the concert-going public. (and may the days of people actually attending concerts come back as soon as possible!)

As chance would have it, the new date of concert, 15th December, was the last day possible to perform for a live audience in the venue, socially distanced of course, as new restrictions came into force the following day. John Rayment, the original actor reading, playing Ivor Gurney and reading his poetry, was unable to make the new date, so he was replaced, at very short notice, by David Mildon. The concert was streamed online by Apple and Biscuit. Here is a link to the video on the London Song Festival YouTube channel – as of today (6th January) it has had 322 views, a number which is increasing daily.

[*He That Dwells in Shadows - LSF 2020 - YouTube*](#)

I have been delighted to receive messages from people in France, Belgium, Germany, the US and Australia who have accessed and enjoyed this video – it is lovely to see how international the London Song Festival has become as a result of its new online presence.

Here is a link to the PDF containing my programme notes that viewers can access, the texts of the songs and background information about Gurney and his songs, and the poets he set:

[*He+That+Dwells+In+Shadows+Song+Texts+and+Programme+Notes.pdf\(squarespace.com\)*](#)

I hope you enjoy the video of this concert – please feel free to pass the link to anyone who might be interested. With many thanks again for the support of *Finzi Friends* for the London Song Festival.

With best wishes,
Nigel”

5. Future Events

We remain positive and optimistic about the future and a gradual return to normality which is why we have put plans in place to both recreate and support some events this year and we encourage you to participate and support where you can. The Finzi connections are as follows, including our own proposals:-

St Marylebone Festival 18-23 July 2021 (Marylebone Parish Church)

The Festival was unable to take place last year but in confidence has been re-scheduled for late July. You can be assured all precautions will still be observed and consequently ticket booking has commenced. More details can be found on their website: <https://www.stmarylebonefestival.com/>

Of particular interest to Members the last day, on Friday 23 July, when Finzi is prominent and we are delighted to be working in partnership with St Marylebone Festival to present 'A Finzi Feast'. We are delighted to work with Committee member, Gavin Roberts to promote this event. Gavin is Director of the Festival and Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church. The event will commence with a visit to Finzi's birthplace in Hamilton Terrace in St John's Wood, just a mile from St Marylebone Church and will include a stroll back to the Church including the Royal Academy of Music opposite the Church, where Finzi taught. Chairman Martin Bussey will be providing the guided tour. We will meet at 3.00pm at 93 Hamilton Terrace. Please also see the link below.

<https://www.stmarylebonefestival.com/events-1/finzi-heritage-walk>

In the evening there is a 'Finzi Feast' commencing at 6.15pm with a Finzi talk by Martin Bussey and then from 7.00pm a Finzi concert. This will be held at St Marylebone Parish Church, 17 Marylebone Rd, Marylebone, London NW1 5LT. The concert combines choral and instrumental music alongside some of Finzi's well-known and lesser-known solo songs. It will feature the Choir of St Marylebone PC directed by Gavin Roberts and instrumental music given by Gavin Roberts (piano, conductor), Clare Hoskins (oboe) and Jamie Rogers (organ). Tickets for this event are £15 but *Finzi Friends* Members benefit from a £5 reduction, available for purchase on the Festival website.

<https://www.stmarylebonefestival.com/events-1/a-finzi-feast>

Chosen Hill 4 September 2021

Caution has driven us to re-schedule this event once again and we are in touch with St Andrew's Church Centre on a regular basis to fine tune the arrangements as permitted by the government's easing of lockdown. For your reassurance St Andrew's are being ultra-cautious with each development to ensure congregations and visitors alike are kept safe. For this reason we feel justified in making arrangements for this event to go ahead and hope therefore you will feel reassured to join us once again. In addition, this will be our only opportunity to hold our AGM live and we hope Members will turn up early to participate.

The performance and the performers have naturally had to be held in abeyance and we hope their arrangements will allow us to re-engage them and if so we hope to invite Florian Panzieri, tenor and James Atkinson, baritone. Florian is from Guildhall and James from RCM. They would have been singing songs from *Earth and Air and Rain* and *Oh fair to see*, together with songs by Kurt Weill, Butterworth, Madeleine Dring and American composer Ben Moore. The original plan was that Iain Burnside would accompany them but Iain is always in demand so watch this space!

For those of you able to access the *Finzi Friends* Website we invite you to stay in touch to keep abreast of arrangements as they develop. Mailing Members will be sent a flyer and application form nearer the time.

Ludlow English Song Weekend 29 & 30 October 2021

A recent meeting of the LESW Directors concluded that the safest approach would be to re-schedule this event for later in the year.

LESW have expressed their preference for keeping the festival live and following thorough planning are confident visitors can all be safe, hygienic and comfortable in the wide open spaces of St Laurence's Church by continuing to observe social distancing.

The need to compromise has led to a shortened Weekend, running it from Friday afternoon to Saturday teatime. However, the programme is still action packed and Roddy Williams kicks off in style, with the wonderful mezzo Kathryn Rudge, pride of Liverpool and first time Ludlow visitor, rounding us off. Natalya Romaniw, recently crowned RPS Singer of the

Year and is the UK's hottest vocal property. Rhian Samuel is composer in residence, guiding an intriguing group of young composers. Katy Hamilton will lead a discussion with fiercely intelligent guests. There is no masterclass this year, so the first concert on Saturday afternoon showcases not only those young composers but also a group of wonderful emerging singers from the RCM. To them are entrusted the premieres: Rhian's *The Moon and I* and *Fallen*, a new cycle by Philip Lancaster, to specially written poems by John Greening. *Fallen* ties together various LESW strands, and is cast for the unusual combination of tenor and unaccompanied violin. Michael Foyle is the luxury casting violinist.

Full programme details and ticket sales can be found on their website: ludlowenglishsongweekend.com

The Future

Looking forward we would love the opportunity to share music making with the Members again similar to our Tardebigge 'Come and Perform' event eighteen months ago. Members were given the opportunity to perform regardless of standard, and those attending expressed how enjoyable the event had been. Members embraced the friendly atmosphere and the opportunity to perform before an appreciative audience. The relaxed atmosphere encouraged performers to want to repeat the experience and therefore we are keen to plan this into our forward programme again. There was a wealth of music made, vocal and instrumental, making a varied and full programme for audience alike. We encourage you to join us and look forward to positive feedback and enthusiasm for another event.

6. Review

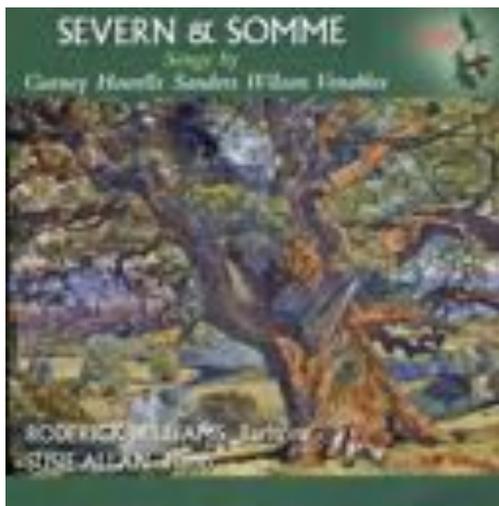
Anthony Boden has featured in the recent Journal and Newsletters principally for championing Ivor Gurney, something instigated by Gerald Finzi, and for his family connection with Gurney. He recently became aware of the following CD and the inspired review by John Quinn which he is keen to share with us.

Severn & Somme

English Song featuring Ivor Gurney but including Herbert Howells, John Sanders, Christian Wilson and Ian Venables.

Roderick Williams (baritone)
Susie Allan (piano)
SOMM RECORDINGS SOMMCD057

Recently, when I was researching background for my interview with the pianist Susie Allan, I discovered somewhat to my surprise that we don't seem to have reviewed this disc, which I believe was the first that she and Roderick Williams made together. How can this collection of English songs, which I bought when it first came out, have eluded us? Well, on the basis of better late than never, it's high time to draw the attention of collectors of English song recordings to this disc.



As its title suggests, the programme is rooted, albeit not exclusively, in my adopted home county of Gloucestershire. The backbone of the collection is formed by no less than seventeen songs by Ivor Gurney, Gloucester born and bred. Indeed, the album takes its title from the title of Gurney's first published collection of poems, *Severn & Somme* (1917). There's also a song by Gurney's lifelong friend, Herbert Howells, who hailed from

Lydney and studied as a boy at Gloucester Cathedral, where he met Gurney. Though born in Essex, John Sanders became closely identified with Gloucester Cathedral, serving as its Assistant Organist (1958-1963) and then as Organist from 1967 to 1994. Christian Wilson came to Gloucester when he retired and he served for 12 years as Secretary of the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival. Ian Venables, a Liverpoolian by birth, has lived across the county boundary in Worcester for many years, so his connection with the River Severn is as strong as any of his fellow composers represented here; indeed, one of Venables' finest sets of songs is the cycle *Song of the Severn* (2013), which was premiered and subsequently recorded by Roderick Williams (review)

The programme that Roderick Williams and Susie Allan put together for this disc includes several songs that are very well known. However, many are less familiar and out of the twenty-six songs they perform, no less than twelve of them here received their recorded premieres, including eight by Gurney. All of those eight Gurney songs were, at the time of recording, unpublished and had been edited by Philip Lancaster.

The Gurney songs are presented in roughly chronological order. 'On your midnight pallet' is Gurney's first setting of a Housman poem. The piano part is martial and over it the vocal line is seamlessly legato. 'Dearest, when I am dead' sets a poem by a Gloucester-born poet, W E Henley (1849-1903). It's a satisfying setting which builds to a rapturous, expansive climax on the last couplet, 'Seeing, how goodly and great love, / Were your ways with me.' However, I think that perhaps through inexperience, Gurney slightly miscalculated; so long is the sustained note on the word 'love' that after the preceding extensive phrase even a singer of Williams' abilities needs a breath before singing that word. 'Edward, Edward' is a Sots ballad consisting of six stanzas which might, in lesser hands, lend itself to strophic treatment. However, Gurney perceptively varies the music very effectively in each stanza according to the demands of the text. Williams relates the story vividly and Susie Allan invests the piano part with lots of vitality and varying colours.

'In Flanders' is surely one of the great English songs. The words are by F. W. 'Will' Harvey (1888-1957), a lifelong friend of both Gurney and Herbert Howells. Written in wartime France, the poem is an almost unbearably nostalgic evocation of home, taken to new heights by Gurney's music. In this performance Susie Allan places every single note of the

piano part perfectly while Roderick Williams sings with eloquence and with infinite care both for the words and for the musical line. Immediately following is 'Severn Meadows', another song which is fit only for the highest place in the pantheon of English song and one of the few settings that Gurney made of his own poetry. It lasts less than two minutes but it says so much in such a short span.

In complete contrasts stands 'Captain Stratton's fancy', a rollicking setting of part of John Masefield's poem which F W Harvey asked Gurney to make. He set less of the poem than Peter Warlock did in his song of the same name and it's interesting that there are textural discrepancies between the two: almost certainly, Gurney, serving in the trenches in France, was setting Masefield's lines from memory. I admire the clarity of Roderick Williams' diction in this tongue-twisting song but I do wonder if his delivery could have been a little more unbuttoned. I think Warlock's song is the finer of the two, but Gurney's is far from negligible and most enjoyable.

'Red Roses' and 'Song of silence' were composed in 1918 and both were dedicated to Annie Nelson Drummond, a nurse who tended Gurney in hospital. He fell for her but, sadly, his love was unrequited. Both of these are love songs. 'Red Roses', a lovely song, shows an enhanced harmonic adventure compared to many of Gurney's earlier songs. 'Song of silence', probably a setting of Gurney's own verse, is equally lovely. There's rapture here but it's of the introspective kind and Williams sings the song most expressively. The piano writing has echoes of late Brahms, I think. I spoke of harmonic adventure and that's even more in evidence in the Edward Thomas setting, 'Lights out'. This is a masterly song in every respect. Both the vocal line and the highly independent piano part are searching in nature. The intensity of the song is matched by the intensity of this performance.

'Black Stichel' is one of Gurney's best-known songs, and deservedly so. Its flowing lyricism is expertly conveyed here. 'Western sailors' is one of Gurney's very last musical compositions, though he continued writing poetry after 1926. The words to this song are probably by him and I find them very interesting. In illustrating how far sailors roam, the poet is peppered with references to destinations in the USA. However, the refrain keeps harking back to one source: 'Of all the rivers yet I know, / I love Severn best'. Here, surely, we see Gurney, incarcerated in a Kent mental hospital, pining for his never-to-be-forgotten roots.

There's just one song by Gurney's friend Howells. 'Goddess of night' sets lines by their mutual friend, Will Harvey; in fact, Gurney also made a setting of them. Howells' song is aptly described in the notes as a "soothing nocturne". Whilst not disagreeing, I think there's also a decided air of mystery, at least in this highly atmospheric performance.

The two John Sanders songs come from his song cycle *The Beacon*. Yet again we have a Harvey song in the shape of 'On Painswick Beacon'. The poem describes Harvey's feelings on returning to Gloucestershire from war service and surveying his beloved home county of Gloucestershire from the hilly vantage point of Painswick Beacon between Gloucester and Stroud. Sanders' music gradually expands to express the poet's relief and pleasure. 'Cotswold choice' sets a poem by Frank Mansell. The poem is a wistful paean to places in the Cotswold countryside to which Sanders responds with music that is modest in tone but very effective. Sadly, the disc was already generously filled so there wasn't room on it for the other two songs in the cycle which, so far as I know, remain unrecorded.

To the best of my knowledge it's only through this disc and therefore this pair of songs that I've encountered the music of Christian Wilson. His song 'The empty cottage' sets a poem by Wilfrid Gibson and there's another Gurney connection here because the lines set by Wilson are Gibson's second version of his poem; the first was set by Gurney as 'All night under the moon' (1918). I liked Wilson's song and it could scarcely receive stronger advocacy than it does here. Wilfred Owen's 'Anthem for doomed youth' was memorably set by Britten in *War Requiem*. I presume Wilson's setting came later. He doesn't attempt as 'public' a setting as Britten, nor is his musical response as searing. Instead, the music is fairly subdued and intimate but it's nonetheless deeply felt.

There's a Gurney connection too with Ian Venables, who is a longstanding admirer of and advocate for Gurney's music and poetry. Happily, his own songs are well represented on CD and here are four choice examples. 'Midnight lamentation' is, I think I am right in saying, his very first song. Anyone listening to it will surely be astonished to learn from the notes that it's the work of a nineteen-year-old. Susie Allan plays the searching prelude beautifully, paving the way for the truly memorable vocal line, which Roderick Williams delivers with great yet completely natural expression. Incidentally, the words in the second and third verses of

the song differ quite a bit from the text printed in the booklet. 'A Kiss' is a Thomas Hardy setting; both words and music are suffused with melancholy. By contrast, 'Flying crooked' is a delectably witty little song. 'Easter song' is an intriguing composition. The words are by Edgar Billingham (1897-1987). Though he lived and worked in Worcester, I learned from the notes that his ashes are interred in Gloucestershire, on Chosen Hill, the vantage point between Cheltenham and Gloucester. Both Gurney and Howells knew this spot well. The title of the poem might lead you to expect a joyful, extrovert poem and song, but such is not the case. Instead, much of the poem is thoughtful and inward, to which Venables responds suitably. It's only in the last two lines that words and music achieve potent affirmation.

This is a very fine collection of songs which has been discerningly chosen. Throughout the programme Roderick Williams sings with his trademark sensitivity to words and music and with a tone that gives consistent pleasure. Susie Allan's pianism is intuitive and perceptive; at all times she is 'with' her singer.

SOMM's production values are high. The recording was engineered by Eric James who has achieved splendid results, balancing voice and piano expertly. The documentation is first rate. Graham J Lloyd provides an excellent note about the Venables songs, writing with the experience of many years of playing the composer's music. The remaining songs are covered in an equally authoritative note by Anthony Boden. He writes with the benefit of deep knowledge of the Gurney-Howells-Harvey circle, as evidenced in his fine biography, *F W Harvey. Soldier, Poet* (1988, rev 2011). The care taken over this release even extends to the cover image. It's a reproduction of a watercolour, 'The Lassington Oak, Gloucestershire' by Thomas Gambier Parry (1816-1888), father of Sir Hubert Parry, who lived at Highnam Court, just outside Gloucester, where he built a handsome Victorian Gothic church on the family estate.

If you like recordings of English song and haven't yet encountered this excellent disc then I urge you to add it to your collection without delay. It's an ideal complement to the subsequent and equally desirable recital 'Celebrating English Song'.

John Quinn

Contents

Ivor GURNEY (1896-1937)

On your midnight pallet (1907) *, Dearest, when I am dead (1908) *,
Edward, Edward (1913), Dreams of the sea (1914) *, In Flanders, Severn
Meadows, Dinny Hill*, Captain Stratton's fancy (1917), Red Roses (1918)
*, Song of silence (1918) *, The white cascade (1918) *, The folly of being
comforted, Desire in Spring, Walking song (1919), Lights out (1919),
Black Stichel (1920), Western sailors (1926) *

Herbert HOWELLS (1892-1983)

Goddess of night

John SANDERS (1933-2003)

On Painswick Beacon*, Cotswold choice*

Christian WILSON (b 1920)

The empty cottage (2001) *, Anthem for doomed youth*

Ian VENABLES (b 1955)

Midnight lamentation, A Kiss, Flying crooked, Easter song

*denotes premiere recording

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