



FINZI FRIENDS NEWSLETTER

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Church Farm
Ashmansworth

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Gerald Finzi

Foreword

This year we return once again to our spiritual home at Ashmansworth, where Gerald and Joy Finzi made their last home and found tranquillity in the Berkshire countryside providing inspiration for the music we love. Live that experience for yourself by joining us on our day of pilgrimage on 11 July 2020. We are offering a full day's programme and excellent lunch with our President Iain Burnside directing the music. Full details are given in Section 6 of this Newsletter and we enclose a flyer and application form for your response. The flyer is also available on the website where you can make application for reservations. Do join us.

**Join us at
Ashmansworth
again this year**

It is with sadness that we have to report that Gerald and Joy's last surviving son Christopher (Kiffer) passed away in late November 2019. You may have seen reports in the press but we give a more positive report in Section 1 of this Newsletter. Our thoughts are with his wife Hilary and the children. The family threads to Gerald are loosening but we are grateful to Kiffer's son Orlando for maintaining the connection, being firmly involved with the Finzi Trust and a valued support to the Friends.

Orlando has also brought to us more reminiscences of someone close to Gerald and Joy: we include the memories Richard Shirley Smith has offered of his friendship with the family at Ashmansworth. Richard has achieved his own distinction through his Art so we are grateful to him for his thoughts.

We include a report on our 'Come and Perform' event at Tardebigge last autumn and we'd appreciate your thoughts on the day if you were there or your aspirations if you weren't, in our attempt to gauge opinion on staging a similar event. The feedback on the day was very positive from both performers and audience, enjoying the informality and friendliness of the gathering.

Eric Hazelwood

1. Tributes to Christopher (Kiffer) Finzi 1934 - 2019

The sole surviving son of Gerald and Joy Finzi, Kiffer, who was born in 1934 sadly died on 28 November 2019. He hadn't been well for some time but it is still a sad loss and represents the closing of another chapter in the surviving Finzi lineage. It was a joy that he was able to come to part of our last Ashmansworth event. We give below some accounts and thoughts of his passing, including a tribute from Diana McVeagh, Gerald Finzi's biographer.



Service of Thanksgiving held at St James' Church, Ashmansworth, 11th December 2019

A report by Jim Page

This tiny church, which has played host to so many memorable events featuring music by Gerald Finzi, was absolutely packed with family and friends for a Service of Thanksgiving for the life of his elder son Christopher (Kiffer) Finzi who had died on 28th November 2019. The service opened with a Folk Tune by Percy Whitlock played by organist Anthony Williams, and between family tributes and readings by the four children, Theresa, Clare, Nico and Orlando, granddaughter Holly Lyne sang 'Fear no more the heat of the sun', from *Let us garlands bring*.

Hymns included 'For the beauty of the earth', 'I heard the voice of Jesus say' and 'Jerusalem'. The service was conducted by Reverend Canon Christine Dale who gave the Address. The Wake was held some distance

away at Andrew Pengelly's home and Kiffer's eccentricity was well represented by Hilary proposing a toast with his 64 year old Mead. His notes say 'Created 30th October 1955, casked 15th November 1955, racked 29th March 1956'. 'Pale, dryish, very clear, warming, very promising.'

The church is directly opposite Church Farm which was built by Kiffer's parents, Gerald and Joy, in 1938 and on the wall at the entrance is a blue plaque placed there by *Finzi Friends* some twenty years ago.

There is also a memorial to Gerald and Joy just outside the church porch, which houses Laurence Whistler's engraved window to 50 English Composers.



It was felt that Kiffer would have applauded the environmental concerns of Extinction Rebellion so it was suggested that donations should be given to the cause.

There must have been almost 100 people standing and the Skinners (who are Churchwardens and who generously host our summer events) did a calm and organised job in ushering about 40 people out so that the coffin could get in and then doing the same again when the coffin was taken out.

Reminiscences from Diana McVeagh

I remember a warm kindly man, who regarded his fellow humans with some amusement, and the future of the planet with trepidation.

Very early on, I had been staying at Ashmansworth, and drove the two Finzi boys, then quite young, back to London. They were in high spirits. I can't remember a word they said, but the banter between them was such that I nearly drove off the road, so doubled up was I with laughter.

At the Canterbury Finzi Festival, Kiffer was to conduct *Dies Natalis*, with a scratch orchestra – and I do mean scratch. At the first rehearsal the sound

was execrable. Not a flicker of pain crossed Kiffer's face, not a word of reproach crossed his lips. Calmly he set about rehearsing them, teaching, demonstrating, encouraging, coaxing. The performance that evening was creditable. It was a masterly display of self-control, professionalism, and wisdom.

In the months after my book was published he would often ring me up quite late at night, talking, talking, talking. I had revealed things about his father he had not known, or had not thought deeply about, taking him for granted as one does relatives. His devotion to Gerald was heart-warming.

The night before Nigel's funeral, because it was to be in the morning, I had booked into a nearby B&B. Kiffer rang me, inviting me to supper that evening at Ashmansworth. 'But it's just family' I protested. 'You *are* family,' he insisted.

At one point I wanted to persuade that remarkable film-maker John Bridcut to make a documentary about Gerald, while Kiffer and Hilary were still living at Ashmansworth. I propounded the idea to Kiffer as we walked slowly (it was after his first stroke) from the house across the lane to lock up the church. He wasn't keen. 'Oh Kiffer, why not' I said. I'll always remember the sad look on his face as he replied 'I wouldn't want people to remember me like this.' I so admired the dignity with which he accepted his disabilities and also accepted any proffered help. But his wry humour came back as he remarked that as he daily locked and unlocked the church he must have visited it more than any member of the congregation.

I heard the news of his death on board a ship off the Canaries. Expected though it was, it was a shock. Perhaps because I was so far away, and with no one to talk to who had known Kiffer, I found myself reflecting on the responsibility of a biographer. In my book Kiffer gets born. Now I have outlived him. It seems the wrong way round.

The lasting memorial to Kiffer is the recording he conducted in 1964 with Wilfred Brown of his father Gerald Finzi's exquisite cantata, *Dies Natalis*. Brown had sung it and Kiffer (a cellist) had played it under Gerald, so not only is it authentic, but it is among Brown's finest recordings, intelligent, poetic and spiritual. It was originally released by World Record Club and included Imogen Holst conducting her father's music, surely a unique double alliance across generations.

Reminiscences from Michael Barlow

Michael Barlow, a long standing *Finzi Friend*, passes on his thoughts following Kiffer's death. Michael has spent a career in music education, heading departments in schools. He is also an organist and composes music for amateur musicians, especially for schools. Michael is also the author of 'Whom the Gods Love', the life and music of George Butterworth and he writes:

I first saw Kiffer when I was a young schoolboy, back in 1958, when he conducted the Newbury String Players in a concert in Stanbridge Parish Church, Bedfordshire, a few miles from my family home. The vicar at the time was the Rev. Michael Shiner, who later became a *Finzi Friend* (he may even have been on the committee). One item in the concert was Finzi's *Fear no more the heat of the sun*, sung by the vicar! - this was my first introduction to Gerald's music.

2. News from the Committee

2.1 Recent Proceedings

Grants Allocation

The Working Party has continued to receive applications for grants: fourteen applications in the last twelve months, of which eight resulted in the *Friends* making a grant.

They include a grant to Cumbria Rural Choirs in support of a performance of *Intimations of Immortality* that will take place in Carlisle Cathedral on 21 March 2020 (see also the account of Finzi in Cumbria below!).

Other grants include support to the City Music Foundation in making a recording of a CD by the Eblana String Quartet which includes Finzi's String Trio, and a second grant to the Community and Youth Music Library, Hornsey Library in London, to enable the library to increase its holding of choral works by Finzi. We made a grant to Zen Kuriyama, musicologist, to contribute to the expenses of his journey from Boston USA to the University of St Andrews, Scotland to deliver a paper on Finzi's correspondence with Cedric Thorpe Davie (of which an edited transcript was published in *The Finzi Journal* of December 2019).

Looking ahead to summer this year, the *Friends* will be supporting the Lambeth Orchestra's performance of Finzi's *Cello Concerto* planned for 11 July 2020 at All Saints Church, West Dulwich in South London.

In 2018 and 2019 the *Friends* placed an announcement in *HighNotes*, the Membership Magazine of Making Music (formerly, the National Federation of Music Societies), inviting applications for grants. Since the launch of our new website in June 2019, a number of applications have reached us via the website route. Though the numbers are too small to constitute evidence of a definite trend, it is pleasing to see several applications from individual musicians as distinct from organizations.

Membership Renewal

This is a gentle reminder to those who have still to pay their 2020 subscriptions. The subscription year starts on 1 January 2020 and we would be grateful, if you haven't already enrolled again this year, if you would consider contributing to the Society again this year. It is only through your subscriptions that we are able to provide the publications and events that we do and in addition, small grants to deserving causes. The rates haven't changed for a number of years and are still:

Individual	£20
Additional member at same address	£12.50
Student	£10
Overseas	£25

Payment should be made to the Treasurer, Adrian Williams, whose contact details are on the back of this Newsletter. It can also be made via the website.

2.2 Thoughts on Programme Planning.

Our Committee Member Geoffrey Alan Taylor is a composer and performer in his own right and is often asked to prepare and perform programmes of his own compositions, Finzi or a mix of sympathetic contemporaneous music. As a result, he has become adept at preparing programme material for suitable occasions and venues and he shares his thoughts with us in the following, particularly giving an insight into how *Finzi Friends* reviews applications for grants.

The art and skill of programme planning is to attract and capture the interest of performers and an audience. This can be done by a judicious selection of works that may relate to each other, or by carefully selected juxtapositions engendering a mutual enhancement. This is perhaps more easily achieved with works by a particular composer thereby giving an over-all experience of his works. Another possibility is where the chosen works relate to a 'theme' and its connections; this has become a popular option with orchestras and choirs. (Periods, places, times, travel, cities, countries or other examples that you may have experienced.)

Can we think beyond the fear of losing an audience exposed to new and unfamiliar repertoire? Why are we worried about filling the hall? It would be so much better if every concert had the courage to contain something of the present time, something new and freshly created to try and open up minds and give the audience an adventure, especially if it relates to a familiar and well known work. So often the pieces played are by dead composers, so it's good to give living composers a chance, as was the case in the past.

Finzi Friends would always go for the support of projects that benefit and involve the most people, namely choirs and orchestras that give live performances and encourage real music making rather than passive listening. Do groups have outward links with younger people, with aims in broadening education, giving encouragement for children to attend rehearsals or concerts? Or a sponsorship scheme for compositions or commissions whereby members are involved in the creation of new works that have some relevance to them, as aids to commissions (perhaps on a Finzi related theme)? Ideas such as this have been used by the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group. Gerald Finzi was always looking into the unexplored byways and unearthing works by neglected or forgotten composers. If possible we must try and move forward into new areas having explored down so many avenues. More original thoughts are to be welcomed.

Projects with a view to making a CD are often the basis for a plan, and it's always more difficult when it comes to considerations for money for CD's which may easily be seen as 'vanity' projects. Will the new CD really give us something new and original or add anything more in interpretation? When many splendid versions already exist of well-known works, how will the future performance add anything new? We need projects with good Finzi connections, perhaps in a series, or with an educational slant. It's always so encouraging to see groups coming up with stimulating and related programming.

3. Finzi Trust Report

In Retrospect. Finzi Trust 2019:

by Andrew Burn, Hon Secretary, Finzi Trust.

The passing of Christopher (‘Kiffer’) Finzi in November marked the end of an era, as the trustees recalled his significant contribution to the Trust during his time as its Chairman, as well as his involvement in the four triennial Weekends of British Music from 1981 onwards when he conducted his father’s music, and directed choral workshops, bringing, naturally, a unique perspective to them. For many, his recording of *Dies natalis*, with Wilfred Brown, remains the finest. Kiffer will, indeed, be missed.

For the Trust, 2019 was a year of reflection, as Trustees contemplated on how the copyright on Finzi’s music ceasing in six years’ time, and hence the virtual end of royalties, will affect our activities, and also how we take forward Jean Finzi’s most generous legacy to the Trust, which is to be used primarily to support disadvantaged young musicians.

Jean’s legacy was recognised through the opening concert of the 2019 Ludlow English Song Weekend being dedicated to her memory, as the Trust continues to provide financial support to this important venture. The Trust also awarded grants to the Three Choirs Festival, and the English Music Festival for their programming of British music.

Another major aspect of the Trust’s work are the Finzi Scholarships, which in 2019 were awarded to Alice Barron, to visit India to study the techniques of Karnatic violin with the Mysore Brothers; to Amanda Johnson, also a violinist, who will visit France to take forward her project entitled “The Festival of the Black Madonna – Music for a Gypsy Pilgrimage; to composer Jay Richardson, enabling him to travel to Hong Kong to work on his project ‘In The Concrete Silence – Re-hearing Silence in Hong Kong’, which will lead to the creation of an urban soundscape composition; and to the pianist James Watkins, who will in his project, ‘The First Steps Towards an International Pianist’s Career’, study with leading pianists in the USA and France, and also research the psychology and methodology of private practice.

The Trust's Finzi Royal Academy Scholar for the academic year 2019-20, is Hazel Neighbour, who is in her second year of the Academy's Advanced Diploma in opera.

Following discussions with the Bodleian Library, which houses the main body of the Finzi archive, the Trust has given further ongoing financial support to enable the digitalisation of the photocopies of the composer's letters.

Finzi's music continues to be performed throughout the UK and abroad, with the Trust offering a number of modest performance grants which in 2019 included: the Chiswick Choir (*In Terra Pax*), the Eversley Choir (*Magnificat*) and the Monteverdi Chor, Würzburg, (*Dies natalis*). The Trust has continued to offer grants to young people and students through the Stockton-on-Tees Lunchtime Concert Series, Dorset Opera, Roman River Festival, and Sound Thinking (Oxford Faculty of Music outreach initiative to schools). There have also been grants to individual young people to assist with the purchase of violin and cello bows, as well as organ and singing lessons. Apart from Finzi, support has been offered to a recording by the Aurora Trio of works by Malcolm Lipkin, Alwyn and Bax.

During 2019, two new trustees were appointed, and we were delighted to welcome the distinguished pianist, Iain Burnside, and Sara Ascenso, a former Finzi Trust Scholar. The Trust's relationship with Finzi's publisher, Boosey and Hawkes continues to be a fruitful and positive one; among current initiatives, the album of arrangements of Finzi works for saxophone will be published imminently.

It is gratifying to note many performances of Finzi's music at home and abroad which are given without specific support of the Trust: in 2019 these included *The Fall of the Leaf* by the Hallé Orchestra, conducted by Sir Mark Elder, who also conducted four performances of the same work in Hungary; *Dies natalis*, performed by Mark Padmore and the Britten Sinfonia; and the Clarinet Concerto played by Christopher Swann and Sinfonia Viva. Other European performance include the Clarinet Concerto in Poland, Sweden and five times in Switzerland; *Let us garlands bring* in Portugal and France, and further afield, Raphael Wallfisch, ever the great advocate of the Cello Concerto, played it in Moscow, and the *Eclogue* was performed three times in Japan.

Finzi's music continues to attract new recordings: 2019 releases included a disc of choral works by the Choir of Trinity College Cambridge, conducted by Stephen Layton, which includes the premiere recording of David Bednall's *Nunc dimittis*, a work commissioned by the Trust, as a companion piece to Finzi's *Magnificat*. The baritone Marcus Farnsworth, clarinettist Robert Plane, oboist Ruth Bolister, and the Finzi String Quartet are the artists on a Resonus CD which brings together *By Footpath and Stile*, the Interlude, the Five Bagatelles, and the Romance for Strings (the latter in the version by the composer and Finzi Trustee, Christian Alexander). Lastly, *Lo, the Full Final Sacrifice* is included on what was to be one of the final recordings of Sir Stephen Cleobury with Kings College Choir on the choir's own label. Finally, the Trustees remain gratified that Finzi continues to be represented in the most popular 300 works in Classic FM's Hall of Fame.

4. Reminiscences of Gerald Finzi

We are enormously grateful to those who came into contact with Gerald or the Finzi family and who are willing to share their experience with us. This is all that remains of the living memory and it is always thrilling to hear of another encounter with Finzi and how someone's life was affected by the friendship. This time Richard Shirley Smith shares with us.

Gerald Finzi - Reminiscences from 1943 – 1956 by Richard Shirley Smith.

Richard Shirley Smith was born in Hampstead in 1935 and was educated at Harrow School. He studied at the Slade School of Fine Art and in Rome. His main output as an artist has been a sequence, over fifty years, of solo shows of paintings, illustrated books, *trompe-l'oeil* murals, engravings and bookplates. All these works reflect his interests in Italian architecture, theatre, classical ruins, surrealism and still-life. Richard writes:

In August 2018 I visited Church Farm, Ashmansworth for the first time since the Finzi family had left in early November 2010. Gerald Finzi's plaque was on the gate pier and as I looked through the gates I could see that all had been tastefully re-organised. In the ancient churchyard opposite stands a fine dark slate tombstone for Gerald and his wife, Joy, cut by Reynolds Stone. He had lived in Ashmansworth and engraved a charming little wood block of the church, which was later used in a bookplate for Gerald's library of English Literature. (This library was donated to Reading University.) I was awaiting Gerald's daughter-in-law, Hilary, as we were about to clean lichens from the slate inscription, as it had stood for 60 years.

I must have been aged 7 or 8 (circa 1942) when I was first asked to stay with my school friends, Christopher and Nigel Finzi. My own home was a happy comfortable place to return to after work but 'Ashmansworth' was quite different - a centre of the Arts in the country, with studios for composition, string music, sculpture, drawing, books and also bees, geese and orchards. I will say no more of this as my subject here is Gerald himself. Gerald was always welcoming and friendly preferring first names and never 'Sir'. When he first arrived at Ashmansworth he was mistaken for General Finzi and invited to shoot pheasants. Although he had visits

from outstanding poets and musicians he had time to encourage a little slow-starter like me, in spite of his many worries. I later realized that his considerable family funds had been lost, but his great good fortune had been meeting Joy Black, a multi-talented artist. She was able to build Church Farm, which must have been the last substantial house to be built before WW2. Just as Finzi's great masterpiece, *Dies Natalis*, was to be performed in the Three Choirs Festival, Hitler invaded Poland, the score was mostly put away and only partially heard. He went to do war work in the London Blitz at The Ministry of War Transport. After this it was not a great many years before he was diagnosed with Hodgkin's cancer resulting in his tragically early death in 1956. He was not helped by the fashion for music with few tunes at the BBC. Fortunately this has been turned around now. Recently, unable to sleep owing to chemotherapy for Hodgkin's, I often heard Gerald's lovely music, *Let Us Garlands Bring* or *Eclogue* broadcast at night. What a tragedy that there was no cure then for Hodgkin's!

He used to answer childish questions very helpfully. For example, when asked "Which is better Handel or Bach?" he replied "It's like asking if Christopher is better than Nigel." "What do you think of Gilbert and Sullivan?" "Very fine workmanship."

Gerald was a true artist in the sense that he could shake hands with artists across the centuries. He explained: a family could be close together like telephone wires but not communicating, while an artist could be in touch with other artists hundreds of years or miles apart down the line.

During the war I invented a model boat with a double keel and two propellers. He said nothing at the time, but later he recalled that they were trying something very similar in the ministry during the war. We later learned of an enemy submarine in the Pacific Ocean called the G.Finzi.

Gerald was very concerned about me, a dreamy child uninterested in sport or exams, going to Harrow. Luckily my House Master and art teacher, Maurice Percival, turned out to be very helpful and I made friends with half a dozen students interested in the arts. He and Joy visited me there later and were pleased with the Elgar part songs we were rehearsing. In 1950 I was lucky enough to attend the Gloucester Three Choirs Festival with the family for the first performance of his grand choral work *Intimations of Immortality*, a great experience for me. Our house party

contained many outstanding musicians such as Ralph and Ursula Vaughn Williams, Gerald and Joy Finzi, David Willcocks, Howard Ferguson and others. I remember during lunch Nigel went to the kitchen to fill the water jug for RVW and didn't return. I went out and found him sitting cross legged on the draining board closely guarded by the housekeeper's fierce bulldog. The conclusion of *Intimations of Immortality* is glorious in its serenity "...thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears." I could not have imagined that exactly sixty years later Christopher and I, with our wives, would hear it again in Gloucester Cathedral.

Gerald even took an interest in my flute playing. "Why haven't you had a go at *The Dance of the Blessed Spirits*?" Also, he gave me a copy of an edition he had made of a John Stanley flute sonata. Having tried it out, there was a little detail astray. I pointed it out and he took it back to his work room, where he had a very clever way of changing notes with a razor blade. I still have the sonata but could never find where the change was.

He took a great interest in some of the English composers of Handel's time (As Brancusi observed, as he departed Rodin's studio: "Nothing flourishes under the shadow of very big trees"). I remember making a wall chart for Gerald showing the sequence of their working lives: Blow, Stanley, Arne etc. He gave a local talk about them and asked for questions: "Mr Finzi, why does all 18th cent music go rum-te-tum-te-tum?" During the war he formed and conducted the Newbury Strings, which continued for many years. This was to maintain the culture of the nation in war time. The National Gallery Concerts had the same aim and I recently saw television footage of Myra Hess there with Howard Ferguson. He was Gerald's closest musical friend and Howard later taught me much about music and the arts. He was an outstanding pianist, composer and later, musicologist. After the war a magnificent set of large scarlet volumes appeared at Church Farm, the Bach-Gesellschaft-Ausgabe. Gerald had a very special love of Bach as one can tell from the second part of his *Farewell to Arms*.

Gerald often amused us. At the breakfast table I remember a spirited imitation of one of Hitler's swinish speeches, arm extended. Another time I saw him outside the kitchen window dealing with the fish van. The fishmonger raised a slimy, scaly hand to descend, in a pally way, on his shoulder To avoid an unfriendly sideways move, his knees folded and the hand missed. Gerald was not in demand as a driver as he was reported to have swerved to avoid a rat. I have a memory of Gerald at the Three

Choirs standing between two very long tea tables and, noticing a notorious festival bore heading his way, he slipped under the table cloth to the other side to escape. He used to try to work through Christmas but found it 'crept in under the door' as he said. I remember many desperate scrambles to get in the van and be in time for trains or concerts but Anna Shuttleworth's version amused me most. Everyone was in the van with instruments, music and stands except Gerald, who was running late. As he jumped into the van he announced "Every time I heard a hoot, I sat down and counted to ten!"

I have here one of Gerald's volumes of Collected Poems of Hardy containing Joy's letter on my 25th birthday and the year of my Slade Diploma. Joy writes that Gerald had marked, in pencil in the index, poems he planned to set to music. Sure enough I can see indicated his great settings: *Amabel*, *To Lizbie Brown*, *I look into my Glass*, *At a Lunar Eclipse*, *I need not go*, *The Sigh* - what masterpieces! When he finished a setting he destroyed all the earlier versions so critics couldn't complicate things.

Having finished National Service and about to go to the Slade, Joy and Gerald, only a week or so before he died, drove me to Great Bardfield, where their friend John Aldridge RA lived. He was to be my Slade Tutor and friend. In 1956, Gerald died having missed Sir John Barbirolli's performance of his Cello Concerto and before I started at the Slade, sharing a flat in Holland Park with his younger son, Nigel. We were stunned by this loss.

His philosophy shone through his works. He hated dogma and man's inhumanity to man and wondered at how we proceed from dust to dust. He explored and loved the British Isles and its landscape, poetry, architecture, folksong, crafts, gardens and particularly ancient orchards. Little time was spent abroad. He hated the obstruction of talent and did much to rescue creative people prevented by illness, poverty or war. We think of Ivor Gurney, Ernest Farrar and George Butterworth. I have always had a great admiration for Gerald's lovely works. As Jeremy Dale Roberts pointed out, he and Joy had good taste in all things. They inspired and shaped my whole life's work. Very sadly my mother, Alice, died before my 50th Birthday Retrospective at the Ashmolean Museum, but I was glad that Joy lived to see it.

5. Report on Recent Events

5.1 Tardebigge Members' Performances last October

We start with an amusing and apt anecdote entirely relevant to this occasion.

An attempt was made to recreate the spirit of a recital in Vienna early last century, concerning which a critic wrote, "This was a curious occasion. The person turning the pages should have been playing the piano. The person playing the piano should have been playing the violin. And the person playing the violin should have been turning the pages." On this occasion Martin Bussey was the page-turner; Roddy Williams played the piano; and Adrian Williams sang Vaughan Williams' *Bright is the Ring of Words*.

You won't be surprised to learn that there is a wealth of musical talent within the membership and those that came to the autumn Tardebigge event last year were enchanted by an eclectic programme of composition, instrument and voice.

The programme was largely of English origin exemplified by the number of personal compositions from members enabling us to declare some of the music entirely contemporaneous. Exciting compositions new to the audience brought freshness to the programme and appreciation of the talented compositions.

We are most grateful to our Chairman, Martin Bussey, who kindly took it upon himself to accompany those who needed it, sometimes without prior warning, but he took it all in his stride, delivering a faultless performance and we were pleased to fall back on his reliability.



Martin accompanying

Adrian Williams, your Treasurer, apart from entertaining us with Finzi songs, brought his son Roderick with him and added spice to the conclusion of the programme making a most enjoyable and fitting end.

The Programme

Commenced with the rich baritone voice of David Russell singing three songs from Finzi's *Before and After Summer* – 'Childhood in the ferns'; 'Amabel'; and 'The Too Short Time'. David was local and came to us from Hampton-in-Arden. He is a Dental Surgeon and sings with the Birmingham Bach Choir.



David Russel in performance



Christopher Boodle

We are lucky to have among our Membership the Composer Christopher Boodle, a regular attender at our events and well known to many, although we rarely get to hear his compositions. He played for us entertaining excerpts from his own *Sonatine Classique; Toccata Festiva; GFH Fugue* and from his *Six Little Pieces*. Educated at New College Oxford and the Royal College of Music, he has had a career as a Cathedral organist combined with teaching and conducting a Choral Society. His main activities now are organ playing and composing both at the Three Choirs Festival and abroad. Compositions include four symphonies and many chamber and Church works.

Ruth Sharville is also a regular attender at our events. Her singing career began as a chorister at St Peter's Church, Staines and she has sung in choirs ever since. Despite having a cold she was determined to sing and chose to restrict it to *The Slow Train*



made popular by Flanders and Swann, and enchanted us all. Having thoroughly enjoyed herself she expressed her determination to repeat the performance adding additional pieces on the next occasion.

Our own Committee member and composer, Geoffrey Allan Taylor, along with his partner Valerie, also demonstrated the depth of his talent by sharing his own compositions *Arcadian Invention*; *Passionate Pantomime*; and *Epithalamion*. Valerie is an accomplished violinist and with Geoffrey added Purcell's Sonata in G min arr. Howard Ferguson and concluded with Finzi's *Elegy* for violin and piano, a seldom heard piece but enchanting nevertheless.



Edward accompanies Tim

Edward Rigg came to us from Wardle, a village near Rochdale. For many years he has been the director of the Oldham Community Choir, conducting and accompanying as needed. He also gives piano recitals, including lunchtime concerts at Littleborough near Oldham. He brought with him a young man, Tim Hudson, whom he

has encouraged through accompanying him on his violin and this he did for us again on the day. As a consequence Tim has become a willing and competent soloist and we were delighted to hear him play Massenet's

‘Meditation’ from *Thais* and the finale from Dvorak Sonata Op 100. It was a most accomplished performance from both of them.

We returned to more Finzi when Adrian shared with us his baritone voice (where did Roderick get his from?) and sang for us *When I set out for Lyonesse; To Lizbie Brown; and Rollicum Rorum* with some gusto. How lucky Norma is to have both Adrian and Roderick to sing to her, and daily no doubt. A little later Adrian was accompanied by his son and delicately sang for us Vaughan Williams’ ‘Bright is the Ring of Words’ from *Songs of Travel*.



Adrian and Roderick accompanying his Father

Before I bring to you items of conclusion, there were two episodes of note within the programme that more than captured our attention. Firstly, and surprisingly, in an afternoon of classical music, the show was stolen by a solo performance by Barry Lingard of ‘Send in the clowns’ a Stephen Sondheim composition for the musical *A Little Night Music*. Barry won’t mind me saying he is now of a certain age and feared his former ability may now let him down but not a bit of it. He accompanied himself on the piano and his



rendition was movingly delivered with sensitivity and feeling. The audience was touched by the performance, restrained in its applause, overtaken by the emotion of the moment.

Secondly, before the conclusion everyone present was encouraged to sing Vaughan Williams' *Linden Lea* and enthusiasm brought a full bodied performance sung with volume and accompanied by Martin with his professional nonchalance but for which we were most grateful.



Assembled company in full chorus for a rendition of Linden Lea

Once again, how fortunate were we to have Roddy grace our occasion and he concluded with Finzi Songs to our consummate delight.



The programme in the end was full and extensive such was the enthusiasm and willingness of guests to perform. In order to give everyone else the opportunity Eric, your Secretary, and Comperre that day, was happy to withdraw his rendition on the trumpet but those who knew he had it in abeyance demanded he played. His baroque performance of English music was mercifully short but he, as a rank amateur, was able to demonstrate that no-one should be afraid of their potential lack of ability and should be encouraged to perform. The audience were appreciative because that's what we encouraged i.e. people of all ability and I can assure you people like Eric were ready to give it a go despite little ability and so we encourage you to step forward on another occasion and share in the music making, and most of all enjoy yourself and give others the pleasure of hearing you.



This is also exemplified in Ruth's experience reported in her performance above. So comfortable in the informal atmosphere she felt confident to want to perform again. Also, those that came were keen for it to be repeated, the performers wanting to do it all over again having thoroughly enjoyed themselves; especially as there was no shortage of tea and cakes at the interval.

In analysis, the Committee felt it was all a success but we would like your opinion or even feedback if you were there or contemplating coming: we look forward to hearing from you.

5.2 News from Members

We are aware that our events have traditionally been held in the midlands or southern England, unable of course to escape from the Finzi house at Church Farm being located in Ashmansworth.

However, we are pleased to report that the Society and Finzi is not being neglected in the north thanks to the dedication of a committed *Finzi Friend*.



Ian Jones has been and is instrumental in ensuring Finzi's music is performed in Cumbria where he himself is located. Ian has faithfully attended the *Friends* events and even written articles for the Newsletter, you may recall, in expression of his enthusiasm. Ian is the MD of three Choirs in Cumbria and has not neglected to include Finzi in his repertoire. Recent performances have been acclaimed and we are pleased to report this success. Concerts in 2019 included:

July, Kendal Parish Church: Cumbria Festival Chorus – Finzi *Intimations of Immortality* with Paul Smy (tenor) and CFC Orchestra;

November, St Oswald's Church, Warton, nr Carnforth: Eversley Choir – Finzi *Magnificat*;

December, Carver Uniting Church, Windermere: Levens Choir – Finzi *In Terra Pax*.

Of this last performance the reviewer wrote:

The concert closed with Finzi's *In Terra Pax*, which intersperses the poem 'Noel: Christmas Eve 1913' with St Luke's account of the angels' visit to the shepherds. The choir brought across the solemnity of the occasion well, with soloists Edwin Reynolds and Rebecca Chandler taking the parts of the poet and the angel confidently yet with gentleness and delicacy of tone. There was a triumphant and joyful climax, with the choir skilfully passing passages back and forth to create a cacophony of pealing church bells to proclaim the birth of Christ. This was an exuberant performance, a perfect end to a most enjoyable evening.

Ian goes on to inform us that this July, as part of the celebrations for Wordsworth's 250th, Cumbria Festival Chorus will perform Finzi's setting of *Intimations of Immortality* alongside two new commissions of settings of Wordsworth's texts. *Intimations* is also going to be performed in Carlisle in March by Cumbria Rural Choirs.

Finzi flourishes in Cumbria!

6. Future Events

We are continuing to target the most popular destinations for our main events and we are pleased that it is time for us to re-visit Ashmansworth again this year. We are keen for this to be successful as usual to keep our roots firmly bound in the Finzi tradition making the Finzi home our home and keeping the Society and the Members mindful of our tradition and purpose.

**Join us at
Ashmansworth
again this year**

2020

a) Ludlow English Song Weekend 3 – 5 April 2020

This event is very nearly upon us and Saver Tickets are sold out although individual tickets are still available. There is now also a Saver ticket for all of Saturday's concerts available. We are sure this indicates the popularity of this event and hope that you either already have your tickets or are planning to come in April. We look forward to seeing as many of you there as possible and re-establishing friendships after another year.

Once again a full weekend programme is planned and we encourage you to look on the Ludlow English Song Weekend website for all the latest information, updates and the programme of events. Iain Burnside has weaved his magic again in ensuring our entertainment. Visit the website at appropriate intervals for updates: *ludlowenglishsongweekend.com*

b) Ashmansworth 11 Jul 2020

Arrangements are already in place to schedule the return to our roots and we look forward to another day of acquaintance with the Finzi tradition. The programme is well advanced and this year we are to be privileged to have our President, Iain Burnside joining us as he accompanies our young soloists.

We will meet in the Village hall first for our morning's events and lunch.

It is our intention to commence with our AGM, essential business with Members present. This will be followed by a talk given by our Chairman Martin Bussey on 'Taking Finzi into the 2020's'.

We will transfer to St James' Church after lunch for a Concert at 2.30.

We are pleased to welcome Florian Panzieri, tenor and James Atkinson, baritone. Florian is from Guildhall and James from RCM.

They will be 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

Once again Mr and Mrs Skinner who live opposite Church Farm and St James' Church are hosting our event with their usual efficiency and attention to detail and we look forward to another wonderful lunch. They will also be providing afternoon tea and cakes after the afternoon concert in their large garden overlooking the South Downs.

We hope once again to be allowed access to the grounds of Church Farm, after the Recital, a chance to experience the atmosphere and location which inspired such lyrical music.

Please join us on the day by returning the application form on the Ashmansworth flyer accompanying this Newsletter, or via the website.

*St James' Church
Ashmansworth*



2021

c) Chosen Hill June 2021

We have our sights set on Churchdown once again following our former successes. Ideas are still in formulation but it was felt the relationship between Finzi and Vaughan Williams may make an attractive focus this time. Vaughan Williams was taken to Chosen Hill by the Finzis during the Gloucester Three Choirs Festivals. We will be approaching the Vaughan Williams Society to see if they would like to join us this time.

Ideas we are exploring are a concert in the afternoon with Martin Bussey's Chester Bach Singers again following its success at the same venue in 2017. This two-centre day, St Andrew's at the foot of the hill and St Bartholomew's at the top, has proved to be an attraction. St Andrew's is very well appointed and provides a wonderful atmosphere for socialising, dining and a concert.

d) Come and Perform Members Event

As reported earlier in this edition the Come and Perform Members Event at Tardebigge in the autumn last year was, we felt, a success and of course gave Members an opportunity to perform to an audience they wouldn't necessarily otherwise experience. We are, therefore, considering arranging a similar event, perhaps this time in a different location to suit Members who may feel that the West Midlands isn't necessarily accessible.

e) St Marylebone Festival July 23 2020

We are delighted to be working in partnership with St Marylebone Festival to present 'A Finzi Feast' on 23 July, 2020 at 19:30. This will be held at St Marylebone Parish Church, 17 Marylebone Rd, Marylebone, London NW1 5LT, UK.

It will feature the Choir of St Marylebone PC directed by Gavin Roberts and instrumental music by Finzi. We are excited to co-host this venture, promoted by our newest committee member, Gavin Roberts. More details are currently on their website:

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

Finzi Friends
Registered Charity No 1089033

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Herad Finzi

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