



# Leading Notes

## CHRISTMASTIDE

Issue 14 : December 2005

### Editorial Mutterings

Dog-sitting during the summer holidays at a daughter's place, I came across three brand-new as yet unopened books of songs: traditional American, Welsh and Irish folk melodies. Folding back the crackling new pages of each in turn, lo and behold there were titles familiar from the Dark Ages (ie just before and during the 39-45 lot), when as a youngster (teenagers did not exist then - 'Mozart was never a teenager' I yell at the radio whenever an announcer perpetrates that solecism) I

joined in the family Sunday evening sing-song round an aunt's piano..

Did you sing this? I asked W., knowing full well that her family, like many others right from Victorian times and earlier, had followed the same weekly ritual. Persuading her to the piano, we spent a nostalgic half-hour 'rendering' 'I dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls', 'Ash Grove' and so on.... Then we came to the American book, and there were the negro spirituals, in simple form, that had inspired Michael Tippett. Very affecting. The last time I had sung those must have been about 1943.



Detail from 'Rehearsal of Child of Our Time' St. Mary's Church, Banbury, June 4th, 2005'

Ann Dent

### Chairman's Ramblings

Browsing through past Ramblings, I see that I last paid tribute to the Committee two years ago. As we have changed a bit since then, an update might be informative.

Margaret Cable's sad death earlier this year lost us a most conscientious and efficient Tickets Secretary as well as a good friend; Sarah Cobb, who was already assisting Margaret, agreed to take over her job. Toby has made the Concert Manager's job his own, and he and Sarah are sharing the post of Vice-Chairman. Vicki Pike is now assisting Marian with the Librarian's duties and will take over next season when Marian retires. Betsy Tyler-Bee and I have also announced our retirements next September; watch this space for news of successors. Andrew Vaile has bravely (rashly?) offered to help with publicity; we unanimously co-opted him (surprise) at our last meeting. Howard Hicks, Brian Jones, Beth Sinclair and Britta Urban continue in office. They form the best (and cheekiest) Committee I have ever worked with. Thank you all!

Roger Stein

Last summer Jo Graves floated the idea of a concert to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> October as part of RAISE YOUR VOICES - the World's largest singing event - which every two years organises worldwide concerts to raise money for hospices and palliative care. Peter and Roger agreed that the Society would take part; as it turned out, Peter co-ordinated the occasion and we provided more than half the programme. It proved enjoyable! We recycled some of our repertoire (Tippett, Rutter and *Sumer is icomen in*) and explored new styles (Rogers and Hart, Manhattan Transfer and an Unusual Round). Sian wowed us with her gospel singing; Tish Nicoll, Graham Pike and Roger had solo spots; the Small Group reconvened; Bernard's accompanying was as immaculate as ever. It was good to be back in St Mary's after more than a year's absence, and singing the Spirituals from *A Child of Our Time* was almost as moving as last summer. The concert raised more than £800 for the Lawrence Home Nursing Team.

We were honoured when Anthony Cable asked us to form a choir for the Thanksgiving Service in memory of Margaret on 15<sup>th</sup> October. There was no shortage of volunteers, and a choir of twenty sang Mozart *Ave Verum Corpus* and Rutter *The Lord Bless You and Keep You*. It was a privilege to take part in such a moving and uplifting service.

### LOOKING AHEAD - 2006

Saturday April 1st - Stainer *The Crucifixion* and anthems by Parry and Stanford  
Saturday June 10th - Purcell *Dido and Aeneas*

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## A Singday with The Really Big Chorus

Aghast at the prospect of a summer dry of singing, your correspondent sought solace in the arms of another choir – The Really Big Chorus, no less. As friends, or rather, *former* friends wondered aloud with barely-suppressed mirth whether this was a choral society for the fuller-framed singer, I shall elaborate that The Really Big Chorus' name refers to the *numbers* of singers, rather than the *figures* of singers. Hundreds of us trekked from all over the country, eager to wrap our tongues round the lascivious lyrics of Orff's best-known work, *Carmina Burana*. Picture the scene: our conductor for the day mischievously asked the first tenors to make themselves known, and gasps rang round the Royal Albert Hall at the forest of hands raised; but when Brian Kay's instruction for the *second* tenors to do likewise produced a similar tidal wave (if I may mix my metaphors) of hands, a section of sopranos swooned at the excitement of having so many menfolk.

A morning's rehearsal with the piano warmed us all up, and showed that several hundred amateur singers can make quite an impressive, and not altogether unpleasant, sound. The male singers also comprehensively demonstrated that not watching the conductor is a sure route to disaster in a piece such as *In taberna quando sumus* – fast, with lots of words and no women to maintain control and dignity. Glorious sunshine and the nearby pleasures of Hyde Park wiled away lunch time, and then we rehearsed with our orchestra (the English Festival Orchestra) and soloists. I know that size isn't everything, but a piece of music that calls for a percussion section nearly as populous as its violin section has to be admired (but pity the poor concert manager). The orchestra's quality musicianship helped the Chorus up its game, as did the increasingly impassioned exhortations of our conductor to sing the lusty bits more lustily; the tender bits more tenderly; the come-hither bits more come-hitherly; and (for the chaps), *In taberna quando sumus* in time,

please. Before we knew where we were, the evening performance was upon us: yes, remarkably, people came and paid good money to listen to us. Our conductor had cunning plans for an effective performance; just like singing Tippett's Spirituals without copies. The Chorus had practised standing swiftly and silently en masse, and the sight of the hordes rising to their feet was sufficient to elicit a round of applause – clearly, a tame crowd. My descriptive powers are woefully insufficient to describe the emotions of that evening. So many voices, singing such a piece of music, in a venue like the Royal Albert Hall, with conductor, soloists and orchestra of the highest calibre – a truly magical experience. For the record, whilst the blokes were hideously out of time during *In taberna quando sumus*, for once we weren't dragging behind the beat; oh no, quite the reverse – up to a bar ahead in places. Ah well, a note of reality to reassure myself I didn't make the whole thing up.

Should you wish to find out more about the joys of super-sized singing, to say nothing of meeting new singers and finding what an odd bunch they can be, The Really Big Chorus has a website that can be found at [www.trbc.co.uk](http://www.trbc.co.uk)

TRB

*Carl Orff (1895-1982) is best known for 'Carmina Burana'. But the Munich-born composer was also well-known in his native land as an educator, in particular for his work in the field of music for children. There are five volumes of 'Music for Children' (Das Schulwerk) dating from the 30s, republished in the 50's.*

### *A letter to eds. (or Wonders Never Cease)*

*Dear Editor,*

*A week or two before each concert our chairman tells us what concert dress is needed. It may be my imagination, but this information always seems to be delivered hurriedly and without the usual informality of the notices. Is this because many members would prefer alternative dress but that discussion on the matter would leave an evening's rehearsal schedule in tatters?*

*A 'uniform' of some sort is a good idea as the audience is able to concentrate on the performance rather than a fashion parade. But why black and white? Is it because the men wear djs and white shirts, so the ladies mirror this tradition?*

*How often have we shivered in St Mary's Church in our thin blouses? It is difficult to conceal a warm layer beneath a white blouse. The stark contrast of black on white can be rather unflattering around the midriff, and there is always the dilemma - blouse tucked in or out?. What is white anyhow? We know it is not cream (that's not allowed) but after a few washes most whites turn a pale shade of grey.*

*You may gather that I for one would welcome some thought on the matter and the pages of LN seem the ideal forum for some debate on the subject*

*Yours, Angela Sorrell*

Angela! Thank you! Splendid! All replies should be passed surreptitiously to eds., preferably with sketches of suitable garments/undergarments addressing the problems discussed above and, (with recommendations for more efficient brands of washing powder) enclosed in a sealed plain envelope. Opinions are sought from S's and A's, T's and B's possibly having no opinion on the matter.

## CHRISTMASTIDE

An evening of carols, readings and seasonal songs for choir and family audience  
Saturday 10th December 2005, 7.30pm  
in  
St Mary's Church, Chipping Norton

**Bernard West** Accompanist **Peter Hunt** Conductor

Tickets £5 including refreshments, accompanied children under 12 free

For tickets: ring 01993 830775 or e-mail [tickets@cncs.org.uk](mailto:tickets@cncs.org.uk)

Also available at Cotswold Newsagents, 19 High Street, Chipping Norton (01608 642545)

### £££ Money Matters £££

#### Betsy reports:

The Society has started the new season in a healthy state. Subscriptions form the biggest part of our income - we have to date received over £3,300 for this financial year. Your treasurer is about to submit a claim to the Inland Revenue for the current tax year which is expected to bring in an additional £1,200. This represents an excellent return. Thank you to all those taxpayers who are willing to support the Society in this way.

We have two other major sources of income which are showing a healthy return two months into the financial year: Friends' donations stand at £180 to date, and the raffle has so far brought in nearly £132. Your continued support is very much appreciated.

The committee is now working to a planned budget, and will monitor actual income and expenditure against this over the year, reporting its success to the next AGM. This should help the Society to plan another major event in the future.

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We are fortunate to have the support of our **Patrons** (see overpage for a list). Amongst them is Ann Dent who did the drawing of the rehearsal of the Tippett, a copy of which she sent to Peter, and a detail of which appears on the front page of this LN. LN is not noted for art work - though we did include some photos in a recent issue. If any members are hiding an artistic flair under a bushel and could provide art work which might be suitable for LN - an appropriate decorative border perhaps - then please let eds. know

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Leading Notes Editorial  
via The Red Box  
or to [barberpandw@onetel.net](mailto:barberpandw@onetel.net)

### WHO WAS.....?

Peter Warlock (the composer of 'Bethlehem Down')

Well, for a start, he wasn't Peter Warlock. Born Philip Heseltine (1894, in the Savoy Hotel!) into a well-to-do stockbroking family, he was intended for a career in the City or the Civil Service. However, having developed musical interests at prep. school, and those interests being further developed at Eton by a sympathetic piano teacher, his eureka moment came in 1911 at a concert of Delius's music, when he was taken backstage after the concert to meet the composer. Warlock became obsessed with the Delius sound, and a friendship developed between the two. Indeed for several years afterwards Delius became his mentor, though the relationship eventually cooled.

Warlock, an admirer of D.H. Lawrence, became a part of the author's literary circle. Registering as a conscientious objector with the onset of war in 1914, he followed Lawrence to Cornwall, involving himself in an unsuccessful venture to publish some of the author's works. Back in London, he married Minnie Lucy Channing ('Puma'), an artist's model, then back in Cornwall resumed a by now more distant relationship with D.H.L. He was unaware that Lawrence was writing into *Women In Love* two rather unflattering characters who appeared to be based on himself and Puma. When, just before publication, Warlock learned of this, Lawrence was obliged to do some hasty rewriting in the face of threatened legal action.

Fearing conscription, Warlock fled to Ireland, to return home again after the armistice in 1918: during the Irish exile however he wrote songs which were published on his return, the beginnings of an artistically productive era which continued through the early 20s. He distinguished himself by writing a book on Delius, transcribing quantities of early music, and composing large numbers of songs, including his fine song cycle *The Curlew*, and his best-known piece the *Capriol Suite*.

He had adopted the pseudonym Peter Warlock on return from Ireland in 1918, publishing his songs under that name, knowing that the name Heseltine would occasion an extremely chilly reception from the London musical establishment.

In the late 20s he felt his creative powers subside, suffered from depression, and on the morning of 17 December 1930 was found dead with gas poisoning in his Chelsea flat. The coroner returned an open verdict.

### CNCS Committee:

**Direction:** Peter Hunt, Shauni McGregor, Bernard West

**Chairman:** Roger Stein 01295 721522 [steinrandm@tesco.net](mailto:steinrandm@tesco.net);

**Sec:** Beth Sinclair 01608 641051; **Treas:** Betsy Tyler-Bee 01608 811214 [betsy.tyler-bee@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:betsy.tyler-bee@admin.ox.ac.uk); **Subs:** Brian Jones 01608 683635 [Brian.Jones@bagy.demon.co.uk](mailto:Brian.Jones@bagy.demon.co.uk);

**Tickets:** Sarah Cobb 01993 830775 [sarah@cobb.uk.net](mailto:sarah@cobb.uk.net); **Membership:** Britta Urban 01608 642309 [britta.urban@clinical-medicine.oxford.ac.uk](mailto:britta.urban@clinical-medicine.oxford.ac.uk); **Librarian:** Marian Stein (details, see Roger);

**Friends:** Howard Hicks 01608 737017 [barbara@lane-end-cottage.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:barbara@lane-end-cottage.fsnet.co.uk);

**Concert Manager:** Toby Blundell 01235 821232 [toby.blundell@talk21.com](mailto:toby.blundell@talk21.com)

.... but see Chairman's Ramblings on Page 1

## FRIENDS OF CHIPPING NORTON CHORAL SOCIETY

Privileges of membership include advance notice / reserved seats at concerts; complimentary copy of 'Leading Notes';  
£1 discount on up to 2 tickets per concert.  
Ring Howard Hicks on 01608 737017

### Friends of the Society are currently:

Mrs. Naomi Bowen; Mrs Christine Brennan; Mr Anthony Cable; Mrs Nancy Catling; Mrs Paula Clarke; Mrs Ann Crabtree;  
Mrs Ann Dent; Mr Maurice George; Mrs Katherine George; Mr Brough Girling; Mrs Catherine Hitchens; Ms Claire Jarvis;  
Mrs Joan Mann; Mrs Ann Paton; Mrs Rita Perry; Mrs Margaret Savigear; Mrs Ann Symons; Mrs Lucia Turner; Mr A Webster

### Bookshelf

The Pianist by Wladyslaw Szpilman

This is an account of a young Polish Jew, a brilliant pianist who broadcast regularly on Polish radio before World War II, describing his survival under German occupation in the Warsaw ghetto.

I found it incredibly moving, not just because of the events he recounts but because of the restrained, almost matter-of-fact way he tells his story. The book is rich in personal human details which became etched sharply in his memory - his story covers all six years of the war. For example he describes how, with his family, he was herded into the main square of the city to await mass transportation to the death camps. 'A boy came selling sweets - though heaven knows what he thought he would do with the money. Scraping together the last small change, we bought a single cream caramel. Father divided it into six parts with his penknife'. Thus they had their last meal together as a family.

The book recounts many small incidents such as this - it is an intensely poignant and harrowing account of the suffering endured by the Szpilman family - and millions of others - between 1939 and 1945. Not a gentle read for the beach, but a deeply moving one which can uplift as well as sadden. At times it is nail-bitingly exciting. We should try not to forget these things!

Martin J. Root

*The Pianist* by Wladyslaw Szpilman / Pub. Victor Gollancz in paperback ISBN 0-75381-405-6

### Tonsor's PRIZE Teasers - the Missing Word

In each, one word is missing : (e.g. Romeo and Shakespeare = Juliet).

1. Little Lucas and Walliams 2. Mad Dogs and Coward 3. The Origin of Darwin. 4. The Yellow Van Gogh. 5. Vorsprung Durch VW. 6. per M&S 7. Per Ardua Ad RAF 8. The Birthday Pinter 9. The Compleat Walton 10. Belshazzar's Walton 11. Intensive Williams 12. What Not to Trinny and Susannah. 13. Washington James 14. Songs for Swingin' Sinatra 15. The Stepford Levin/Rudnick 16. Crime and Dostoevsky 17. My Emin 18. Comme des Kawakubo 19. Norwegian Beatles/Murakami 20. Eats, Shoots and Truss.

Easy? You havn't finished yet! Unscramble these carols/ Christmas songs. (Dennis Mowbray's anagrams:-)

- a) Yon Kettle Lid
- b) GI Walks Dog On Scene
- c) The Mellow Bottle Of Thine
- d) Lift Her Stone
- e) Waning Yam Area

Answers on a card please, with name and voice, in the Red Box. Draw at final rehearsal. Seasonal bottle as prize!

Compliments of the Season to all our readers!

### Incidentally.....

.....it is going to be a Bach Christmas, looking at the BBC Radio schedules. The complete works .. yes. absolutely everything JS ever composed, so they say, during 10 days continuous broadcasting.. Performances by eminent musicians -Sir John Eliot Gardiner, Yo-Yo Ma, Angela Hewitt to name but a few, plus The Rt Rev Rowan Williams, Terry Waite, Andrew Motion, Wynton Marsalis, Ian McEwan, Elvis Costello, Baroness Julia Neuberger and a whole constellation of others who will be adding their personal thoughts on the composer. This follows on from the success of the *Beethoven Experience* broadcast last June.... BBC TV will be in on the act too, if you are lucky enough to receive BBC Four, the teleghetto where such things are now corralled, with a performance of *Christmas Oratorio* (Eliot Gardiner). But we should not, I suppose, quibble. Enough that in an age of enormous commercial pressures, at least we still have a public service facility with the breadth of vision to devote a week or more entirely to the man himself -

- A Bach Christmas, 16th-25th December, BBC Radio 3.

Eds. thanks are due to Martin Root (tenor) for the review of *The Pianist* in the column opposite. So who will be kind enough to provide a book review for the next issue of LN? Come, don't be shy. The Red Box is always there at rehearsals, (and eds. laptop eats e-mails, address below) awaiting your contributions - max. 200 words, many fewer if inspiration runs out; nice if your chosen read has musical connections, but not absolutely necessary. And you can put your name, your initials, or a pseudonym to your gem, whatever. It would be grand if eds. finished up with a sheaf of reviews to tide us over the next few issues.

barberpandw@onetel.net

### News from the Chipping Norton Festival

Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> March - Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2006

Dates for next year's diary

The festival begins with the lively Mexican rhythms of **beat4three** on Friday March 3<sup>rd</sup>. This exciting percussion trio is led by Alonso Mendoza and will be held in the theatre. To complement the concert Irene George will be holding an art exhibition in The Theatre Gallery, her **Yellow Hat Tribe's** distinctive style perfect for the Mexican theme.

Two further professional concerts will be held in Chipping Norton Town Hall, Sunday March 5<sup>th</sup> the Anglo-Scandinavian jazz trio **Stekpanna** will entertain in an informal setting. The following Sunday **James Gilchrist**, the renowned tenor, will be giving a concert to include works by Mozart, Liszt and Finzi.

This year's festival has a new class, **Sing for Pleasure**, which may be of interest to members of the choir. This class is open to anyone over the age of 17 who enjoys singing, so the whole of choral society qualifies! The adjudicator will give informal comments and helpful guidance with no categories being awarded. The class is for those who would like to experience solo singing but may be reluctant to enter an adjudicated class. Why not have a go?

Finally, the roots of the festival are in our choral tradition and the festival would not be complete without an entry from **Chipping Norton Choral Society**. The date for your diary is **Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March** and who knows this year's adjudicator may recognise the talent we all know should be a winner!

Rosemary Wilson