

The Holst Society



July 2017

Holst Society

The Holst Society was launched at the English Music Festival over the spring bank holiday weekend in May 2017.

The Society was founded by Chris Cope, an amateur musician who has been a devotee of English music for many years, having previously (until the autumn of 2016) been the secretary of the Stanford Society from shortly after its inauguration. Holst was, of course, a pupil of Stanford at the Royal College of Music.

The Society is in the process of creating a website and has already submitted an application to the Charity Commissioners to be registered as a charitable incorporated organisation. Officers have been appointed, namely Chris Cope as chairman and David Young FCA as honorary treasurer. We also have three trustees, namely Chris Collier (chairman), Chris Cope and John Graham.

The trustees will be meeting shortly at the Three Choirs Festival in order to confirm the appointment of the Society's first four vice-presidents who will be officially appointed during the course of August. We will not be appointing a president until the Society has been in existence for a couple of years.

The principal objectives of the Society are twofold, namely:-

- To promote and sponsor the live performance of Holst's music to be performed by amateur choral societies and orchestras; and
- To promote the recording of music by Holst, hitherto unrecorded and which is considered to be worthy of recording.

The Society already has three projects for CDs to be issued in 2018, namely:-

1. All Holst's Christmas music to appear in the autumn of 2018 and to be recorded by the City of London Choir under its conductor Hilary Davan Wetton. This recording will bring together on one CD all Holst's Christmas music, most of which has already been recorded, but which can only be found on a whole series of CDs. There are one or two gaps regarding Holst's Christmas music where there is no available recording and these omissions will be rectified to ensure that we have one CD representing all Holst's Christmas music.

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2. We are presently negotiating with the Godwine Choir, a highly acclaimed choir of young professional singers, who are keen to produce a CD of neglected music by George Dyson and Holst. The Society is very keen to take this opportunity of recording a number of part-songs by Holst, of which a substantial number of part-songs (a cappella) have yet to be recorded.
3. A joint CD with the Vaughan Williams Society under the Albion label to include works for voice and piano by Vaughan Williams and Holst. Again, the Society hopes to extend the amount of recorded works by Holst for voice and piano to compliment the 1998 Naxos CD under the English Song series (number 6), which featured some 33 songs by Holst for violin and piano. However, there is a substantial amount of unrecorded music, some of which we hope to record on the Albion label.

We also have a long-term project for 2019 to produce the first recording of Hecuba's Lament dating from 1911 (H115) which was composed by Holst for chorus and orchestra. According to Michael Short (Holst's biographer), Hecuba's Lament is for contralto solo, female chorus (SSA) and orchestra. The text is from the Trojan Women of Euripides, translated by Gilbert Murray. The first performance took place in 1922, 11 years after it was composed. The piece lasts for about 12 minutes. Stainer & Bell published a vocal score in 1921. The full score and parts are available for hire. Michael's view is that it would be good to have this piece recorded and we hope to achieve that in due course.

With regard to the making of grants to orchestras and choral societies, the Society must first raise funds, which it intends to do through subscription income, legacies and grants.

The Society intends to work closely with the Holst Birthplace Museum and is in contact with the Holst Foundation. We will also be liaising with other English composer societies, together with the British Music Society.

It is proposed that the Society's first AGM will take place in Cheltenham in November 2018, to include a recital.

The Society will issue regular newsletters by post/email. However, it is not intended that the Society will produce quarterly journals as this is a particularly expensive item for any society. The Holst Society would prefer to spend its income sponsoring live performances of Holst's music and promoting the recording of music, hitherto unrecorded.