

HOLST

THE SOCIETY

www.holstsociety.org



NEWS

OCTOBER 2017

Firstly a warm welcome to the second edition of our monthly newsletter. This will be sent by email to all our members or by post to those not on the internet. Ideas, news and articles to me please (Chris Cope) – chairman@holstsociety.org – for our next issue by 30th November 2017.

WEBSITE

The first piece of good news is that the Society now has a website, which please visit at www.holstsociety.org.



The initial reaction to the website has been very positive. Nevertheless, it is very much a “first draft”. There is much that needs to be worked on,

particularly the sections concerning articles and works. As ever, we are open to suggestions. Let’s hope that it produces many new members.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership continues to grow, albeit fairly slowly. We are hoping that this is largely because we have not had a website to visit for those interested, since the Society was launched at the end of May.

The trustees have agreed that St Paul’s Girls’ School, the English Music Festival and the Holst Birthplace Museum be granted complimentary membership. The Society intends to keep in close touch with the School, the Festival and the Museum.

VICE-PRESIDENTS

Since the initial newsletter was issued, four vice-presidents have been appointed. All are composers and Holst scholars. In alphabetical order, they are Alan Gibbs, Raymond Head, Colin Matthews and Michael Short.

The Society is grateful for advice, information and assistance from all our vice-presidents during recent months.

NEW RECORDINGS

The latest information is set out on the website. However, we can provide some additional information.

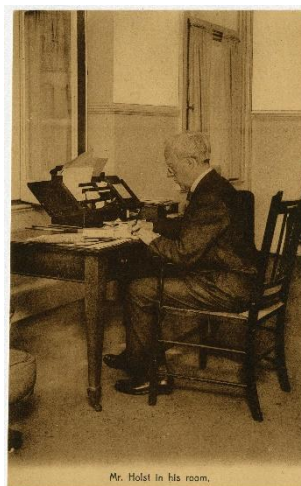
Project 1

I am in the process of gathering together all the Christmas music by Holst which we will be inviting the City of London Choir to record in about a year’s time. During the next month or so, I am due to meet the Choir’s conductor, Hilary Davan Wetton, in London, to discuss further.

Project 2

The Godwine Choir have now recorded part-songs by Holst and George Dyson, in London, over the weekend of 21st/22nd October. I was able to attend one of the recording sessions.

Project 3



Having visited the British Library in August, I am in the process of obtaining copies of original manuscripts of music for voice and piano, which will then need to be transcribed. I have already received offers of help with regard to preparing transcriptions. I have also been in contact with the Vaughan Williams Society who will be providing soloists and a pianist. I will need to

be providing a copy of the transcripts to the soloists, in due course.

Project 4

At the Holst birthday concert in Cheltenham at the end of September (see below), I had an opportunity to chat with Stephen Layton, the conductor of the Holst Singers, who was enthusiastic about the Society's suggestion that the Holst Singers might like to record some of Holst's choral music (previously unrecorded) in about two years' time.

I mentioned to Stephen that I had visited the British Library, which has copies of two unrecorded choral works by Holst, namely Hecuba's Lament and Clear and Cool. Stephen has asked me to obtain a copy of the manuscripts, which I will be obtaining from the British Library and to send these on to him for his professional view as to whether these works are worthy of being recorded.

So, as you can see, we are making some progress with regard to all four proposed recordings.

HOLST BIRTHDAY CONCERT

On Saturday 23rd September at All Saints' Church, Cheltenham (the church where Gustav's father was organist for some 27 years), the Holst Singers, under its conductor Stephen Layton, gave a concert of music by Holst, Herbert Howells and Ralph Vaughan Williams. The first part of the concert included Holst's Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda (Third Group) H99, together with the Two Eastern Pictures (H112). We also heard a rare performance of Howells' Prelude for Harp. The soloist in these three pieces was Sally Pryce.



The first half concluded with Holst's Six Folk Songs (H136).

After the interval, we heard Holst's The Evening Watch (H159), VW's Mass in G Minor and then, finally, Holst's Nunc Dimittis (H127).

The Holst Singers were in fine voice and I have to say that this was one of the most enjoyable and rewarding concerts that I have attended for many years. There was also a good attendance.

HOLST BIRTHDAY CONCERT 2018

We understand that the Cheltenham Choral Society has been invited to sing at next year's birthday concert. In addition, Britain's leading tenor, James Gilchrist, to be accompanied by John Wright FRCO (both residents of Cheltenham), will be giving a recital of music for voice and piano by Holst.

There are, presently, at the British Library, no less than 60 works by Holst for voice and piano, in original manuscript score which have never been published and certainly never recorded. As to whether these works have previously been performed can only be speculation.

The Society will be concentrating its efforts during the next few months, to obtain from the British Library a copy of these manuscripts, which James Gilchrist has asked to see, with a view to giving a performance of some at next year's birthday concert.

Could I also please take this opportunity to extend my thanks, on behalf of the Society, to Colin Matthews, executive administrator of the Holst Foundation and a vice-president of the Society, for very kindly giving the Society authority to obtain copies of these manuscripts from the British Library. The Holst Foundation holds the copyright.

CHARITY COMMISSION

After a few ups and downs, the Charity Commission has now approved the formal name for the Society, namely The Gustav Holst Society. However, for trading purposes, we will be known as the Holst Society.

Initially, the Charity Commission was not convinced that the objects of the Society were in the public interest, but we are pleased to confirm that after an exchange of emails, the Charity Commission is now satisfied that our objectives are in the public interest. We are therefore now approved as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and our registered charity number is 1175057.

FORTHCOMING CONCERTS/EVENTS

Generally speaking, the Society remains disappointed about the performance of Holst's music in concert halls throughout the UK. For example, the Snape Proms, which extended throughout August, featured no music by Holst at all. Looking at the programme of concerts and events at the Snape for the period September 2017 to May 2018, it was disappointing that this featured no music by Holst.

Also in East Anglia, the Saffron Hall, a concert hall at Saffron Walden, has published its autumn programme for 2017/18. Again, there is no music by Holst.

We were recently handed a fairly substantial brochure entitled Chamber Music Plus (Central Edition) – Classical Music Concerts 2017/18. We ploughed our way through page after page covering the period September 2017 to June 2018 inclusive, but only found two concerts featuring the music of Holst. The first is on Sunday 10th December at the Royal Agricultural University in Cirencester, when the Aether Vocal Ensemble will perform Christmas music by Holst, Howells, Warlock and Walford Davies. We are not sure what Holst is to be sung.

There will be a concert in Birmingham at the Barber Institute on Friday 23rd March 2018 when the University Women's Choir will perform Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda (presumably Group 3). Other music in the programme includes works by Janet Wheeler and Eric Whitacre.

We have also looked through the Northern edition of Chamber Music Plus. Of 203 concerts (September 2017 to August 2018) only one features music by Holst – The Planets.

The paucity of music by Holst to be performed in coming months clearly demonstrates just how important it is that we now have a Holst Society to promote his music throughout the UK. There is much to be done.

On a more positive note, we hear that the Norwich Philharmonic Choir will be performing Holst's Cloud Messenger at St Andrew's Hall, Norwich, on Saturday 4th November at 7.30pm. The concert also features a performance of the first symphony by Sibelius. The Society is making a modest donation towards the costs of this concert.

“GUSTAV HOLST: BEYOND THE PLANETS”

There will be a study day exploring the extraordinary range and variety of Holst's music beyond his most famous work presented by Gwyn Parry Jones on Saturday 28th October at the Reading International Solidarity Centre between 10am and 4pm. The address is 35-39 London Street, Reading RG1 4PS.

Chris Carter who is organising the event writes:-

Gustav Holst is much more than the “one-work wonder” creator of The Planets Suite. Church music and folk settings, orientalism, the masterly Hymn of Jesus and some of the best wind band music ever written – all imbued with a limpid clarity and a unique voice. Learn about the man, his vision and his contribution to the English Musical Renaissance.

The cost is £38. Chris Carter can be contacted on 0118 946 4137 or www.weareadingadulthoodeducation.org.uk. This should be an event well worth attending.

LOST MANUSCRIPTS

As you may already have read in the national press, two lost Holst manuscripts, missing since 1906, have turned up in New Zealand. Apparently, the librarian of the Bay of Plenty Sinfonia was clearing out old photocopies from the sheet music library and came across the Holst manuscripts. These have now been validated as Holst's originals for “Folk Songs from Somerset” and “Two Songs without Words”. They both appear to have been brought to New Zealand in the 1960s by an English flute player, Stanley Farnsworth. How he obtained them and why they should have gone to New Zealand will perhaps be revealed, in due course.



CLASSIC FM

To celebrate its 25th anniversary, Classic FM played over the weekend of 26th/27th August 2017, the 300 most popular recordings which have appeared over the last quarter of a century.

Only two pieces by Holst appeared in these recordings. Inevitably, The Planets was featured and appears at positions 192, 218 and 239. The recording at 192 was coupled with The Mystic Trumpeter.

Also included within the 300 are a host of compilation albums. However, we have not analysed these albums with a view to finding some Holst.

A long-term project for the Society is to try to persuade Classic FM to play works by Holst, other than The Planets.

BOOSTING BRAIN POWER

A study by Radboud University in Holland has found that people's ability to come up with creative answers to complex problems is boosted specifically by up-beat, happy compositions.

Some 155 volunteers were split into five groups and heard pieces of classical music judged to be either happy, calm, sad or anxious. The fifth group sat in silence. The happy group listened to Vivaldi's Spring, Lakmé's Flower Duet and the Ode to Joy by Beethoven.

The calm group were played The Swan from Saint-Saëns' Carnival of the Animals.

The anxious group listened to Holst's *The Planets* and in particular, *Mars, the Bringer of War*.

The sad group listened to the *Adagio for Strings* by Samuel Barber, Schubert's *Winterreise* and some Mahler.

Whilst listening to this music, each group was given a number of cognitive tasks to perform in order to test their creativity.

The study concluded that those who had listened to happy music were able to generate more innovative solutions, when compared with those who sat in silence or listened to sad or anxious music.

What a pity that the happy group was not asked to listen to, for example, *Jupiter* from *The Planets*.

RECENT RECORDINGS

The Society aims to draw new recordings to the attention of members. Three recordings have recently come into our possession.

1. *Echoes of Land and Sea* includes piano music by Britten, Holst, Ireland and Roderick Williams. The works by Holst include all the solo piano music composed during the period 1924 to 1932, namely *Toccata*, *Chrissemas Day in the Morning*, *Oh! I Hae Seen the Roses Blaw*, *The Shoemaker*, *Nocturne* and *Jig*. Of rather greater interest (seeing that the solo piano music has previously been recorded) is the world première recording of the piano transcription of Holst's *Brook Green Suite* by Vally Lasker.

The soloist is Maria Marchant and the recording is on the SOMM label SOMM CD 0174.

2. *I Love My Love* is a folk song collection arranged by Vaughan Williams, Cecil Sharp, Percy Grainger, Gustav Holst, Dame Ethel Smyth and others. These are historic recordings collected together by the Ralph Vaughan Williams Society and date from 1919 to 1947 inclusive.

The only work by Holst is *I Love My Love*, which is number 5 of his *Six Choral Folk Songs* dating from 1916. This is a recording by the Fleet Street Choir conducted by T B Lawrence under the Decca label and recorded on 26th May 1941.

From an historic point of view, this fascinating folk song collection is a must for your CD library.

Issued by Albion Records – Albion ALBCD032.

3. *Songs of Dorset* is a re-issue of a 2002 Dunelm recording, which features the music of Arthur Somervell, Gerald Finzi, Vaughan Williams, Holst and others. The two songs by Holst which appear on this CD are *The Sergeant's Song* and *Between Us Now*, numbers 3 and 5 of six songs dating from 1902/03 (H68). The soloists are Stephen Foulkes (baritone) and Colin Hunt (piano) recorded, live, at the art gallery of the Holburne Museum in Bath on Sunday 10th March 2002.

The recording is on the Divisions label (DDV24163) issued by Divine Art Recordings Group in the USA.

If members come by new recordings of music by Holst, please let us have full information, so that we can advise other members of the Society.

The Society would also be grateful if members could advise us regarding any future live performances of Holst's music.

Next newsletter will appear before Christmas 2017.

Chris Cope

Chairman

October 2017

