



Imogen's Clavichord

The Museum is delighted to have received a gift of a charming clavichord, originally the property of Imogen Holst. The instrument was made in 1942 by the distinguished makers, Goble. Imogen gave it to Dr John Agate, a great friend and the geriatrician who looked after her in her later years. She also dedicated a carol *Out of your sleep arise & wake* to Dr Agate. He was a great lover of music and friend of many musicians. George Malcolm, the celebrated harpsichordist, played the clavichord whilst it was in Dr Agate's possession.

Elisabeth Etheridge, Dr Agate's daughter, has generously given the instrument to the Museum on the instructions of her mother.

By an extraordinary coincidence, the clavichord had only been on show for a few days when a visitor to the Museum recognised it. She related that she had seen it in Dr Agate's house and that the good doctor was responsible for inspiring her to become a geriatrician herself.

The instrument is in working order and can be seen in the Regency Room.

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Inside this issue:

Events Preview	2
A Holst Miscellany	2
Aldeburgh	2
It's <u>Not</u> <i>The Planets</i> but...	3
Victorian Christmas Activity Day	3
Martin Horwood	3
Friends' report	4
Friends' application form	4

Chairman's Note

I'm sorry to report that, at the time of going to press, we are still without a curator/museum manager to give the Museum the professional leadership it deserves. We now plan to advertise locally and have accepted a generous offer of voluntary help from a headhunter with a number of personal contacts. The experience of the last few months has made the trustees appreciate that we need a more flexible approach to working arrangements and remuneration to accommodate the right candidate, but still within our current financial constraints.

The better news is that the figures from the last quarter of 2007 are most encouraging, with an increase in concessionary admissions and school groups and shop sales well up on the same period in 2006. This year has started well, with Cheltenham College Junior School visiting on the opening day: they will be followed by 12 primary schools, all booked in before the end of this term.

Three of our most valued and committed volunteers have decided to retire or move on to 'fresh fields and pastures new'. Ken and Molly Parker and Gwyneth Rattle were amongst the original core of volunteers who have supported

the Museum since it became independent over 7 years ago and their contribution has been immeasurable. The rest of the team goes from strength to strength and is the main reason that the Museum continues to thrive. The board of trustees has been strengthened by the co-option of Graham Lockwood, whose business experience and love and knowledge of music will be of great value - his wife Eileen was already one of our volunteers, so there was really no escape for him!

There is more good news about gifts and donations; you will read elsewhere about the wonderful gift of a clavichord, and we are particularly grateful to the Pittville Area Residents Association who have given us £500.

I have saved the best news until last - and that is the Diary of Events that is enclosed with this Newsletter. I am indebted to Gina Wilson and the Events committee for putting together a full and exciting programme - I hope that you will feel able to support these events and ensure that 2008 is a lively and successful year.

Marjorie Imlah

Events Preview

A full calendar of events, culminating in a grand *Cheltenham's Homage to Holst* concert in the Town Hall, is planned for this year. Your own calendar accompanies this newsletter, so we will only touch on imminent offerings and a few highlights.

The year starts with a lecture by Neil Williams on Thursday, the 28th of February, at 7.30pm in the Museum. Neil, a Holst scholar and friend of the Museum, will talk on Ernest Cossart, the Hollywood actor who was born as Emil von Holst, brother to Gustav. March brings the Friends' Music Day, which you can read about on the Friends' page at the back of the newsletter.

Other highlights include a concert in the Music Barn at the invitation of Elisabeth Waterhouse and in memory of Bill Waterhouse. Those who attended the magnificent concert and tea in 2006 will appreciate what a splendid affair this will be.

In June, the distinguished pianist David Owen

Norris will play the Collard & Collard piano which belonged to Holst and which occupies pride of place in the Museum. David has seen the piano and is keen to show off its merits.

On the 2nd of November, the Holst Birthplace Museum will celebrate the life of Gustav Holst with a grand concert in the Cheltenham Town Hall, featuring the Salomon Orchestra conducted by our Friends' President, Martyn Brabbins. The concert will re-create a concert given by the people of Cheltenham in honour of their famous son, a gala evening at which Holst conducted his own *Planets*. Holst said of the concert that 'It was the most overwhelming day of my life'. We are seeking sponsorship and advertising revenue for the concert and would welcome any assistance or suggestions.

Other interesting events will fill your diaries and we hope that you will attend as many as possible. We can promise you will enjoy a varied and interesting programme.

A Holst Miscellany

How tall was Holst? What was *The Idea*? Who was the first to sign the Holst Museum's first visitors' book? The small exhibition now in the display cases in the Music Room will provide the answers to all three questions. As the name implies, there is no particular theme here; it is simply a small selection of items from the archives which are not normally on display. Among these are two passports belonging to Holst, issued in 1918 and 1928. The first is of particular interest, being the old style folding sort, so that when it is opened out it is possible to see a good number of the countries which Holst visited in and after 1918. This passport was replaced by the familiar booklet type ten years later.

Other exhibits refer to some of Holst's compositions, including *The Perfect Fool*, the *Choral Hymns from the Rig Veda* and *The Cloud Messenger*.

The final section of the Miscellany relates to the origins of the Museum itself. The house, already marked as Holst's birthplace and receiving visiting enthusiasts, fortunately became available for sale in 1974. A generous contribution from Cheltenham Borough Council, an appeal fund and renovation work led to the official opening of the Holst Birthplace Museum by the Duke of Beaufort in 1975.

Susanne Fletcher

Aldeburgh

It was a great pleasure recently to welcome two visitors to the Museum from the Britten-Pears Foundation in Aldeburgh: Christopher Grogan, Librarian at the Britten-Pears Library and editor of the new biography of Imogen Holst (now on sale in the Museum), and his assistant Judith Ratcliffe. Because of Imogen Holst's long association with Benjamin Britten as his amanuensis and as a director of the Aldeburgh Festival, the Foundation holds a considerable number of Gustav Holst's manuscripts and other material, originally passed on by Imogen to the Holst Foundation and now made over to the care of the Britten-Pears Library. The meeting was enjoyable and useful, and we believe it will lead to a valuable co-operation between the Holst Museum and the Britten-Pears Foundation. Lists of holdings by the two bodies have been exchanged, and there are plans for representatives of the Museum to visit Aldeburgh this spring, to discuss, among other things, what the Foundation might be prepared to lend us for future exhibitions.

Susanne Fletcher

Some more dates for your diary

The new Holst statue in Imperial Gardens will be unveiled on 4th April at 12.00.

There is to be a Concert of Music by Raymond Head, to celebrate his 60th birthday, on 20th April at 5.30, in the Holywell Music Room, Oxford. Tickets at the door.

It's Not The Planets but...

Gustav Holst began to compose what is now *A Somerset Rhapsody* Op.21 No.2 in 1906. It was largely inspired by a sheep-shearing tune called *It's a Rosebud in June*. The work was originally performed as *Two Selections of Folksongs*, however the composer was dissatisfied with this piece and decided to edit it into two separate compositions – *The Songs of the West* and the present *Rhapsody*.

As the title implies, the tunes were all from Somerset. They were collected by Cecil Sharp, the work's dedicatee, and include *High Germany*, *The Lovers' Farewell* and *O Polly, Love, O Polly*. In 1910 Holst wrote to the critic Edwin Evans, explaining that the genesis of the work grew out of a

"suggestion of pastoral country[side] becoming filled with human activities but surviving them all – and heaps of other things too."

The *Somerset Rhapsody* is one of a number of works that was written by various composers in a 'folksong' idiom in the early part of the Twentieth Century. Gustav Holst's essay is certainly one of the best of this genre and has a charm and poetic depth that combines musical interest with a definite touch of melancholy.

A Somerset Rhapsody is available on Chandos 9420 and Lyrita SRCS 222.

John France ©

Victorian Christmas Activity Day

While Cheltenham's Town Centre was packed with bustling Christmas shoppers, visitors to the Holst Museum were greeted by the sight of gently flickering candles, winter evergreens decorating the mantelpieces, the scent of spices and cinnamon and glowing coals in the fire lit downstairs in the kitchen range. This was the scene for the 'Victorian Christmas Activity Day' held in the Holst Museum on December 15th. A small, steady and enthusiastic stream of visitors came to the Museum and enjoyed the activities on offer including scrapbook making, card design, and Christmas tree and table decorations. It all involved a lot of glue, ribbon, glitter, coloured paper, chatter and much concentration! We were delighted to welcome Martin Horwood MP and his

wife and two children, who joined in all the activities and also the hunt for the 'robins' hidden around the Museum.

One visitor quietly working at the table in front of the kitchen range remarked how the sound of the steady tick of the clock brought back memories of sitting in his grandparents' front room as a boy on a Sunday afternoon. We hope that all our visitors that day could enjoy the spirit of a Victorian Christmas away from the glitz and glare of 21st century material madness.

Join us next Christmas on December 13th 2008!

Liz Auster

Martin Horwood writes

I must have been a great disappointment to my music teacher - through no fault of his, music lessons generally made little impact on me. But studying *The Planets* was an exception. The urgent excitement of Mars is enough to attract any schoolboy's attention and the following pieces are a brilliant introduction to the power of music to convey dramatically contrasting images and moods (I always saw Venus as the quiet morning breaking over the devastated battlefield abandoned by Mars). And even better the composer was from Cheltenham! I'd soon bought my very first LP and the distinctive sounds of *The Planets* were heard over and over again at home. The familiar theme from Jupiter still makes the hairs on the back of my neck stand up today.

My grandmother lived a stone's throw from Pittville Park; the Museum opened when I was 12 and before long I discovered this fascinating time-

capsule of a house. I'm grateful that thanks to the dedication of many Friends and Volunteers over the intervening years, the Museum survived so that I can now bring my own children to Clarence Road. The Christmas nursery is a particular favourite for Maya and Sam!

And, thanks in large part to visits to the Museum and its events, I've gradually learnt that there is much more to Holst than *The Planets*. His fascination with Indian mythology, with folk traditions and with representing places through music all strike a chord with me now and I'm still hearing pieces for the first time like the beautiful *Song of the Night* performed by Rupert Luck last year in the fabulous surroundings of All Saints. Cheltenham is both lucky and right to have the Holst Museum at its heart.

Martin Horwood

The Friends' Page

Friends' Music Day

We are very pleased to be able to tell you that the Friends' Music Day on March 15th is shaping up well. We've had a good number of Friends contact us and offer to perform one or more items in the evening concert. Also there is an enthusiastic bunch of singers signed up for the afternoon workshop – but still room for more if you want to join us. Ring Sue Adlard on 01242 579334 or email holstfriends@dsl.pipex.com.

The idea is to have a music making day somewhat in the fashion that Gustav Holst would have mounted. Friends will perform Holst's music and other music of their choice. Holst would certainly have approved of the occasion.

The programme will include several part-songs by Holst, Vaughan Williams and Bliss. There will also be solo vocal items by Holst, Delius, Vaughan Williams, Barber and Brahms. Solo instrumental items will include works by Vaughan Williams for the viola and by Holst for the cello; ensemble works will include the *Fugal Concerto* by Holst. A special arrangement of one of the movements from *The Planets* will be played on the piano and there will also be some original composition, an inclusion that Holst would have welcomed in his own informal concerts.

Lastly everybody who takes part will be invited to join in singing and playing the Jupiter tune with the words "I vow to thee my country".

Do come along with your family and friends and support this day. The venue is Pate's Grammar School and the time of the concert is 7.00 pm. The afternoon singing workshop for those who have signed up will run from 2.30 to 5. Drinks will be served during the concert interval.

Entry is free and proceeds from a retiring collection will go to the Museum.

Not a Friend yet?....

....You can help the Museum by becoming a member of the Friends - simply fill in the form on this page, arrange your payment and return to the Membership Secretary.



01242 524846 01242 580182 (fax)
holstmuseum@btconnect.com
www.holstmuseum.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 1078599

4 Clarence Road
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL52 2AY

Newsletter editor: Richard Smith
01242 578172
r.j.smith.70@cantab.net

APPLICATION FORM

I/we would like to support the Holst Birthplace Museum and apply to join the Friends

Name(s):

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone:

Email:

Membership options (*please tick your choice*)

	Category	Annual	Life
<input type="checkbox"/>	Single	£15	£250
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joint	£20	£350
<input type="checkbox"/>	Family	£25	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	Overseas	£25	-
<input type="checkbox"/>	Corporate	£50	£500

I/We enclose a cheque for:

I/We prefer to pay by Standing Order:

To The Manager

plc

Address:

Postcode:

Name(s) of Account Holder(s):

Branch Sort Code:

Account Number:

Please pay to the credit of Friends of the Holst Birthplace Museum's Account (number 11851012) at HSBC Bank, Cheltenham Promenade Branch, 2 Promenade, Cheltenham, Glos GL50 1LS (Sort code 40-17-10) the sum of: on the 15th of 2008, and on the same date annually until further notice.

Signature(s)

Date:

GIFT AID

I wish my payments to the Friends of the Holst Birthplace Museum to be treated as Gift Aid donations. I expect to pay an amount of income tax at least equal to the amount that the charity reclaims on my behalf.

Signature(s):

Date:

Please return this form to the Membership Secretary at the Holst Birthplace Museum, 4 Clarence Road, Cheltenham GL52 2AY.