



Members' concert

On Saturday 20th March we will be holding our annual Holst Members' Music Day at Pate's Grammar School.

This occasion provides Members with various opportunities. In the first instance, there is a chance for singers to take part in a choir workshop during the afternoon, run by local choirmaster John Wright. Elgar's six *Songs From the Bavarian Highlands* will be rehearsed, and these will then form part of the evening concert.

The concert will also provide a platform for any Members with musical talents to perform. The programme is yet to be finalised, but this year we hope to hear a piece played on a sitar, several different styles of piano compositions (including a first performance of one of our Member's pieces and a jazz improvisation from another) and solo songs from other members.

Lastly, this is a social occasion, and all Members are warmly welcomed to come along to hear the performances and to meet with other members over an interval glass of wine. The concert starts at 7.00pm and entry is free. Non-members are also very welcome to attend (though we hope that they will at least consider joining the Trust!).

It's not too late to offer a musical contribution for the concert - if you would like to offer a solo, or are part of a chamber group who would be prepared to play a short piece, then please contact Carol Sadie (01242 577606 or email carol.sadie@yahoo.co.uk). Otherwise, please do come along and enjoy the concert.

The One Show

Spending the night with the comedian Arthur Smith is not in the usual museum job descriptions, although this is exactly what I did at the end of November, as part of a programme for the BBC's *The One Show*. What at first seemed a rather bizarre concept - a presenter stays over night in a historic home to soak up the atmosphere of the place - turned into an intriguing and insightful slice of film making. The day began with the arrival of the crew at lunchtime and they immediately enthused about the period feel of the Museum, particularly the eerie stillness of the Victorian bedroom where Arthur would be sleeping that night. Raymond Head was interviewed by Arthur, and also played *The Planets* on Holst's piano. When it was time for bed I retreated to the Regency Room; a sleeping bag underneath the

somewhat unsettling Theodor von Holst painting, *Bertalda Frightened by Apparitions*. There was not much time for nightmares however, as the alarm was set to light the range at 6am, kitchen-maid style, for Arthur's bacon. Over breakfast, with the fire burning, and the bacon sizzling, Arthur related more tales of Holst to camera. It was a fascinating experience to be part of, not only to see how such programmes are made, but also to witness the Museum being used in a new and imaginative way. When the film was broadcast on *The One Show* on 13th January, the feedback from everyone was overwhelmingly positive. Let's hope it encourages many new visitors to the Museum in 2010!

Laura Kinnear

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The Passmore Edwards Settlement

(This concludes the article in Newsletter 25)

Holst, previously conductor of the Hammersmith Socialist Choir, shared Mary Ward's caring nature. Vaughan Williams – as Jon Ceander Mitchell has suggested – probably recommended him to Mary: Ralph had played the viola and his wife the 'cello at the PES in the time of Richard Walthew (1899-1903), who maintained his link with the University afterwards as conductor of the Musical Society. Holst straightway put his own stamp on the enterprise. In one of his first concerts, on 11th December 1905, his choral piece *Dream Tryst* was sung. But his three years at the PES are chiefly notable for his bold programming of Bach cantatas at a time when they were generally unknown in this country. At Morley this was to alienate some older students, but by then he had achieved a number of landmark performances which encouraged him to persevere. Lucy Broadwood (see Newsletter 22) aided and abetted these, making translations and lending her melodious voice, already heard at St Augustine's, Settle Street in the presence of 'confirmed drunkards and pickpockets' (the vicar's description) as well as at the Bermondsey Settlement and Toynbee Hall. 'The generosity of musical people, whether professional or amateur, was wonderful' wrote Mrs Barnett. Lucy had performed at the PES even before Walthew's advent, when Charles Williams was conducting his 'admirably excellent orchestra', and sang there frequently afterwards, or just 'helped' as at Mary's entertainment for 400 poor children in December 1898. Sometimes she sang under the auspices of the People's Concert Society, founded in 1878, of which she was a committee member.

Lucy's niece Barbara was in Holst's choir and sang in *Sleepers wake!* for him on 16th April 1905. His own *The Sergeant's Song* was sung by Francis Harford at the same concert. The chorus numbered 42 and the orchestra, led by Jeanne Levine, 38 including RVW and his wife, with Mrs Holst on 2nd violin. The versatile and obliging Isobel would also put her hand to bass or 'cello as Gustav required. More Bach cantata concerts followed, notably on 5th November, when Lucy and J Campbell McInnes were soloists in her own translation of the *Peasant Cantata*. The HBM Scrap-Book reproduces at 34 part of the programme: copies of this and others are held at Cheltenham Art Gallery and Museum. The event was styled 'the first complete performance in England' and Lucy's – unbiased? – assessment was that it was 'a very spirited performance (giving huge pleasure to a full room)... Music heavenly.' She also sang three folk songs, a category of

music in which she had just initiated RVW, so through him Holst. Another item was three of the dances Gustav had arranged for Ralph's Ben Jonson masque *Pan's Anniversary*. The printed programme announced the Opening of the Organ by Sir Walter Parratt on 8th November, setting a precedent for St Paul's Girls' School two years later. Fog prevented Lucy's, and Barbara's, attendance at the next cantata concert on 10th December, but fortunately, no doubt because of the interest aroused on 5th November, this concert was scheduled to be repeated a week later because the hall was 'not large enough to accommodate all those who wished to be present'. Lucy heard 'a very good, neat perf:' of *There is no more soundness* (her own version of *Es ist nichts Gesundes*) and *Soul array thyself* (Muriel Davenport's of *Schmücke dich*). Isidore Schwiller led the orchestra this time, and Holst was to use him in the same capacity for his Purcell revivals at Morley. The new organ was played by Thomas, scion of the Spring Rice family, Cecil's cousin and Lucy's friend. The next month she was busy translating more Bach, *Halt im Gedächtnis* 'for Mr.G. von Holst'. She heard it at Morley on 8th June 1912 if not before. In 1907 both Morley and the PES figured among the venues at which she illustrated RVW's lectures.

To conclude: Holst's Tavistock Place experience was surely vital to his development as a man and as a musician, reminding us of his 'practicable socialism' (to use the Barnetts' phrase) as also his initiative in reviving neglected musical masterpieces, both activities to be pursued further at Morley College.

Alan Gibbs (with thanks to Laura Kinnear)

Chairman's Note

Welcome to 2010, the year in which we celebrate the 35th anniversary of the opening of the Holst Birthplace Museum.

Enclosed with this Newsletter you will find our revised leaflet, which includes the all important Trust membership details, and our Events leaflet with full information for the next six months and a trailer for two important events in the second half of the year.

With our public profile raised by such programmes as BBC 1's *The One Show* and Radio 4's *Ramblings*, I believe we can look forward to an exciting and successful year.

Marjorie Imlah

Ramblings

Some readers may occasionally listen to the BBC Radio 4 programme *Ramblings*, in which presenter Clare Balding goes on country walks with a selection of (hopefully) interesting local characters. The Trust were pleased, and I dare say rather surprised, to be asked to help Clare to make a programme based around the Holst Way which we have been developing.

So, on the morning of Tuesday 2nd February, seven rather bedraggled Trust Members (it was a wet day) rendezvoused with Clare and with Lucy Lunt, her producer, sound recordist, and general factotum, outside Cranham Church, with the intention of walking back along the proposed route of the Holst Way to Leckhampton.

The first thing we did seemed obvious at the time, which was to shorten the walk in view of the weather – so we drove to Birdlip and started from there instead. The way Clare and Lucy organised us was a wonder to behold. They would pick each of us in turn for a short interview as we walked along, Clare and the interviewee talking while Lucy held the mike and managed the recorder (Lucy deserves some sort of award for managing one of those cumbersome microphones with a what looks like a fluffy toy on the end through all

the rain and mud). While these interviews were in progress, the rest of the party were asked to keep at a discreet distance to ensure a clean recording.

We talked about all sorts of things – the local landscape, archaeology, the Leckhampton riots of 1902 – but mostly about Holst, his music and his love of walking. It will be very interesting, and I dare say embarrassing, to see how our unpractised comments are massaged into shape by Lucy to make a coherent radio programme!

Not too long after we set out from Birdlip, it miraculously stopped raining, and the weather continued steadily to improve. We enjoyed the full view over the Vale of Gloucester from Barrow Wake, and by the time we got to the Devil's Chimney at Leckhampton it could almost be described as a fine day (maybe we should have started from Cranham after all...).

Ramblings is broadcast at just after 6am on Saturdays and at 3pm on Thursdays. We understand that our programme will feature in the summer series, but we don't yet know when. We will email Members when we know the date.

Richard Smith

Paint Pots and Paintings

What do you do when the Museum is closed? This question has been posed frequently to me over the last month. Casting my mind back to the Victorian Christmas Day event on December 12th, I envisaged a peaceful stretch where I could knuckle down and get important jobs done. Inevitably come January the days whizzed past, and all those crucial tasks stacked up. The most important thing on the list was the refurbishment of the staff kitchen. Snow ensured that this much needed re-vamp was badly delayed. Nevertheless, after a flurry of paintbrushes, and some tussles with the drill, the volunteers were greeted on the first day of opening on 2nd February by a smart lick of paint, new shelving and a new table.

Although the refurbishment has been a lot of work, it has provided extra space – a tidier work area for Sara, the Education and Events Assistant, and also for the many volunteers who are involved in office-based activities. Importantly, the space in the kitchen has meant that items have been moved from the Curator's office. This year we hope that the Holst archive from Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum can be given a home permanently at the Museum. Without a clearout of the curator's office this cannot realistically

happen. This knowledge certainly gave the volunteers and me added impetus when wrestling with flat-pack shelving. Indeed, having the Holst archive reunited with other Holst-related material already in the Museum is particularly fitting for this, the Museum's 35th anniversary year.

As part of the 35 year celebrations, there will be a special exhibition of material relating to its opening from May 14th to August 21st. There are some fascinating plans and letters relating to its establishment, as well as photos and posters. They all give an insight into the energy and commitment of those involved with setting up the museum, in particular Imogen Holst. Heralding this exhibition will be a free twilight admission to the museum, as part of *Museums at Night 2010*. This event echoes a similar one held at the museum in 1975, when local residents were invited for free.

Arguably the most exciting event in 2010 will be the organisation of an exhibition devoted to the work of the painter Theodor von Holst (1810-44): *Theodor von Holst, his Art and The Pre-Raphaelites*, from September 3rd to December

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Events

You should have received with this Newsletter a new calendar of events covering the first half of this year. 2010 promises to be a special year with, amongst other highlights, celebrations to mark the 35th Anniversary of the opening of the Museum in 1975 and the 200th Anniversary of the birth of Theodor von Holst in 1810. We are also delighted to announce that Dame Felicity Lott will be performing for Holst's Birthday Concert in All Saints Church on September 25th, so do reserve this date in your diary.

Please take time to study the programme of events which should provide something of interest for everyone. Come and be informed and stimulated by the talks that have been arranged.

Come and relax and enjoy the musical events.

I would like to draw special attention to the Drinks Reception and Private View at the Martin's Gallery on April 30th. A leaflet is enclosed with a return slip to reserve tickets for this evening. This will help with catering arrangements for this event which we hope will bring new and old friends together in a very special setting to hear more about the work of the Trust.

The revenue from these events is **vital** to the work of the Museum. Please do support them and spread the word among your family and friends.

Liz Auster

Become a Member

If you are not already a member of the Trust, please do consider joining. Not only would you have the satisfaction of giving financial and general support to the Museum, but you would also enjoy many other benefits. The new Museum leaflet (copies included in this mailing) contains a membership application form.

Annual Membership rates are:

Single £15, Joint £20, Family £25, Corporate £50, Benefactor £60, Joint Benefactor £100, Corporate Benefactor £300.

For further details, please contact the Membership Secretary Catriona Smith:

tel.: 01242 578172

email: holstmembers@randc.me.uk

We would be grateful if Members would keep Catriona informed of their email addresses. This will help her to ensure that you continue to receive emails concerning Holst events, particularly if notice is short.

If you would like to become a Volunteer at the Museum, and thus a Volunteer Member, please contact the Curator, Laura Kinnear, at the Museum (see below for contact details).



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Paint Pots etc (cont.)

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13th. Theodor was Gustav Holst's great-uncle, and the son of Matthias von Holst, who was the first member of the family to emigrate to England from Latvia. Although still in the early planning stages, the exhibition will entail a complete rehang of the Regency room, with paintings and drawings also exhibited in the Music Room and Victorian Bedroom. Works will be coming from mainly private individuals, including items never seen in the public domain. It promises to be an exciting show, with many events and activities programmed alongside it in the autumn.

Laura Kinnear

EMF e-bulletin

The Holst Birthplace Trust has recently joined the English Music Festival e-bulletin Scheme, which they have set up to promote and benefit organisations involved in promoting British composers. The bulletin will be used to disseminate information on behalf of all the music societies who join the scheme to all their members.

We are also being invited to add details of our forthcoming concerts and events to the dedicated concerts and events Calendar on the EMF website at www.englishmusicfestival.org.uk

What you need to do to request the e-bulletin:

Members of the Holst Birthplace Trust can ask to receive the bi-monthly e-bulletin free of charge simply by e-mailing your email address to English Music Festival director Em Marshall at em.marshall@btinternet.com.