

Yorke Trust Newsletter Autumn 2013

Welcome from the Chairman, Rodney Slatford OBE

I can hardly believe it, but next year will be the Yorke Trust's thirtieth. So to kick off the anniversary celebrations, here is a newsletter to help bring you up to date. In it you'll find details of our **concert on 14 December at Houghton Hall**, news about **Easter** and **July's summer opera** which we think is going to celebrate Gluck's 300th anniversary that month, together with a glance at last summer's **Britten** triumph, news of the **Music & Dining Club** and a welcome to our **New Team**.

We began in London in 1984 with a grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation to help us develop the **Yorke Mini-Bass Project**, a scheme designed to enable children to learn the double bass, the instrument I played throughout my professional career. It had never been done on such a scale before but resulted in the introduction of early double bass grades in music examinations, introduction of double bass tuition at the specialist music schools, notably the Menuhin School in Surrey, and a new wave of young players in youth orchestras that had historically relied on adults to fill the bass section. All this has contributed to a steady rise in standards of playing and teaching throughout the world - something of which the Trust can be justly proud.

The death of my mother in 1991 resulted in a generous legacy from her estate, enabling the Trust to purchase premises in Norfolk. To mark the bequest, earlier this year the Trust commissioned a commemorative plaque with an award from the **Haworth Trust**. Louis Russell, a young stone mason with local connections, fixed his beautifully designed and lettered slate plaque to the Old Chapel on my birthday last July. It was his first major commission, carried out under the supervision of his teacher James Salisbury.

Next Spring we launch an **anniversary fund raising initiative** in both London and Norfolk to celebrate thirty years of achievement in the world of music education. We will also look ahead to exciting developments designed to ensure a secure future for future generations of young people keen to explore music and the arts to the highest possible levels. We have been very fortunate to inherit funds from **Brancaster Summer Music** which has recently closed: we thank their Trustees sincerely.

Please don't hesitate to drop us a line with feedback both about this newsletter and about any of our projects. Inevitably much of our work involves raising money, so if you are connected to a charity or organisation that might be able to help us, we would very much like to hear from you.

Rodney Slatford

***In the Smoke* at Houghton Hall – Saturday 14 December 2013**

One of the regular visitors to the Creake Centre is the London-based vocal group ***In the Smoke*** who come to Norfolk for rehearsal weekends. They are simply amazing. As part of the Trust's ongoing fundraising programme, they are singing for us in the Picture Gallery at Houghton Hall, an occasion that our patron The Marquess of Cholmondeley KCVO is kindly hosting. The Picture Gallery, rarely open to the public, houses some fine paintings from His Lordship's private collection. **Tickets at £20** have been selling fast so do book now to avoid disappointment as there aren't many left! **Champagne and canapés** add a festive touch to this light seasonal concert with a difference. Check out the group at their website. More details and a booking form are on the **flyer enclosed** - tickets can also be booked online. Definitely one not to be missed!

Continued...

Easter Choral Concert – Binham Priory and St. Mary's South Creake Friday 11 & Saturday 12 April 2014

Oliver-John Ruthven and **Alexander Crowe** share the next Easter Choral Course direction that pays homage to Rameau, who died 250 years ago next year, with an eclectic mix of works including Brahms *Marienlieder* Op.33 and probably a Bach cantata. Oliver-John, or O-J as he is affectionately known to everyone, played continuo in the Trust's stunning production of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* in 2011. He is one of Britain's promising young conductors and music director with Hampstead Garden Opera.

Once again a chorus of fine young voices is being recruited from the music conservatoires, some singers returning year after year to benefit from the unique training opportunity. Visit virtually any opera production anywhere in the country and you can be sure to spot some names that you first encountered in Norfolk. **Oliver Dunn**, for example, was in Norwich recently, with the Glyndebourne tour: with us he took part in *Dido & Aeneas* in 2007 and has often sung in concerts at Easter and Christmas. Box office opens in January.

Summer Opera 2014 – Friday 25 and Saturday 26 July

After the ambitious and highly successful production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* last July, taking an operatic Sabbatical in 2014 was seriously considered. The company numbered in excess of 100 and put a considerable strain on facilities! But how could we not do something in our 30th anniversary year? One option was to do a series of excerpts, similar to the programme we took to private houses in 2011, which would certainly fit in with the philosophy that the training elements embodied in the summer opera courses are all-important – but it wouldn't give so much emphasis on stage craft, for which we have become well known. Also, a mixed bag of 'bleeding chunks' isn't really the ideal way to celebrate thirty years of remarkable achievement.

Another idea was to look out two one-act operas, perhaps a *comédie* and a *tragédie* one by Rameau and another by Gluck, both of whom have significant anniversaries in 2014. It might have been possible to edit performing material in time, but studying two obscure works that students would probably never come across again didn't quite tick the right boxes. *Comédies* from the period tend to feature a huge amount of ballet and, without spending literally months learning the idiomatic steps and gestures, as Jennifer Hamilton points out, 'there is only a limited amount of stage 'business' a director can introduce to the operatic narrative in lieu of dance, however wonderful the ballet music may be'. She also advised that staging a double bill is virtually twice the work of a single opera – perhaps not such a bright idea when trying to put together something with modest resources.

So the jury is still out at the moment, with **Gluck's *Armide*** the favourite contender, always supposing we can track down a well-edited set of performing material – something eternally challenging with early opera. Whatever the work, the production team will be the same as for 2013's Britten and performances are scheduled for **Friday 25 and Saturday 26 July** in St Mary's South Creake. This will inevitably clash with other summer music projects in the county, but our dates are governed by both the conservatoires' academic year and the many visiting courses that regularly use our premises, without which our economic survival could well have been somewhat precarious.

Britten *A Midsummer Night's Dream* July 2013

Had we realised the complexities of tackling *A Midsummer Night's Dream* we might have opted for something less challenging. As it was, with the generous support of a number of private sponsors, the production didn't (quite) break the metaphorical camel's back. The children's team alone involved twenty-seven people including parents, chaperones and special coaches. Recruiting the virtuoso players required for the orchestra wasn't completed until literally a few days before 'curtain up', **Darren Hargan** (conductor) and **Adam Johnson** (assistant) making literally hundreds of calls to recruit harp, a trumpeter, a percussionist and a replacement leader,

ours having stepped down well into rehearsals. But with a super-human effort from everyone, **Gidon Saks's costumes, Ian Sommerville's spectacular circular set and lighting** contributed to yet another of **Jennifer Hamilton's thought-provoking productions**. The support and cooperation of our new priest Clive Wylie, and the churchwardens, was invaluable.

There are some miracles that an 'instant' summer opera company such as ours can achieve that are rarely to be found in the professional world. Without Sue Sommerville's extraordinary management skills and the months of preparation behind the scenes from a small administrative team, the production could never have achieved what it did. As Darren Hargan had always intended, the standard of singing, of stage craft and of orchestral playing were raised to a new level – and all in the space of less than a month from scratch!

The Trust's involvement with *Familiar Fields*, the East Anglian contributor to the international *Britten 100* celebrations brought a new dimension to our promotional efforts and enabled us to reach a much wider audience than would otherwise have been possible. Our thanks go unreservedly to everyone who made everything go so smoothly. The largely un-sung heroes of the project included **Jo Robinson** who did amazing things on her sewing machine, including making a lion's outfit from a pair of old bedroom curtains; **Julia Meynell and Tiji Wellens**, with a very willing Belgian assistant to help, translated Ian Sommerville's imaginatively conceived set into the practical realms of possibility, albeit that their lovingly created dry lake in the centre of the church had to be sawn up after the final performance and stored in the Trust's orchard under canvas for future use; **Robert McNaughtan**, helped by **Felicity Crowe**, was feeding more than 100 hungry mouths twice a day *and* devising appetising picnic boxes to rival any that can be found on similar occasions elsewhere, only ours cost barely a third of the price. It will be a hard act to follow, but we can breathe a sigh of relief that it will be some while before **Sue Cutler** has to find seventy five beds in the area, without which we would have been sunk.

Finally, thanks must go to those who took part in the Britten seminar sessions that focused on a good selection of repertoire less often encountered in the concert hall. Highlights were surely **Darren and Adam's two piano tours de force** – virtuoso playing of the highest order put together with minimal rehearsal; the fascinating talk by the composer and film historian **Miguel Mera** with illustrations from the GPO archives; and reminiscences of the first production in 1961 with **John Copley and Nona Liddell** – a packed house and some scurrilous inside stories shedding new light on life behind the scenes in those early Aldeburgh Festival days. Brilliant!

Show Coach!

The Trust's ongoing work with local children, formerly under the *Pied Piper!* umbrella for the last seven years, has been re-launched as *Show Coach!* with local teacher Liz Dark at the helm. Numbers are down a bit this year, but grant applications are in hand to enable us to recruit more actively in schools next season. Unusually the groups often have more boys than girls, the relatively small numbers giving everyone an opportunity to shine, to build confidence and to become a little star. Trustees view this part of their work as vital to building an understanding of the arts from the early years. *Show Coach!* focuses on music and drama tuition of the highest calibre – subject areas that some schools find increasingly difficult to cover as comprehensively as they would like. Classes are held on alternate Saturdays. An open day in the summer with a BBQ in the Trust's orchard rounds off the year.

Music & Dining Club

After seven successful years the Music & Dining Club is taking a break – something that many supporters have found to be hugely disappointing. Designed both to give a platform to emerging young artists and to help raise a little money for overheads, organising a monthly event involves more work than meets the eye. The series is normally set up during the summer months which this year were unusually hectic with the magnitude of the opera project. So with an office move in the pipeline (albeit only down the road), the 30th anniversary looming, and new recruits to the

administrative team, we felt we would literally be biting off more than we could chew. Instead, for this year we are concentrating on four major events, of which the Houghton concert on 14 December is one. This, we hope, will enable us to keep in contact with everyone without endangering our mental and physical health...

Associated Events

Britons Discovered – London 28 November 2013

Enclosed with this mailing is a flyer for Adam Johnson's forthcoming **Northern Lights Symphony Orchestra** concert at the church of St Sepulchre without Newgate in the City. Adam conducted our Easter concert last year and has been a regular supporter of Yorke Trust activities on many occasions. His orchestra, of which I am honoured to be both the President and a Trustee, comprises many young instrumentalists who have spent time with us in Norfolk, including James Dickenson who is playing the little-known violin concerto by Robin Milford. St Sepulchre's is home to the Musicians' Chapel where many great performers are laid to rest and where many have chosen for their funeral service. These include, most recently **John Amis**, a regular visitor to us in Norfolk and long-term supporter of the Trust's work who died earlier this year.

Britten Cello Suites on DVD – Jamie Walton's latest release

Our Trustee Jamie Walton has recorded all Benjamin Britten's works for cello, every one of which has received rave reviews. Fresh to his canon comes a DVD of the three solo cello suites, written for Rostropovich, with whom Jamie has been favourably compared! Paul Joyce, the distinguished film director, collaborated with Jamie on the production for his company Lucida Productions. Filmed in Blythburgh church in Suffolk, a venue much-loved by Britten, the sensitive camera work reveals aspects of the church and the local countryside at three different times of day, the candlelight used in the third suite lending particular poignancy to a powerful DVD that every enthusiast will want to add to their collection. Find out more about it at www.jamiewalton.com.

E-mail or Snailmail?

Several of you have asked to be kept abreast of our activities by e-mail rather than on paper. Our mailing list database holds nearly 1000 addresses and is constantly being refreshed, but until we transfer to a new system, hopefully in the New Year, we can't filter postal addresses from electronic ones. Hence this snailmailing! Please return the enclosed prepaid card with any changes of information that we may not have. Thank you.

Welcome to our new team!

This year we said farewell to **John Williams** as a Trustee who has moved back to Hereford - we thank him warmly for his support over the years. **Stephen Day**, our former Honorary Treasurer, has moved to France - his place has been taken by **Alison Randall** who is a Financial Services Officer for Norfolk County Council. **Henry Head** is a businessman, brought up in West Norfolk, who has lived in the county for 37 years. He leads The Reel Fling, a Scottish dancing group that have made The Creake Centre their home. **Nigel Housden** and **Scilla Landale** have joined the office to help **Sue Cutler** and me on a regular basis. Nigel is looking after the computers, electronic files and fundraising. Scilla is dealing with press & publicity, the website, the mailing list and 101 other time-consuming things.

Facebook & Website

Follow us on **Facebook** or check the **website** at www.yorketrust.org for all the latest news about the Trust's activities. In thanking you for your support and encouragement in the past, I hope you will be able to join us during our thirtieth year and celebrate all that has been achieved so far.

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