



AGS News

13 Autumn 2010



Welcome to the latest edition of AGS News, the forum of The Armstrong Gibbs Society, which covers events, people and music.

Armstrong Gibbs Music Festival 2010

The Artistic Director writes:

It is becoming increasingly difficult these days to stage anything artistic, let alone a festival. Against all the odds, The Armstrong Gibbs Society was able to put aside the modern constraints and present a three day festival of truly international standards. Gibbs had a real commitment to music in the Danbury area and we had a great mix of local and visiting artists this year.

As artistic director, this second festival was even more precious to me, with our first venture into an education project. Three local schools were involved under the masterful direction of Simon Warne, with the incredible support and dedication of Debbie Leaver and Emma Griffin.

Our main sponsor M and G who have always had an interest in education helped us so much with this year's contribution.

I believe that to be truly educated one must not only learn to appreciate the arts, but have opportunities to actively participate in creative work. I feel that we have made a good start to help towards this goal.

The education project concluded with a morning concert on the Saturday with the children sharing the stage with the London Piano Trio. It was extremely well attended and the positive response from children, parents, audience, and teachers alike expressed the importance of what we are trying to do.

The Friday lunchtime concert was given by the Griffin sisters, Lara piano and Emma

clarinet, giving us an enchanting start to the festivities. This was followed by a festival lunch.

We have already spoken about the children's concert on the Saturday morning which was followed in the evening by a concert of our own Gibbs Festival Orchestra, made up of a group of truly world class musicians. We performed two Gibbs works in the first half, A Spring Garland, and his concertino for piano and string performed brilliantly by the Ukrainian pianist Olga Dudnik. The middle work was Bach's Brandenburg concerto no 4 with myself and Anne Skinner and Kerenza Allin-Garner, recorders, as soloists. We were assisted on the continuo cello and harpsichord by the international talents of David Jones and Gillian Ward Russell. The concert concluded with the ever popular Vivaldi The Four Seasons with yours truly as soloist. Paul Hagger the organist at St John's played continuo.

On the Sunday we had a choral evensong sung by the St John's Singers, the choir at the festival venue where Gibbs sang himself. It was a fitting finale to a wonderful weekend of great music making.

I would just like to ask everyone to pass on the news of what we are doing as we need many more society members to continue our most important work.

Special thanks should be given to Christopher Kingsley who was indisposed for this festival, but his hard work went a long way towards the success of the weekend.

Robert Atchison



FROM THE RECORDS

Honor Gibbs to her daughter Ann:

The Oundle Festival 1950

“So much of humour and interest happened at Oundle. I longed to have time to write you a long account – from the old lady of 82 who had been Queen Mary’s Lady in Waiting and a good old battleaxe too who gave away the prizes with great vigour and aplomb – to the old granny of nearly the same age who sang with her contemporaries in the WI choir; and the excellent male choir of Latvian d.ps from Corby steel works who won a cup amid great applause and cheering and gave us an encore in their own language. All dressed alike in smart navy suits provided by the British Government...”

“And then the church choirs – whose competitions took part in the really lovely old church – and Dad’s opening speech in which he said he wished all choirs could be judged in the churches for music was for the greater glory of God...”

“Then there was the enthusiastic and v. stout secretary who came running up to greet us, tripped and fell heavily – I rushed to help her up – ‘all right dear, always doing it – never hurt. I bounce – so beautifully fat.’”



Memory Lane

Matthew Radford writes:

‘Gibbs was a regular worshipper at the 11a.m. BCP Matins and always sat in the back row of the choir stall nearest to the Sanctuary. He sang bass but sat on the tenor side because there was at that time no radiator on the bass side. At Easter when the choir processed round the church, he would wear the full robes of a Doctor of Music.

Gibbs disliked long sermons, and after about ten minutes would begin to fidget with his books. The Rector, Frank Hopkirk, would hear it and say ‘And finally’ and the noise would stop for a few moments, but would start again as Hopkirk went on relentlessly to complete his sermon.

Hopkirk, who was also choirmaster, occasionally wrote short easy pieces of music such as final amens for the choir, duplicating them and distributing them only just before the service as most of us were reasonably good sight-readers. When this happened Gibbs would bring out his pencil and correct his copy during the readings.



NEWS AND VIEWS

Recordings

March 2010

Gibbs’ oboe concerto recorded by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic, soloist Jonathan Small

This recording is available from Angela Aries at the special festival price of £10.00 (cheque payable to the Armstrong Gibbs Society).

September 2010

Gibbs’ complete works for piano and violin, Olga Dudnik, Robert Atchison.

Available at the festival price of £10.00 from Robert Atchison. Also available: Gibbs’ Piano Trios, by The London Piano Trio.

2010 Celebrations

20th November 2010 – Christchurch, Chelmsford, 7.30p.m. Essex Symphony Orchestra perform Gibbs’ Oboe Concerto, soloist Will Oinn

For regular updates on events please visit the Armstrong Gibbs website at www.armstronggibbs.com

See Next Issue for CAG Soundbites, From the Records, Memory Lane, and News and Views. Please send contributions to the editor:

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