



AGS News 6 Winter 2005/6



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

There have been a number of exciting developments in the Society over the last few months, in terms of concerts and possible recordings of Gibbs' works. If you want to find out more, come along to the AGM on 20th May at 11 o'clock, in Danbury Parish Church Meeting Room. For more details, contact the Secretary. Meanwhile, April 2nd May 14th May 21st and June 8th are important dates for your diary!

Discovering Gibbs

My name is Robert Atchison, and I am the violinist in the London Piano Trio.

I moved out to Essex just over a year ago from London, and am enjoying Essex life very much.

As I am new to the county I looked on the internet for Essex composers and found the Gibbs website.

Incidentally I had never heard of Gibbs prior to this. After contacting various people in your society I was able to get photocopies of two of Gibb's trios, the Yorkshire Dales and the Trio in D from the Britten Pears library in Aldeburgh.

Over the years, we have been approached by many people concerning music that has been neglected, and I have to say that for the most part this is due to the poor quality of most of these compositions.

I remember well the morning that I got my copies of the scores in Gibb's own hand, and sat down with a pot of coffee and was amazed at this man's wonderful work.

This was a true musical discovery for us, revealing works of great depth, originality, passion and appeal to the ear, and as a result we intend to record all four piano trios written by Gibbs, which are: The trio in D, The Yorkshire Dales, The Three Graces, and Country Magic.

We have also programmed the trio in D for forthcoming tours of Canada, America, and the Far East, and we will be playing the work at the Cadogan Hall in London on the 8th of June 2006.

Future performances are also planned, and we will notify the society when they are confirmed.

A big 'thank you' to all at the society for your friendship and help.

Please feel free to visit our website:

www.londonpianotrio.com

Robert Atchison



Creative Explorations (1)

by David Rust

I never knew my grandfather well. I was born in 1953, and we did not often see our grandparents (we knew them as Dan and danpy) between 1956 and 1959 as we were in Australia, and Armstrong died in 1960, soon after we returned. But I have always loved listening to his music, especially his songs.

My parents have often talked about Armstrong's uncanny ability to capture the mood of a poem, and to express it in music. He was great friends for many years with Walter de la Mare. I enjoy de la Mare's explorations into the world of dreams and the subconscious. Critics write of the resemblance that his poetry has to music (see, for example, 'Stepping Out of the Gloaming: A Reconsideration of the Poetry of Walter de la Mare' by Richard Hawking, University College, Worcester, 1999). De la Mare was fully aware of the way in which music, like the sense of smell, has an indescribable power to evoke and arouse a lost, perhaps forgotten reality. 'His dominant impulse was the quest for another, richer self, and another, essential reality' (Hawking). Many of his poems seek to reawaken childhood memories, which he regarded as a purer, higher reality.

Armstrong, too, was highly sensitive regarding his own childhood memories. In his unpublished autobiography, 'Common Time', he records some of his intense, often anguished experiences. Sometimes his music appears to be a quest, seeking to make

sense of his deeply buried emotions. I find certain of his orchestral works a roller-coaster of emotion and spirit, such as Prelude, Andante and Finale (on the CD Dale and Fell released by Hyperion), in which Armstrong explores coming to terms with wartime trauma and the loss of his only son, my Uncle David, in Italy in 1943. How much my response is due to an inherited affinity, and how much to Armstrong's universal ability to communicate emotion through his music I cannot tell.



The Essex Chamber Orchestra

The Essex Chamber Orchestra, popularly known as ECHO, comes together three times a year for intensive weekend rehearsals followed by a series of concerts usually at venues in Essex. When the orchestra was established in 1979, ECHO recruited its players from those members of the Essex Youth Orchestra who were obliged to 'retire' on reaching the age of 21. The orchestra now also recruits players who live or work in the County, those who attend Essex schools or colleges, and other invited players for particular concerts. ECHO's Musical Director is Patrick Bailey; its Principal Guest Conductor is Colin Touchin.

Although originally conceived as a chamber orchestra, ECHO varies its forces to perform a wide variety of programmes ranging from Baroque and Classical works to the repertoire of the 20th Century. ECHO has on occasions joined forces with choral societies to perform works such as Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius* and Brahms's *German Requiem*; on April 8 2000 the orchestra accompanied the Chelmsford Singers, under the baton of Peter Cross, in a performance of *Odysseus* by Cecil Armstrong Gibbs.

In April 2005, ECHO celebrated 25 years of successful music making with a concert in Chelmsford Cathedral, which included the *Blackwater Suite* by Clive Smith and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*. On that occasion the orchestra was joined by the Warwick Phoenix Singers, continuing a fruitful association begun in 2003 with a performance of Mozart's *Requiem*.

From the records

Herbert Howells writes to Gibbs following the death of Walter de la Mare in 1956

If there is any man with approved and rich right to be wistful over the death of a beloved man-of-genius it surely is yourself now that W.J. has gone from us. Ever since I heard (to my vast regret) of his death, you and he have gone singing through my mind, in my sheer gratitude for the linked beauty of his poems and your settings of them.

I doubt if you or he ever can have realised what deep appreciation there has been for what your marriage-of-true-minds gave us. Anyhow, one of your old friends tells you of it point blank, and with real affection



NEWS AND VIEWS

ECHO concert

The Essex Chamber Orchestra will be performing Armstrong Gibbs' Symphony no.3 in B flat, 'Westmorland' in the Lord Riche Hall Felsted School, on Sunday 2nd April at 7.30p.m. For more details contact Tim Brockington at tim.brockington@tesco.net

Chelmsford Cathedral Festival

'Echoes of Essex' Sunday 14th May at 9.00p.m. A presentation in sound and light featuring music of Essex – Tallis, Holst, Armstrong Gibbs, Byrd and Walley. Narrated and presented by Paul Guinery of BBC Radio 3. Sponsored by the Armstrong Gibbs Society and the Friends of Chelmsford Cathedral Festival. Information from the Cathedral Box Office on 01245 606505

The London Piano Trio

There will be two opportunities to hear a performance of Armstrong Gibbs' Piano Trio in D Major, Opus 97.

21st May at St John's Recreation Centre, Harlow, 7.30 p.m.

8th June at the Cadogan Hall, London 7.30 p.m.

For details check the website

www.londonpianotrio.com

Subscriptions

If you have not yet paid your subscription for this year (January to December 2006) The Treasurer, Douglas Potter, would be very pleased to receive a cheque for £10 from you. If you would prefer to pay by standing order, kindly use the enclosed form.

Please make cheques payable to:

The Armstrong Gibbs Society, and send them to:

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See Next Issue for **CAG Soundbites, Memory Lane, and your News and Views**. Please send contributions – **BY END OF APRIL PLEASE** – to The Editor, Angela Aries, 16, Runsell Close, Danbury, CM3 4PQ, or e-mail (angela.aries@btinternet.com).