

Lyritya

Arthur Richard Itter, the founder of Lyritya Recorded Edition, has died near his home in Burnham, aged 85, following a brief illness.

Richard was among the very first private individuals in the UK to start a record label. The Lyritya imprint, which celebrated its 50th year in 2009 began at a time when recording was dominated by HMV and Decca. Richard had a sense that those companies, with their international outlook, were paying insufficient attention to the considerable wealth of mid-twentieth century British composers. Thus Lyritya was conceived from the outset with a singular focus on British music performed by British musicians.

Among the composers that were to benefit greatly from Lyritya's attention in the early days were John Ireland and Gerald Finzi whose music often had its first recordings under Richard's care. The label grew steadily through the 1970s adding important premieres of symphonic works and concertos by Bax, Moeran, Alwyn, Bridge, Holst, Hurlstone, Rawsthorne, Rubbra and Sterndale Bennett.

Although keenly interested in music and in recording technology Richard was happy to remain in the background. His decision to hire Decca to provide all recording, manufacturing and distribution services was practical, and significantly gave him access to Ken Wilkinson, one of the most celebrated recording engineers of the time. Richard's determination to engage the best performers would lead to long relationships with the principal London orchestras, particularly the LPO, and to a pattern of composer conducted recordings which quickly created a unique catalogue of musical life in Britain through the 1960s-1990s.

The Lyritya label was virtually dormant in the decade 1995-2005 until a license agreement was signed with Wyastone Estate Ltd, the owners of Nimbus Records, which had previously acted as both manufacturer and distributor of Lyritya CDs. Under this agreement every Lyritya title was reissued in time to celebrate Richard's 80th birthday. International enthusiasm for the re-releases was marked, leading Simon Heffer to comment in *The Daily Telegraph*:

"From the 1960s to the 1990s, those with a taste for obscure English classical composers, or for the obscure works of the well-known ones, needed only one port of call: Lyritya Records. For aficionados of the English canon the re-issue of this material is one of the great events in our musical history. It is like coming across long-buried treasure, and represents perhaps the finest exhibition our music has ever had."

Richard was anxious to preserve his catalogue, and to ensure that it would continue. He created and endowed the Lyritya Recorded Edition Trust which since June 2012 has owned and operated the Lyritya label through its on-going license with Wyastone Estate. Two new recordings of works by British composers had already been made prior to Richard's death, activity which will now continue under the auspices of the Lyritya Recorded Edition Trust.



Arthur Richard Itter

Born : Peterborough, 5th April 1928

Died : Burham, 1st March 2014

Photograph : Sir Adrian Boult and Richard Itter at one of the Lyritya sessions for the Elgar Symphonies recorded in 1968.

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