

# *The Creel*

Journal of The Rawsthorne Trust  
and  
The Friends of Alan Rawsthorne

Volume 8, Number 1  
Issue Number 26  
2015

A large, stylized orange signature of the name "Alan Rawsthorne" is positioned at the bottom of the page. The signature is written in a cursive, handwritten style with thick, expressive strokes. The word "Alan" is partially obscured by the large, looping "R" of "Rawsthorne".



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## **Contents**

Editorial	5
John McCabe, CBE, 1939–2015 <i>Tony Pickard</i>	7
Rawsthorne Weekend, RNCM, Manchester <i>Andrew Mayes</i>	12
Serialism in Late Rawsthorne <i>Ian White</i>	20
The Celluloid Plays a Tune <i>Alan Rawsthorne</i>	36
Working with Alan Rawsthorne <i>Peter Dickinson</i>	49
The Viola Sonata <i>Tony Pickard</i>	54
New Music and Recordings <i>Andrew Mayes</i>	59
A Permanent Remembrance of Rawsthorne	61

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*Editor:* Martin Thacker  
*Design:* Sarah Darby  
Michael Smith

### Contributions and copy to the

*Editor at:*  
24 Eagle Brow  
Lymm  
Cheshire  
WA13 0LY  
email: mthacker@care4free.net

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## The Friends of Alan Rawsthorne

(The promotional and educational arm of the Rawsthorne Trust)

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### President:

TBA

### Vice-President:

Gerard Schurmann

### 'Friends' membership enquiries to:

Andrew Knowles  
30 Florida Avenue  
Hartford  
Huntingdon  
Cambs  
PE29 1PY  
Telephone: 01480 456931  
email: [apkmusicprom@ntlworld.com](mailto:apkmusicprom@ntlworld.com)

## Editorial

### In memoriam

The list of articles begins with John McCabe – and so must the editorial. An outstanding figure in so many departments of British music, he is particularly to be mourned by us in that he was for over twenty years a very committed president of the Friends of Alan Rawsthorne. No composer could have wished for a better friend, for John spared neither time nor effort to enhance Alan's reputation and to save his music from falling into neglect. Eminent though John was, he and Monica (to whom we send our heartfelt condolences) regularly honoured us with their approachable and friendly presence at Rawsthorne gatherings, and at different times he appeared both as pianist and as lecturer. More general obituaries have not been lacking in the national press and elsewhere, but we are grateful to Tony Pickard (who also writes illuminatingly on Rawsthorne's Viola Sonata in this issue) for giving a more Rawsthorne-specific record of John's activities.

### We have been busy ...

Since the last issue of *The Creel* appeared, the Trust and the Friends have been active, and there is much to report. Peter Dickinson's completion and edition of Rawsthorne's piano arrangement (with speaker) of *Practical Cats*, commissioned by the Trust, has been performed twice, in Suffolk and in Manchester, in the latter case at a successful Rawsthorne Weekend organised by the Trust at the Royal Northern College of Music in October last year. Professor Dickinson writes about his work on *Practical Cats* in this issue: his article is a version of the talk he gave at the Weekend.

Andrew Mayes provides a thorough review of the proceedings, not neglecting to mention any of the large number of works performed there – something of a tour de force. He also discusses yet another initiative, the commissioning from Peter of a version of *Cats* as a four-hands-one-piano suite, without narrator. This was designed to complement Rawsthorne's other suite for the same performers, (the one that gave its name to this journal). The suite was first performed, again at the RNCM, on 21 April this year.

Andrew Mayes also reviews a world premiere recording, partly sponsored by the Trust, of *Diabelleries*, a composite work with a movement each by many well-known British composers, including Rawsthorne. Finally on this list of activities, there is the sponsoring of a seat in the refurbished RNCM concert hall, which now bears an inscription in Rawsthorne's memory.

### Sorry we forgot ...

Amid the large number of anniversaries celebrated in 2014, *The Creel's* own twenty-fifth birthday was somehow allowed to pass unnoticed. One would have thought that its issue number – 25 – might have jogged our memory,

though in fact this was mere coincidence: there had been years with two *Creels* and others with none. Also, as explained previously, one issue had been left out of the counting process: we have issue 8 of 1993, and what now has to be called 8a, of 1994. Anyway, there it is: twenty-five years from Volume 1, No. 1 (Autumn 1989) to Volume 7, No. 4 (2014); and belatedly we mark the occasion by reprinting Rawsthorne's own article 'The Celluloid Plays a Tune', from Volume 1, No. 4, chosen both because, thanks largely to Professor Peter Dickinson, we can add value to it with a description of its pre-*Creel* origins, including a facsimile of a letter from Isabel Rawsthorne, and also – of course – because, being by Rawsthorne himself, it is highly entertaining. The title may sound almost too familiar to some readers, but this is *not* a repeat of a repeat. The title was recycled for another piece, but the article itself has only appeared once before in *The Creel*.

I am delighted to welcome Ian White back to our pages after twenty years. He has previously given us articles on 'Rawsthorne's Musical Idiom' (1991); 'Rawsthorne's Third Symphony' (1992); and 'Rawsthorne's Orchestral Sound' (1995), superb pieces all – they form part of a goodly heritage of musicological work that over the years has been the rigorous backbone of *The Creel*. We have had able essays in analysis, discography, reception history, publication history, manuscript [source] studies, biographical research, and more; enough to fill a book that could worthily sit on the shelves beside the volumes by Alan Poulton and John McCabe, should the resources and the authors' permission become available. The title could perhaps be *Alan Rawsthorne: Essays of a Quarter-Century*, or *The Creel: The First Twenty-Five Years*.

*Martin Thacker*

## John McCabe, CBE, 1939–2015

*Tony Pickard*

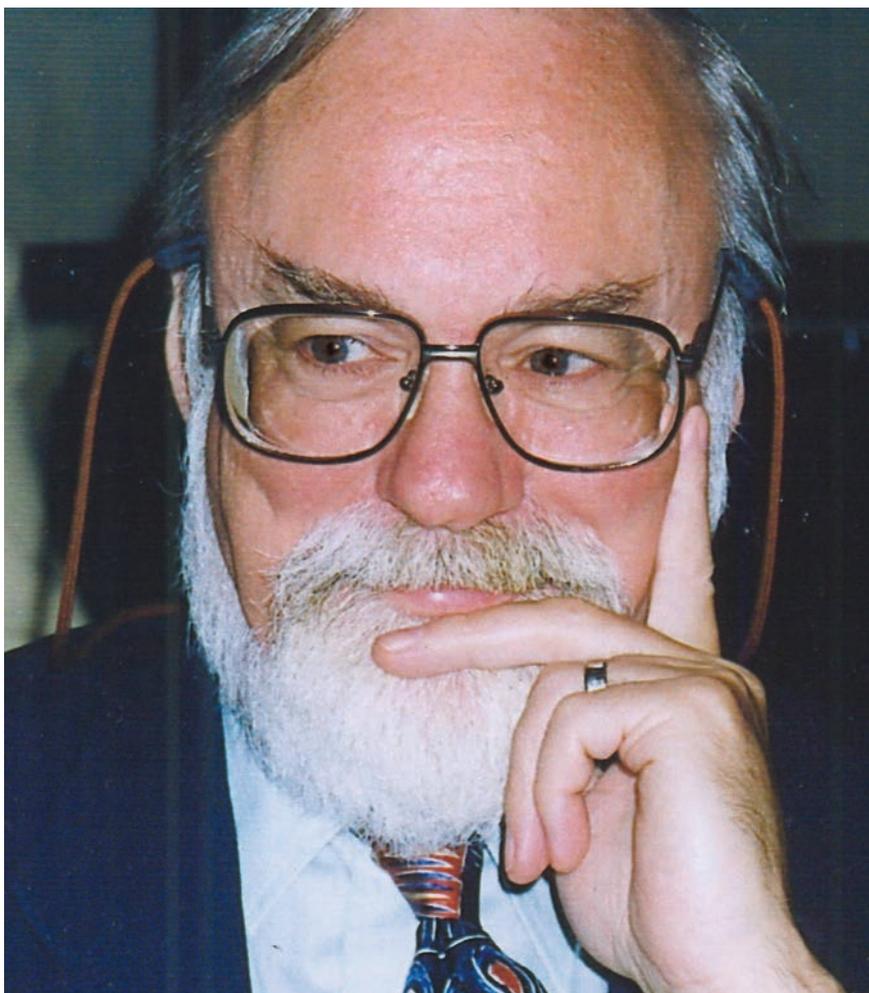
*The multifaceted career of John McCabe, who died on 13 February this year, has been reflected in obituaries in the national press and on radio, and more comprehensively by John Turner in a recent issue of the journal of the British Music Society. Here, we focus on his particular significance as one of the foremost of the Friends of Alan Rawsthorne – a doughty champion whose loss will be greatly felt.*

John was born on 21 April 1939, the same day that Rawsthorne's *Symphonic Studies* were receiving their first performance at the ISCM festival in Warsaw – a happy omen. Like Rawsthorne's, John's childhood was marred by illness; when not quite three years old he fell into an open fire at home and was badly injured: he then could not go to school until he was eleven. During these eight years at home he got to know much of the standard musical repertoire from his parents' large collection of 78 rpm recordings. (His mother was an amateur violinist, so there was always music around.) He started composing quite naturally when he was five and a half years old, before he ever played the piano; this prompted his parents to get him a piano and lessons.<sup>1</sup>

Attracted to Rawsthorne's music from an early age, he later recalled:

When the 78s of Constant Lambert's recording of the *Symphonic Studies* were issued (1946), I saved up my pocket money to buy it, and since my piano teacher, Gordon Green (with whom I studied for many years) was one of Alan's oldest friends it was inevitable that with my interest in his music I should first meet him about 1949 or 1950. From later years, I still treasure the LP of Clifford Curzon's performance of the second piano concerto, very kindly autographed by Alan, and many occasions on which I had the privilege of playing his music in his presence and promoting the art of a composer whose music retains for me the strong attraction I felt even from the start.<sup>2</sup>

His schooling was at the Liverpool Institute, where his younger contemporaries included Paul McCartney and George Harrison. From there he went to Manchester University to read music, and then to the Royal Manchester College of Music (1960–4) for a postgraduate diploma in piano and composition, followed by a year of study in Munich.



He spent the next three years as pianist in residence at University College, Cardiff, where Alun Hoddinott (a great admirer of Rawsthorne's music) was an innovative professor of music. Hoddinott engaged composer-performers and commissioned new works from senior composers, of which Rawsthorne's Quintet for Piano and Strings was the first to be performed. The premiere was given by John and the University Ensemble of Cardiff in March 1968. The following year he wrote the sleeve notes when it was recorded by Eric Harrison and the same ensemble, together with the Cello Sonata and works by Hoddinott, on Pye GSGC 14107. John referred (as much later he would do in his full-length book on the composer) to the fact that Rawsthorne's

style had gradually evolved 'without being untrue to that strikingly individual manner with which he first came to prominence in the late 1930s ...':

The salient characteristics of his music, notably the tonal elusiveness due to constant harmonic ambiguity, have remained the same, but nonetheless there has been gradual change over the years ... And, even if one can certainly say that his style today is recognisably related to his style thirty years ago, his output can loosely be divided into three 'periods', the second and third of which are here represented by masterly examples of his chamber music.

In 1969 John recorded a recital of twentieth-century piano music (Pye GSGC 14116) ranging from Britten to Webern and including Rawsthorne's Bagatelles and his own Five Bagatelles of 1964. As artistic director of the Cardiff Festival, Hoddinott commissioned Rawsthorne's 1967 Ballade for Piano, and in 1973 the Cardiff Festival Ensemble recorded an LP of Rawsthorne's chamber and piano music (Argo ZRG 743).

When Isabel Rawsthorne died in 1992, John, by now a senior British composer, educationalist and administrator, and of course a renowned concert pianist, was the natural choice to succeed her as president of the Alan Rawsthorne Society, soon to be reformed as The Friends of Alan Rawsthorne. In his 'Foreword from the President' in *The Creel*, he outlined the main challenge ahead:

... [Rawsthorne] made an important and invaluable contribution to our repertoire, and it is up to us to see that proper recognition is accorded him. One important strand in this will be persuading sympathetic artists to perform his music, and where possible giving them the opportunity [to do so] ...<sup>3</sup>

For over twenty years he continued to do all in his power to achieve this aim. He was no mere figurehead: whenever professional commitments permitted, both he and Monica attended the annual reunions, right up to the last of the old series in 2010, where he gave a talk on Rawsthorne's chamber music. Other notable occasions were reunions at Downing College, Cambridge, in 1996 (where I met him for the second time, discovering a shared love of cricket; although from opposite sides of the Pennines, we did not hold that against each other) and 1998, during which he unveiled the Essex County Council blue plaque at Sudbury Cottage, Rawsthorne's last home. At this time he was also engaged in the huge task of writing his *Alan Rawsthorne: Portrait of a Composer* (Oxford University Press, 1999), a full-length biography and handbook to Rawsthorne's music which has become an indispensable resource for those engaged in research on the composer.

John orchestrated (for strings) the accompaniment to Rawsthorne's Suite for Recorder and Piano, following its rediscovery in 1992 in the guise of a suite for viola d'amore. When, in 1996, the Rawsthorne Trust received as a donation the orchestral parts (minus one trombone) of the *Coronation Overture*, written for the National Youth Orchestra in 1953 as part of a projected suite, John reconstructed and edited a full score – this was the edition recorded on Dutton CDLX 7203, released in 2008. Neither of these two works is in the first rank of the composer's output, but it is good to have them nonetheless, and the care which John took with them is typical of his devotion to Rawsthorne's cause.

He continued to write for *The Creel*: in addition to the article on the *Symphonic Studies* and the foreword referred to above, he also wrote 'The Fourth Romantic Piece: Is It Really the Missing Bagatelle?' (1997); 'Walton and Rawsthorne' (2002); 'The Rawsthorne Piano Concertos on Compact Disc' (2004), and the centenary guest editorial in 2005, in which he summed up the successes of his own and the Trust's efforts to bring Rawsthorne's name to prominence amid all the other centenarians which fell in that year (he himself brought a wealth of experience and professional contacts to bear in helping to secure performances, in some of which he appeared as a performer – including a memorable Rawsthorne day at Liverpool, centred around the university and the RLPO's chamber ensemble).

In this editorial he also considered what had *not* been achieved, namely a sufficient number of performances of the major orchestral works, and recordings of *Medieval Diptych* and *Carmen Vitale*. A fine recording of the former, by Jeremy Huw Williams (baritone) and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by David Lloyd-Jones, was issued later, in 2008 (Dutton CDLX 7203). As for *Carmen Vitale*, in 2010 I had the temerity to suggest that a 'symphony' might be extracted from it as a means of getting at least some of the music performed or recorded, or both. John's response was characteristically positive; he wrote to the editor of *The Sprat*,

The October *Sprat* came out well ... not least Tony Pickard's thoughtful piece about a *Carmen Vitale* symphony – an excellent idea, I thought. I immediately went and dug out my vocal score, thinking how to work it out and may be sort-of-record it from cassettes of the premiere and Donald Hunt's recordings, since when I haven't had time to get any further. A pleasant task for a free day ...'

In fact, he rarely had any spare time. His reply to one of my letters began, 'I'm sorry I'm such a bad correspondent – I had a lot to do, before getting back to a string quartet (which was rudely interrupted by a trumpet concerto) I felt I had to respond to your letter, though briefly.'

John has left permanent reminders of his admiration for Rawsthorne and

his music, including his biography (referred to above), his recording of Rawsthorne's complete piano music (Dutton CDLX 7167), and his article on the composer for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, published in 2004. Last year the British Music Society, in conjunction with Naxos, produced what will become one of the permanent reminders of John: a reissue on CD of works of his that had long been unavailable. The disc (Naxos 8.517370) is entitled 'John McCabe, Composer, Pianist, Conductor', and features his First Symphony (LPO/Snashall), John playing three of his piano works (Studies Nos. 1 and 2 and 'Fantasy on a Theme of Liszt') and conducting the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland in his *Tuning* (1985). This last role comes as a surprise to many of us who often heard John say, as he did in his *Creel* article of 1990, 'If I were a conductor, and I appear to be the only person in the musical world who has no such ambition ...' Writing in 2014, in the booklet included with the CD, John remembered: 'this was [my] first and last attempt at conducting a large orchestra in a public performance, and it is only fair to add that the orchestra had been previously very well trained by Nicholas Braithwaite.'

How typically John!

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> John McCabe, in interview with Donald Macleod, 2009 ('Composer of the Week', BBC Radio 3).
- <sup>2</sup> John McCabe, 'Rawsthorne's Finest Achievement?' *The Creel* 1/3, issue no. 3 (Autumn 1990), pp. 91–4.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Creel* 2/2, issue no. 7 (Autumn 1992), pp. 52–3.



TONY PICKARD is a frequent contributor to *The Creel* who is well versed in matters concerning Rawsthorne's life and works. He first encountered the composer's music on the BBC Third Programme in the early 1960s and joined the (then) Alan Rawsthorne Society in 1996. He is an amateur viola player, enthusiastic about the repertoire and discography of the instrument. He was a career civil servant with the Central Office of Information.

## Rawsthorne Weekend, Royal Northern College of Music Manchester, 25–26 October 2014

Andrew Mayes



The very pleasant surroundings and excellent facilities at Wadham College, Oxford, had been much enjoyed in recent years. Some fascinating talks, splendid dinners in the college, and the Sunday morning coffee concerts in the Holywell Music Room, featuring fine performances of Rawsthorne's music, all made for some very memorable reunion weekends. Sadly,

the last of these reunions was in 2010. In 2011 the planned continuation of the series became a casualty of the Trust's gradually dwindling funds.<sup>1</sup> This led to a period of 'belt tightening' during which, whilst it was possible to continue making grants, these were of necessity less frequently offered and not as generous as many made in the past. However, our prudence enabled the level of funds to build up to the point where a Rawsthorne Weekend in some form became a practical proposition.

It would be difficult to find a venue and formula to match what had previously been so much appreciated. Nevertheless, this was the task the Trustees set themselves, and after discussion at a number of Trustees' meetings, Manchester emerged as an alternative location with many positive features.

The Royal Northern College of Music in Oxford Road provides good performing spaces and first-rate catering facilities. The institution was formed in 1973 by merging the Northern School of Music with the Royal Manchester College of Music, the latter having been the establishment at which Rawsthorne began his studies, not far away down the same thoroughfare, in 1925. The College library houses the Rawsthorne archive containing many music manuscripts, letters and other documents relating to Rawsthorne's life and music, so there are tangible links and associations which also extend the appropriateness of the location for our event. The Manchester Business School, literally across the road, offers comfortable accommodation at very reasonable cost. All these factors, together with Manchester's efficient transport links, seemed to provide everything required, and we chose the last weekend in October to re-launch what we hoped would capture something of the atmosphere of the Oxford weekends, whilst perhaps beginning to establish a character of its own.

### Saturday evening

As people gathered at the college during the Saturday afternoon there was the anticipatory buzz that usually accompanies such occasions – the prospect of meeting old friends and making new acquaintances, together with the opportunity to hear live performances of Rawsthorne's music.

#### 'Alan Rawsthorne and Me'

Official proceedings began in the Carole Nash Room with a talk by Peter Dickinson entitled 'Alan Rawsthorne and Me'. Peter's own coverage of its contents is published elsewhere in this edition of *The Creel*, but a point from it that particularly interested me seems worthy of comment. Peter had been commissioned by the Trust to edit and complete Rawsthorne's arrangement of a version with piano of his 'entertainment' for speaker and orchestra, *Practical Cats*, and a substantial part of the talk covered aspects of the work involved. Having received the duly annotated score from Peter, John Turner and I undertook the task of computer setting the individual movements. In the process I used the Sibelius playback function to listen to the piano part on its own as a useful element in the checking process. What immediately struck me was just how satisfactorily and convincingly the music stood on its own without the spoken text, and it was therefore both enlightening and reassuring to hear Peter make the same assertion. It was also of interest to learn that some of the piano writing, especially in the overture, was on the fringe of practicability – there are a lot notes. Taking both issues into consideration, it was suggested that a piano duet version of the music alone be arranged – a companion piece for Rawsthorne's suite, *The Creel*. Peter Dickinson subsequently completed this, and a first performance was included in the concert to celebrate the opening of the Ida Carroll Walkway at the Royal Northern College of Music on 21 April 2015.

#### CD launch

Immediately following Peter Dickinson's talk was a CD launch by Prima Facie Records. This pioneering enterprise run by Steve Plews and Giles Easterbrook has released a wide range of contemporary music, including jazz (Plews himself is an accomplished jazz pianist). A sampler CD celebrating the Prima Facie twentieth anniversary was available. Though not featuring any of Rawsthorne's music, it contains eighteen representative tracks from their extensive catalogue and includes works by John Ireland, John McCabe, Howard Skempton, Peter Maxwell Davies and much more besides, including some jazz – an eclectic mix to suit all tastes. Individual CDs from which the music on the sampler had been taken were also available.

There was then time to settle into rooms at the Business School and freshen

up, or seek refreshment at the RNCM bar before an excellent buffet was served at 'Brodsky', the college restaurant – a very different environment from the dining hall at Wadham College, but light and spacious, providing comfortable surroundings in which to enjoy the food and conversation, of which it was good to see much in evidence – an essential ingredient to any musical celebratory event.

## Concert

The evening concert was given by The New World Ensemble: Andy Long and Katie New – violins; Katie Stables – viola and Zoë Long – cello, with Linda Merrick – clarinet; John Turner – recorder and Peter Lawson – piano. Of the college's performing areas the Carole Nash Room is the smallest. It is quite a narrow space in proportion to its length and is frequently set out, as on this occasion, with the performers at the side and with only a few wide rows of seating for the audience. This can suit chamber music well, but with the audience relatively close, balance when the full-size concert grand piano is involved can sometimes be difficult to achieve without judicious use of the short stick. Nevertheless, there were no such problems with the wonderfully rhythmic opening of **William Alwyn's** Rhapsody for Piano Quartet, with which the concert began. Completed in 1939, the work plays continuously, but is divided into three clearly defined sections, the central one being warmly lyrical, though still underpinned by hints of the opening rhythmic figuration. This eventually returns and leads to a dramatic coda.

**Rawsthorne's** Quartet for Clarinet, Violin, Viola and Cello of 1948 was aptly described by Paul Conway as one of the composer's '... most darkly intense and closely argued pieces'. This is an apt assessment: the opening duet for clarinet and viola is abruptly interrupted by a dissonant chord for the strings, the harmonic implications of which, along with a characteristic dotted-rhythm figure, underpin the material of the entire movement. Even the harmonious chord with which it closes has an ominous feel. The middle movement takes the form of an uneasy lament, and complete contrast is achieved in the finale's rather rustic dance, though overall unity is achieved by the distinctly concertante treatment of the clarinet.

A medieval masterpiece is the inspiration of **Anthony Gilbert's** String Quartet No. 3, subtitled 'Super Hoqueto "David"'. Composed in 1987, it is founded on Machaut's 'double hocket', and though perhaps there is not an obvious link between string quartet sonority and Gothic polyphony, Gilbert pictured medieval sculptures depicting a huge hurdy-gurdy or *organistrum* held across the knees of two monks, sometimes used to accompany voices. The work is in a single movement that begins in a fragmentary way with short motives exchanged – hocketed – between the instruments. The tempo is always brisk, and eventually hints of Machaut's melodic and harmonic world

gradually emerge. The textures become more rugged with what the composer describes as 'lusty first-position writing for the violins' and the piece comes exhilaratingly to a hurdy-gurdy-like grinding halt with bows on strings.

After the interval, John Turner joined the New World Ensemble in the first performance of the Quintet for Recorder and String Quartet by **Patric Standford**. John received the draft score of what would become the second and third movements of this work in July 2013, with instructions to 'alter it mercilessly where needed'. Some alteration was indeed required, and the following month a further draft score, containing the first movement, arrived. Again adjustments were required, but sadly Patric died before these could be finalised, so some minor editorial work was required to this movement. It makes use of treble, descant and soprano recorders and is very substantial and virtuosic for all five players. The Arietta is by contrast simple and melodic with canonic interplay between the instruments. There is a more intense central section, but the gentle mood of the opening returns at the close. The rondo finale is again virtuosic with a riot of birdsong, and the work ends with a surprising ecstatic flourish.

There can be few more eloquent musical homages than **John McCabe's** to Debussy in *Snowfall in Winter*, his Study No. 9 for piano. Whilst capturing the essence and atmosphere of the snowscape in Debussy's evocative prelude, *Des pas sur la neige*, McCabe's own musical language is nevertheless ever present – we tread in Debussy's footprints with McCabe holding our hand.

A particular element frequently found in **Rawsthorne's** music is sets of variations; another, not so often present but employed with equal creativity, is the chaconne. The second movement of his String Quartet No. 3 is a fine example of the latter – brooding and with an almost nocturnal quality. However, variation and subtle development are also at the heart of the entire work. The basic thematic material is given out in the arresting opening Allegro deciso and alluded to in a more flowing and lyrical Allegretto section before returning to the Allegro deciso to bring the movement to an abrupt close. In the Andante (alla ciaccona) middle movement the main theme is combined with the ground bass, and is energetically treated in the virtuosic Molto vivace finale, which nevertheless recalls moments in the chaconne. Rawsthorne himself observed that use of the same thematic material is perhaps more suited to a work in a single continuous movement than one in a number of separate movements, but noted that whether the formal concept gives rise to the material, or the other way round, is hard to decide. He concluded that the composition of the form of a piece of music was as much a creative act as, and went hand in hand with, the invention of the thematic material – a synthesis masterfully achieved in what was Rawsthorne's last string quartet.

## Archive exhibition

This was a concert of contrasted and very satisfying music, performed with considerable authority and commitment by all the musicians involved. As noted earlier, the RNCM houses the **Rawsthorne archive**, and it was therefore an opportunity for material from it to be put on display. It was of much interest to see a score of *Practical Cats* bearing the signature of Alvar Liddell, who was the narrator in the first performance with the BBC Scottish Orchestra under Ian Whyte at the Edinburgh Festival in 1954. Also on display was the score of what appeared to be an arrangement of *Practical Cats* with chamber ensemble. On investigation, this turned out not to be in Rawsthorne's hand, but in that of Brian Fairfax, the arrangement having been made for a performance in 1971, with Spike Milligan as narrator. This brought the arrangement to the attention of Peter Dickinson, who had not previously known of it.

## Sunday morning

### Concert

A very varied programme, with a prominent though not exclusively lunar theme, (and three first performances) was promised at Sunday morning's **Coffee Concert**, in which the performers were Eleanor Bron – narrator, Lesley-Jane Rogers – soprano, John Turner – recorders, Linda Merrick – clarinet, Rosie Burton – bassoon and Harvey Davies – piano.



**Rawsthorne's** *Tzu-Yeh Songs* are a very early work, first performed at the Royal Manchester College of Music in 1929 with the composer at the piano. The poems set are in a translation by Arthur Waley and exhibit that confluence of apparent inconsequentiality and subtle depth of expression frequently found in Chinese poetry. The musical language is very assured and of great beauty, but represents a path not taken; the need to express himself in what became such a characteristic style, frequently discernible after just a few bars, presumably led Rawsthorne to abandon quite such overtly lyrical writing as found here, of which there is, nevertheless, occasionally just a hint in his mature works.



A very great contrast of style is also to be heard in **William Alwyn's** Sonata for Clarinet and Piano, if comparing it with his Rhapsody for Piano Quartet performed at the previous day's concert. Both works are in a single movement and contain music of contrast, but the Sonata, composed fourteen years after the Rhapsody, displays a much more angular lyricism, even in the flowing cantilena that forms the second of two major ideas on which the entire work is based. It is a tightly organised piece that makes serious demands of both players.

Composed in 1998 for John Turner, **Gerard Schurmann's** *Moonbird* for

solo treble recorder is one of those evocative pieces that captures the recorder's ancient ornithological associations, though with a soulful and expressive voice rather than with the more frequently encountered chirpings.

The Manchester composer **Edward Isaacs** is chiefly remembered today as the founder of the Manchester Midday Concerts (celebrating their centenary in 2015). His music is now all but forgotten, but 'Moonlight' for piano (published coincidentally in 1915) is one of those 'album leaves' that delighted players and listeners alike with its simple craftsmanship, and which can still enchant us today.



It was in 1965, while staying with friends in Paris, that **Peter Dickinson** heard a bassoonist practising on the top floor of the house. Like some other French players he was obviously fond of the instrument's high register, and this inspired Dickinson to explore these stratospheric notes in his Sonatina for Solo Bassoon. This deterred the British players to whom the composer subsequently showed the work, but it was revised in 2011 for Rosie Burton who gave its first

performance at this concert. In addition to the high register, the work also exploits the instrument's lowest notes, and demonstrates in three movements with contrasting tempi both its agility and expressiveness.

**Gerard Schurmann's** response to a commission from the Rawsthorne Trust for a work in memory of the soprano Tracey Chadwell, who died in 1996, was his cycle of *Six Blake Songs* for soprano and piano. These were a reworking of some of the composer's earlier Blake settings of 1956 and, though the poems are taken from a number of sources, a common theme marking the passage of time unifies them. In poems such as 'Augury' and 'The Sick Rose' Blake expresses profound thoughts with disarming simplicity and brevity; 'To The Evening Star' is one of his non-rhyming sonnets. Schurmann has captured the intensity of Blake's texts in settings of careful musical expression.

A much earlier work by **Peter Dickinson**, his Fantasy for Clarinet and Piano dating from 1956, followed the interval. It is essentially lyrical in style, but there are dramatic confrontations too. Dickinson notes that it dates from a time when he was beginning to show his work to Lennox Berkeley, and perhaps displays signs of his influence.

The Moon featured in six poems set in the cycle *Moon Songs*, for soprano, recorder and piano by **Joseph Phibbs**. This was the first performance of the complete version: songs 5 and 6 were commissioned by The Rawsthorne Trust and are dedicated to Gerard Schurmann. The frequently melancholic poetry of the New York poet Sara Teasdale (1884–1933) is colourful in its imagery and direct in its expression. Phibbs's settings capture both these elements in elegant vocal writing and subtle use of the recorder's distinctive sonority.

A number of composers, notably Gounod and Pärt, have involved themselves with the first Prelude from Bach's '48'. **Peter Dickinson** felt that there was a blues somewhere in Bach's arpeggios and has successfully found it in *Bach in Blue*, dating from 2004. There are versions for piano solo and for violin, clarinet and piano. A new arrangement for recorder, clarinet, bassoon and piano made by the composer in 2014 received its first performance – Bach remains ever present, even though blue-notes colour Dickinson's smooth melodic lines.

The arrangement for narrator and piano by Peter Dickinson of **Rawsthorne's** *Practical Cats*, discussed earlier, had already received its first performance with Eleanor Bron during the William Alwyn Festival in Suffolk at the beginning of October. It was good to have a second performance following so closely, and from which the effectiveness and indeed intimacy of the reduced forces were entirely evident, perhaps realising the composer's intentions sketched but not completed those decades ago. T. S. Eliot's poems remain favourites, and though the colour of the orchestral version is lost, Rawsthorne's music transferred to the piano still carries all its descriptive powers. As Peter Dickinson observed, *Practical Cats* in this format could become one of Rawsthorne's most popular works.

### To sum up ...

As in the previous day's concert, the music of a wide-ranging programme received dedicated and stimulating performances, enabling it to be appreciated and enjoyed by the enthusiastic audience. From the comments of the dispersing company it had clearly been a most successful event, and the RNCM a very satisfactory venue. Despite the continued reduction in royalty income, which would probably involve each of us in paying for our own reunion dinner, it will hopefully be possible to organise a similar weekend at some time in the future – the formula appears to work well, though the inclusion of a higher proportion of Rawsthorne's music would no doubt be welcomed.

### Note

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<sup>1</sup> See Andrew Mayes, 'The Rawsthorne Trust: Providing Funding in a Tough Economic Climate', *The Creel* 7/1, issue no. 22 (2011), pp. 45–6.



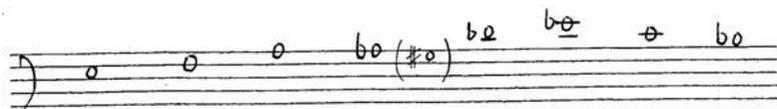
ANDREW MAYES became a trustee of the Rawsthorne Trust in 2007 and its treasurer in 2009. He edited *The Recorder Magazine* for twelve years (1993–2005), and is a vice chairman of the North West Early Music Forum and a governor of the Dolmetsch Foundation. Although remaining a keen recorder player (but now describing himself as a 'lapsed baroque oboe player'), much of Andrew's time in recent years has been devoted to research and writing on the recorder's twentieth-century repertoire. His book, *Carl Dolmetsch and the Recorder Repertoire of the 20th Century* was published by Ashgate in 2003 (a revised edition was published in paperback by Peacock Press in 2011 to coincide with Dolmetsch's centenary). He undertook further research through Birmingham Conservatoire, preparing a thesis examining Dolmetsch's performance practice in the repertoire composed for him, and was awarded a PhD by Birmingham City University in 2009.

## Serialism in Late Rawsthorne

Ian White

Alan Rawsthorne's final period of creativity coincided with the heyday of William Glock at the BBC and recognition for composers whose works reflected recent musical developments, particularly those in post-war Europe. Consequently, figures such as Berio, Boulez and younger British composers influenced by the serialist/avant-garde movement came to prominence at this time.<sup>1</sup> Rawsthorne, of course, did not belong to this category, yet he received four further commissions from the BBC in his last years. Three of these, *Medieval Diptych* (1962), the *Quintet for Piano and Wind* (1963) and the *Concerto for Two Pianos* (1968),<sup>2</sup> and also other works from this period, are influenced to some degree by serialism, yet the composer's characteristic hallmarks are present nonetheless. In fact Rawsthorne's attitude to serialism suggests a certain compatibility with his own compositional instincts: 'I find the manipulation of small melodic units or cells an interesting method of [composition] ... but I do not find that the adoption of this technique as a permanent and unique method of writing leads anywhere in particular ... the range of expressive possibilities is extremely limited.'<sup>3</sup>

Although there is no shortage of tonal ambiguity in Rawsthorne's output prior to 1962 (the final bars of the *Symphony No. 2* (1959) and the *Concerto for Ten Instruments* (1961) being but two then-recent examples), it is really *Medieval Diptych* (baritone voice and orchestra), and in particular the first panel, a setting of the medieval allegorical poem, 'Sodenly Afraid', that marks a departure and the beginning of a new phase in which serialism plays a role. Whether this is a nod towards current trends and the great and good at the BBC is neither here nor there; Rawsthorne's sensitivity to the sombre text is a far more compelling factor, devoid of archaism but perhaps recalling the ideals of *ars nova* in the expressive vocal writing and *ars antiqua* in the predominantly austere accompaniment provided by an orchestra without upper strings but including alto flute and bass clarinet. A sense of desolation, of being engulfed, even trapped, by grief is enhanced by the thin, fragmented, yet closely related textures based on small melodic cells derived from an eight-note row (Ex. 1a), as in the first eight bars of the adumbrative orchestral introduction (Ex. 1b).



Example 1a

Example 1b

Each melodic cell and harmony is assigned a specific instrumental colouring and consists only of notes belonging to the eight-note row, the source material for this setting. However, as in other late works, for instance his 1964 Cheltenham commission, the *Symphony No. 3*, and his last work, the *Elegy for Guitar*, a penchant for E as a tonal centre with semitonal inflections F and E $\flat$  is much in evidence: E, the first note of the row, is firmly established at the outset in the form of a pedal (Ex. 1b); the dark, 'Phrygian' F is prominent on solo cello (Ex. 1b); a high E $\flat$  is juxtaposed with E in the opening recitative at the start of a free retrograde and melisma on 'weeping':

Example 2

The increasingly flexible vocal writing in the refrains is complemented with serially derived melodic fragments in the accompaniment, providing unity as well as variety through textural variation and a fresh palette of tone colours:

Example 3a shows a vocal line with dynamic markings *cl.* and *fl.* and lyrics "Je nun, so she nobbed". The piano accompaniment features a serially derived melodic fragment.

Example 3a

Example 3b shows a vocal line with dynamic markings *pp espr.* and *alto fl.* and lyrics "yet she re-vived & nobbed now her son was bobbed,". The piano accompaniment features a serially derived melodic fragment.

Example 3b

Rawsthorne's fascination with small melodic cells, serially derived or not, also resulted in more subtle, integrated textures; hence a greater degree of mercuriality in rapid tempi and the emergence of the introspective quality we tend to associate with his late output. This is regardless of whether the overall influence is Bartók, as in the first movement of Rawsthorne's Quintet for Piano and Wind (1963), or Schoenberg, as in the scherzo of the same work, a Quasi moto perpetuo, where the fragmented instrumental interjections are

derived from a row announced in the piano semiquavers (Ex. 4a). In this work, written less than a year after *Medieval Diptych*, the musical language shows a greater commitment to serialism through the variety of permutations deployed (Ex. 4b):

Example 4a shows a piano semiquaver row with the tempo marking *Allegro non troppo, poco misterioso* and the time signature 4/4. The dynamic is *p sotto voce*.

Example 4a

Example 4b shows piano and horn parts. The piano part is marked *(piano)* and the horn part is marked *(horn)*. The tempo is *Allegro non troppo, poco misterioso* and the time signature is 4/4. The dynamic is *p sotto voce*.

Example 4b

Such textural variety anticipates the sense of 'life below the surface' and 'hints rather than statements'<sup>4</sup> prevalent in both the scherzo and the opening bars of Rawsthorne's Symphony No. 3 (1964), where the single most important source of thematic material and harmony in the whole work is presented in the form of a twelve-note row at the outset (Ex. 5 overleaf).

Allegro  $\text{♩} = c 126$

vc *ppp* *bns*

$P_0$  1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Example 5

The row starts on an F, perhaps foreshadowing the dark Sarabande's Phrygian colouring, and contains, in embryonic form, an E/E $\flat$  conflict not resolved until the last bars of the finale. As in *Medieval Diptych*, the themes tend to emerge from small melodic cells in the row, both in prime order ( $P_0$ ) and in various transpositions (e.g.  $P_5$  1-4,  $P_7$  1-4 and  $P_9$  9-12):

tbai/tuba *fz*

$P_5$  1 2 3 4

cl. *ob.*

$P_9$  9 10 11 12  $P_9$  9 10 11 12

Example 6

E is again the main tonal centre of gravity, counterbalancing any departure from tonality in the row and structurally underpinning the entire symphony.

However, serialism does not necessarily limit the compositional process; permutations of the row actually permit subtle developmental possibilities not normally available in tonal frameworks. For instance, the wistful first movement coda contains a built-in cadential *rallentando* which, to the ear, appears to be new and unrelated, but is in fact an inversion ( $I_{11}$ ) of the row on which the movement is based:<sup>5</sup>

$I_{11}$

fl. *pp*

Example 7

*Tankas of the Four Seasons* (1965),<sup>6</sup> Rawsthorne's setting for tenor voice and chamber ensemble (oboe, clarinet, bassoon, violin and cello) of a poem in an ancient Japanese verse-form, the *tanka*, by the Catalan poet Carles Riba, in a translation by Joan Gili, is undeniably complex. The complexity stems as much from nonconformity, or perhaps sheer originality, as it does from any presence of serialism. As the composer says in his note in the score, 'no attempt has been made to make the music sound Japanese or Catalan, still less a mixture of the two. The intention has been to integrate the voice part with the instruments so as to produce a texture which can follow the images and moods of the poem ...' Consequently, *Tankas* is as much a piece of chamber music as it is a six-and-a-half-minute cantata.

The musical language is neither tonal, notwithstanding the presence of a sustained D at the beginning and end of the work (as well as other tonal centres) nor freely atonal – for the same reason; neither is the musical language strictly serial, since there is no clearly defined row as such, though Rawsthorne incorporates elements of serial technique in his treatment of the source material, much of which unfolds in the first few bars, expanding from

a semitone above and below pitch class D to a rising and falling figure in the oboe:

Example 8

The quaver figure in the clarinet (bars 4 and 5) contains the essence of the accompaniment, with its minor third framed by an ascending and descending semitone (intervals so characteristic of this composer), followed by a diminished fifth, which seems to encapsulate the overall angularity in *Tankas*.

As in *Medieval Diptych* the elements of serialism are more apparent as permutations in the instrumental introduction and accompaniment. Ex. 9a shows the initial bassoon entry at bar 9, a combination of an inversion ( $I^{10}$ ) of bars 1 and 2 (clarinet 'x') and transposition  $P^{10}$  of bars 5 to 7 (oboe 'y'). The writing in bars 15 to 18 (Ex. 9b) illustrates just how complex Rawsthorne's musical language had become: the bassoon plays two rhythmically free versions in transposition  $P^{11}$  of bars 5 and 6 (clarinet), the last  $F\sharp$  of which serves, in terms of pitch class, as an axis of symmetry with the clarinet in bar 17. Meanwhile, another mirror image based on the melodic fragment in bars 5 to 7 (Ex. 8) in diminution is played by the oboe. In similar fashion to 'Sodenly Afraid' the vocal part emerges from the instrumental introduction with the same material in original note values, albeit slightly modified (Ex. 9c):

Example 9a

Example 9b

Example 9c

Two unrelated, yet compatible, art forms are present in *Tankas of the Four Seasons*, one a twentieth-century compositional technique, the other an ancient Japanese verse-form. Their compatibility lies in their inherent artificiality and narrow parameters, which serve as a backdrop to impassioned vocal writing. This is perhaps the most significant role of serialism in *Tankas*.

The Concerto for Two Pianos (1968) called for an altogether different compositional approach: extended solo passages, contrasts displaying the characteristics of the solo instrument, and attributes of the performers, economy of texture and so on. Here serialism is rather less present, its purpose perhaps less exalted and more practical: expanding and developing a group of quavers in the first movement (Ex. 10a), providing an angular slow movement theme consisting of irregular note values (Ex. 10b), and a gentle but distinct clarinet melody for a set of variations in the finale (Ex. 10c).

Handwritten musical notation for Piano I, marked *Allegro*. The score shows a melodic line with a circled 'C' and a Roman numeral 'I'. Below the staff, there are handwritten annotations:  $P_0$  and  $I_0$  with arrows pointing to specific notes, and  $RI_2$  (or retrograde of  $I_0$ ) and  $R_{10}$  (or retrograde of  $P_0$ ) with arrows pointing to other notes.

Handwritten musical notation for Piano I, marked *f*. The score shows a melodic line with a circled 'f' and a Roman numeral 'I'. Below the staff, there are handwritten annotations:  $P_0$  1-6 and  $P_0$  7-12 with arrows pointing to specific notes.

Example 10a

Handwritten musical notation for Violoncello, marked *Adagio ma non troppo*. The score shows a melodic line with a circled 'II' and a Roman numeral 'II'. Below the staff, there are handwritten annotations:  $pp$  and arrows pointing to specific notes.

Example 10b

Handwritten musical notation for Clarinet, marked *Allegretto con moto*. The score shows a melodic line with a circled 'III' and a Roman numeral 'III'. Below the staff, there are handwritten annotations:  $p$  piacevole and arrows pointing to specific notes.

Example 10bc

The musical language as a whole suggests pantonality, in that a number of tonalities coexist, as opposed to atonality where there is an absence of tonal centre, or indeed serialism, which is altogether more systematic.

The late Oboe Quartet (1970) combines recent influences with much earlier traits, as if in retrospect. The prominent perfect fourths in the slow

movement oboe recitatives recall the language of early works such as the Sonatina for Flute, Oboe and Piano (1936) and Four Bagatelles for Piano (1938), as do the intervals in 0134 pattern (semitone, tone, semitone), a source of harmony generally (Ex. 11a), as well as thematic material (Ex. 11b).

Handwritten musical notation for Oboe, marked *95 Allegretto*. The score shows a melodic line with a circled 'I' and a Roman numeral 'I'. Below the staff, there are handwritten annotations:  $0$   $1$   $3$   $4$  and arrows pointing to specific notes.

Example 11a

Handwritten musical notation for Oboe, marked *4*. The score shows a melodic line with a circled 'II' and a Roman numeral 'II'. Below the staff, there are handwritten annotations:  $p$  and arrows pointing to specific notes.

Example 11b

Unlike the Concerto for Two Pianos, an underlying unity is achieved with a common row for all three movements, though there is some flexibility in the presentation of the row in its various permutations. The repetition in the violin at the outset (Ex. 12a) and free retrograde in the slow movement (Ex. 12b) reflect the quartet's essentially lyrical character, while the finale's contrasted moods are captured in contrapuntal and homophonic statements of the row (Ex. 12c). As in the Symphony No. 3 (Ex. 7), some of the themes seem at first to be unrelated.

Handwritten musical notation for Oboe, marked *Andante*. The score shows a melodic line with a circled 'I' and a Roman numeral 'I'. Below the staff, there are handwritten annotations:  $p$ ,  $vl. p$ , and  $va p$  with arrows pointing to specific notes.

Example 12a

Example 12b

Example 12c

Application is not strict, however, and usually a segment of the row is interpolated as source material, for instance at bar 11 of the first movement (Allegretto), where five notes of the row are stated and pitch class E inverted to create a sequence of minor thirds (Ex. 13a); or as a structural device, for instance at bar 87, where the row is presented in a more homophonic texture serving as a built-in cadential rallentando to round off a section (Ex. 13b).

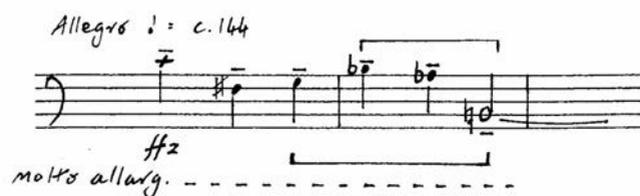
Example 13a

Example 13b

The note rows Rawsthorne tended to select included intervals prevalent in his non-serial works: the semitone and, as in the 1970 Oboe Quartet, the minor third. Thus, his highly individual voice was not compromised by combining serially derived melodies, latterly melodic fragments, with trademark bitter-sweet harmonies.

Experimenting with serialism was a logical step for Rawsthorne in his last years; he was undoubtedly seeking to expand a musical language already highly chromatic and tonally ambiguous, to the extent that much of the thematic material could have been treated serially anyway, as in the opening of the Piano Quintet (1968) and fugato from his last orchestral work, *Triptych* (1969). The following three examples share the same intervallic content and contour (indicated by brackets above the staff), yet only the 1970 Oboe Quartet can be said to be influenced to any degree by serialism, and even this is tempered by tonal centres and devices found in much earlier works. Incidentally, the origin of these examples can also be traced to a rotation of the 0134 pattern (indicated by brackets below the staff) referred to above:

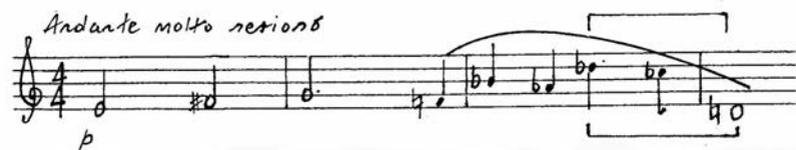
Piano Quintet (second melodic idea)



Oboe Quartet



Elegy for Guitar



Example 14

The evidence so far suggests that the deployment of note rows was, as Peter Evans writes,<sup>7</sup> essentially a rationalization of tendencies already present. At any rate, this composer was certainly not prepared to allow his creativity to be restricted by a set of rules. Much the same is true regarding form, as in the late Oboe Quartet and the unfinished Elegy for Guitar, where the structure seems to evolve from the theme itself. The Elegy again might be seen as a synthesis of old and new: the source material, an eleven-note row (Ex. 15a), begins on familiar pitch class E, introduces Phrygian colouring in bar 2, prominent perfect fourths in bars 2 and 3, and an E/E<sub>b</sub> conflict in bar 5. Rawsthorne typically focuses on segments rather than the whole row, not

for serial treatment on this occasion, but for variation in the Bach/Goldberg sense (Ex. 15b-d):



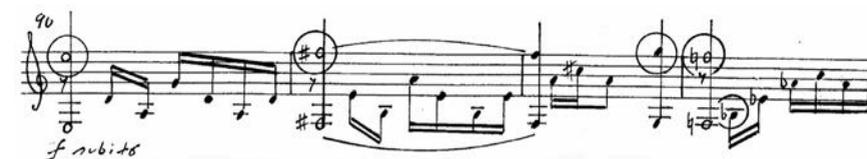
Example 15a



Example 15b



Example 15c



Example 15d

There are of course practical advantages in selecting a prominent pitch class (E) and main interval (perfect fourth) of guitar tuning, for instance in bars 90–7 (*Allegro di bravura*) where two segments of the row are combined: the E strings sound the main tonal centre followed by F#, G and F, as the G, D and A strings facilitate the execution of rapid semiquavers based on the perfect fourth sequence in bars 2 and 3 (Ex. 15d).

Serialism, or rather elements of serialism, unquestionably played an important part in a process of reinvention, engendering a new approach to the deployment and development of themes. This in turn resulted in more integrated textures and structures which seem to evolve as the music unfolds. As we have seen, there were also hints of much earlier Rawsthorne in the last works, hence perhaps a sense of yearning for the past coupled with quiet resignation. It is a curious paradox that an abstract method of composition should have proved so effective in shaping personal statements.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Birtwistle, Goehr and Maxwell Davies (The ‘Manchester School’) were among those who benefited.

<sup>2</sup> *Triptych* for Orchestra (1969) being the other commission.

<sup>3</sup> Malcolm Rayment, ‘The Composer Speaks: Alan Rawsthorne Talks to Malcolm Rayment’ (24 May 1962), *The Creel* 4/4, issue no. 16 (2002).

<sup>4</sup> The composer’s description, quoted in John McCabe’s sleeve note for the 1968 BBCSO/Del Mar recording.

<sup>5</sup> The same technique is deployed by Schoenberg pupil Roberto Gerhard (1896–1970) in his *Concerto for Orchestra*, written for the 1965 Cheltenham Festival. See pp. 71–2 of my analytical essay ‘Structure in Roberto Gerhard’s *Concerto for Orchestra*’ (pp. 49–90 of ‘Portfolio of Compositions with Supporting Materials’ PhD 1997), available from British Library EThOS, or as a free download at <http://epubs.surrey.ac.uk>. Roberto Gerhard was a member of the 1938 ISCM panel which selected Rawsthorne’s *Symphonic Studies* for performance.

<sup>6</sup> Premiered at Cheltenham on 13 July 1965, just four days after Gerhard’s *Concerto for Orchestra*.

<sup>7</sup> *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, p.885.



IAN WHITE began his musical career as an orchestral trombone player with the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Having received encouragement from Herbert Howells in the early 1970s he returned to composition in 1992 with *Spire Studies* (wind quintet) and *Renaissances* (brass sextet). The latter was performed by the London Mozart Players conducted by the composer. *Undertones (in memoriam Tony Hancock)* for tuba and string quartet won the prestigious Clements Memorial Prize in 2000 and *Island* was premiered by the Orchestra of Opera North in 2002, subsequently becoming a set work in the Leeds Conductors’ Competition. The BBC has since recorded *Island* for Radio 3’s contemporary music programme ‘Hear and Now’ and commissioned *Strata* (symphony orchestra) which was premiered by the BBC and later broadcast on BBC Radio 3. His more recent *Grey Abbey Echoes*, a Whitgift

Foundation commission for brass octet, was enthusiastically received by London audiences last year. He is currently writing *Spirals*, a string quartet. *Strata*, *Grey Abbey Echoes* and *Spirals* all reflect Irish heritage in various shapes and forms.

Other activities have included designing and leading composition workshops, lecturing, writing on subjects ranging from new editions of baroque music for trombone to number-crunching in relation to Roberto Gerhard’s *Concerto for Orchestra*, the subject of his doctoral thesis, and exploring other cultures. He is also a member of the Bar of England and Wales (Lincoln’s Inn).

## The Celluloid Plays a Tune (reprinted to mark *The Creel's* silver jubilee)

*Alan Rawsthorne,*  
*introduced by Martin Thacker*

### Introduction

Although, in terms of the written word, Rawsthorne's output was not as extensive as that of Schumann, for example, or Berlioz (both journalists as well as composers), what he did write, from his juvenilia onwards, showed that he shared their gifts of light touch, delicate irony and dry humour. As Peter Dickinson explains nearby in his caption to the reproduction of Isabel Rawsthorne's letter, the composer produced this essay in response to a request for a piece to be part of a 'weekend anthology', the chief aim of which was to provide diversion. Some of the writers in whose company he appeared possessed – and posthumously retain – a legendary ability to entertain ... but Rawsthorne was by no means eclipsed.

His survey of the craft of film music composition remains relevant after the passage of many decades. Even the title has not been rendered entirely old fashioned by modern developments – film sound is digital now, and multitrack, but some systems still involve optical reproduction from the film itself – and even when the sound is recorded on multiple CDs, synchronisation is sometimes provided via an optical track on the film.<sup>1</sup> Certainly the composer would now have less need to choose certain instruments over others because of limitations in the quality of reproduction, and he would find that 'a rich Elgarian tutti, obtained how you like' sounds better without the sometimes oppressive monaural blare that greeted the eardrums of mid twentieth-century film audiences.

Considering some of his points as they are exemplified in one of his major films, *The Captive Heart*, we note that the 'Prisoners' March' extends organically after the main titles, coming gradually to exemplify hardship, weariness and fortitude, although having begun by announcing, just as Rawsthorne describes, that 'something of moment and grandeur is about to take place'. Another important musical feature is the 'romantic piece' (one of Rawsthorne's troubled waltzes) performed by Stephen Harley on the grand piano in his London flat, to a lovesick Caroline, a tendentious Beryl and a matter-of-fact Robert. Few would deny that this symbolises romantic love; separation; distant longing. Both themes, and fragments of them, return in different guises throughout the film – they are even combined: a demonstration of Rawsthorne's statement that 'you can lend special significance to some object or happening early in the proceedings, and recall it to the mind of the onlooker later on'.





impersonating her dead husband, Rawsthorne seems to go against the spirit of his own statement 'frequently it turns out that dialogue is obscured not so much by the weight or volume of the music, as by the actual instrumentation'. The dialogue would certainly have been obscured by the thrilling orchestral allegro that the composer provides here, had it not been kept firmly in the background when the sound was mixed. His idea, evidently, was to set the painful and seemingly hopeless conversation in the context of the whole theme of 'war and the cruelty of war'. It is reminiscent of equally exciting music (also partly obscured – by the noise of battle) in the much earlier scene where Hasek finds Mitchell's body and steals his identity – both scenes prominently feature a motif (itself recalling the fugue subject in Liszt's B-minor piano sonata) which first appears towards the end of the main titles.

But, in the very last sequence of the film, although Celia and Captain Hasek now talk happily on the telephone, their voices are silenced, and even the (highly symbolic) VE-night fireworks are muted, leaving the field entirely to the music, now free of dialogue, bangs, whooshes, cathedral and village bells and other features of the victory celebrations – an excellent demonstration of the veracity of the opening (and closing) quotation in Rawsthorne's article, to which we now proceed ...

### The Celluloid Plays a Tune

'MUSIC', SAID VAN DIEREN, 'conveys ideas where words fail.'<sup>2</sup> The uses to which it can be put are many. Joshua – a naive orchestrator – used it as an offensive weapon with apparent success.<sup>3</sup> The duke of Illyria, at the opening of *Twelfth Night*, has faith in its therapeutic powers. If Oberon's testimony is to be believed, the music of his sea-maid must have created quite a stir in scientific circles.<sup>4</sup> It can be used as an aphrodisiac or as a sedative; it can rouse a man to great feats of valour, or cause him to turn off the light and get into bed. In our terms of reference, it can bolster up a rather corny piece of photography, or carry through a choreographic moment which would hardly get by in cold blood. It can bemuse us like the conjurer's patter, so that we do not see how the rabbit gets into the hat in the first place. And so the vast resources of the art of music have been enlisted by the makers of films.

It must be admitted that there is another reason for the employment of music in the cinema. The conditions of present-day urban life have induced in most men and women a profound distrust of silence. They feel that if nothing is to be heard, something is amiss, and this sensation grows stronger and stronger as more and more people experience it together. Thus many people will turn on the wireless when a vacuum cleaner or a pneumatic drill would serve the purpose equally well. I have never been in a large cinema when a long film has been exhibited without music or soundtrack; such gruelling experiments

are usually reserved for small groups and special purposes. But the result, I imagine, would be mass-hysterical demonstrations far outclassing the Gordon Riots and a concert by Frank Sinatra rolled into one. Film exhibitors therefore decided to invoke the aid of music – if not to enhance the aesthetic pleasure of the film, at any rate to enable people to sit for two and a half hours in the dark without going bats.

'The Silent Days' have now reached the respectability of an epoch, like the Stone Age and the Regency. Three kinds of cinema music, roughly speaking, arose. There were cinemas employing a small ensemble of anything from three to twenty musicians, who played what was known as 'segue'. That is to say, the musical director would receive a cue-sheet every time the programme was changed, and would go to a library to find suitable music for the sequences on the screen. He would find out from his cue-sheet what he was to try to match with his music, and would find the appropriate pieces in the library under various headings – 'Dramatic Agitato', 'Tender and Pathetic', 'Renunciation', and so on. A tap on the desk, or in certain very advanced establishments a flick from a little light, would cause his band to plunge headlong from one piece to the next. Other orchestras, not so particular, would provide themselves with a selection from *The Arcadians* or the like, and would plough mercilessly along. A lofty disregard for the exigencies of the dramatic situations on the screens characterised their performances. The third and last expedient was the cinema pianist, who would frequently improvise music to fit the picture. An almost unlimited field of fancy was open for him to explore. I can remember being taken, at the age of five or so, to see a film which had been made of the Delhi Durbar. The pianist, obviously a good Wagnerian, modelled his music on leitmotif principles. He played 'God Save the King' every time their Majesties appeared on the screen, thereby causing the whole audience to rise. Since such appearances were naturally very frequent though sometimes brief, the whole evening was spent, amidst much clatter of seats and shuffling of feet, in getting up and sitting down again, and I can remember it now as being one of the most exhausting entertainments I have ever experienced. It finished for us, I recollect, by my sister shutting herself up in the tip-up seat of the tiny cinema, and being precipitated through the back on to the lap of the gentleman sitting behind. So direct an impact of film music on the audience is rare, for film music usually makes its effect unconsciously.

The arrival of the sound-film threw thousands of such musicians out of work practically overnight, and caused widespread distress in the profession. It also meant that actors who spoke a mixture of the East Side of New York and the Alexanderplatz in a high soprano voice could no longer be very successfully cast for roles such as Ivan the Terrible or the Archangel Gabriel, though this fact was not appreciated by producers for some years. But one happy result was that the aid of music now had to be consciously and seriously sought, as a formidable weapon in this unpredictable onslaught on the public. What

1974

Tel:  
68393

3 Ferry Path  
Cambridge  
Sept 18<sup>r</sup>

I am pleased you will include a full list of works.

Dear Mr Dickinson,

I like the idea of the booklet on Alan, and I hope the publication will proceed without undue delay.

Would you be able to include a reproduction of one of Alan's manuscripts? It had a very beautiful music writing. If so Alan Frank would provide something.

I should like to have a copy of the book if you can manage it.  
Yours very sincerely  
Isabel Rawsthorne

Letter from Isabel Rawsthorne

were the powers of music in this connection, and how were they best to be employed? Music was no longer a mere alternative to silence. It must now be regarded as an essential ingredient in the recipe for a successful film.

We do not know how old music is, but it is certainly as old as speech. The idea of using music as an integral part of dramatic representations is probably as old as drama itself. We know little of Greek music, but Aristotle's *Poetics* implies that the theatre of Euripides and Aeschylus relied upon music to a considerable degree for its proper fulfilment. The liturgical dramas of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries certainly contained many passages which were sung, for some such fragments still exist, and, more important for the present subject, the medieval mystery plays used quite an amount of music which in our modern jargon might be called incidental or even background. Before the performance of such plays a ceremonial precession would take place through the town, with music played by the pipe and tabor: an almost exact precursor of the 'main titles' of our present-day film. The entrances of important personages would be heralded by brass flourishes, and actors

Note by Peter Dickinson

I wrote to Alan Rawsthorne on 21 July 1971 to tell him that the Feeney Trust had asked me to prepare a small book on their series of commissions. His *Second Symphony* was the sixth in this series and was premiered in Birmingham Town Hall on 2 September 1960 by the CBSO under Meredith Davies. As it happened Rawsthorne died on 24 July and the whole project was delayed anyway. I wrote to Isabel Rawsthorne on 12 September 1974 about the book to say that I was thinking of representing Rawsthorne with his article 'The Celluloid Plays a Tune'. This originally appeared in 1950, in an anthology called *Diversion* edited by John Sutro, an independent film producer who knew the Mitfords and moved in the same social and intellectual circles between the wars and after. Sutro's preface alleges: 'No critic will hail this book as an Important Contribution to an Understanding of Anything. It poses no problems, it traces no trends ... It sets out to be no more than a week-end entertainment, escapism for the eclectic, in short a *Diversion*.' Sutro had an all-star cast including John Betjeman, Sacheverell Sitwell, Cecil Beaton, Terence Rattigan, V. S. Pritchett, Joyce Grenfell, Robert Helpmann and more. Rawsthorne was in good company. He may have met Sutro through his connections in the film world. Isabel Rawsthorne's reply is shown here. She seems to have got the idea that the book was only about Rawsthorne, which was never the intention. Alan Frank was Rawsthorne's publisher at Oxford University Press. Twenty British Composers finally appeared in 1975.

would be accompanied from one scene to another by appropriate music. Such moments were the dissolves and other opticals of our films. As distinct from music that was 'incidental' to the drama, supplying an emotional backing, or giving point to the action, there was also 'realistic' music that was a part of the play itself. Herod's daughter would dance to the tambourine; a choir of angels would play the harp (or rather would pretend to do so, while their parts were performed by musicians in the orchestra. Judging by paintings of the Renaissance and earlier, the instrumental technique of the angels seems to have been of a low standard; frequently they do not appear to be paying attention). It is easy to see that the part to be played by music in the film of the future reposed on foundations of honourable antiquity. It remained for a reciprocal gesture to be made, on the one hand by the producers of the films themselves, and on the other by composers who must somehow construct music to fill the bill.

The approach of film producers to music was, on the whole, tentative and suspicious; it has, moreover, remained so, in many cases, down to the present day. This is strange, for the technicalities of music are far more readily accessible to the normal mind than those of the film. You can now shine a light on a piece of celluloid and thereby cause it to play a tune. This is a piece of nonsense which is as incomprehensible to the average composer as sawing a woman in half at Maskelyne and Devant's – indeed, since the average composer knows more about women than celluloid, more so.<sup>5</sup> The composer must accept the fact that the woman will finally emerge, pink tights and all, in one piece.

But will she? Of all forms of artistic creation the composer's is the most precarious. If you paint a picture or carve a statue, people can go and look at it more or less as it left your studio. (If, of course, it *has* left your studio.) If you build a house, people can not only admire its façade but go inside it, and even occasionally, by a freak of fortune, go and live in it. But if you write a symphony there are many things between you and your public. The parts may be badly copied. The orchestra may be tired, or bored, or both. The conductor may not have had time to study your score adequately, or may have little idea of how it should go anyway. The hall may be unsuitable. The acoustics may be bad. There may be an important boxing match on the same night. There is no end to the things which can go wrong.

Now there must be added to this list of woes the vagaries of the sound track, and the interminable difficulties in faithfully realising your intentions thereon. The music must be photographed; it must then be printed; it must be mixed, and finally projected, with the film, in the cinema. Another gesture must therefore be made by the composer, in recognising the incapacity of present-day recording methods to reproduce with any degree of accuracy the timbres he had in his mind when composing the music. This problem would be more easily solved if the reproducing mechanism would consistently arrive

at the same degree of distortion. Such, however, is not the case. It is therefore impossible to arrive at any definite theory of orchestral technique which can be studied and acquired. Some composers of film music, for example, aver that violins should be dispensed with, since this kind of tone cannot be faithfully reproduced. Undoubtedly they are right in this latter supposition. But if dealt with in this piecemeal fashion, the orchestra for films would be curious indeed. I have found that among the best instruments for recording are the viola and the xylophone, but if one were to confine one's activities to films for which this somewhat bizarre orchestration is suitable, one would have to turn down an embarrassingly large number of contracts. Another theory (held by article-writers rather than by musicians) is that good film music should always be written for small orchestras. This seems to arise from the naive belief that if a composer employs an orchestra of ninety players he must necessarily keep them all blowing, scraping and banging away simultaneously throughout his score. The constitution of the orchestra, and consequently its size, will naturally depend upon the effect which the composer desires to produce, coupled with the economics of the studio. Sometimes a producer will want to indicate to his public, during the main titles, that something of moment and grandeur is about to take place. A rich Elgarian tutti, obtained how you like, may be the answer. Or his film may be gay and even flippant, which one might suggest with a couple of flutes and a triangle. There is no end to the resources which can be tapped. Producers rightly attach great importance to this title-music, regarding it as a kind of overture to the film. This music, which is probably the only music your audience will hear consciously, should establish the mood of the ensuing drama, no matter whether the drama is to do with blood and passion or with the extermination of garden pests. Above all, it will establish the *quality* of the film, and will be of the highest importance.

A theory of orchestration for sound-films is thus very difficult to arrive at in the abstract. The problem is further complicated by dialogue, thunderstorms, horses' hooves and the many other aural felicities with which the enterprising producer likes to enrich his film. It is essential for the composer to have the actual *sound* of the various voices in his ear when scoring music for those sequences where dialogue occurs. Frequently it turns out that dialogue is obscured not so much by the weight or volume of the music, as by the actual instrumentation. Human voices vary almost as much as the instruments in the orchestra, and it is only by carefully listening to them that the composer can really weave them into his score. There remains the track containing what are sometimes invidiously known as 'natural sounds', as distinct, presumably, from the unnatural noises made by the actors and musicians. Unfortunately the composer rarely has an opportunity of forming any clear idea of what these sounds will be. He composes away, in his simple-minded fashion, unaware that the ruthless director has a sharp shower of rain, a couple of motor cycles and a peal of bells up his sleeve, against which the music can strive in vain. It

is therefore important for the composer to come in fairly early in the game, in order to grasp what the producer is trying to do, and assemble his forces accordingly. Sometimes he should even go and make a nuisance of himself in the cutting rooms, where the editor plies his grim trade. There is far more in the scoring of film music than a simple decision as to which instruments sound nicest when mechanically reproduced.

The uses to which incidental or background music may be put are fascinating and inexhaustible. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the quality and meaning of many sequences on the screen can be entirely reversed by the use of music and other sounds. This can be proved quite interestingly by playing different gramophone records to the same bit of film. Some years ago I volunteered to help select records for use with an amateur film, in colour, of the Coronation. Several of the shots revealed quantities of Peers emerging from various vehicles, disentangling their robes and entering the Abbey. To some solemn music on the organ this looked quite impressive. But we found somewhere a (rather rare) record of massed, tumultuous, hysterical laughter: the sort of laughter which causes you to hold your sides and cry. The effect was withering. The Peers looked like a deputation of the Father Christmases' Union entering Selfridge's.

It is essential that composer and producer both fully understand what the music is supposed to be doing at any given moment. The producer may want to heighten the emotional intensity of a certain scene. To the composer, the scene may seem to border on the sickly, and he may feel that the application of a little musical vinegar would be welcome. If such points are not fully discussed at the outset, much time will be wasted, and the baser passions of all concerned will be roused. The musical director, whose many qualities must combine the impassivity of a Zeno with the intrepidity of a lion-tamer, should be constantly consulted; it is his duty finally to realise the intentions of the composer, and his experience will be invaluable in translating the occasionally obscure observations of the director into language which is comprehensible to a musician. It is very difficult to talk about music and make sense. Similarly film directors are often surprised that anyone can be so dumb as not to grasp the precise significance of each shot of their picture.

Having decided not only where the music should come, but also what it is to do, the composer then has to ask, usually repeatedly and loudly, for some measurements of the sequences, so that he can make his music fit the picture with a stop-watch. When he comes to the recording session, of course, he will frequently find that the picture has been re-cut, and consequently that his music doesn't fit anyway. After a few films he will accept this fact with resignation. Editors are fidgety people. Whenever they see a piece of celluloid their itching fingers long to claw it to pieces. The only way to ensure that the film will remain the same while you are composing the music would be to take it home and lock it up. Or you might do the same with the editor.

The music, then, can fulfil its functions in a fascinating variety of ways. Music is a strongly evocative art, and can illustrate and support the action on the screen by methods varying from crude imitation to the subtlest kind of suggestion. It is very difficult, for instance, to make a noise like a fish. Yet Saint-Saëns in his well-known *Carnival of the Animals* somehow seems to succeed in doing so. Once, during the credit titles of a film, a composer succeeded in suggesting a certain fruit, by the judicious (or injudicious) employment of the double bassoon. The effect was such that the passage was removed. In addition to underlining the action and supporting the emotional qualities of the picture, music can be used with astonishing effect as a kind of counterpoint to what is going on. A sense of foreboding, for instance, can be imparted to an apparently ordinary series of events – as was done by William Walton in Thorold Dickinson's *Next of Kin*. You can lend special significance to some object or happening early in the proceedings, and recall it to the mind of the onlooker later on. You can carry the mood or the action of one scene through the next, or even follow two ideas at the same time. The perception and realisation of all this is the duty of the composer, and such imaginative powers are a most important part of his equipment.

The composition of film music differs in one important particular from other kinds of music. In writing symphonic music, for instance, the form that the music takes arises from the nature of the material employed. The themes will tend to develop, like characters in a play, according to what was inherent in them at the outset. A sense of metre and rhythm in its very widest meaning will ultimately decide the shape of the composition. This cannot be so with film music. The shape of the music is more or less decided in advance. You cannot delay the entrance of the hero for a minute or two because you don't want to bring in your trombones quite so soon. Until these two kinds of mental process are unified – and this is quite possible – the music will tend to be stilted and will not give the backing to the action that it should. In my view, the acquisition of this kind of technique can have a very beneficial effect on the whole output of composers – particularly the middle-aged.

The first essential for a good film composer is a talent for composing. This apparently obvious fact is frequently obscured in a welter of theories as to how he should or should not proceed. Film music must be genuine music. In this country, it is a matter of universal gratification that music is now being written for films by composers of the highest eminence. (Not least, of course, is it a matter of gratification to the bank-managers of Their Eminences themselves.) We have indeed been fortunate in having had, in the early days of British film-making, men of high and sensitive culture such as Basil Wright or Cavalcanti, who were interested and skilful in the weaving of music into the whole design. Thus we adopt the plan (obvious, but apparently unusual in the United States) of employing a composer because we think his style will be suitable for the film. If we have a film about rural life in England we would

not immediately ask Schoenberg, for example, to write the score. Though Schoenberg could doubtless turn out an amiable six-eight as well as the next man, it would be an obvious waste of his personal style to ask him to do so. ‘Music conveys ideas where words fail.’ This is the intangible contribution which music has to make to the composite art of the cinema.

## Notes

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- <sup>1</sup> <http://web.archive.org/web/20030219005830/http://history.acusd.edu/gen/recording/motionpicture3.html> (accessed 1 July 2015) gives details of the complicated developments since around 1990.
- <sup>2</sup> Bernard Van Dieren (1884–1936), composer. Born in Holland to a Dutch father and Irish mother, he lived most of his life in London. As well as many musical works, he produced a volume of essays, *Down Among the Dead Men* (1935) from which Rawsthorne’s quotation is assumed to come, though this fact has not been rigorously checked.
- <sup>3</sup> Joshua 6:15–21; using the sound of trumpets, followed by shouting, to demolish the walls of Jericho.
- <sup>4</sup> *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* Act II scene 1, 152–6: ‘... and heard a mermaid on a dolphin’s back / Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath / That the rude sea grew civil at her song / And certain stars shot madly from their spheres / To hear the sea-maid’s music.’
- <sup>5</sup> Writing in 1950, Rawsthorne refers to the magic shows of John Nevil Maskelyne (1839–1917) and David Devant (1868–1941) as if they were still to be encountered in the theatre. They may have been carried on by others; but even if not, he was old enough to have seen them for himself.

## Working with Alan Rawsthorne

Peter Dickinson

Last year I was commissioned by the Rawsthorne Trust to arrange *Practical Cats* for speaker and piano. The first performance of this version was given by Eleanor Bron and Jonathan Rutherford at the William Alwyn Festival, Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh, on 11 October 2014. The second performance was given by Eleanor Bron with Harvey Davies at the Rawsthorne Weekend at the Royal Northern College of Music on 26 October 2014. Three works of mine were given in that programme: Fantasy for Clarinet and Piano (1956); Sonatina for Solo Bassoon (1966/2011: premiere); and *Bach in Blue* (2004: premiere of a new version with recorder). On the Saturday I gave a talk and recalled a few personal connections. Rawsthorne was a student at the then Royal Manchester College of Music with my aunt, Irene Porter, soprano and pianist. She told me that he always wore very smart cravats. When he came to Birmingham in the late 1960s to give a talk in a series I had organised, I remember him saying that it wasn’t first performances that were the problem but second performances.

It now seems appropriate that I should record what I have done in arranging *Practical Cats* for speaker and piano and in creating the Suite: *Practical Cats* for piano duet from that music – perhaps a companion to *The Creel* – which was premiered on 21 April 2015 at the Royal Northern College of Music by John Wilson and Peter Lawson.

*Practical Cats* was commissioned by the Edinburgh Festival Society for a children’s concert, where it was performed by Alvar Liddell with the BBC Scottish Orchestra under Ian Whyte on 26 August 1954. It uses six poems from T. S. Eliot’s well-known collection, *Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats*, published in 1939, which became the basis for Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical *Cats* (1981). Rawsthorne’s work has been recorded by Robert Donat with the Philharmonia Orchestra under the composer (Columbia 10-inch LP 33C 1044 released in 1957, reissued on Classics for Pleasure 3 82230 2) and then by Simon Callow with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under David Lloyd-Jones (2008; Dutton Epoch CDLX 7203). Brian Fairfax made a version for chamber orchestra and gave the first performance with his Polyphonia Orchestra at the Queen Elizabeth Hall with Spike Milligan narrating on 21 May 1971, two months before Rawsthorne died. In a BBC talk, Rawsthorne’s great friend Constant Lambert said: ‘... with one or two noteworthy exceptions I know of no composer or executant worth his salt who has not been devoted to the feline world’. Unfortunately Lambert died three years before *Practical Cats* appeared.

After the premiere *The Times* reported: ‘Rawsthorne’s new work proved

to be as witty as one would expect from him ... There are touches of word-painting, amusing musical allusions, and a continuous animation which fully justifies the title ‘entertainment’. It is in fact a new essay in the manner of *Façade* and likely to prove as popular if not as protean.’<sup>1</sup>

The material in the Rawsthorne papers at the library of the Royal Northern College contains the autograph of the full score; Brian Fairfax’s chamber orchestra version; and a transcription for speaker and piano in the composer’s hand, parts of which are marked ‘piano reduction’. As piano writing some of this is impossible and there are details Rawsthorne added to the orchestral score which are not present. And No. 6, ‘Old Deuteronomy’, is missing – or lost – in his piano version, while in the score Rawsthorne left out the second verse, presumably intentionally.

The archive contains two versions of the Overture laid out for piano, one incomplete. It looks as if the complete version is the first draft and then Rawsthorne started to write the piano part out again – but he stopped at bar 64. This incomplete version has no title and no tempo mark. In neither case does Rawsthorne make any concessions to what is playable on the piano at the required speed. However, the two-minute Overture is a fine example of Rawsthorne’s orchestral style and, as John McCabe has suggested, it could stand alone for concert performances.<sup>2</sup>

Modifications that have been made in my arrangement include – octaves added to the bass line, where present in the orchestral score; some repeated chords, where needed to reflect sustained orchestral textures; and some corrections have been based on the full score. No. 7 ‘The Song of the Jellicles’ posed problems. The orchestral melody in verse 3 was missing and I have added it and used bass notes to represent percussion and maintain momentum. I have omitted as little as possible from Rawsthorne’s piano score but was able to include more in the duet version.

There are a number of quotations, or amusing references:

- III. ‘The Old Gumbie Cat’: a realistic fanfare at 157 and, at 162, McCabe sees this final snippet as the ‘three cheers’.
- IV. ‘Gus: the Theatre Cat.’ This is based on a diatonic melody which appears in full at bar 81. It sounds like a quotation (see Ex. 1), but Rawsthorne’s own note (see below) suggests that he invented it.
- V. ‘Bustopher Jones: the Cat about Town.’ There is no mistaking a brief allusion to Elgar’s ‘Land of Hope and Glory’ at bar 23. Even perhaps ‘Abide with Me’, the hymn-like passage starting at bar 10.
- VII. ‘The Song of the Jellicles’: this starts with ‘Boys and Girls Come out to Play’ before it descends in the whole-tone scale.



Example 1

I am grateful to John Turner for suggesting both these arrangements and to Anna Wright and Allison Allerton for sending me papers from the Rawsthorne Archive at the library of the Royal Northern College of Music. Also to Andrew Lamb and Tony Locarno for help in tracing the possible quotation in the central section of ‘Gus: the Theatre Cat’ – unsuccessful – and to Jonathan Rutherford for comments on the piano part in both versions.

This is the composer’s note for the original recording:

*Practical Cats* was written at the suggestion of the promoters of the Edinburgh Festival and was first performed there in 1954. It was designed for a concert for children. I chose six of Mr Eliot’s poems which seemed to me might fit together in a musical pattern – ‘Old Deuteronomy’, for instance, as a slow movement and ‘The Song of the Jellicles’ as a jig by way of finale ...

I. The composition starts with an Overture which is intended to be rather busy and gay, not because it is particularly feline, but because it contains some phrases out of which later music is developed.

II. The first two lines of poetry are unaccompanied, and the orchestra, when it enters [‘The Naming of Cats’], plays some music which is based on the main theme of the Overture. It is a slower, syncopated version. This piece is in two parts, dividing itself naturally when the poem begins to tell us of the mysterious, secret name which a cat possesses but which the cat alone knows.

III. 'The Old Gumbie Cat' is of a more prosaic nature; she is amiable, sedentary and public-spirited. There are two kinds of stanza in this poem, differing in rhythm and tempo. The music consists of a little set of variations on a very simple tune, varying with the verse in its alternating metres of twos and threes.

IV. For 'Gus: the Theatre Cat' I have written some music which is supposed to evoke a certain nostalgia, expressed by Gus, for his past glories in the theatre. It is based on a number of clichés and platitudinous phrases which, one fears, were very much a part of Gus's performances on the stage.

V. 'Bustopher Jones: the Cat about Town' is, as explained in the text, the very opposite of Gus. This is another variant of the music first heard in the Overture. It has turned from the lively nature of its first statement into something pompous and solid as befits the clubman of Pall Mall.

VI. 'Old Deuteronomy' is a kind of lullaby for this venerable animal. It begins with a gentle introduction in six-eight time; when the voice enters, the melody is turned into two-four time as an accompaniment. After the speech is ended, the six-eight version reappears in a shortened form and dies away in a sleepy fashion.

VII. For 'The Song of the Jellicles' we once more go back to the opening music, this time transformed into a jig-like metre, in a festive mood under a Jellicle moon.

Making the suite for piano duet was more complicated than the arrangement for speaker and piano since decisions had to be taken about what portions of the music would work without the speaker. There were also issues about using octave doublings above and below. Sometimes these were used to keep the two players out of each other's way; reference was also made to the full score. I can itemise what I have done:

- I. Overture – no changes, except that more notes were able to be included with two players. The piano duet version may be attractive with performances with speaker – less demanding – but this is the only part of the duet score that can be used in that way.
- II. 'The Naming of Cats' – I cut the repeated verse from bar 51 (numbers here are from the speaker and piano score), coming back at bar 74.
- III. 'The Old Gumbie Cat' – the single note D at the start was effective

on the horn; I retained it in the speaker and piano version so that it could be used for rehearsals; but removed it for the duets. I cut the repeated verse from bar 61 to bar 118.

- IV. 'Gus: the Theatre Cat' – I cut the repeated verse from bar 121 to bar 167.
- V. 'Bustopher Jones: the Cat about Town' – I tightened up the central hymn-like section from bar 10 to bar 19 and removed its repeat from bar 46 to bar 57.
- VI. 'Old Deuteronomy' – I cut the repeated verse from bar 43 to bar 59.
- VII. 'The Song of the Jellicles' – no cuts.

Finally, I hope that this very characteristic Rawsthorne piece can now be more widely available in these two formats. It could become one of his most popular works.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Times* (27 August 1954).

<sup>2</sup> John McCabe, *Alan Rawsthorne: Portrait of a Composer* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

The composer, writer and pianist PETER DICKINSON was born in Lytham St Annes, Lancashire, on 15 November 1934 and now lives in Suffolk. Tributes marking his 80th anniversary have included concerts and various articles, broadcasts and interviews. After Cambridge he spent three formative years in New York, initially at the Juilliard School. From this time onwards Dickinson's music has been regularly performed and recorded by some of the leading musicians. There are four full CDs of Dickinson's music on Albany; three on Naxos; and there are five CDs on Heritage of his music or performances.

As a pianist, Dickinson had a twenty-five-year partnership with his sister, the mezzo Meriel Dickinson – their recordings include *American Song* and *British Song*. He is also represented on CD with violinist Ralph Holmes and oboist Sarah Francis. Dickinson's literary interests are reflected in settings of poets such as W. H. Auden, E. E. Cummings, Dylan Thomas and John Heath-Stubbs, as well as Emily Dickinson, Philip Larkin, Stevie Smith and Thomas Blackburn. His three concertos – organ, piano and violin – were released on Heritage last year.

Peter Dickinson's books include studies of Lennox Berkeley (two), Billy Mayerl, Aaron Copland, John Cage, Lord Berners and Samuel Barber. For over thirty years he was a regular contributor to BBC Radio 3 and is widely read as a critic on *Gramophone*. He is an Emeritus Professor of the Universities of Keele and London and is chair of the Bernarr Rainbow Trust, for which he has edited several books on music education. Dickinson's music is published by Novello/Music Sales. Website: [www.foxborough.co.uk](http://www.foxborough.co.uk)

## The Viola Sonata

*Tony Pickard*

Alan Rawsthorne's viola sonata has been described by John McCabe as 'the work which firmly announced his arrival as a force to be reckoned with ...'<sup>1</sup> He adds that it was completed in October 1937 and revised in January 1954. It is good to have such authoritative confirmation, as some reference books give 1935 as the date of composition. The earliest reference to a first performance that I have found is a BBC Invitation Concert on 19 March 1937,<sup>2</sup> and the latest is 1938 at the Wigmore Hall.<sup>3</sup>

The first performance was, almost certainly, that of 19 November 1937 at a BBC Contemporary Concert given in the concert hall of Broadcasting House. The programme included Hindemith's cantata *Die Serenaden* and Berg's String Quartet. The new works were Britten's *Five Auden Songs* sung by Sophie Wyss with Britten at the piano and Rawsthorne's Viola Sonata played by Frederick Riddle and Adolph Hallis. Transmitting on the National Programme, the BBC made no concessions to its live or radio audience; the concert started at 9.50 p.m. and ended at 11.00 p.m. However, it was followed, in the wonderfully eclectic manner of the BBC schedules of those days, by dance music from the Dorchester Hotel.

On 22 November *The Times* reported:

A sonata for viola and piano was finely played ... [and] confirmed the impression that its composer Alan Rawsthorne has something to say and can say it without beating about the bush. The first movement is pungent, the second witty, the third thoughtful and the finale brisk, and it is all at once thoughtful and effective.<sup>4</sup>

In December the monthlies delivered their judgement. *The Musical Times* reported:

Alan Rawsthorne's sonata for viola and piano, brilliantly played ... had all the appurtenances of a good work but not a single compelling idea to support its well-contrived framework. The only ghost of a theme which the present writer recalls occurred in the slow movement and bore some resemblance to a recent popular ditty entitled 'The Music Goes Round and Around'. Without wishing to be malicious, we suggest that this is exactly what this work (and so many others of its kind) does do. Its music goes round and around harmlessly and sometimes quite skilfully. But one is entitled to query whether it should ever have started out on its circular itinerary.<sup>5</sup>

The pseudonymous author, 'F' had barely a good word to say about any of the music in this programme. His patronising review, in its totality, has the odour of midnight oil having been burned in the sharpening of his barbs.

Reid Stewart in his 'Radio Notes' for *The Strad* wrote:

... and a viola sonata by Alan Ransthorne (sic). The latter is an interesting specimen of contemporary music making; brittle, shrill, smart and metallic, the musical equivalent of the chrome-plated furniture: glossy, hygienic, but thoroughly comfortless. There is only one word for such music: 'clinical'. It disinfects the romantic spirit and is about as inviting and cheerful as a dentist's consulting room. Still the composer is young and obviously possesses tremendous technical fecundity. When he discards his 'contemporary awareness' and writes music evoked by 'emotion recollected in tranquillity' he will doubtless add something worthwhile to the musical literature of our epoch.<sup>6</sup>

Almost a year later, Constant Lambert, who was of course familiar with Rawsthorne's music, delivered a more considered judgement in the *Monthly Musical Record*:

The Sonatina (1936), though charming, is a small-scale work and not to be compared, for musical and emotional interest, with the Sonata for Viola and Piano (1937) which in my opinion is his most important work so far. The introduction has a fine rhapsodical sweep, the succeeding allegro and scherzo have a thoroughly convincing intellectual energy (as opposed to the merely athletic energy of so much contemporary music), which is well contrasted with the sombre imagination of the slow movement. Where the work disappoints, to my mind, is the final rondo, which is pleasing and well made but lacking in the intellectual fire of the rest of the work. It seems rather too easy a get-away from the problems posed earlier on.<sup>7</sup>

Lambert presumably rated this sonata more highly than the Theme and Variations for Two Violins which was premiered two months after the sonata, in January 1938, and brought Rawsthorne's name to international attention.

Frederick Riddle (1912–95) went on to make the first recording of the Walton Viola Concerto with the composer conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. In a radio programme he told how at Lionel Tertis's insistence he learned the concerto, having purchased the music on the morning of a visit to Tertis, and made the recording within the month.<sup>8</sup> That recording is regarded by many as the finest performance ever committed to disc. The dates are significant: the Rawsthorne was premiered on 19 November and the

Walton recorded on 6 December – an early example of Riddle’s famed ability to learn a new work quickly and then give an outstanding performance of it. Riddle was successively principal viola of the London Symphony Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and taught at the Royal College of Music. After the war he premiered many new works. Of some of them he said ‘a lot of bloody work for only one performance’.<sup>9</sup>

The score of the sonata disappeared after the first performance. Sebastian Forbes has recounted the story as told to him by his father, the violist Watson Forbes:

After the first performance a London critic immediately borrowed the piano score in order to write an appreciation for the *Musical Times*. Meanwhile, war was declared; the critic put the score away in a drawer pending better times and forgot all about it. When he died his widow sold all his books and music – including the score of the Viola Sonata – to a second-hand dealer in Hampstead – where I discovered it.<sup>10</sup>

Possibly that critic was the ‘F’ who wrote the *Musical Times* review quoted above. The viola part was lost along with many Rawsthorne manuscripts during an air raid on Bristol in 1940. Sebastian Forbes continues:

The printed copy of the viola part includes a note which contains the sentence ‘The composer has taken the opportunity of thoroughly revising the Sonata before publication’, but my father’s account of his discussions with the composer reveals a different story. Rawsthorne, it would seem, was not too eager to tamper with a work which was almost twenty years old, and was content merely to take my father’s suggestion that the finale was a little too long. Comparison of the two versions shows that the published finale is thirty-six bars shorter (these bars originally coming just before letter ‘N’) and consequently maintains its mood more consistently.

In his examination of the manuscript, Timothy Mottershead concludes: ‘All in all, the revisions were minor, which is important to know when assessing the work. It reveals that the rather astringent harmony all dates from the 1930s. The work is thus set in the context of Rawsthorne probing the possible direction his music might take, but as we know did not.’<sup>11</sup> A review of the published score opined: ‘Undoubtedly a fine work, even if the composer shows undue anxiety to avoid the commonplace.’<sup>12</sup>

Watson Forbes taught the viola at the Royal Academy of Music and introduced his students to a wide variety of music, including this sonata. John White studied it with him and first performed it at a concert in 1961. White

became in his turn a viola professor at the Academy and later recalled:

Over the years many of my own students have played the sonata and it was featured in three special tributes I arranged for Watson’s seventy-fifth, eightieth and eighty-fifth birthdays. He was delighted when I told him that a former student of mine, Martin Outram, was to make the first recording of the work with Julian Rolton (Naxos 8.554352).<sup>13</sup>

Martin Outram now teaches viola at the Academy, so continuing a direct line back to the time of Rawsthorne himself. He tells me that his students are enthusiastic about the sonata, so continuing its performance to another generation.<sup>14</sup>



Watson Forbes, John White, Martin Outram

A second recording was released in 2012 as part of a two-disc collection of British viola sonatas played by Louise Williams and David Owen Norris (EMRCD007–008). The past five years have seen renewed interest in British viola music both by young players and established ones. Many neglected works have been recorded, thanks mainly to Dutton and Naxos – some twelve CDs, by my reckoning. We can look forward to the Rawsthorne viola sonata featuring as often on disc as the violin and cello sonatas, each of which has half a dozen recordings.

- <sup>1</sup> John McCabe, *Alan Rawsthorne: Portrait of a Composer* (Oxford University Press, 1999).
- <sup>2</sup> Alan Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, 3 vols. (Bravura Press, 1984), vol. I, p. 21.
- <sup>3</sup> Note on the published viola part for the sonata (Oxford University Press, 1955). Correspondence with Dr Simon Wright reveals that there is now no record in the OUP files of the performance in question, so that the date cannot be verified.
- <sup>4</sup> 'Weekend Concerts', *The Times*, 22 November 1937.
- <sup>5</sup> *Musical Times* (December 1937), pp. 1067–8. 'F's perception seems to have been a little selective. It may very possibly be true that 'The Music Goes Round and Around', if played very slowly and sadly (which it rarely, if ever, has been) would bear some resemblance to Rawsthorne's slow movement. The metre, at least, does not rule out an accidental similarity. Nevertheless, the title of the popular song was suspiciously convenient for the point that 'F' wanted to make. How did he miss all the strong and individual themes from the two earlier movements – including the much more noticeable resemblance to 'Down at the Old Bull and Bush' at various points in the scherzo? – ed.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Strad* (December 1937), p. 376.
- <sup>7</sup> *Monthly Musical Record* (September 1938), pp. 196–9.
- <sup>8</sup> 'Comparing Notes with Richard Baker', BBC Radio 4 (5 January 1990).
- <sup>9</sup> John White, ed., *An Anthology of British Viola Players* (Comus Edition, 1997), p. 184.
- <sup>10</sup> Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, vol. III, pp. 18–21.
- <sup>11</sup> *The Creel* 1/1, issue no. 1 (Autumn 1989), p. 14.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Score* (December 1955), p. 155.
- <sup>13</sup> *The Sprat* (October 2010), p. 6.
- <sup>14</sup> Martin Outram in conversation with the author, 2013.

## New Music and Recordings

*Andrew Mayes*

### Music

#### ***Practical Cats* – Suite after T. S. Eliot for piano duet, arranged by Peter Dickinson**

As noted in the report of the Rawsthorne Weekend included elsewhere in this edition of *The Creel*, the first performance of Peter Dickinson's arrangement for piano duet of Rawsthorne's music for his entertainment *Practical Cats* received its premiere in a concert given at the RNCM on 21 April 2015 to celebrate the opening of the Ida Carroll walkway. A sparkling performance by Peter Lawson and John Wilson demonstrated convincingly that the music can indeed stand on its own very effectively. Nevertheless, one cannot help at times but recall the words of T. S. Eliot's poems, so subtly are they integrated with the music in Rawsthorne's original creation. That said, as a substantial companion piece to Rawsthorne's very concise four-movement suite *The Creel*, it would work very well. The two works are linked by Rawsthorne's well-known love of cats and fascination with fish.

Peter Dickinson's piano duet arrangement has sensibly omitted some music where it is repeated in the original for individual verses of the poems. As Dickinson commented in his programme note for performances of his arrangement with narrator and piano, some of Rawsthorne's piano writing in his 'piano reduction' is simply impossible. In making the 'narrator and piano' arrangement Dickinson has ensured everything is playable. But the sonority of this new arrangement for four hands on one piano makes one consider, though at the risk of creating an embarrassment of riches, that a version for narrator and piano duet would be especially effective. Only slight adjustments to add back the omitted repeated music would be required.

### CDs

#### ***Diabelleries* – world premiere recording**

A recent grant by the Rawsthorne Trust assisted the funding of a CD recorded by the Cologne Chamber Soloists which includes the world premiere recording of *Diabelleries*. This work is a set of variations on 'Where's My Little Basket Gone', a tune attributed to the amateur composer Alfred Scott-Gatty. It is scored for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, horn, trumpet, percussion and strings and, at the instigation of Ralph Vaughan Williams, was a present for Anne Macnaghten. The nine variations were composed by Vaughan Williams, Howard Ferguson, Alan Bush, Alan Rawsthorne, Elisabeth Lutyens, Elizabeth Maconchy, Gerald Finzi, Grace Williams and Gordon Jacob. The CD liner note describes the work as 'an enchanting snapshot of British music in the middle of the twentieth century', which it certainly is. The first performance

was given by the Macnaghten New Music Group in May 1955, conducted by Iris Lemare. All the variations are short – around two minutes or less, but the compositional styles of the individual contributors are very evident, particularly Rawsthorne's. Hardly a couple of bars have passed before his very characteristic harmonic fingerprints are detected.

The CD is essentially of Finzi's chamber music, including arrangements with string quartet, by Christian Alexander, of the Five Bagatelles for Clarinet and Piano and the *Romance*, originally for string orchestra. The inclusion of *Diabelleries* is an imaginative and enterprising piece of programming, much to be applauded. The playing and recording are excellent, and the CD is released by Dabringhaus and Grimm with the number **MDG 903 1894-6**.

### **New CDs from Prima Facie Records**

These two discs present a widely varied selection of repertoire for recorder and string quartet from the beginning of the twenty-first century. Four of the composers were present at and/or had works performed at, the 2014 Rawsthorne Weekend at Manchester. All the music on the first disc has a nostalgic quality, often a fond recollection, filtered through modern sensibilities, of music of a past era – renaissance dance music, medieval song, the baroque, the golden age of Hollywood, and English folk music. Other works on this disc refer to close friendships and memories of favourite places – country walks and busy towns and cities.

In contrast, the more substantial works on the second disc (that by Patric Standford received its premiere performance at the Saturday evening concert of the Rawsthorne Weekend) show that composers can write for the instrument in a more serious context, despite its well-known limitations of dynamic inflexibility and limited range, successfully exploiting those characteristics to produce music of depth and emotion. Other works on this disc are individual responses to the nature of the instrument, ranging from the quirkiness of modern jazz and minimalism to a well-known folk tune transmuted into a heartfelt small tone poem, and the playfulness and circus humour of deft changes of different sizes of recorder.

### **Contents:**

*The Nostalgic Recorder*: Methuselah Dances (Antony Hopkins), Fantasia on Dowland's 'Flow my Tears' (Peter Hope), 'Anima' (Alan Brown), 'Elegy' (Owen Swindale), 'Fred's Blue Ginger Staircase Music' (David Ellis), 'Dance-a-Triple Round' (Anthony Gilbert), 'Meditation on a Norfolk Ballad' (John McCabe), 'Capriccio' (Philip Wood), 'River Dances' (Martin Ellerby), 'From Castle Hill' (Andrew Cusworth), 'City Square' (Geoffrey Poole).

*The Proud Recorder*: Quintets by Karel Janovicky, David Beck and Patric Standford, Variations (Robert Crawford), 'Magellan in Moscow' (Stephen Plews), 'Phantasy' (Mervyn Burch), 'Lullaby' (David Beck), 'Song of the Small White Orchid' (Peter Lawson).

## **A Permanent Remembrance of Alan Rawsthorne at the RNCM**

The recently completed substantial refurbishment of the concert hall at the Royal Northern College of Music naturally involved the seating. This included some seats additionally located in newly constructed balcony areas very impressively incorporated into the existing space without compromising its overall 'feel' and character. All the new seats have a discreet, satin finished plate let into the arm at one side, and the RNCM is encouraging donations to have dedications engraved on these as a gift or a memorial.

At the Rawsthorne Weekend held at the end of October last year, the RNCM very kindly provided free use of the Carole Nash room for our event. It therefore seemed appropriate to acknowledge this gesture by making a donation for a seat in the concert hall to be inscribed in Alan Rawsthorne's memory. This has been duly carried out, and the dedicatory plate on seat J14 (in the rear tier of main seating to the left of centre when facing the performance area) now bears the simple inscription 'In memory of Alan Rawsthorne'.

Rawsthorne studied at the Royal Manchester College of Music, which, following its later amalgamation with the Northern School of Music, became the present Royal Northern College of Music. For this reason, the dedication of the seat to his memory is especially appropriate; so is the fact that his birthplace, the Lancashire town of Haslingden, is only some fifteen miles north of Manchester city centre.

## THE WILLIAM ALWYN FESTIVAL 2015



WEDNESDAY 7TH – SATURDAY 10TH OCTOBER

BLYTHBURGH - SOUTHWOLD – ORFORD

### ARTISTS INCLUDE:

RETORICA (VIOLIN DUO) – SARAH-JANE BRADLEY  
(VIOLA) – GRAHAM WALKER (CELLO) – JOHN TURNER  
(RECORDER) – NATHAN WILLIAMSON (PIANO) – JAMES  
GILCHRIST (TENOR) – ANNA TILBROOK (PIANO) –  
CLARE HAMMOND (PIANO) – JOHN LENEHAN (PIANO)  
– CAVALERI STRING QUARTET – PROMETHEUS  
ORCHESTRA DIRECTED BY EDMOND FIVET, CBE.

The William Alwyn festival, now in its fifth year, returns once again to rural Suffolk with a diverse programme of music from the standard repertoire to works by contemporary composers. Alwyn will be represented by instrumental, chamber, vocal and orchestral works which highlight the wide diversity of his craft. Also, given that Alwyn was a highly respected film composer of some two hundred scores there will be a screening of one of his classic films.

For further details please contact Festival Director, Elis Pehkonen.

Tel: 01728-830531

E-mail: [elis.pehkonen@mypostoffice.co.uk](mailto:elis.pehkonen@mypostoffice.co.uk)

Or visit [www.williamalwyn.co.uk](http://www.williamalwyn.co.uk)

