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EDITORIAL

Nicholas Clark

The first issue of *Brio* for 2023 provides a range of articles that focus on change and diversity. The second of these themes came to mind as a suitable topic on which to focus during the 2021 VASE (Virtual Annual Study Event). It has taken some time to act on this, but I shall include articles on that theme both here and in our Autumn/ Winter issue.

First, though, we have change. Meg Fisher has drawn upon work completed in her Bryant Prize-wining dissertation for the first of a two-part study on the subjects of cataloguing and training: the opportunities, challenges and setbacks that Library professionals specialising in Music have encountered recently. Not surprisingly, the pandemic played a part in some of those setbacks, but it also opened avenues in terms of time available for study and reviewing prospects for improving career options. This research makes an interesting companion piece to Michael Bonshor's review of training and user experiences that we published in 2021.

Carissa Chew's research focusses on the work that lies ahead of librarians in terms of presenting historical records for items whose language has rightly been identified as discriminatory and offensive. This is part of an ongoing project that examines material which highlights the dangers of prejudice. It will ensure that while readers have access to it, the wrongful use of past terminology will be emphasised. This summary of some of Carissa's work shows us the role music librarians can play in addressing a vital subject.

Our work in libraries and archives is of course geared toward the dissemination of knowledge or facilitating access to resources from various periods. Whatever branch of the information profession we work in, we have all witnessed the differing interpretations our users have placed on the materials we retrieve for them. My colleague Christopher Hilton has written a report on his experience of hosting school students with special needs at The Red House in Aldeburgh. The response following their visit (which was undertaken pre-pandemic) invites us to see how material in all our collections can enlighten, educate and enrich the imaginations of our visitors.

This is followed by an essay on how composers and librettists have portrayed the heroine who is placed in vulnerable or compromising situations within the plots of three modern operas. The origin of this brief study lay in

a survey which aligned voice types with the characterisation and fate of certain roles in opera of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries where the heroine is mistreated or victimised. But what is the later situation? Have things remained the same? Have they changed, and if so, what means have composers and librettists used to effect change? The work of Elizabeth Maconchy, Richard Rodney Bennett and Thea Musgrave may well tell us.

Also in this issue, a tribute to IAML (UK & Ireland) colleague Jane Harington, who passed away last year. Jane enjoyed a long and distinguished career as Librarian at the Royal Academy of Music. Testimony to her commitment to the profession can be seen in the comments of colleagues she inspired. I am grateful to Rosalind Cyphus, Celia Bangham, Bridget Palmer, Liz Hart and friends she knew and worked with for their thoughtful recollection.

Our reviews section contains assessments of books and an exhibition. Jonathan Frank reports on 'Music for the King', an insight into the Concert of Antient Music which is on at the Foundling Museum until October. This fascinating view into the world of the working musician of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries complements Colin Coleman's article in our previous issue of *Brio*.

The anniversary of Ralph Vaughan Williams's birth, celebrated in the pages of Brio in 2022 has resulted in welcome new publications and we have overviews of two of them here. Katharine Hogg looks at Eric Saylor's biography of the composer released in the Master Musicians series, while Richard Turbet investigates Caroline Davison's recent study on RVW's lifelong passion for the folk song. Robert Weedon looks at the extensive correspondence between the violinist and composer Lucien Durosoir and his mother Louise. It is by all accounts a detailed portrait of lives blighted by the horrors of the First World War.

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CURRENT ISSUES IN SHEET MUSIC CATALOGUING, PART 1: PROBLEMS WITH STAFF AND SYSTEMS

Meg Fisher

Cataloguers and cataloguing

Cataloguers play a vital role in ensuring that library users find the items they require. The intricacies of sheet music – the music itself, its wide variety of formats and the multitude of potential arrangements – present further difficulties to cataloguers, and require specialist skills and knowledge. However, there is little formal training available for those involved in music cataloguing. Additionally, traditional cataloguing systems and policies are not designed for the particular requirements of sheet music, and this can present problems for music cataloguers. This article explores some challenges currently faced by music cataloguers, with particular regard to their training and the systems they work with. Do music cataloguers feel they have enough support and training to do their work? What skills do they require, and how can these be taught? Do systems need to be adapted to suit sheet music and, if so, how?

The aim of this article is to explore the skills involved in music cataloguing, how they are learnt, and how music cataloguers' work is affected by the systems they use. The objectives are to identify the skills that music cataloguers use in their day-to-day work; to explore training availability and how this can be improved; to test the effectiveness of catalogues at retrieving pieces of sheet music and identify problems with retrieval; to explore perceptions of music cataloguers about the effectiveness of systems they use, and what they feel systems should be capable of; to investigate potential ways that systems for sheet music cataloguing can be improved; and to understand the impact of coronavirus on sheet music cataloguing.

The topic of music cataloguing is surprisingly broad. There is a strong sense that the current tools for cataloguing, such as MARC, are outdated or inadequate for music materials (Holden, Knop and Newcomer, 2019; Parkinson, 2020; Tennant, 2002). There has also been discussion about the potential for Linked Data to revolutionise cataloguing for recorded music, notably its ability to make connections between the multitude of people involved in a recording, such as the composer, lyricists, artists and arrangers (Parkinson, 2020). Music enquiries vary widely and may stem from a few vague pieces

of information about a work – which artist performed it, the note it starts on, the emotions expressed – which makes sheet music retrieval often frustrating for musicians (Szeto, 2017). Linked Data would allow these different scraps of information to be used together, but only if cataloguers are aware of the myriad complexities of musical items. Music cataloguing requires a different set of skills and competencies to print cataloguing, and additional training is required for staff (Bratcher and Wood, 1993; Clark, 2013; Kranz, 1990; Redfern, 1978; Redfern, 1979; Urbanik, 2003).

Music as 'different'

There is a recurring theme in the literature that music is essentially different from other mediums and that its cataloguing needs are more complex than those of print cataloguing, requiring a different set of skills and competencies (Bratcher and Wood, 1993; Redfern, 1978; Smiraglia, 2017; Urbanik, 2003). Smiraglia (2017, xiii) takes a philosophical approach to the issue, claiming that the main difference between music and books is that sheet music is only ever a representation, because music exists temporally as sound rather than statically on a page. This is echoed by Holden, Knop and Newcomer (2019, p. 600), who observe that music exists "as an idea or concept, apart from any physical token".

Downie (2005, p. 295), discussing Music Information Retrieval (MIR), takes a practical view of the situation, attributing the problems faced by cataloguers and designers of MIR systems partly to the complexities of notation. This is supported by a later study (Schedl, Gómez and Urbano, 2014, p. 210), which concluded that the multifaceted nature of music creates difficulties in both cataloguing and retrieval since it is "inherently more complicated than text". Users may recognise music by textual data – title, composer or publisher of a work – or musical data – instrumentation, key signature or even emotion expressed by a piece – and enquiries are often directed at staff when the catalogue fails to deliver (Orio, 2006; Szeto, 2017; Inskip, Butterworth, MacFarlane, 2008).

Vellucci (2001, p. 542) noted that the prevalent use of generic titles (such as Symphony or Sonata) and the potential number of formats and different arrangements for a single work makes consistency in catalogue records and the use of authority control such as uniform titles "particularly essential". Other authors have also emphasised the importance of uniform titles in identifying and uniting various manifestations of a single work, identifying this as an issue which is much more prevalent for musical items than for print books (Smiraglia, 1989; Gentili-Tedeschi and Riva, 2004).

Inadequacy of MARC

Knop and Newcomer's (2019) discussion of the history of music cataloguing is particularly useful for contextualising issues with music cataloguing and retrieval and demonstrating that the needs of music has long been neglected in favour of text items. In their article, they noted the difficulties that cataloguers of non-text items – such as sheet music, maps, and audio-visual materials – face in "trying to squeeze the data they need into MARC" (Holden, Knop and Newcomer, 2019, p. 592). They suggest that traditional cataloguing systems do not account for the special nature of sheet music and that there is a definite "book bias" built into MARC (Holden, Knop and Newcomer, 2019, p. 592). In other words, systems which are ill-designed for the particular needs of sheet music can impede the work of even experienced and skilled cataloguers. This finding is supported by Napier (1995, p. 104), whose research into current music cataloguing practices revealed that "the music library world was nowhere near as unified and homogenous as the rest of librarianship". Napier's study also uncovered a widespread practice of libraries creating their own localised systems for cataloguing and classifying music as a result of inadequacies within traditional cataloguing systems. It is possible that these local adaptations have an effect on the reliability of retrieval across different catalogues – particularly within the context of union catalogues or WorldCat – but little research seems to have been done in this area.

In the wider cataloguing community, MARC is felt to be an outdated way of organising data, particularly considering the dramatic changes to technology since its creation in the 1960s (Tennant, 2002, p. 26). MARC was originally designed to be an electronic version of card records, and since space on early computers was at a premium, it was necessary for these records to be brief. This mindset is perhaps reflected in Redfern's (1984, p. 5) article 'Dinosaurs to crush flies…', in which he asserted that the only details required in a bibliographic record are "author's name, title, edition, possibly publisher, and class mark". Redfern claims that this is because readers rarely use catalogues and that catalogues should function as tools for finding items on shelves rather than be surrogates for the items themselves.

The findings of a more recent study (Lai and Chan, 2010) appear to contradict Redfern, as it found a correlation between ease of finding materials and user satisfaction within a University's music department, which they attributed to better cataloguing practice and an increased awareness of the library catalogue amongst their users.

Their results suggest that people *will* make use of the catalogue if it can help them to identify the materials they need; by improving the accuracy, reliability and user-friendliness of catalogues, we can increase their use. This conclusion is also supported by a study by Madarash-Hill and Hill (2005, p. 19), which found that there was an increased level of use for books with

"enhanced catalogue records", containing information such as contents, front covers and sample text. However, Haigh (2005) has asserted that the sample used in Madarash-Hill and Hill's study was too small for this conclusion to be definite. Nonetheless, the influence of websites such as Amazon means that it is reasonable to assume that modern users would be more satisfied with and likely to use a catalogue with greater detail than Redfern suggested as an ideal 36 years ago.

In her *Introduction to Cataloguing* seminar, Parkinson (2020) outlined the history of MARC before concluding that "MARC is pretty old, it's really time for something new". This is a view which has been expressed for quite some time, notably in Tennant's (2002) controversial article 'MARC must die', in which he appears to endorse the use of relator terms, which are an important part of Resource Description and Access (RDA).

Alternatives to MARC: Linked Data

As an alternative to MARC, various authors have explored the potential of Linked Data, such as in BIBFRAME (Lorimer, 2018; Parkinson, 2020). In a lecture about a Performed Music extension to BIBFRAME, Lorimer (2018) described linked data as having "great potential to improve the way music . . . [is] presented in our catalogues", although she considers recorded music rather than sheet. Discussing the benefits of Linked Data for musical works, Szeto (2017, p. 16) notes that MARC records only allow connections to be made within data in the record itself, whereas Linked Data allows for much wider relationships to be shown and can help with much more abstract queries than simply finding a single item. She suggests that using Linked Data for music could radically improve library catalogues, as it would allow greater interactivity between data in records, bringing to light information which is currently obscured by MARC.

For recorded music, numerous authors have proposed or designed systems which allow query-by-example or query-by-humming to retrieve music (Antonelli, Rizzi and Vescovo, 2010; Borjian, 2017; Cartwright and Pardo, 2012; Doraisamy and Rüger, 2003; Rocamora, Cancela and Pardo, 2014). Ultimately, these systems would allow for the efficient identification and retrieval of 'unknown' items (i.e., where the melody is known but not the composer or title) a situation imagined by Downie (2005, p. 252), although he acknowledges that there are "Myriad difficulties … to be overcome" before this can be reality. The closest to this for retrieving sheet music is perhaps the website Themefinder, which allows users to identify pieces of music based on the shape of the melody, as discussed by Shelley (2010). However, much of the research seems to be focused on the potential of new technology for cataloguing and retrieving recorded music, and there is a gap in the literature on sheet music.

Unfortunately, these developments have had little effect on traditional cataloguing, since "nearly all bibliographic data is encoded in MARC", which does not have the facility to incorporate non-text data, such as musical excerpts (Holden, Knop and Newcomer, p. 608). Wright (2012, x) notes that even though tools such as MARC and AACR2 are becoming "increasingly obsolete" in the face of technological advances, such as the semantic web, the cost and effort required to transfer all data to new systems is prohibitive. Furthermore, Cannam et al. (2010, p. 213) noted that there are potential barriers to using Linked Data for music, particularly the issue of copyright connected to composers, lyricists, performers and editions. Perhaps the best compromise for now is to ensure that music cataloguers are aware of the limitations of MARC, and that cataloguing practices are adapted to work within those constraints until better systems become affordable and widely available.

Music literacy as essential to music cataloguing

One of the key themes emerging from the literature on music cataloguing is a need for music cataloguers to have at least some level of musical literacy. Several authors contest that it is possible for a cataloguer without musical knowledge to create usable records for sheet music (Bratcher and Wood, 1993; McCoury, 2017; Urbanik, 2003). Others strongly urge music cataloguers to ensure that they are musically literate and have a good understanding of the subject, but disagree on what skills and knowledge this includes (Jones, 2017; MLA, 2018; Redfern, 1978; Smiraglia, 2017). The Music Library Association's list of core competencies (2018, p. 1) gives the minimum requirements for a music librarian as "Reads music and demonstrates understanding of musical instruments, music history, theory, music terminology and ethnomusicology", which suggests the need for at least an A-level in music, but it is unclear whether this applies equally to music cataloguers.

Numerous researchers specify that music cataloguers should have a music degree in order to catalogue music (Morrow, 2004, p. 29; Redfern, 1978; Redfern, 1979; Smiraglia, 2017). This is supported by Clark's (2013, p. 482) study of job specifications for entry-level music cataloguing jobs, 80% of which listed an undergraduate music degree as either essential or preferred. However, since the scope of Clark's study was limited to entry-level positions, it is not clear whether this requirement changes for more experienced cataloguers. Whilst the MLA's definition of an expert does not explicitly include a music degree, it is strongly implied by the breadth and depth of knowledge they list in their core competencies document:

> *Reads music in multiple clefs and varied musical notation practices (e.g. non-western, pre-common practice). Demonstrates*

> *broad knowledge of music history, theory, and ethnomusicology. Demonstrates familiarity with scholarly publishing in music.*
>
> *(MLA, 2018, p. 1)*

Redfern describes music literacy as an "essential prerequisite" (1978, p. 9), proposing that it is more vital for music cataloguers than for music librarians (Redfern, 1979, p. 18). Smiraglia (2017, xiii) requires more of music cataloguers, listing "Acquaintance with music, its performance, and its documentation (including its bibliography and historiography)" as instrumental to their success or failure.

Other writers place emphasis on practical skills rather than theoretical knowledge. Bratcher and Wood (1993), for example, feel that a music cataloguer must have a sound working knowledge of musical notation in order to be able to identify flat and sharp signs when transcribing the titles of works such as *Sonata in Eb major* [E flat major] and to understand terminology such as "score", "arrangement", "transcription" and so on. McCoury (Southwest Florida Library Network, 2017) takes a more relaxed approach to the problem, stating "I don't think there's really any special knowledge that's required to do music copy cataloguing, but there's some knowledge that will help you".

Musical knowledge vs cataloguing skills

In volume one of *Organising music in libraries*, Redfern (1978, p. 97) notes that there is dispute over whether cataloguing competence or music skills should be prioritised when hiring staff, and expresses a strong preference for the former, arguing that musical knowledge can be gained later. This is contradicted by several researchers (Bratcher and Wood, 1993, p. 66; Kranz, 1990, p. 91), who claim that many libraries in the USA employ musicians as cataloguers, which implies that musical knowledge is prioritised over cataloguing experience. Although neither author provides hard evidence for this assertion, it is reasonable to assume that it has been gained through their own experiences in libraries. Kranz (1990) also indicates that training given on cataloguing – such as the creation uniform titles and use of reference works to check details – can help improve musical knowledge and competence amongst music librarians. This suggests that both subject knowledge and cataloguing skills can be learnt in tandem, and that they mutually benefit one another.

Several researchers identify a connection between library budgets and the quality of cataloguing (Butterworth and Perkins, 2005; Kranz, 1990; Redfern, 1979). In volume two of *Organising music in libraries*, Redfern (1979, p. 18) deplores library services "where for 'reasons of economy' music is catalogued centrally by cataloguers who lack a knowledge of the subject", resulting in errors or incomplete records. It should be noted that this appears to be a contradiction of volume one of this work, in which he indicated that cataloguing

experience was more vital than subject knowledge. Butterworth and Perkins (2005, p. 205) identify that small specialist libraries, where funding is limited, are likely to rely on teams of volunteers, who "can be a mixed blessing". If mismanaged or insufficiently trained, voluntary labour may result in "large backlogs of erratically organised materials" (Butterworth and Perkins, p. 205). Eccentric cataloguing leads to poor metadata, which can make a library appear unprofessional, or create unnecessary extra work for future cataloguers: it is false economy (Redfern, 1979, pp. 18-19). Kranz (1990, p. 90) notes that a decrease in budgets and the number of professional cataloguers employed has meant an increased workload for remaining staff and that alternatives must be sought. As a compromise between professional cataloguers and volunteers, he proposes that music librarians should be trained in cataloguing, creating a team of 'paraprofessionals' to support 'professional' cataloguers.

The literature recommends that cataloguers make themselves familiar with a variety of reference sources such as thematic indexes, books about music cataloguing, guides to AACR2, and websites such as Library of Congress Authorities in order to double-check their work (Bratcher and Wood, 1993, p. 71; Kranz, 1990; Smiraglia, 2017; Urbanik, 2003, p. 250). Several researchers suggest that cataloguers who are new to music seek advice from colleagues with musical knowledge (Bratcher and Wood, 1993, p. 67; McCoury, 2017). McCoury recalls that she relied on musical colleagues until she gained enough confidence with materials. However, advice from musical colleagues may not always be available, particularly in smaller libraries, which is the typical setting for a single general cataloguer rather than a specialist in each subject (Bratcher and Wood, p. 66). Lack of in-house specialist knowledge may be an issue, but one intriguing solution is for expertise in music cataloguing to be shared across libraries, such as in the collaborative project between UC San Diego and UC Santa Barbara (Nyun, Peters and DeVore, 2013).

Language skills in music cataloguing

Non-musical skills are also important, notably a proficiency in other languages. Music is often described as a universal language since it does not rely on the spoken word, but in practical terms this means that cataloguers working with music are far more likely to encounter items published outside of the UK than are those who work with print items only (Bratcher and Wood, p. 67; Redfern, 1979, p. 17). They will therefore have items in which details of publication or the title of the work may be in a foreign language or have several languages throughout (Kelly, 2010, p. 163).

A study of job descriptions for music librarians working in public-services positions identified language skills as a common requirement, with 43% of job advertisements requiring this (Clark, 2013, p. 481). However, this almost

doubled for cataloguing positions, with 80% of listings requiring or preferring foreign languages (Clark, 2013, p. 482). Jones (2017, p. 31) corroborates this, recollecting that she has catalogued items "in just about every European language, and several different scripts". Whilst it would be ludicrous to demand cataloguers be fluent in all languages they may encounter, McCoury (2017) recommends that music cataloguers have a basic knowledge of German, Italian and French and be aware of how key signatures are written in other languages (knowing that H-moll is B minor in German, for example). She urges that cataloguers who either lack these skills or receive items written in more unusual languages must recognise their deficiencies and use resources such as dictionaries or Google Translate.

Issues with cataloguing guides

In their paper *Cataloguing music: the non-musician's perspective*, Bratcher and Wood (1993, p. 67) contend that the difficulties of cataloguing musical items have been exaggerated and that "the biggest problem a non-musician faces is fear". Urbanik's (2003, p. 250) article *Sheet music cataloguing for the non-specialist* echoes this sentiment, describing her initial impressions of music cataloguing as "daunting".

It is arguable that the fear described by non-musical cataloguers has been exacerbated by the cataloguing guides themselves, which rarely include clear instructions about how to deal with non-print materials, such as sheet music. Indeed, the subject of sheet music is often ignored entirely in standard guides, or only mentioned in passing. Although it is impractical to demand that general works on cataloguing should include detailed consideration of all types of materials, it is reasonable to expect that they include a list of works – such as those by Weitz (1990) and Smiraglia (2017) – to consult which do examine specific materials in greater detail. However, of the guides examined (Lazarinis, 2015; Mortimer, 2007; Welsh and Batley, 2012; Zeng and Qin, 2016) none included either specific information on sheet music or a recommended reading list. In their book *Metadata*, Zeng and Qin (2016) include substantial guidance on how FRBR applies to music recordings, but gave little attention to sheet music, although it is arguable that the principles are transferable. *Practical Cataloguing* (Welsh and Batley, 2012) includes only two mentions of music, both of which direct users to look at sections of the AACR2 and RDA rules. However, Redfern (1979, p. 12) describes AACR's glossary of musical terms for cataloguers as "very unsatisfactory", although he acknowledges that this is not helped by a lack of clarity from musicologists.

Redfern (1979, p. 14) also notes that the international nature of music publishing further complicates the issue, as some of the guides written by the International Association of Music Librarians (IAML) include contradictory definitions of terms, depending on whether they are written in English, French or German. He notes (Redfern, 1979, p. 14) that there is a need for interna-

tional agreement over these terms, in order to avoid confusion. In general, it can be said that there needs to be greater cooperation between musicologists, music library specialists, and general cataloguers on the treatment of sheet music. This need becomes more urgent as we move towards new systems, so that methods of working can be agreed upon from the beginning.

Cataloguing guides which specifically address issues with scores and sheet music, such as Smiraglia's (2017) *Describing music materials*, have been accused of assuming that the reader holds a music degree, which may intimidate non-musical cataloguers and create unnecessary barriers (Urbanik, 2003, p. 250). Urbanik (2003, p. 250) also expresses frustration at the lack of hands-on advice in the literature. However, Weitz (1990, xvii) makes the point that a cataloguer must have a thorough understanding of "the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of cataloguing" before they are capable of creating accurate records which demonstrate best practice; texts which focus on practical examples without explaining the theory behind them are inherently misleading. Before attempting to catalogue musical items, one must have a firm grounding in cataloguing principles and codes (Redfern, 1979, p. 11).

Training possibilities for music cataloguers

There is currently little formalised training in music librarianship, let alone music cataloguing, within the UK. In Ledsham's (2003) examination of music librarianship training in the UK between 1950 to 2000, he noted that the option of a music librarianship module disappeared from degree courses during the 1980s, due to pressures on library funding and a perceived need to train managers rather than subject specialists. It wasn't until 1998 that dedicated modules in music librarianship were made available again for students in the UK, at Aberystwyth University, including a cataloguing section (Fuidge and Willett, 2010, p. 38; Ledsham, p. 81).

IAML (2007, p. 4) recommends that those wishing to pursue careers in music librarianship should try to incorporate music research into their degree, whether through assignments or dissertation topic, and seek additional training outside of their university course. Ledsham (2003, p. 78) recommends IAML's short course 'Music for the Terrified' as being particularly good for introducing staff to the fundamentals of music librarianship. He is optimistic that the situation for music librarianship training is stronger than during the 1950s because the options available are now "richer, more varied, more flexible" (Ledsham, p. 82). However, much of the UK literature on training relates to music librarianship rather than cataloguing and there appears to be a lack of research about music cataloguing training within a UK setting. In a recent survey of music library staff and users, staff mentioned that there was a need for cataloguing training (Bonshor, 2020, p. 9); this is an issue which needs addressing.

Coronavirus and music cataloguing

The coronavirus situation forced everyone to make dramatic changes in their personal and professional lives. An article about libraries' response to the pandemic in the USA (Jones et al., 2020, p. 10) noted that, since access to physical items is not possible for cataloguers working from home, there has been an increase in "collection-based record enhancement", such as adding contents and subject headings to items. The closure of libraries to the public and researchers also freed up time for staff, creating an opportunity to train new staff in cataloguing (Cohen, 2020, p. 648). An Australian study (Suraweera et al., 2020) noted that libraries' response to the crisis demonstrated the adaptability of librarians, as they developed innovative ways of continuing to provide a service despite the restrictions of lockdowns and social distancing.

The pandemic provided a chance for libraries to revitalise and rethink their cataloguing practices, as well as provide staff with the necessary skills. This need to adapt presented an opportunity for the information community to rethink how information is presented and to make our catalogues more interactive and user-friendly. It is reasonable to suggest that the increase in homeworking and intermittent lockdowns led to more people accessing library catalogues remotely rather than travelling to the library to seek information in person.

Some key issues emerge from the literature about music cataloguing: problems with the systems used for cataloguing, and problems with training for music cataloguers. Many authors have expressed their dissatisfaction with current systems for cataloguing – especially MARC – and demonstrated that newer systems and philosophies such as FRBR and Linked Data are much better suited to the needs of music materials (Cannam, Sandler et al., 2010; Downie, 2005; Holden, Knop and Newcomer, 2019; Lorimer, 2018; Tennant, 2002). However, this frustration has not led to significant change or migration to new systems as yet, possibly due to the prohibitively high cost (in money and labour) of moving large amounts of data (Wright, 2012). There is also debate about who should be responsible for music cataloguing, although authors generally agree that the cataloguer should have some level of musical knowledge and literacy (Bratcher and Wood, 1993; Fuidge and Willett, 2010; Kranz, 1990; McCoury, 2017; Urbanik, 2003). At the same time, there are very few dedicated training programmes for music cataloguers in the UK (IAML, 2007; Ledsham, 2003).

Much research has been devoted to problems with recorded music (Antonelli, Rizzi and Vescovo, 2010; Borjian, 2017; Cartwright and Pardo, 2012; Doraisamy and Rüger, 2003; Rocamora, Cancela and Pardo, 2014), but there is a lack of literature about issues specific to sheet music. There is a need to study whether the problems encountered with sheet music cataloguing stem from the systems themselves, from a need to better equip and train staff,

or a combination of both. Studies seem to treat the two issues as separate to one another, but it is arguable that there is a connection between them. If cataloguers are to help develop a system which really works for music, they need a full understanding of how sheet music differs to other materials and what its needs are. However, until these systems can be developed, music cataloguers must alter their practices.

The need for research into better cataloguing practice for sheet music was heightened by the coronavirus situation, as users were potentially more likely to access library catalogues remotely, since access to physical resources was restricted. The pandemic also provided unprecedented opportunities, as staff had time to examine problems and come up with innovative solutions (Cohen, 2020; Jones et al., 2020; Suraweera et al., 2020).

This study examines the gaps in training and faults with current cataloguing systems when applied to music and proposes suggestions for how training and systems can be improved.

Sampling

The sample of organisations was selected purposely across different library environments. The original aim was to include three music college/university libraries; three public libraries; two legal deposit libraries and one specialist music library. Criteria for selection were size and reputation of both the music collection and larger organisation, as these are most likely to have a dedicated music cataloguer or team of experienced cataloguers. COVID-19 had an impact on the responses from libraries contacted. Several libraries replied to my enquiry to say that they were experiencing staff shortages due to the pandemic, with members of staff furloughed. The study therefore proceeded with a smaller sample: two public libraries, two academic libraries and one legal deposit library for both parts of the study. These are referred to as Public 1, Public 2, Academic 1, Academic 2 and Legal 1. The specialist library's catalogue differed too much from the other libraries – both in scope and format – to be comparable in usability testing, so was involved in the interview stage only, and is described as Specialist 1. To ensure that there was still a balance of libraries in the first part of the study, one of the legal deposit libraries who was unavailable for interview was examined for usability testing, referred to as Legal 2.

Usability testing

To determine the current effectiveness of sheet music cataloguing, I engaged in usability testing. This method has been widely used, both within general library settings (Chisman, Diller and Walbridge, 1999; Comeaux, 2012; Denton and Coysh, 2011; George, 2005) and specifically for music (Clark and Yeager, 2018). Pickard (2013, p. 129) notes that usability testing can test

new systems before they are launched or evaluate existing systems. In this case, usability testing was conducted to evaluate a variety of catalogues for sheet music collections.

Just as "[p]oor and inconsistent data can impede effective research" (Holden, Knop and Newcomer, 2019, p. 591), we can infer that items which have been well catalogued should be easy to retrieve. By attempting to retrieve various items from catalogues of sheet music, quantitative data could be gathered about the reliability of catalogues for sheet music retrieval and recurring issues which hampered retrieval were revealed. By examining the variety of tools available to users – such as advanced searches and the ability to filter results – I gained an insight into solutions to sheet music retrieval issues currently being built into systems.

In the usability studies examined, system testing was generally carried out by a team of users, but this was not possible for this research due to COVID-19 restrictions. Additionally, usability studies tend to evaluate only one system or a group of linked databases. This study has deviated from this by examining a variety of systems and comparing the results between catalogues and search strategies.

Each catalogue was searched for a list of six items (see Table 1) using a variety of different search techniques. Searches involved different pieces of data (composer; work; instrument; form; key; publisher and format) and utilised the basic and advanced search functions as well as filtering. As far as possible, searches mimicked real-life, drawn from the author's own experiences and the literature on music retrieval (Downie, 2005; Inskip, Butterworth and MacFarlane, 2008; Orio, 2006; Szeto, 2017). For each search, catalogues were given a score between 0 and 2, as follows:

- 2: work retrieved easily;
- 1: work retrieved with small adaptations to terms, or further checks needed (e.g. checking anthology's contents on a separate website); or
- 0: work not retrieved or insufficient detail to confirm item.

Fourteen separate searches were performed for every work, giving a maximum score of 28 per item. I also noted both useful and problematic features of the catalogue, both generally and for specific searches.

Works were selected for their ubiquity: every collection searched should have a copy (for example, a vocal score of Handel's *Messiah* published by Novello). Each work also allowed for different aspects of music retrieval to be examined, such as multiple titles – form and distinctive or in different languages – or composers. Some small adjustments had to be made where a library had a different edition of a work on their catalogue, but searching for the same works on each catalogue ensured fairness and enabled results to be easily compared between libraries.

Table 1: items retrieved for usability study

Work		Category	Item
1		Basic search for specific version of work with distinctive title	Vocal score of *Messiah* by Handel, New Novello, edited by Watkins Shaw
2		Search for a specific format with a work which has both a form title and a distinctive title	Miniature score of Dvorak *Symphony no.9 'From the New World'*
3		Search for an excerpt of a larger work, which may be known in several languages	'Das Wändern' ('Wandering') from *Die schöne Müllerin* (*The fair maid of the mill)* by Schubert, version for low voice
4		Search for an arrangement of a work, which may be known in several languages	'Wachet auf' ('Sleepers wake') by J. S. Bach, from *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, BWV 140, arranged for piano
5		Search for a work where the title is not remembered, but musical aspects are	One of Chopin's piano nocturnes, in a major key, in 3/4 time ('Nocturne in E major, op. 9, no. 2')
6		Search for individual song with several authors, which may be in anthology	'Yesterday' by the Beatles (John Lennon and Paul McCartney) from the album *Help!*

Each individual library's average score and the average for each library type were considered, as well as the average across all libraries for each work, to reveal patterns. Results for particular searches in which all libraries did particularly well or poorly were examined and recurring observations were considered. This data was put into graphs. The results of the usability testing were discussed with staff during interviews, allowing comparisons between library

staff's perceptions of their catalogues and my experiences using the systems.

Interviews

Although usability testing can indicate the extent of issues with music cataloguing, they cannot explain the reasons for it. Interviews enable researchers to gain an "in-depth understanding of individual perceptions" (Pickard, 2013, p. 196) and allow for follow-up questions if the interviewee raises particularly interesting points.

Initial contact with interviewees was made by email rather than phone, as it was more convenient for staff who may be working from home or on reduced hours due to the pandemic. Once people agreed to take part, and informed consent was gained, they were given a choice of date and time for interviewing.

The coronavirus situation meant that it was not possible to travel for interviews, nor did the interviewer wish to endanger herself or participants by meeting face-to-face. Therefore, interviews were conducted by video over Zoom because it is the closest surrogate for face-to-face conversation. Interviews were recorded directly on Zoom, with a back-up version recorded by Dictaphone. Overall, interviews on Zoom worked well, although there were slight issues with distortion or echo on the line due to problems with the Internet connection.

One: Training for music cataloguers

Half of the interviewees in this study had degrees in both music and librarianship; with the remaining three having a degree in librarianship, a degree in music, and a degree which incorporated music (Table 2). Most began their career in music, before moving into library work. Academic 1 responded to the question 'Did you start off more in music or librarianship?' with "Definitely more in music and I would say I'm still there!", explaining that he saw himself as a musician who "happen[ed] to be a music librarian". Similarly, Academic 2 worked part-time as a music librarian and a professional singer. Specialist 1 studied for Master's degrees in Librarianship and Ethnomusicology simultaneously, including an internship at a music library. All six were active musicians and musically literate, with subject knowledge supplemented by years of experience in the field.

Library	Music	Librarianship	Other degree	Music or Librarianship first?
Academic 1	✓	✓		Music
Academic 2	✓	✓		Music
Public 1	✓			Music
Public 2		Creative Arts – including music		
Legal 1		✓		Librarianship
Specialist 1	✓	✓		Both together

Table 2: Qualifications of music cataloguers interviewed

The interviewees at public libraries both had degrees in, or involving, music. Neither held degrees in librarianship, but they had been trained by their predecessors or taught themselves to catalogue music through years of practice. Self-directed learning and the value of practical experience were major themes across the interviews, with several stating that training in music cataloguing was not offered as part of degrees and had been learnt later:

> *"When I did my library qualification there was some cataloguing but it wasn't music specific. And so the actual music cataloguing was something I've learnt on the job."*
>
> (Academic 1)

> *"When I was in school there wasn't any specific training for music cataloguers, and the ones who went into that field were sort of self-directed and it was our own interest and, I guess, to some extent our own music, history with music, you know, that drove us to that particular specialisation."*
>
> (Specialist 1)

There were also mentions of short courses run by IAML or other organisations, although one staff member noted that their organisation was sometimes reluctant to pay for outside training.

> *"Music for the Terrified' I think that's a very good thing."*
>
> (Legal 1)

> *"There's the IAML workshops coming up in April as well which are all being done on Zoom, so I'm hoping to get booked onto those."*
>
> (Public 2)

> *"I've benefited from IAML courses and so on myself in the past [. . .] Something came to [nearby town] and I wasn't allowed to go. I was absolutely furious and so was someone else in the library and it cost £100 or something and [the library] wouldn't kind of wear it."*
>
> (Public 1)

Music or librarianship skills?

There was a mixed response to the question of whether music or librarianship skills are more important for music cataloguers. Several interviewees felt that their work would be impossible without a high level of musical knowledge:

> *"music cataloguing is at least 80% musical knowledge and the rest is just catalogue technique, which you can teach somebody, but you can't teach a cataloguer the music."*
>
> (Academic 1)

> *"I would say about 70% music, 30% cataloguing but with a willingness to learn and to get the cataloguing sorted."*
>
> (Public 1)

> *"All the music librarians I've met had some background in music. Many of them had an undergraduate degree in music at least. They're all music literate."*
>
> (Specialist 1)

Others felt that a basic level of musical knowledge was important, but only essential for staff working on their own in a music department.

> *"out of a team of four people I am the most clued up about music. People come and ask me questions but they do a good enough job without really that much musical knowledge […] You probably wouldn't be able to do it if you were a complete novice and you were just working on your own. I think you do need some kind of musical knowledge and you need to be able to pick apart various things [. . .] But overall I would say you can get*

> *away with being . . . just have a bit of a brief introduction to music, to get away with it."*
>
> (Academic 2)

> *"Certainly when they were looking to employ somebody they were looking for somebody with a music background, so who understood the terms and the language of music and suchlike [. . .] My assistant doesn't have a music background, he's more from a library background but he's got a general interest in music and he's very good in that respect and anything he doesn't understand in terms of music language he can come to me and ask me about it. I do think the music side of it is, you do need that knowledge, I think. It is a specialist subject and you do need, I think, some music knowledge there, yes, definitely."*
>
> (Public 2)

One interviewee felt that music and librarianship were equally necessary for the role:

> *"I think people can come from either side and be equally successful. I mean we're very lucky because when we advertise for a music cataloguer we ask for a library qualification and we ask for a music qualification and because people want to work [here], we're lucky enough that we get both of those things. But I think either one is good."*
>
> (Legal 1)

One unexpected result was that Academic 2 considered musical knowledge sometimes affected his efficiency: "my musical knowledge actually hinders the process occasionally as I tend to overthink things". When asked about this, Public 1 and Legal 1 agreed that there was a risk of being too exhaustive when cataloguing sheet music. They saw it as a balancing act between including enough detail and keeping their workload manageable:

> *"Sometimes you have to stop cataloguers from just being too attentive to detail and wanting to create 'the perfect record' because you have to get a certain amount done."*
>
> (Legal 1)

> *"I don't think the knowledge is a disadvantage [. . .] but you do have to be very careful not to get kind of anorak-ish about it."*
>
> (Public 1)

In contrast, Public 2 felt that music library users appreciated catalogue records being as detailed as possible and that it was therefore important that cataloguers took the time to create these. However, she did say that this rarely involved extra research beyond what was on the music itself.

Importance of language skills

All interviewees agreed that they encountered a large variety of languages in their cataloguing work, and the majority felt that music cataloguers should have a basic understanding of the most common ones:

> *"in addition to the music, foreign languages are very useful. When I was a student they weren't required but it was strongly urged for music students to have French and German, and Italian is pretty useful too."*
>
> (Specialist 1)

> *"you need a basic understanding of languages if you're going to be interested in cataloguing."*
>
> (Public 1)

> *"I definitely think language is important. You've not only got language differences in terms of titles and in terms of vocal scores, different languages of the words, but you've also got different spellings of composers' names."*
>
> (Public 2)

> *"You need the language skills" [holds up scores in Russian, Polish, German and English]*
>
> (Academic 1)

However, one interviewee argued that it is unnecessary for music cataloguers to have an in-depth knowledge of foreign languages, since new resources such as Google Translate mean that "the language barrier is really not that much" (Academic 2). However, he also acknowledged that he could ask specialist staff at his institution for help with translations, especially with Russian materials, which is unlikely to be the case in smaller libraries.

Other requirements for music cataloguers

Beyond music literacy and foreign languages, interviewees described the following qualities as useful for music cataloguers:

- a knowledge of composers, forms and instruments (Academic 1, Public 2);

- an understanding of different music formats (score types) and their uses (Legal 1, Academic 2);
- a general interest in history (Specialist 1);
- a knowledge of printing processes (Specialist 1);
- research skills (Specialist 1 and Public 1); and
- a strong understanding of their users' information needs, including how they search (Academic 1, Academic 2, Public 1, Public 2)

Importing vs. creating records

There was a wide range of experiences and opinions about whether records should be imported from other institutions or created from scratch. Two libraries did not have the option of importing records at all, either because their Library Management System (LMS) did not allow this (Public 2) or because items in their collection were unique so no record existed elsewhere (Specialist 1). This meant that both interviewees had to create all records themselves. Of the remaining four interviewees, one considered that music cataloguers should make their own records and that there was a strong need for universities to equip the next generation of cataloguers with the necessary skills:

> *"we don't import records for music, largely because we can't trust the quality of the records that are out there. And the argument in library schools now is that we don't need to teach cataloguing because you can import records, but somebody still has to create those records and they still have to reach a certain standard."*
>
> (Academic 1)

The cataloguer at Legal 1 felt that music cataloguers should be able to create their own records if necessary, and critically examine other organisations when importing:

> *"In theory I think starting from scratch is ideal and you want people to be able to do that and to recognise when they do import records what's right and what's wrong."*
>
> (Legal 1)

The interviewees at Public 1 and Academic 2 both said they tended to import records. For Public 2 this process was usually automated by their LMS system, and most items arrived with records already. When this was not the case, she looked for records to import from elsewhere and, as a last resort, would catalogue items herself. The cataloguer at Academic 2 said that he imported records created by institutions he knew were reliable and would then improve

these by adding contents for others to import: "with all the metadata and things that we're trying to put in to help us, it's also helping other places". However, he felt that records online varied greatly in quality and that there needed to be quality control on a large scale to "get rid of the terrible records".

Two: Systems for sheet music cataloguing

Differences between library settings

In usability testing, the legal deposit libraries achieved the highest average score across all six works, followed by academic libraries, then public. Looking at Figure 1, there is little variation between the two libraries of each type, with only a difference of 0.2 and 0.3 between the two academic libraries and public libraries respectively. The difference between the two legal deposit libraries is slightly higher (2.2) but significantly smaller than the gap between the legal deposits and the academic libraries.

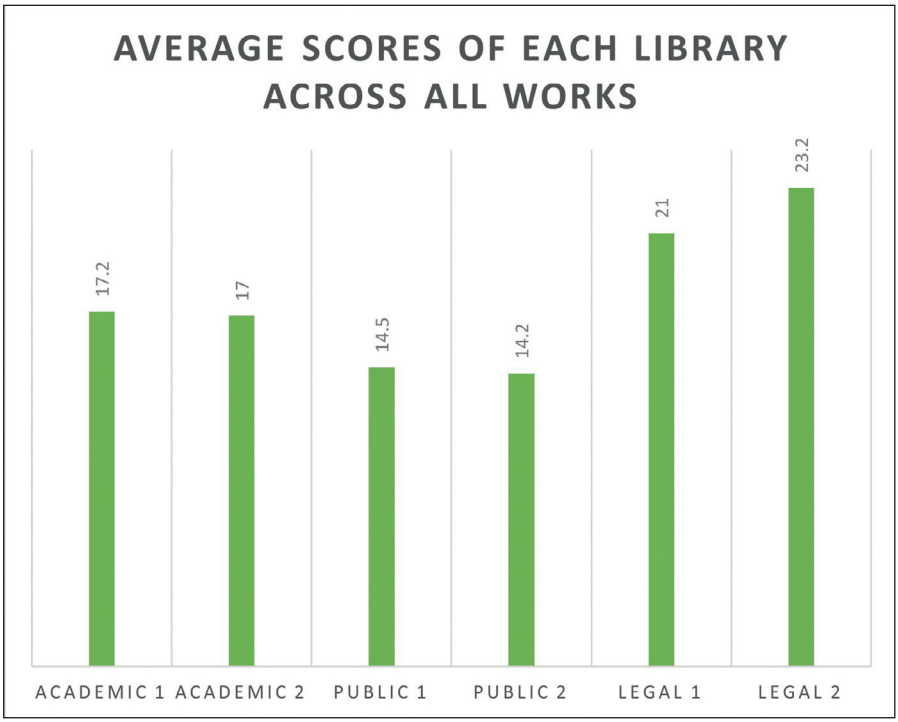

Fig. 1: Average score across all works for each library.

When comparing the different types of libraries, the gap between the public libraries and legal deposit libraries is particularly striking (Figure 2). The average overall score for public libraries was about ⅓ lower than those of the legal deposits: 14.35 compared to 22.1.

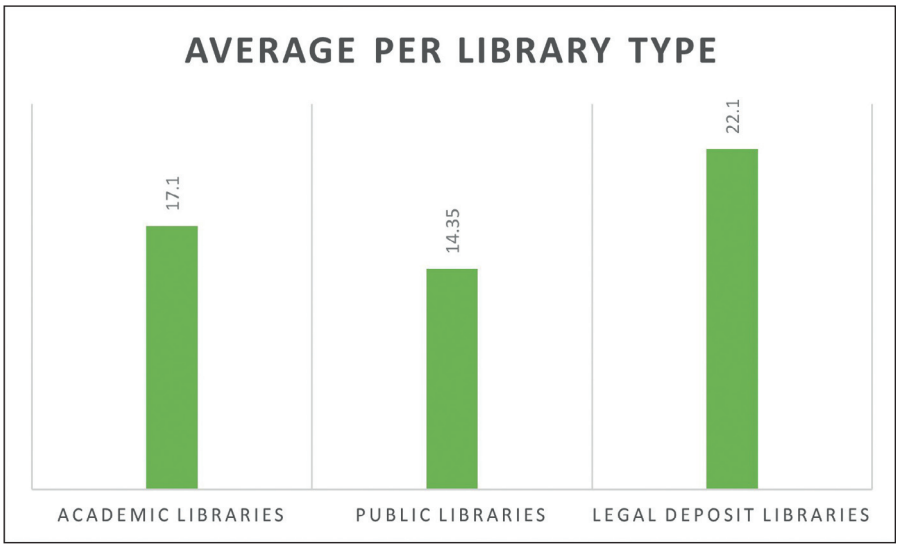

Fig. 2: Average scores per library type.

Adequacy of systems for sheet music cataloguing

Several interviewees used bespoke systems specifically designed for music materials, whilst others worked on systems built for all materials. Interviewees' attitudes towards current cataloguing systems for sheet music varied widely. One felt that cataloguing systems was gradually adapting for music's needs:

> *"I think it has improved a bit recently because of the RDA developments and MARC's reaction to that, also because of the new vocabulary that has been developed by the Library of Congress for music."*
>
> (Legal 1)

Other interviewees felt that there was still some way to go before cataloguing systems were suitable for sheet music:

> *"They could definitely do with more fields within the form that are specific to music."*
>
> (Public 2)

> *"a lot of people are stuck with having to catalogue music on a system which is not set up for it."*
>
> (Academic 1)

Two interviewees acknowledged that there are problems with using MARC for sheet music, but that either the system was either as good as it could be for now, or that there were no viable alternatives for their organisation:

> *"you just kind of get used to it. There are obviously problems that arise but just squeezing stuff in […] But yeah, they've done a reasonable job, I think."*
>
> (Academic 2)

> *"I don't think we have any choice. I mean, an academic music library might be able to pick and choose and do something different, but if you're using any of the basic Library Management Systems they're all going to be running on MARC 21 really. And I think you've just got to live with it."*
>
> (Public 1)

Academic 1 noted that the extent to which MARC is ingrained in many cataloguers' psyche is a barrier to change in itself: "every [. . .] course I've been on people just end up saying 'which MARC field do I put it in?' "

The interviewee at the specialist library used open-source software and had a working relationship with the developers, so was able to have the system adapted to suit the needs of the library.

> *"it's very, very flexible. However, I have had to file enhancement requests for various things related to music […] I guess at least with something like that you've got the flexibility and you can work with designers to say "can we tweak this, here and there"."*
>
> (Specialist 1)

However, she had worked with MARC in the past and felt that, on the whole, it was usable: "sometimes you have to get it a little sideways to get it to fit, but it mostly works".

Problems identified

In the usability testing, there were significant differences between the average scores for each work, across all the libraries (Figure 3). Most libraries scored highly when searching for a specific edition of a work for which all details were known (works 1 and 2), but did poorly when it came to searching for a piece where the title was unknown (work 5). In particular, it was not possible to retrieve the item reliably by searching for the composer and key, since the key was not consistently included in the title of the work, and thus not available for retrieval.

This study lacked the considerable resources required to examine all items on each catalogue and determine how many items were relevant to each search compared to how many were actually retrieved. It is therefore not possible to calculate an exact recall ratio for searches. However, I estimate that recall was considerably lower on searches involving works in multiple languages, items within anthologies, or composers with several possible spellings for their name.

Whilst most libraries succeeded at retrieving an individual song within an anthology (work 6), none of the catalogues allowed for the song to be retrieved by a lyric search. Another area which presented difficulties was retrieving music which is known by both its title in the original language and its English version (items 3 and 4). On some catalogues, different items were retrieved depending on whether searches were carried out in English or in German. This indicates that the titles were inconsistently catalogued, or that the parallel titles of works (such as for foreign languages) were not always included on the catalogue.

Other recurring issues with retrieval during usability testing are displayed in Figure 4. Of these, one of the most significant was not being able to view the contents of anthologies on the OPAC. When this issue was discussed during interviews, all participants agreed that it was important for users to be able to see contents for items and search for individual songs within anthologies. However, three interviewees (Legal 1, Public 1 and Public 2) said that they had too much legacy data for this to be possible. Legal 1 said that the pandemic had provided enough time to improve these older records and so more items would include contents lists. However, the two public libraries stated that this was not a priority or not possible due to a shortage of time and staff.

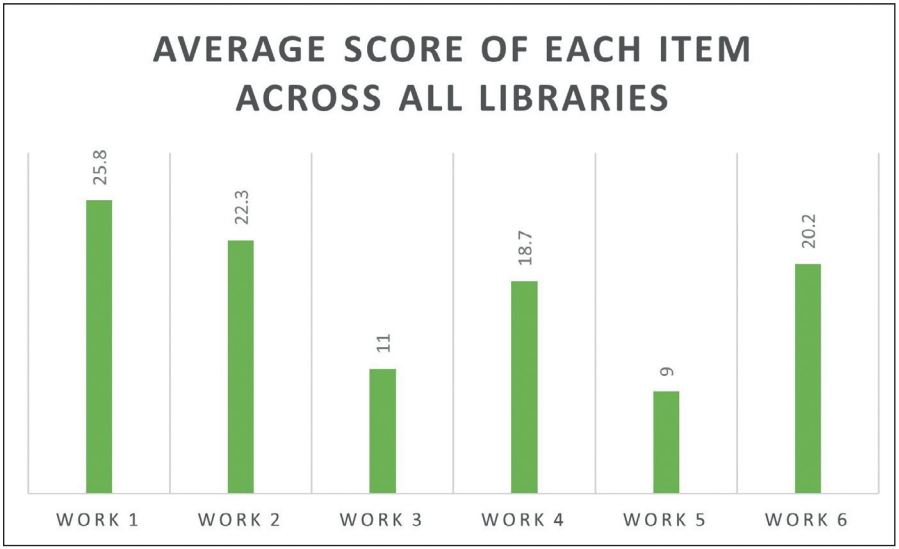

Fig. 3: average score of each item across all libraries.

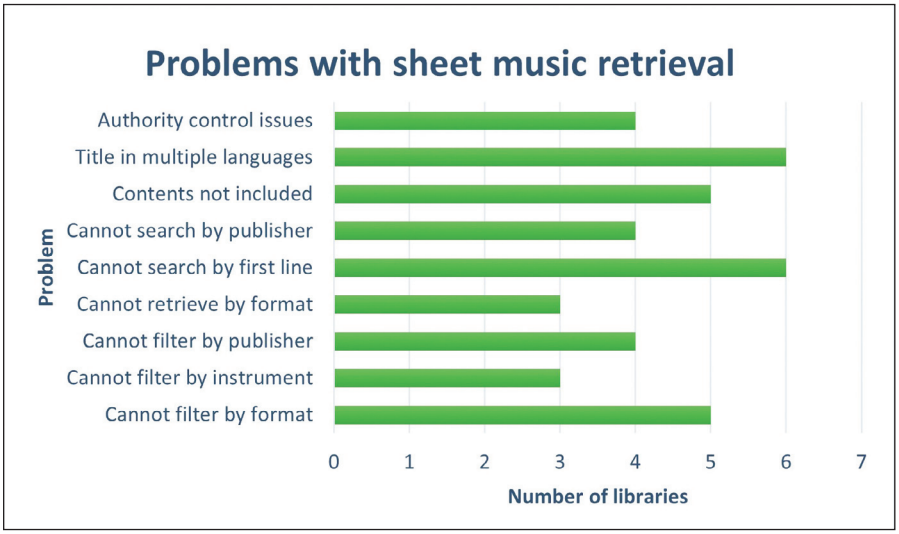

Fig. 4: number of times problems encountered across all libraries.

There were some issues with authority control for composer's names, which had affected the searches using filtering. Often there were multiple options for the same name, with differences in accents. For example, several catalogues included Antonín Dvořák's name with and without accents as options, each with different numbers of results. This may have hindered effective retrieval, as having to select between multiple possible names necessarily means excluding results listed under the alternate name.

Only two of the catalogues allowed results to be filtered by the publisher and advanced searched by publisher. However, all of the interviewees agreed that people searching for sheet music often needed a specific publisher's edition, and that it would be useful for music library users to be able to specify the publisher as part of searches.

Changes suggested by interviewees

When asked what changes they would like to see in systems for sheet music cataloguing, everyone responded with a different need. These ranged from relatively small, practical adjustments to changes at a policy level:

- including additional options for musical forms in the 008 field, particularly for specific dance types (Academic 2);
- enabling records to include musical incipits for works, especially to help users differentiate between items with similar titles when searching (Specialist 1);
- ensuring that all Library Management Systems allow cataloguers to view and import records from other authorities (Public 2);
- changing authority terms to reflect how users actually search the catalogue, rather than continuing to use rules based on the restrictions of card catalogues – not expecting users to search for 'Sonatas' when trying to retrieve an individual sonata, for example (Academic 1); and
- making authority data for works visible to users and allow items to link to a work level record, so data can be inputted once for a work rather than for every record of the piece – i.e., integrating FRBR models into cataloguing (Legal 1).

The interviewee at Public 2 felt that the issue was less about systems needing to be improved, and more about cataloguers learning to be flexible:

> *"know what you can and can't do within your own LMS, and be prepared to not to have a stand-off between what you think should happen and what you can actually do."*
>
> (Public 2)

Impact of COVID-19

All of the interviewees agreed that coronavirus affected the nature of their work. Some had been redeployed to help colleagues in other departments (Academic 2, Public 1), whereas others found they had time for work that wouldn't happen under normal circumstances (Legal 1, Public 2, Academic 1):

> *"it's been a big opportunity to fix our catalogue, so to go back and work on legacy data. Do lots of deduplication, add uniform titles, add contents… just enhance lots and lots of records, which we always did a little bit of it, sort of in an ongoing way, but really we can do a lot more, so that's been really satisfying."*
>
> (Legal 1)

> *"we've definitely had more time. We've generally always got a big backlog of cataloguing to do. Basically, our priority task is the enquiries and getting things out to people, so cataloguing tends to get shoved down the line a bit. But I only work 18½ hours a week, so there's very little time – once you've done your enquiries and such – to get on with those sorts of tasks, so we generally have a big stock of cataloguing waiting to be done. But we have nearly got on top of it now."*
>
> (Public 2)

Public 2 added that she had been able to get help from colleagues "who normally wouldn't be available" with identifying records she needed to correct. The interviewee at Specialist 1 observed that she had already been working remotely for several years prior to the pandemic, so hadn't been affected in this sense, but – with the physical library closed – her colleagues were using the time to improve databases and add detail to records. Public 1 works in both the cataloguing and acquisitions departments, and most of her work during lockdown had been in acquisitions, for both new stock and helping with the mobile libraries' workload. Academic 2 had been busy working in Document Delivery Service, as they were offering additional services such as postal loans and scanning documents for staff and students.

There was also some agreement that the pandemic affected the way in which users interact with library services, resources and catalogues, possibly forever:

> *"I think COVID might sort of permanently alter the way people search for things and use online information and possibly will affect the way they use libraries because now they'll be used to*

> *finding out as much as possible before actually going to get something."*
>
> (Legal 1)

> [Discussing Order and Collect services] *"as much information as possible that can be included on the record is ideal for the customer because obviously they can't see beforehand what is within the score unless it's all written down somewhere on the record."*
>
> (Public 2)

> *"I think that coronavirus has forced a lot of users – and this is staff as well as students, in my experience – to realise that they need to come up to speed in using any kind of library IT [...] I was trying to explain to one of them recently on the phone how Click and Collect worked and I mentioned the catalogue and he said "What's the catalogue?" [. . .] there always have been, in my experience, people who don't engage with any kind of online resources and the pandemic has actually forced them to confront that. They've got to use them, otherwise they can't access resources."*
>
> (Academic 1)

Academic 2 noted that his organisation had invested more money in electronic resources (including digitised sheet music) than prior to the pandemic, to ensure that students were not disadvantaged by current circumstances. However, he felt that restrictions on spending time in libraries had had little effect on students' use of the library, as in his experience Undergraduates access items directly from links on reading lists rather than by searching the catalogue.

Other issues raised

Academic 1 felt that there is a need for further research into the actual rather than perceived needs of music library users and their catalogue use. He also felt that users should be given tools to help them use catalogues effectively, adding that he had spent the first lockdown creating a guide for users on how to go beyond basic keyword searches.

Several interviewees were keen to discuss funding for music libraries and the importance of retaining specialist services and staff. In particular, the interviewees at the public and academic libraries had direct experience of the impact of budget cuts in music libraries, although Legal 1 was also aware of the issue. Specialist 1 said that her library had not been so affected, but observed that it was "considered one of the main assets" of the larger organisation she worked for, which is a potential difference between her library and

the others. Funding and attitudes to music libraries and staff is not explicitly linked to the original research question, but it is an important aspect of the overall problem, as will be shown in the discussion.

Conclusion

Most interviewees found that their music cataloguing knowledge and skills came from practical experience as musicians and in libraries, courses by IAML, and on-the-job learning. None of the interviewees had been taught music cataloguing in a formal setting such as a university, although they all had degrees. Interviewees agreed that languages, research skills, and a good understanding of music history and library users were important qualities. Numerous problems with systems were identified, including not being able to view contents, problems with multiple languages and retrieval by publisher. Interviewees had mixed feelings about the adequacy of current cataloguing systems, but agreed that there was room for improvement. COVID has had – and continues to have – an impact on music cataloguing and these effects may be long-lasting. Interviewees were also concerned about the effect of budget cuts on music libraries.

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Abstract
This paper explores challenges currently faced by music cataloguers, particularly regarding their training and the systems they work with. It asks whether music cataloguers feel they have enough support and training and how the skills they require might be taught. It also examines whether systems need to be adapted to suit printed music. The project focuses on staff responsible for cataloging printed music at music libraries in the UK, whether this is a part of or their entire role. Most music cataloguers handle both recorded and printed music, but this paper considers printed music only.

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N.B. This is part one of a two-part article (with the second half appearing in the Autumn/Winter issue of Brio*). Part two will include suggestions for improving cataloguing, and outline training opportunities available for music cataloguers.*

Brio Volume 60, Number 1 pp 38-44

MUSIC AND MISREPRESENTATION: GUIDANCE ON DEALING WITH HARMFUL MATERIALS AND DISCRIMINATORY LANGUAGE IN MUSIC COLLECTIONS

Carissa Chew

Please note, the following article contains examples of discriminatory language for educational purposes.

From blackface minstrelsy to antisemitic opera, sexist and imperialist jingoism in Victorian music halls, and the recent appearance of a lyric deemed insulting to disabled people in Lizzo's song "Grrrls" and Beyoncé's "Heated", music and the music industry has played a role in the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes. Like any other cultural art form, music's history, and the way it has been preserved, collected, and presented by heritage organisations, has at times been influenced by racism, sexism, antisemitism, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia.[1] Heritage professionals have an ethical responsibility to mitigate the harm caused by bigoted metadata and discriminatory language, imagery, and sound across their catalogues, collections, exhibitions, and learning resources, of which music-related materials are no exception. As part of a broader decolonisation effort across music libraries, descriptive and interpretive practices must undergo reform. Language should be harnessed to create and curate socially conscious catalogues and improve the accuracy and discoverability of resources related to marginalised communities. As a call for practical action, the first part of this article proposes advisory notices as a tool for dealing with harmful song titles, lyrics, dances, costumes, or gestures in original archival or published material. The second part of this article offers more general guidance on how to revise discriminatory metadata using tools created by the author, namely the Inclusive Terminology Glossary and the Cultural Heritage Terminology Network.[2]

[1] J. S. Bratton, editor, *Music Hall: Performance and Style* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986); Peter Bailey, ed., *Music Hall: The Business of Pleasure* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1986); Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel against the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); John Mullen, "Anti-Black Racism in British Popular Music (1880-1920)," *French Journal of British Studies* 17.2 (2012), 61-80; Nadine Hubs, "Homophobia in Twentieth-Century Music: The Crucible of America's Sound," *Daedalus* 142.4 (2013), 45-50; Uri Erman, "The Operatic Voice of Leoni the Jew," *Journal of British Studies* 56.2 (2017), 295-321; Lily E. Hirsh, *Can't Stop the Grrrls: Confronting Sexist labels in Music from Ariana Grande to Yoko Ono* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2023).

[2] Founded in 2021 by Carissa Chew, both the Inclusive Terminology Glossary and Cultural Heritage Terminology Network can be accessed at www.culturalheritageterminology.co.uk, accessed 24 April 2023.

Advisory notices

It is the responsibility of heritage professionals to accurately preserve the historical record for the purposes of research and education. In other words, it is never appropriate to alter the original language that appears in artefacts, archival scripts, sound recordings, moving images, published texts, published titles, or official names. Advisory notices, nevertheless, can be used to educate users about linguistic controversies and de-normalise discriminatory language, imagery, and sound within music collections, whilst giving users the agency to decide how they want to engage with harmful materials, which might include violent, graphic, and age-inappropriate content. The objective of advisory notices is therefore not to censor, remove, or restrict access to items, but to use description to enhance the quality and integrity of collections information and reduce the emotional trauma and psychological harm that derogatory or distressing materials might cause users.

Advisory notices might appear at a catalogue-level, broadly warning users that they may encounter outdated terminology and harmful materials across online and physical records. Within both published and archival catalogues, however, it is best practice to produce item-level notices that provide specific details about the nature, provenance, and historical context surrounding problematic resources. It should be kept in mind that, for some users, encountering derogatory visual imagery and aural sound can be more distressing than reading written text, so music libraries should use appropriate online technology (such as image blurring filters or pop-ups) to ensure that their advisory notices are conspicuous.

To demonstrate what appropriate content advice might look like in practice, a sample of racist and antisemitic music items and suggested advisory information are listed below. The following items are not affiliated with a single institution or collection; they were selected for educational purposes because they represent some of the kinds of items and offensive genres that UK music libraries hold.

1. Song sheet of "Chink Chink Chinaman", music by Bert A. Williams, words by Alex Rogers (1909)

This song sheet published in Chicago contains discriminatory language and racist stereotypes of Chinese people, reflecting anti-Asian tropes that were widespread in the USA at the time. This is seen in all elements of the tripartite title: the first two repeated words are a highly offensive ethnic slur towards people of East Asian descent, first appearing in print in 1878; the third word is an outdated colonialist term for Chinese people that can be traced back to the early eighteenth century. Alex Rogers was an African American composer and lyricist. Bert A. Williams (1874-1922) was a Bahamian-born Black man who often performed in blackface minstrel roles. Both Williams and Rogers

experienced anti-Black prejudice within the United States' performance industry.

2. Publication of *The Duenna, an opera*, etc. by Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1775)

This opera contains anti-Jewish stereotypes. As scholar Uri Erman has illustrated, the role of Isaac, a merchant, represents a theatrical caricature known as the "Beau Jew" or "Beau Mordecai", who is portrayed as a threat to larger society due to his manipulative and deceitful nature. The negative stereotype is reinforced through the Jewish characters' speech-like style of singing, or what scholar Ruth HaCohen has called the "music libel" through which Jews have been aurally depicted as a-harmonic. Jewish opera singer Michael Leoni (born Myer Lyon, c.1750-1797), who was cast as Don Carlos in the opera in England, faced antisemitic critique from the British public in the 1770s and 1780s, including comments that his "effeminate" voice was the product of castration or circumcision. For further information, see Uri Erman, "The Operatic Voice of Leoni the Jew," *Journal of British Studies* 56.2 (2017), 295-321 and Ruth HaCohen, *The Music Libel against the Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

3. Song sheet of "A Cannibal Maid and the Hottentot Blade", words by Stanislaus Stangé (1901)

This song contains discriminatory language and derogatory stereotypes of Africans, such as tropes of savagery and cannibalism. "Hottentot" is an outdated colonial term for people of the Khoikhoi ethnicity who are native to southern Africa. In the colonial period, Europeans falsely stereotyped the Khoikhoi people as oversexed, culturally primitive, and more closely related to the orangutan than any other ethnic group. For further information, see Sadiah Qureshi, "Displaying Sara Baartman, the 'Hottentot Venus'," *Hist. Sci.* 42 (2004), 233-257.

4. Image of Thomas D. Rice performing "Jump Jim Crow" (c.1830s)

This song and its accompanying performance contain discriminatory language and racial stereotypes of Black people. "Jim Crow" was a derogatory Black male caricature performed in blackface by white American man Thomas Dartmouth Rice (1808-1860). Blackface performance costume was designed to mock and demean African Americans. Wearing a burnt-cork mask and ragged clothing, Rice would mimic African American vernacular whilst performing a dance he claimed he had learnt from a disabled Black stable groom. These kinds of minstrel shows were popular with white audiences in Europe and the USA in the nineteenth century. Other infamous blackface minstrel characters included "Zip Coon", "The Jazz Singer", "Mammy", and "Aunt Jemima".

5. Score of "The Cockney Coon" song by Charles Osborne (1899)
This song, which was performed in blackface in Victorian England, contains derogatory stereotypes of Black people. The musical comedy genre known as the "coon song" was an offshoot of minstrelsy that remained popular in Britain's music halls long after full minstrel shows had begun to decline in popularity. For further information, see John Mullen, "Anti-Black Racism in British Popular Music (1880-1920)," *French Journal of British Studies* 17.2 (2012), 61-80.

6. Audio recording of "The King of the Cannibal Islands" (1936)
This song, which appeared in a broadsheet as early as 1858, contains derogatory stereotypes of native peoples who are described as "Indians". Presumably, the song is referring to Fijians, given that European sailors nicknamed Fiji the "Cannibal Isles" in the nineteenth century. The lyrics represent the native language as gibberish and reinforce myths of women of colour's hypersexuality or "smuttiness".

Metadata revisions
Using advisory notices to deal with harmful archival and published materials is just one strand of inclusive description work, however. Music libraries must also retrospectively address the presence of harmful language within their own metadata, whilst integrating inclusive standards into regular cataloguing practice. After all, memory institutions must be held accountable for the words they choose to use and the stories they choose to tell. Heritage professionals have a duty to promote the ethical use of the information contained within their collections. In principle, they must strive to improve the discoverability of records and quality of collections information by describing and interpreting materials in a manner that is accurate, respectful, and responsive to the communities who create, use, and are represented in their collections. In practice, however, the creation of reparative metadata can be a daunting task.

As a rule, metadata should honour people's self-identities and reflect the preferred terminologies of living communities today. Outdated terminologies may provide important historical context but should only ever be replicated within quotation marks or inverted commas and should not be repeated more than necessary. Descriptive labels should always be specific and should not needlessly group diverse communities together. In some cases, metadata will also warrant revision on the grounds that it entirely omits authors and subjects of marginalised backgrounds or fails to acknowledge their importance.

To carry out inclusive description work thoughtfully and judiciously, heritage professionals must be equipped with knowledge about contemporary and historic issues faced by marginalised communities. The task of addressing harmful language related to all areas of prejudice and protected characteristics is enormous in scope, however, and there is a huge amount at stake. For

inclusive description work to be successful, it will require partnerships and knowledge exchanges across the sector. It is for this reason that the Cultural Heritage Terminology Network was created as a virtual space that promotes practice sharing and cross-institutional collaboration on inclusive description issues via a forum, blog, resources list, and e-newsletter. The Cultural Heritage Terminology Network should also be of interest to those working with metadata because it hosts the Inclusive Terminology Glossary, a guide that is designed to educate heritage professionals on preferred terminology related to marginalised peoples and aid them in the task of recognising harmful materials.

The Inclusive Terminology Glossary is a collaborative, live project that anybody can contribute to via Google Drive.[3] The aim of the project is to collate accurate information about the historic and contemporary usage of words related to race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, class, religion, and disability, to inform decision-making around language use in the heritage sector. The project was launched in response to the fact that no existing terminology guidance i) simultaneously addresses all areas of prejudice and protected characteristics, ii) contains information about both historic and contemporary lang-uage usage, including a timeline and guidance on how language preferences have shifted over time, iii) seriously considers Britain and the legacies of the British empire as part of its scope, and iv) includes multiple perspectives, seeking to explain rather than erase language discrepancies such as national differences in terminology preference.

For ease of navigation, the Glossary is split into numerous sections, reflecting different protected characteristics and areas of interest. Each section includes a list of terms, a contextual note on its usage and meaning and, when applicable, any preferred or alternative vocabularies that exist. Due to the tedious nature of conducting manual key word searches across online catalogues, the Glossary also includes archaic spellings and misspellings that might help heritage professionals to discover materials related to marginalised communities. Many of the terms listed are not necessarily offensive in their own right, but they can be harmful when misapplied to people or places. Preferred terminology is sometimes debated by communities today, and the Glossary aims to preserve these discrepancies and shed light on contested language. Rather than offering a "quick fix" guide, it is an educational tool designed to help heritage professionals make better informed decisions when it comes to their language choices. Using the most appropriate terminology available not only communicates respect for marginalised users, but it also improves metadata quality and promotes the discovery of materials.

[3] For quality control, all suggestions must be manually approved by the Glossary's editor.

Conclusion

Inclusive description work must not be viewed as a short-term project, but as essential ongoing practice. For the decolonisation of language to occur across the sector, a permanent shift in cultural attitudes will be necessary, and music libraries will need to commit their time, money, and resources towards these projects. Through the creation of appropriate content advice, music collections can be transparent about the problematic materials that they hold and minimise the inequality experienced by people with protected characteristics. By enacting metadata changes, moreover, music libraries will contribute to the accurate portrayal of marginalised peoples, thus tackling the unevenness of misinformation and misrepresentation across records.

The identification of harmful language and the task of choosing appropriate terminology can be incredibly difficult, often involving a huge amount of emotional labour. Reparative description demands a sensitive understanding of historical issues and the ability to make judicious decisions that will appease sometimes conflicting viewpoints. Since music collections are dealing with many of the same legacies of colonialism and prejudice that plague the wider heritage sector, however, there is an opportunity for music libraries to engage and contribute to cross-institutional inclusive description initiatives like the Inclusive Terminology Glossary and the Cultural Heritage Terminology Network. It is hoped that these collaborative tools will facilitate the practical implementation of inclusive description work across UK music collections and beyond.

Abstract

Heritage professionals have an ethical responsibility to mitigate the harm caused by bigoted metadata and discriminatory language, imagery, and sound across their catalogues, collections, exhibitions, and learning resources, of which music-related materials are no exception. This article offers practical guidance on the creation of advisory notices and inclusive description using two resources created by the author, namely the Inclusive Terminology Glossary and Cultural Heritage Terminology Network.

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REACHING OUT TO STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AT THE RED HOUSE

Christopher Hilton

Outline

This article describes the development of activities for students with Special Educational Needs at the archive and historic home of Benjamin Britten. It is divided into the following sections:

1. Context: a description of the Red House, the organisation that runs it and how its corporate ethos flows from Britten's own values.
2. Developing an educational offer: how, and why, activities were developed for schools at the Red House.
3. Reaching out to special schools: how activities designed for mainstream schools were adapted for a programme of outreach to schools serving students with a wide variety of special needs.
4. Outcomes, learning and next steps.

Context

The Red House is the historic home of composer Benjamin Britten and his life partner, singer Peter Pears. Located on the United Kingdom's east coast in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, it combines the roles of a public heritage house and a centre for archive research.

The house remains very much as Britten and Pears knew it, with thousands of their possessions still in situ: books, paintings, furniture, crockery, bed-linen, and so forth. It is made available to the public as an immersive experience, without labelling or interpretative text (information about items in the various rooms is available, if desired, from the invigilators in the rooms). The aim is to present the house, as one of our Tripadvisor reviewers puts it, "as if the couple had just popped out" and might come home at any moment.

Across the lawn from the house, in a purpose-built structure opened as part of the Britten centenary celebrations in 2013, is the enormous collection of papers that document Britten, Pears and their creative circle. Composition draft scores of nearly everything that Britten wrote, from childhood onwards, sit alongside libretto drafts, costume designs (and sometimes actual costumes), set designs and models, thousands of files of correspondence, administrative documentation, and the two men's extensive collections of books and artworks. A crucial element to the archive is the presence of other members of their circle: Britten and Pears worked in a collaborative manner

in a genre, opera, that requires input from a team with diverse skills. Also held in the archive are papers of singers, librettists, directors and producers, and Britten's musical assistants: most importantly Imogen Holst, composer in her own right and passionate musical educator and facilitator, whose papers are second only to Britten and Pears' in extent.

The Red House was run after Britten's death by a charity set up to hold and administer the rights to his music, to promote that music and to enable research into his life and work. A separate charity was set up to run Snape Maltings, the concert hall a few miles out of Aldeburgh that Britten and Pears created in the late 1960s, and the Aldeburgh Festival that takes place there. Both charities were animated by principles set out by Britten and in particular by the vision he expressed in his 1963 speech accepting the first Aspen Award:

> *I want my music to be of use to people, to please them, to "enhance their lives" (to use Berenson's phrase). I do not write for posterity – in any case, the outlook for that is somewhat uncertain. I write music, now, in Aldeburgh, for people living there, and further afield, indeed for anyone who cares to play it or listen to it. But my music now has its roots, in where I live and work.*[1]

The two organisations' values were obviously convergent and since the justification for setting up two discrete bodies – fear about the financial viability of the Aldeburgh Festival – has now passed, in 2020 the two merged to form Britten Pears Arts, which now runs and presents the Red House as part of a wide offer of music-making and community activity.

Developing an educational offer

Britten's commitment to "usefulness" is allied, in his Aspen speech, with a commitment to locality, to the Suffolk coast where he was born and lived for most of his life. Describing how, in the summer of 1941, he and Peter Pears stumbled across a copy of George Crabbe's poems in California and found in them the story of Peter Grimes, he explains how:

> *I suddenly realized where I belonged and what I lacked. I had become without roots, and when I got back to England six months later I was ready to put them down. I have lived since then in the same small corner of East Anglia, near where I was born. And I find as I get older that working becomes more and more difficult away from home. . . . I belong at home – there – in Aldeburgh. I have tried to bring music to*

[1] The full text of the lecture can be found at https://www.aspenmusicfestival.com/benjamin-britten (accessed, 1 March 2023).

> *it in the shape of our local Festival; and all the music I write comes from it. I believe in roots, in associations, in backgrounds, in personal relationships.*

To align with his values, then, it is important that activities at the Red House are not merely "useful" in the abstract, serving the music-making community in a general fashion, but are of concrete use to the community around the site. The Suffolk coastal area combines affluence with pockets of deprivation and social exclusion, both urban and rural. Commitment to following the path set out by our founder requires us to be useful not merely to those people who already have the resources and cultural capital to attend concerts at Snape or the Red House: diversity and inclusion must be hard-wired into how we make use of what Britten and Pears left us.

In 2017 the Red House began a programme of concerted outreach to local primary schools. Various day-long packages of activities, aligned to National Curriculum targets, were assembled; these were usually delivered at the Red House site but can also take place in the schools themselves.[2] A visit to the Archive was part of most of these packages and over a period of 18 months the education and outreach specialist at the Red House, together with the Archive team, experimented with different activities to see what worked best.

The activity package that proved most popular – and had the most Archive input – was one centred on the theme of "Make an Opera in a Day". Primary school students would arrive at the Red House and receive a brief orientation chat about who Benjamin Britten was and how linked he was to their local area. Following this they would see inside the Red House itself, then move on to the Archive where members of the team would talk to them about what an opera is and show them the raw materials that go into making one: the score, the libretto, the costumes and the scenery, the latter explained through a set model. (There would also be programmes and photographs to show the finished product.) The group would visit the archive strongroom to see where these materials were kept, and to get a sense of the size of the collection from which they were drawn. After this they would move on to Britten's Library – an open, airy room designed for music-making as well as reading – and work with simple instruments, chiefly percussion, to create pieces of music that told a story. The story most often used was that of Noah and the Flood, chosen in part because of its familiarity but also because it linked back to Britten's own community opera *Noye's Fludde*, materials related to which they would have seen in the Archive. (*Noye's Fludde*, of course, presents musical parallelisms too: Britten wrote expressly for varying musical abilities, one violin part being written for open strings to accommodate a boy who had

[2] A full description of the current menu of activities, now also including those delivered at Snape, can be seen on the Britten Pears Arts website, at https://brittenpearsarts.org/take-part/schools (accessed, 1 March, 2023.)

not yet learned violin fingering, and also featured varied percussion sounds such as the "slung mugs", tapped to give the sound of raindrops.) During breaks the five-acre garden of the Red House could function as a playground and, weather permitting, a picnic location. The day would end with a performance of their own musical retelling of the Flood story, in Britten's Library.

"Make an Opera in a Day" developed in an iterative fashion, testing what worked best and building on it. After about a year, looking back on how its Archive element had taken shape, certain strengths became apparent:

1. "Opera" might have been a remote concept to most of the children visiting (though, when they were asked what the term made them think, the stereotype of a soprano singing very loudly came up with surprising regularity) but when that word was examined, what lay behind it were elements familiar to any child that has taken part in a school show: music, words to learn, costumes and scenery. The school nativity show, for instance, feeds directly into this type of activity. At primary level, too, it is assumed that every child will have some role to play in the show: it is much less likely that there will be segregation between those who are "good at drama" and those who are confined to the audience. The concept of performing and of putting together a show as a team spoke to their experience.
2. By its nature opera calls for a variety of media and appeals in different ways to different personalities and skills. A child who is less interested in seeing the musical score or libretto may light up at the sight of the set model, and the explanation of how this is used to work out positions and problems before the concept is scaled up to its full size in the theatre.
3. The materials documenting the different elements of the opera tended to have a sensory impact. Draft scores could be displayed at a point where sections have been scribbled out (not, it must be said, something common in Britten's papers) to bring the process of composition to life. Libretti may be colour-coded to show which character is singing (and where a stage direction is inserted). Costume designs and set designs are colourful by their nature and can in some cases be displayed alongside the actual costumes used in the finished work. A genre intended to appeal to the senses will, naturally, speak to them in its working papers.
4. The visit to the Archive itself had a strong sensory element, over and above the learning activities delivered there. Stepping through the door into a tall concrete foyer brought them into a new type of space. Visiting the Archive strongroom redoubled this: what is

everyday for an archive professional may be a once-in-a-lifetime visit for anyone else. Walking up steps past a "Staff Only" notice then swinging open a thick metal door controlled by an electronic fob and taking the students into a windowless space filled with tall mobile shelving units, with a large safe visible to one side, was always a moment of drama. The smell of large amounts of old paper and the dim lighting were additional sensory elements. Lively discussions could be stimulated on why an archive is the way it is, and how one preserves paper for ever. Older classes, carefully supervised, would have the opportunity to turn the shelving and feel how easily hundreds of boxes could be moved. (The warning notices on the shelving units stressing the need to keep aisles clear when shelves were in motion provided a frisson of excitement.) Classes seldom left the archive without discussions on how one could keep this valuable material safe from theft: the fact that the most valuable items were kept in a safe whose key was held in a second safe (the "key" to which was a combination of numbers kept in the heads of the archive team) was always exciting.

Reaching out to special schools

In autumn 2019 the opportunity arose to extend the Red House's educational offer beyond mainstream primary to local special schools. This had been identified as a priority from an early stage, in line with organisational values: as noted above, to be properly useful to a community one must be committed to diversity and to breaking down the barriers that may prevent some community-members from accessing one's services. In-house knowledge helped drive the process, in the form of a staff member who was a long-time governor at special schools and was familiar with their needs and challenges, but while this might have accelerated the process of extending the offer it was not an indispensable part of the process and institutions without that personal link should not feel at a disadvantage. The immediate prompt to widen the offer came when the charity Autism in Nature put out an appeal for partners in extending access to nature for young people with autism: it became clear that our existing educational offer, specifically the "Make an Opera in a Day" package, could be adapted to fit Autism in Nature's brief.

Britten's attachment to his local landscape has been noted. Famously, Yehudi Menuhin is quoted as saying "If wind and water could write music, it would sound like Ben's." One could, therefore, add nature content to the existing package of activities without diluting the focus on Britten. This was not, however, the only adaptation that would be called for: it was also necessary to consider the varied needs of the students to be accommodated. Autism in Nature set up links to local special schools catering for students with a

range of learning difficulties and the groups who were to visit The Red House broke down, broadly speaking, into two categories: students with moderate learning difficulties (for instance, with Down's Syndrome) and/or autism, and those with more severe learning difficulties who in some cases also had physical disabilities. Clearly, a one-size-fits-all model would be inappropriate.

As a result the day visits to the Red House were planned with a modular structure, taking a standard pattern but customising it by removing and replacing elements where necessary to suit the needs of the students. The basic pattern was as follows:

- Meet on Aldeburgh beach by the Benjamin Britten memorial sculpture and explore the environment (this element was omitted for those parties that included pupils with mobility restrictions).
- Introduction to the Red House by the Education Officer; some music making and introduction to the four main groups of instruments (percussion, brass, woodwind, strings).
- Visit to The Red House (this element was omitted for those parties that included pupils with mobility restrictions).
- Visit to Gallery exhibit on Britten's opera *Noye's Fludde* to see the animal headdresses worn by child performers and try out the "slung mugs" percussion set that Britten developed for children to play in the piece. Learners had the chance either here or in the archive to try on replica headdresses.
- Visit to Library to hear a professional harpist play and to try out her instrument.
- Visit to Archive to see original materials. For the groups with moderate learning difficulties these included written materials such as Britten's school report card and a sample musical score as well as more visual materials such as set designs. For higher-needs pupils the focus was upon more visual materials, showing the original *Noye's Fludde* animal headdresses side by side with replicas that the pupils could try on. Care was taken to draw material from all parts of the collection and to stress relatability: for example, photographs of Britten included his dog which led to enthusiastic discussion of the students' own pets. For almost all pupils there was also a visit to the archive strongroom to show the environment in which historic materials are kept. Only for one group, with a high proportion of pupils with mobility aids, was this not possible since the stack is raised more than a metre above foyer level (as a flood

defence measure) and wheelchair access to the strongroom is via a slow lift which, for a group containing more than one person using a wheelchair or mobility aids, would slow progress unacceptably.

- Making music of their own, based on the experiences of the day, and for those who had visited the beach at the start of the day using materials found there. For higher needs students there was also a stress on other sensory elements such as light and colour in combination with sound.

Fig. 1: Four of the original headdresses based on Ceri Richards' designs for Britten's Noye's Fludde, Mr Fox, Mr Otter, Mrs Bear (Panda), Mrs Dove.

The day was planned to be as flexible as possible, so that activities could be lengthened or shortened according to how engaged an individual group felt. It was noted in the advance planning that, for students with autism in particular, the visit to this unfamiliar site might be stressful in ways that we could not completely predict, and that there needed to be leeway to move on to another activity at short notice if that seemed appropriate. As mentioned, the basic outline was also adapted for those groups with a high proportion of students with limited mobility and the content of the different elements was also changed according to the groups' needs: for the students with severe learning difficulties, some of whom were non-verbal, stress was placed on non-written material from the archive, in particular costumes. The archive holds the animal headdresses worn by local children for the 1958 first production of *Noye's Fludde*, as well as modern facsimiles of these that can be worn: students were shown the historic costumes in their boxes and then got to wear copies of these. This emphasised that simply visiting the archive building was in itself a dramatic and sensory experience.

These adaptations to the standard offer for mainstream schools of course presuppose prior knowledge of the groups and their needs, in addition to a willingness to improvise on the day. A key element of the project was to get to know the schools and their students beforehand. The learners were typically of similar age, in school years 9-10, but the profile of their needs varied considerably, both between schools and within each party: some pupils were non-verbal and/or required mobility aids, and positions on the spectrum of learning difficulty and/or autism varied considerably. Our Education Officer visited each school in advance, to talk about Benjamin Britten and their forthcoming trip to The Red House: in this way these new concepts were introduced in a familiar and trusted environment and thus, when it came to visit the new environment, it was not completely unfamiliar and was experienced in the company of someone already known and trusted. During these visits, of course, he also had the chance to discuss the proposed visit with staff who knew the students well, and take feedback from them about what would work well, what might be more difficult, what the needs of the individual students were and what the dynamics of the group might be. A key part of this familiarisation process, particularly for the students with higher needs, was to present the visit in clear, concise language with plenty of visuals, so that those students whose autism made novelty a challenge, for example, knew what to expect and were not startled by anything.

The students' response was overwhelmingly positive, as was the feedback from the schools. One message received the day after a visit read:

> . . . I have just had the class that visited you and the first thing they said when entering the room was "we visited The Red House".

We continued for the next 20 minutes discussing, enthusiastically, what they had enjoyed, what they had seen and other information about Benjamin Britten.
We were amazed at how much they had taken in and remembered. They all said they would like to return and the other adult in the room who learnt about Benjamin Britten at school did not know about the house but from the children's excitement and enthusiasm is now hoping to visit the house sometime in the future.

It must have been an excellent workshop if the pupils have been left so fired up! Well done.

Fig. 2: The Library at The Red House. Photograph: Philip Vile

Outcomes and learning

Following this series of visits, the programme had to be put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic (many of the students who visited, of course, are clinically particularly vulnerable) but is now about to resume following that break. From the 2019 visits we learned both how we might adapt that programme the next time that it is run, and the other things we might produce on the back of this experience.

As already noted, there was enthusiastic feedback from students and schools, but we are nonetheless aware of how our experience might improve the next sessions. We remarked above that the sensory elements of the archive visit were appealing: we will build more on those in future, in particular with higher-needs students. The foyer to the archive building is double-height and has bare concrete walls, which give it a resonant acoustic: we could encourage

students to make noise in that space and sample the echo. It was also striking how the mere act of taking the top off an archive box and revealing its previously-hidden contents was dramatic and appealing, and we should make that an integral part of the experience, and strengthen our handling collection of objects that can be passed about the group without our having to worry about conservation issues. Notably, some of our higher-needs students found it confusing that when we showed them the historic *Noye's Fludde* headdresses, they were revealed in this dramatic way but then could not be touched, while the modern facsimiles that could be worn were already present on the table: for future visits we will be less concerned with the distinction between the "authentic" heritage item and the facsimile, and instead produce the facsimile from the archive box so that the dramatic reveal feeds straight into the experience of wearing the mask.

The need to have a handling collection of this type will inform our acquisitions policy: we may in future think expressly about acquiring material that we do not intend to keep in perpetuity, simply because it is expendable. Also on the subject of handling things and sensory appeal, we have sensory packs at the reception desk that can be collected and used by visitors who might find it soothing to have fidget toys and similar things to manipulate, a weighted blanket to help with mood regulation, and so on: we found these useful during our programme of special school visits and will increase our offer in this area.

Fig. 3: The Archive Reading Room, where much the learning session took place. Photograph: Philip Vile

The process of preparation in advance of the visit fed into the general offer that The Red House can make to visitors with disabilities. After the visits Autism in Nature produced a short film describing a visit to the Red House and Snape Maltings in the form of a "social story" – an account of a visit setting out, in simple language supported by pictograms, what a visitor can expect. This sort of preparation can be vital for people with autism, who may find new places and new experiences frightening or overwhelming. The film can be seen on YouTube at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LbNLMef5yI8. It is intended to produce a more detailed social story specifically for the Red House, which will sit on the website. This will describe not merely what the Red House is and the types of activities that can be found there, but also the specific sensory elements that may cause difficulty for persons with autism in particular: the places where it is dark, or confined, or where there are strange noises. Within our exhibition space, for instance, is a small darkened area that is modelled on Peter Grimes' hut on the beach in Britten's opera, and within which there is the sound of waves: an autistic person might well find it frightening to approach this darkened space from which come sounds made by something invisible.

Travelling to somewhere new often involves advance planning when the traveller has a disability: this applies just as much to learning difficulties and autism as it does to physical disabilities, and the aim of these initiatives is to make it easier for such disabled visitors – or schools, families or carers – to do the advance planning that can make the difference between a successful visit and an unhappy one.

The main learning outcome, however, was a more general one: we learned more about what we and our archive can achieve in terms of outreach. The process of reaching out to new audiences is always an iterative one, in which advance planning leads to the activity which in turn leads to reflection and refinement of the next set of plans. We have completed one round of that cycle and, now that the pandemic has receded, are keen to feed our learning into planning a new round of activities. We would encourage any other collection that may be wondering whether to try this sort of activity, to take the plunge: our collections, built as they are around sensory and viscerally-impactful material, are capable of communicating to a range of visitors well beyond what one might assume to be the obvious core group. At the start of this exercise we set out to stretch our educational offer beyond the mainstream for which it had been planned, and found that it was more than capable of being adapted to students with special educational needs, sometimes quite high needs. Britten's ethos urges to make our collections of use to people; this exercise demonstrated triumphantly another way of doing this.

Abstract
The Red House in Aldeburgh is the historic home of composer Benjamin Britten and his partner the singer Peter Pears. It is run by Britten Pears Arts, a charity committed to making the arts socially useful. In 2019 the archive at the Red House worked to adapt its existing educational offer for use by local special schools. Advance liaison with schools familiarised students with the venue, and briefed gathered information about groups' needs. A modular structure to the visits enabled them to be customised according to the group's needs. Learnings and outcomes included a social story setting out what to expect at the Red House, provision of sensory packs at reception for visitors with autism, plus greater awareness of the importance of a handling collection and of the sensory impacts of the archive building. The programme was successful and will continue, building on experience.

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THE HEROINE'S 'PROGRESS' IN THREE OPERAS BY MACONCHY, BENNETT AND MUSGRAVE

Nicholas Clark

Introduction

'No scheme that correlates voice types – soprano, tenor, baritone – and types of character will apply to every opera in the repertory,' the philosopher Catherine Clément observes, 'but some generalizations are possible'.[1] Commenting in 2000, she made this point while focussing on heroines in works by Bellini, Verdi, Donizetti, Puccini and Berg to emphasise that, 'In the operas of the nineteenth century almost all heroines are victims, persecuted by men, baritone or bass. The situation of women in the real world has hardly followed a continuous line of progress and liberation, but has sometimes improved, sometimes receded into darkness, as we see from our perspective at the turn of a new century.'[2]

Traditions within opera have evolved over time and the conventions that govern them have changed as well. Whereas it is true that the storyline of many works ranging from *Norma*, *La traviata, Lucia di Lammermoor, Turandot* to *Lulu* culminates with the heroine succumbing to a cruel end, it is worth reviewing this intermittent progress in three operas from the second half of the twentieth century. Unusual plot structure, imaginative characterisation and innovative orchestration/sound effect in three modern works – Elizabeth Maconchy's comedy *The Sofa* (1959), Richard Rodney Bennett's ghostly tragedy *The Mines of Sulphur* (1963) and Thea Musgrave's supernatural romance *The Voice of Ariadne* (1974) – have gone some way in assisting the heroine's transformation from what Clément calls the 'persecuted victim.' As a consequence, her destiny need not be hopeless, but does her progress in these three examples remain a mixture of anguish and triumph that Clément describes? Significantly, other elements such as composer and librettists' choice and interpretation of source material dictate the portrayal of the heroine's struggle to be seen as a figure of autonomy.

[1] Catherine Clément, 'Through voices, history,' in Mary Ann Smart (ed.), *Siren Songs: Representations of Gender and Sexuality in Opera* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), p.p. 21-2
[2] Ibid,' p. 22.

The Sofa

Not surprisingly, there was little room for consideration of comedy in Clément's select list of heroines. However, the genre does offer characters who succumb to callous mistreatment. Mozart's Donna Anna and Donna Elivira from the semi-comic *Don Giovanni* may come to mind. Like *Giovanni*, Elizabeth Maconchy's one-act opera is a mixture of comedy and the supernatural, with a moral message to be gained at its conclusion. Its source lies in the eighteenth-century libertine novel, *Le Sopha, conte moral (The Sofa: a moral tale,* 1742) by Claude-Prosper Jolyet de Crébillon (Crébillon fils). Written amid the vogue for eastern exoticism, it is a fable about witnessing and attaining love in its purest form. The eastern frame for the story explains its surreal premise – the narrator was formerly a piece of furniture. Ursula Vaughan Williams, wife of Maconchy's former composition teacher, drew a libretto freely from Crébillon's tale. Her adaptation revolves around its title 'character', an amorous young prince named Dominic who devotes himself rather too well to life's pleasures.

As the opera opens, we find him in a room, just off from where a lively ball is taking place where he attempts to make love to a young woman, Monique. At first, she takes issue with his loose morals and makes us aware that Dominic's disapproving grandmother, 'the witch' as Monique describes her, is close at hand. Indeed, Dominic confirms, 'I'm never safe from her pursuing power', which prepares us for the magic she enacts. Frustrated by Dominic's devil-may-care attitude to life and love she transforms him into a sofa 'until love's consummation works your release and sets you free to be a man again.' He thus spends much of the rest of the opera with various trysts and conversations about love and its true meaning taking place quite literally in his face.

The work is scored for eight soloists, chorus and a chamber orchestra of fourteen players. Maconchy's musical language, as one might assume, is often tongue-in-cheek. The opening dialogue between Dominic and Monique is full of lyrical snatches that draw our attention to other types of power play at work in the opera, issues such as the dangers imposed by desire and inequality in gender roles. Dominic's attempt to assure us that charm and love are the same is not enough to convince Monique.

The lively pace of Maconchy's score complements Vaughan Williams's light-hearted (and, for the late 1950s, slightly risqué) verse. There is intentional satire of conventional operatic plot, and music, with some unrestrained allusions to the work of Puccini and Mozart. And Vaughan Williams's text invites comparison with the wordplay of the Savoy Operas. Yet *The Sofa* confronts mature themes (albeit in a comical way). The story moves swiftly from what appears to be seduction into farce: not an unusual device, although in this case the transition is aided by an element of fantasy. Composer and

librettist also invert aspects of conventional characterisation. When Dominic refers to a 'pursuing power' he inadvertently introduces a theme of change and transformation. One of the main issues that preoccupy Maconchy and Vaughan Williams is the question of where power resides, and who is ultimately in control of it. *Don Giovanni* was an obvious model, although Dominic woos clumsily, and he receives comeuppance for his lasciviousness well before the opera's closing bars. The elaborate coloratura Maconchy gives the grandmother when she places her spell upon Dominic raises another Mozartian analogy, the Queen of the Night:

> *Come ye powers known or strange*
> *Make him powerless, make him change . . .*
> *My magic art*
> *Shall set apart*
> *This night from all his span.*

Despite the severity of her curse, the grandmother is in essence something of a cross between Humperdinck's witch and Wilde's Lady Bracknell. Although a relatively small part, her impact is pivotal to the way we view subsequent characters who appear in the work. That is because behind the comic, surreal elements of the opera there lies a criticism of the rake's flippant attitude to romance, and to those who will suffer as a result. As Dominic is forced to endure the indignity of being sat upon, he is forced to listen to three young women who enter the stage and discuss the qualities that most appeal in a prospective partner – a conversation and a viewpoint to which he has seldom been privy. Much has been mentioned to them about the theory of love, 'all the sensibilities of sense that we have learnt to recognise in books,' yet they have yet to witness love's reality. Basically this is what Dominic has refused to face up to, the sober aspects of love.

The comedy that Maconchy and Vaughan Williams employ to drive home this point is not new, as Mozart attests, but the means of teaching the rake to reform his ways is certainly novel. The spell that works his release relies upon his witnessing a genuine act of love undertaken on the sofa. One of the young women is pursued by a suitor and on the point at which Dominic looks as though he will materialise as a man his plans are thwarted when lovemaking is replaced by a marriage proposal. Amid the occasional squeaks of discomfort caused by a loose spring the point is made that Dominic's education at this point is clearly incomplete as he compares marriage unfavourably to the pursuit of leisure.

The *Giovanni*-like offer of repentance is ignored until it seems a vein of genuine feeling is tapped. Monique emerges from the ball in the company of a young aristocrat who she has always favoured. When they make love Dominic is released but only to face humiliation. 'Prince or sofa, who knows?

Who saw? Who knows?' proclaim the chorus in bewilderment. To him it is probably as vexing an ordeal as being dragged to hell for lust, but will he be made the better for his experience? He and Monique are left alone as the stage clears and when he professes his love for her it looks as though a change of heart may have taken place. The resolution to the tale relies mostly on convenience. The opera's length (its running time is approximately three quarters of an hour) does not allow for extensive development of character, however the type of story it tells compensates to an extent. It is, after all, based on and old and familiar scenario: the imprudent libertine who is punished for his crimes was a stock figure even in Mozart's time. But the libertine who repents and is made better by his experience is a welcome change, particularly when this is to the heroine's advantage.

Monique, indeed, all the female characters in the opera are given a position of power. Not simply because they are pursued by vapid young men who view the serious subject of love as a foolish game. Maconchy and Vaughan Williams insist that they ask all the important questions, contemplate the issues that their male counterparts ignore. As the three young ladies who sit on the transformed Dominic confirm, they want to experience true 'Passion, the longed for fate for which we stay, – the part that's not exactly told in books.'

The Sofa was premiered by the New Opera Company at Sadler's Wells in December 1959. As a short work it is sometimes paired in performance with another one-act Maconchy opera, *The Departure*.[3] Composed in 1961, and first performed in 1962 by the same company who premiered *The Sofa, The Departure* has a rather different atmosphere. Again, Maconchy and her librettist, poet Anne Ridler employ a component of fantasy; but mystery, rather than comedy, is the driving force in this case. It is the tale of a women who foresees her own death but cannot do anything other than watch as the events surrounding it unfold. She finally confronts her husband about the inevitability of loss and bids an emotional farewell. Again, with a small orchestra and with even fewer singers than *The Sofa* (the cast comprises wife, husband and small off-stage chorus) Maconchy builds the drama in a tender, gradual manner.[4] The tone and content are an obvious contrast to *The Sofa*. However, the question of whether the control of destiny lies in the heroine's hands is a thread that runs through both operas.

[3] Another work, *The Three Strangers* (1958), based on a story by Thomas Hardy with a libretto by the composer completed Maconchy's trilogy of chamber operas.

[4] Stephen Pettit, in his note for the Chandos recording of *The Sofa* and *The Departure,* observes that *The Departure* 'seems to function through a process of emotional intuitiveness, the melodies often moving in stepwise manner, the cadences and harmonies at times bringing to mind the music of Vaughan Williams.' Independent Opera at Sadler's Wells, cond. Dominic Wheeler, 2009. CHAN50108.
https://www.chandos.net/chanimages/Booklets/CH10508.pdf accessed 25 March 2023 (accessed, 11 March 2023).

Perhaps this overshadows Dominic's eventual reprieve and the seemingly comfortable conclusion brought about by his and Monique's reunion. Raising the question rather than providing a definitive answer is what is important. Maconchy and Vaughan Williams's female characters reverse the idea of who traditionally can and should be in control, leaving the audience to ponder Dominic's having learnt a valuable lesson about the meaning of respect and equality. 'Welcome, dear wanderer, to your home at last,' Monique states, a metaphor that conveys reconciliation has taken place after a degree of soul searching. Not everyone was convinced that this was the case. Donald Mitchell found the score too playful, remonstrating in the *Daily Telegraph* that for a piece that has as its basis so erotic a theme, Maconchy's 'music was altogether too amiable and innocent.'[5] Taking issue with the *Telegraph*'s point that the score belied a certain naivety, *Time and Tide* believed the composer treated her theme in an inventive manner and, furthermore, had the musical wherewithal to produce a full-length comic opera.[6] *The Times* paid tribute to the work's originality when remarking, '*The Sofa* is unique in that it includes the only attempt I have ever seen to present the act of copulation on the public stage.'[7] *The Sofa*'s unusual story may have proved a challenge to some critics but, in many ways, it was a forerunner for the experimental opera, drama and musical theatre that would confront difficult or controversial themes in the decade to follow.

The Mines of Sulphur

Themes of control and mistreatment of the heroine are dealt with in a dramatically darker fashion in Richard Rodney Bennett's 1963 three act opera *The Mines of Sulphur.* The work was initially intended for the Aldeburgh Festival but Bennett's busy schedule meant a deferral of its premiere. The third of the composer's operas, following *The Ledge* (1961) and *The Midnight Thief* (1964), was first performed at Sadler's Wells under the musical direction of Colin Davis on the 24 February 1965.

Bennett's librettist, playwright Beverley Cross adapted the text from his drama *Scarlet Ribbons.* He showed the play to producer Colin Graham who in turn gave it to Bennett who worked with Cross for some two years refining and perfecting the libretto. The story is mix of mystery and the supernatural. Cross's first inkling of the plot came when he was stationed during his army days near the School of Infantry on the Salisbury Plain. He read a story about a vicious winter disease that had occurred centuries ago, carried by wandering

[5] Donald Mitchell, "Sofa as Hero of Iconic Plot", in: *Daily Telegraph* (14 December 1959). Elizabeth Maconchy Archive, St. Hilda's College Oxford, PP 1.

[6] Mosco Carner, 'Opera Workshop' *Time and Tide* 40 (26 December 1959), 1431-1432, 1431. Elizabeth Maconchy Archive, St. Hilda's College Oxford, PP 1.

[7] "Double Bill by New Opera Workshop", in: *The Times* (December 14 1959). Elizabeth Maconchy Archive, St. Hilda's College Oxford, PP 1.

merchants from London. This and an interest in the history of itinerant players who visited the area in post-Restoration times gave him the idea for his story. As it happened, Bennett was looking for a dark subject on which to base an opera, 'something violent, pestilential, sinister.'[8]

An isolated mansion, intersecting timelines and a curse from the past enrich the plot, which is set in a manor house in England's west country in the mid-eighteenth century. Here a landowner called Braxton mistreats his servant, Rosalind. An army deserter 'Colonel' Bonconian and a beggar called Tovey enter the house and soon all three are embroiled in a plan to kill Braxton and then leave for America. A troupe of itinerant players resembling a group of actors who visited the house long ago suddenly arrives and Bonconian agrees to give them shelter in exchange for entertainment. They perform 'The Mines of Sulphur,' the story of an elderly count who meets his death at the hands of a young wife and valet. Unnerved by the similarities with Braxton's murder, Bonconian, Tovey and Rosalind's crime is revealed. Bonconian intends to burn the house down with the players imprisoned in the cellar but first he taunts Rosalind by flirting openly with Jenny, one of the players. The actors disappear without a trace and Jenny leaves too but not before Bonconian discovers that she has plague. The opera finishes with Bonconian, Rosalind and Tovey realising they are infected with the fatal disease.

Bennett's score is, like much of his concert music at the time the opera was composed, based around serialism. Fragments of melody are interspersed, such as the reference to a west country folksong quoted by Tovey, although the general musical atmosphere is overwhelmingly dark. In his biography of the composer, Paul Meredith points out that Bennett worked under what appeared to be a subliminal influence of Hans Werner Henze, whose music Bennett greatly admired (although Berg might also come readily to mind).[9] Meredith acknowledges that some critics needed to familiarise themselves with the work before appreciating its nuanced score. He quotes Edward Greenfield of the *Guardian* who praised Bennett for solving 'with enormous confidence the perennial problem facing modern composers – how far should atonal principles be sacrificed in order to make the vocal line singable – or, going further still – tuneful?'[10] The sinister tones and dissonant harmonies evoke the malevolence which Bennett envisioned from the beginning as essential to the atmosphere he wished to create.

Cross drew on a range of literary influences for the story. There are elements of Shakespeare, Poe, even morality fable, and the entire piece is

[8] Programme for the first production of Richard Rodney Bennet's *The Mines of Sulphur*, Sadler's Wells Theatre, 1965, p. 26.

[9] Paul Meredith, *Richard Rodney Bennett: The Complete Musician. The Extraordinary Life of the Multi-talented Composer/Pianist/Singer.* London: Omnibus Press,2010, p. 151. Bennett stated that there is no overt comparison with Henze to be made.

[10] Ibid.

shrouded in a gothic backdrop that certainly suits the time period in which it is set. The tone and ambiance differ considerably from *The Sofa,* as does the characterisation, although a broad comparison draws together some interesting connections. In both operas the male protagonist is under an illusion that he is in control, little realising that power is taken from him by other-worldly forces (a force represented by the grandmother and Jenny respectively). Dominic and Bonconian are also prone to enjoying the ephemeral pleasures of wealth, casual sex, the trappings of good living, and this essentially is their undoing. 'I do not believe in crime or sin,' Bonconain proclaims after Braxton's murder. 'No, I myself control my heart and brain. Man is alone and no God can forgive, or punish. Or deny or rescue him.'

There are also basic similarities to be drawn between the female characters in Bennett and Maconchy's works, primarily in the ways they reveal the truths that evolve in their respective stories. In *The Sofa* the truth in question is to throw off frivolity and discover what lies at the heart of love.

Themes explored in *The Mines of Sulphur* are, however, less to do with love (other than self-love) and more fundamentally to do with sin and retribution. Bennett and Cross question who, if any, are worthy of forgiveness. The lines between the two are finely drawn for some of their characters. The question is more straightforward for others. As mentioned earlier, the differences between good and bad are oblique as far as Bonconian is concerned. He conveniently shuns the idea of punishment for committing murder and even tries to justify his actions by bringing attention to the new life on which he is about to embark. His accomplices see things differently. Tovey reveals his fear of their being found out and his snippets of dialogue indicate the inevitability of some form of recrimination. Of the three house dwellers, it is Rosalind who seeks some genuine hope of escape from the taint of the past in her belief that the New World to which they intend to travel will wash away sin, 'We'll seek forgiveness in our way of life,' she says imploringly, 'Our crime will be wiped out.' This comes with having endured a history of abuse by men who, by comparison, are more morally debased than her. Her father has sold her at market, Braxton has kept her under the pretence of ending his 'loneliness,' and circumstance leads her into Bonconian's path. Through accentuation of the corruption and taint to which she has been subjected Cross and Bennett explain that her faults are not solely of her own making.

Her previous suffering has warranted salvation, but the reality is that, despite their pain, the guilty will be punished. One the most effective devices composer and librettist formulate in this respect is the Shakespearean play within a play that the travelling troupe act out. At first the troupe suggest that their play is a comedy but the title they give it, another Shakespearean allusion, is chosen with an eye toward highlighting the damage that exciting the wrong type of passion can achieve. In Act III, sc. 3 of *Othello* violent jealousy has been provoked and the villain Iago exclaims:

Dangerous conceits are, in their natures, poisons,
Which at the first are scarce found to distaste,
But, with a little, act upon the blood,
Burn like the mines of sulphur.

The players quote these lines when envisioning the house interior as a potential stage set, divulging an inexplicable knowledge of what transpired before their arrival. It is a prescient indication of the payback to come, one that builds subtly within Cross's well-crafted libretto and the ominous sound world Bennett has created. For instance, at one point Jenny teaches Rosalind lines from the play when Rosalind recognises that a potential life as an actress is a means of achieving freedom. Jenny's speech, however, is yet another coded description of the crime in which Rosalind has been implicated. She briefly relates the tale of a man killed by his lover and the cry the lover hears issuing from his grave. Jenny offers both a vision of Rosalind's possible future and a stark impression of her tainted past. When the play follows the 'dream' that Rosalind has identified as a form of release her vision suddenly deteriorates and she more accurately states: 'The dream has become a nightmare.'

Protagonist and victim, Rosalind's fate is partly of her own making. Then again, this is an opera where fate drives her to act against her will, and the outcome, which is anything but positive, is beyond her control. In such a scenario, power is taken from all characters on stage, and they each succumb to the 'dangerous conceits' of their natures. Even Jenny, who has the advantage of foresight, embodies the fatal Classical seer

The intensity of the drama appealed to the opera's first audience. *The Mines of Sulphur* achieved considerable success on its initial run in London. Performances followed in North America, Canada and Europe (the last included a controversial staging at La Scala, Milan under the direction of John Huston). For a time, it looked as though it would make a place for itself in the repertoire, but performances began to trail off in the seventies and it remained largely in the shadows until recent revivals, most notably a 2005 recording by Glimmerglass Opera.[11]

The Voice of Ariadne

Bennett's contemporary Thea Musgrave was also an occasional colleague. Although she has never adopted the same serial language that attracted Bennett, the two collaborated on a variety of musical projects throughout their lengthy friendship. Musgrave, for instance, exercised her skills as a pianist in the opening credits for Bennett's score to Ken Russell's 1967 spy thriller film *Billion Dollar Brain* (which called for no fewer than three keyboard players). Similarly, Bennett assisted with the production of an electronic tape

[11] Richard Rodney Bennett, *The Mines of Sulphur,* premiere recording. Colchester Chandos Digital, CHSA 5036 (2), Glimmerglass Opera and Orchestra, cond. Stewart Robertson, 2005.

required for Musgrave's three act opera *The Voice of Ariadne,* first performed at the 1974 Aldeburgh Festival by The English Opera Group under the musical direction of the composer.

The opera, which calls on the forces of nine singers and chamber orchestra, has a libretto adapted by the Peruvian-born writer Amalia Elguera from the 1874 tale *The Last of the Valerii* by Henry James. As with *The Mines of Sulphur,* James's story is concerned with the past returning to haunt the present. Elguera identified this as a particularly Jamesian trait, one that recurs in other writings such as *The Aspern Papers, The Golden Bowl, The Spoils of Poynton* and *The Turn of the Screw.*

The Voice of Ariadne broadly follows James's narrative, opening with the American wife of Count Marco Valerio summoning guests to celebrate the discovery of the statue of a goddess in the grounds of the Count's ancestral home, the Villa Valerii. According to legend, whoever uncovers the statue will also find happiness. The Count's obsession with the statue turns to depression when he realises that the marble remains are of Ariadne who was abandoned by her lover Theseus on the island of Naxos. As the Count's search for the lost statue continues his true feelings toward his wife are purposely brought into question by the scheming Marchesa Bianca Bianchi. He hears Ariadne calling to him in the villa garden. The desertion she suffered brings him to review the way he has behaved toward the Countess, enabling him finally to value and return her love.

Fig. 1: Thomas Allen as *Count Valerio,* The Voice of Ariadne, *Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh, June 1974.*
Photograph: Nigel Luckhurst © Britten Pears Arts

The supporting characters include guests, the Marchesa, and the head gardener whose interpretation of the Valerii legend keeps to the fore the imminent infiltration of past into present and by implication the impact it might have on the Count and Countess's marriage.

As the title suggests, Ariadne will articulate something of importance. That the Count obsesses over what the statue symbolises and ultimately divulges creates an air of supernatural suspense, of something waiting to be discovered. The tension mounts when Musgrave blurs the distinction between myth and reality. At the heart of the story is the problem of separation and the acute pain that it can cause. The Countess becomes Ariadne, abandoned and distressed by the question of whether her husband remains faithful, or simply whether he remains psychologically present.

The heroine's plight here is manifold. We are brought to question the Count's loyalty to her by the Marchesa's suspicions (she enjoys the idea of his infidelity and mocks the notion that he is infatuated with the mythical Ariadne). Perhaps more challenging is the Countess having to acknowledge that her husband has been possessed by something as seemingly insubstantial as a ghost. But the ghost is here a plot device, alerting us to the fact that husband and wife have drifted apart. The psychological anguish that ensues – an aspect which always interests James – is the heart of the opera, and it is symbolised by this apparent intrusion of the past.

As mentioned, the assistance that Bennett offered Musgrave took the form of preparing recorded sound on a tape that permeates the opera, like a siren's call. In fact, that is exactly the required effect. The opera is written for nine soloists, although one of them appears via the tape, as the voice of Ariadne communicating solely with the Count. The fact that he is the only one who hears her draws upon Stephen Walsh's point that this is not so much a ghost story, but 'a psychological drama and a fable about reconciliation of the quest for an ideal love with the need, in real life, to find love where we can.'[12] We hear what the Count hears, the lamentation of an abandoned lover, one who does not physically exist. The tape produces an ethereal echo effect so that there are two voices, heightening the idea that this is a ghost from the past. The Count can do little other at this point other than bristle in amazement. The emotional distance that has widened between him and his wife begins to contract when composer and librettist bring the two women, one real the other imaginary, literally together. Stage directions call for the Countess to stand on the empty pedestal that the lost statue once occupied.

Although we have been witnessing the Countess's susceptibility to her husband's loss it is now evident that he is the one in danger. 'Here to remind you, my blood I shed,' he exclaims in an appeal to Ariadne, clasping a knife

[12] Stephen Walsh, 'Musgrave's *The Voice of Ariadne*.' *The Musical Times,* June 1974. No. 1576, Vol. 115, p. 465.

in both hands, 'Blood to remind you of men'. The tape intersperses brief phrases, taunting the Count by hinting at the statue's identity. The composer mixed these brief catches of phrase with the sounds of 'intermittent wind and roars,' creating the idea of a completely alien environment, the lonely isle on which Theseus left Ariadne. Uneasy loss from the past merges with prospective loss in the present. The Count, disoriented in his own labyrinth, takes the knife and makes an incision in his left hand, letting the blood drip onto and into the earth, an act accompanied by wild improvised arpeggios in the orchestration. This is a prelude for the final 'return,' a word used recurrently by the Count, Countess and Ariadne to emphasise the isolation all three feel. The Countess's voice gradually melds with that of the statue until she finally supersedes it. She forms the thread between the Valerii myth and reality and, like Ariadne's thread for the Minotaur-hunting Theseus, provides a safe exit for the Count from his labyrinth. The ending sees an optimistic reunion – not always the outcome one expects in Henry James but in this case the 'wanderer', as Monique says at the conclusion of *The Sofa,* is 'home at last'.

The suspense over the Count and Countess's eventual reunion was a feature of the initial critical response to the first production of Musgrave's opera. Desmond Shawe-Taylor commented that the interplay between other characters in the opera was almost something of a distraction to the unfolding tale of the Count's obsession. He found some incongruities in Elguera's text diverted attention from the theme in places, but he praised Musgrave's 'true feeling for the singing voice, shown in long, freely soaring lines that prove grateful both for the unnamed soprano Countess (a distinguished performance in every respect from Jill Gomez) and her baritone Marco (Thomas Allen looking as English as something out of 'The Pallisers'. . .)'[13] William Mann gave a similar opinion, praising the 'apt and lyrical music, grateful to the singing voice, and to the soloists of the Chamber Orchestra. In a nod to the way in which the tension is maintained he noted too 'the prompt response of the music to the progress of the drama.'[14]

[13] Desmond Shawe-Taylor, 'In a Roman Villa', Festival review, *The Sunday Times.* 16 June 1974.
[14] William Mann, review of *The Voice of Ariadne, The Times,* 3 March 1974.

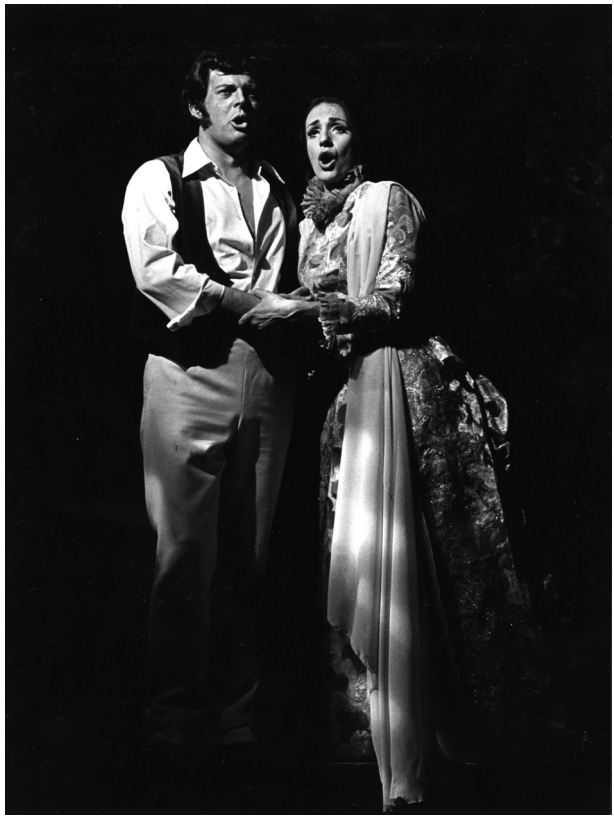

Fig. 2: Thomas Allen as Count Valerio and Jill Gomez as The Countess.
Photograph: Nigel Luckhurst © Britten Pears Arts

The heroine's struggle for acceptance, recognition and love in the face of male opposition was the focus of Elguera and Musgrave's next collaboration, the opera *Mary, Queen of Scots* (1977). Source material taken from history offers specific challenges, such as how close should the character and storyline be to those given to us by biographers. Paying attention to historical accuracy (or otherwise, as Donizetti proved) did not necessarily interfere with the drama. Mary finds that the roles of ruler, wife and sister are brought into conflict with one another by forces that surround her. In this her anxieties bear similarity to those of the Countess who must contend with the trauma of what appears to be a failing marriage. The roles of wife and abandoned lover also come into conflict, although in the latter case they eventually find resolution.

Conclusion

Each of the three works discussed here explore themes that have long formed the dramatic basis for opera. As Catherine Clément reminds us, a familiar trait in opera of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is for the heroine to fall victim to the cruelty of providence or villainy. The length of time between the first appearance of Berg's *Lulu*, the last of the operas Clément selected to illustrate her point, and *The Sofa* is not great. The two works are vastly different in tone and content, but they bring attention in their own ways to the heroine's plight. In terms of theme and character, the mistreatment that Lulu suffers is not unlike that endured by Rosalind. Musgrave's Countess, by comparison, experiences a contrasting fate, but it is hard won. Whether presented in the context of myth, drama or romance, injustice and inequality are issues that composers continue to scrutinise. These three later music dramas show us a deviation from the fate suffered by some of opera's best known female characters. However, issues of equality, abuse, sexual threat and pain of infidelity are hardly new in drama of any sort, and, importantly, they remain a focus of the operatic stage. In these three modern operas, composers and librettists present these themes in strikingly disparate ways.

Abstract

This article examines themes of suffering and empowerment experienced by female characters in three operas — Elizabeth Maconchy's *The Sofa,* Richard Rodney Bennett's *The Mines of Sulphur* and Thea Musgrave's *The Voice of Ariadne*. Taking as a starting point Catherine Clément's observation that the heroine's role in much of the famous operatic repertoire of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries has commonly been that of 'persecuted victim', I survey these later works to note whether composer and librettist have either conformed to or challenged this perception. Elements such as choice and interpretation of source material, innovative characterisation and even sound effect play a part in shaping the heroine's fate.

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OBITUARY
JANE HARINGTON, 1931-2022

Rosalind Cyphus, with contributions from Celia Bangham (niece), Bridget Palmer, Liz Hart and IAML (UK & Ireland) colleagues

Jane Harington
Photograph: Family Archive

It was with sadness that we learned of the death on 18th November 2022 of Jane Harington, one-time Librarian at the Royal Academy of Music. The youngest of three children, Jane was born to Sir Charles and Lady Jessie McCririe Harington. Her father came from a baronetcy descended from Sir John Harington, Physician to Queen Elizabeth I. He was a Professor of Chemical Pathology and later became Director of the National Institute for Medical Research. Her mother had studied medicine at Edinburgh, though she never used her training because it was customary at that time for women not to work

upon marrying. Jane's brother Michael, and sister Alison both studied medicine and became doctors. Jane briefly attended the North London Collegiate School, and then went to a convent school in Wiltshire following the family's evacuation to Warminster during the war. She graduated from Girton College Cambridge in French and German, and became an accomplished, versatile musician, singing as well as playing piano and organ. Jane was awarded the University of London Diploma in Librarianship in 1957, submitting a bibliography of Henry Lawes[1] in part fulfilment of the qualification's requirements.

In 1966, aged 35, she was appointed Librarian at the Royal Academy of Music, under the Principalship of Sir Thomas Armstrong, anecdotal evidence suggesting that she was headhunted for this position. Jane's first significant achievement at the Academy was to oversee the move of the library into new accommodation, and the opening of the new library by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother on 7th March 1968. The following is an extract from the minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 24 January 1968:

> The Principal suggested, and it was agreed, that Miss Harington (the Librarian) and Mr. Stock (her Associate – who had recently completed forty years in the service of the Academy), should receive the distinction of Honorary Associate of the Royal Academy of Music, and that the opportunity should be taken to ask Her Majesty to present these diplomas to them.

Writing in the *R.A.M. Club Magazine* (No.194 (Midsummer 1968), p.5) about the new Library and how she sees her role as Librarian, Jane describes the Library's function of 'providing a house for what it has collected . . . preserving this for an indefinite future . . . [and] . . . making its stock known to its members and building this up to meet their present and future needs'. She speaks of how 'deciding what to keep and what to acquire is in fact the most difficult task of a librarian', and she goes on to describe how this work of collection building involves 'sift[ing] what we have now, ridding the library only of unneeded duplicates and the unbalanced proportion of less worthwhile music, and look[ing] for gaps which must be filled, attending especially to particular personal connections with this institution'. From time to time subsequent issues of the magazine carried updates on recent acquisitions, including some significant collections of scores, some from individuals, others from institutions revealing Jane's knack of fostering fruitful connections (French Embassy; Prague Conservatoire; Norwegian Embassy; Lehman Foundation; Union of USSR Composers). These updates were always accompanied by

[1] Jane Harington, 1957. *Henry Lawes: Printed Editions of his Work and Sources of Information Thereon*. (copies held in the libraries of the Royal Academy of Music, University College London & University of London (Senate House)).

appeals for donations of specific areas of stock where the collections were wanting.

Jane commanded enormous respect from library staff and users alike through her extensive knowledge and her commitment to enhancing and building the library collections, including sourcing valued additions through connections she had made both at home and abroad. Those who were fortunate to work with Jane received thorough and informative training which will have continued to serve them throughout their careers. Jane could appear stern – one former colleague recalls being reprimanded on their first day for being late (through no fault of their own) – yet those who came to know her well became aware of her kind and gentle nature. Sarah Hogan recalls:

> The one thing I will always remember about Jane is the way she stood up for the Library Assistants. When I worked at the Academy Library, it was a very dusty place, the top shelves rarely got cleaned and your clothes got very grubby moving stock around. When management complained about the way we library assistants were dressed (I always wore dungarees and my fellow library assistant at the time wore jeans) she really stepped up and defended us, making it quite clear that conditions dictated our dress, and also her own! I really enjoyed working with her at the Academy and that job was what set me off on my Library career.

Kathryn Adamson, who recently retired from her post as Librarian at the Academy, has commented: 'Although I never worked with Jane, her many visits to the Academy Library after her retirement were always a treat, I suspect as much for her as they were for us, as she shared very valuable nuggets of information about the collections.' Katharine Hogg, also a successor to Jane as Librarian, recounts that 'Jane was very helpful with the historic issue of *Brio*[2] for its anniversary when I was editor, sending in her own contribution'. Indeed, she was very active and highly regarded in IAML at both national and international level and is remembered by friends and colleagues with a mixture of awe and huge respect, as an impressive and lovely lady. Contemporary colleagues, especially new recruits to the profession, speak of learning a lot from her. John Wagstaff recalls how kindly and helpful she was towards a 'new boy', and Janet Smith, then completely new to music librarianship, found her 'always friendly at conferences and particularly helpful in showing me round the RAM'.

Throughout her career Jane attended many of the UK Branch Annual Conferences, her last being at Reading University in 1986, the year she retired. She was also on the Organising Committee for international IAML's Annual Meeting at Bedford College London in 1973, and went to a number of the

[2] Jane Harington, 'Walter Henry Stock', *Brio,* vol. 50 no. 2, Autumn/Winter 2013, p.76

other Annual Meetings abroad. She gave a paper on qualifications for conservatory [sic] librarians at Lisbon in 1978 which was later published in *Fontes*[3] and demonstrates her highly practical approach. While recognising that without library skills conservatory librarians are going to be less useful guides to, and buyers of, their stock, she places musical qualifications first because, in her view,

> they are the most important, and by them [qualifications] I mean some proficiency in at least one instrument. . . . In music colleges, customers know quite a lot about what they want in their own specialities; on the other hand they arrive without a great deal of background knowledge of repertoire and history. Whether or not they know exactly what form of score they are looking for, it is important for their librarian to remain at least one jump ahead, and to know how to anticipate the various problems they may meet. These include matters as basic as making sure chamber music sets have the right contingent of separate parts; as diverse as not objecting if a part comes back sliced across to make a turn possible or a volume is loosened so that it will stay open on a desk; being aware of different editions of vocal scores which may or may not have a particular aria in the original key or form, of transposed piano parts to go with a re-tuned violin or double bass, of bass trombones wanting to be separated from tenor trombones; and the various preferences of lutenists for different sorts of notation.

During this time, Jane was also Assistant Organist to Martindale Sidwell at Hampstead Parish Church and sang in the Hampstead Choral Society of which Sidwell was Music Director. She also found time to study Greek, Russian, Arabic and Botany.

Jane retired in 1986, and – having loved living in Wiltshire during the war – moved back there to enjoy a long and active retirement pursuing her many hobbies including playing the organ and running a children's choir at the local church, choral singing in Salisbury, spinning and dyeing yarn to knit, gardening and reading. She also went on meticulously planned journeys by rail in Europe, India and on the Trans-Siberian Railway. She was able to live independently until shortly before her death and is remembered fondly by all who knew her. Her funeral – for which Jane had carefully selected the music (including Purcell's *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts*) and readings (four from the Bible and one from Cardinal Newman's *Dream of Gerontius*) - took place on 7th December 2022 at St Augustine's Church, Upton Lovell.

[3] Jane Harington, 'The Qualifications for Conservatory Librarians', *Fontes Artis Musicae*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1979, pp. 93–95

Brio Volume 60, Number 1 pp 73-76

EXHIBITION REVIEW

MUSIC FOR THE KING: THE CONCERT OF ANTIENT MUSIC

The Foundling Museum 40 Brunswick Square London WC1N 1AZ

13 January – 8 October 2023[1]

A pair of cats claw at each other, suspended from the ceiling; senior politicians threaten each other with dustpans and brushes, while another spanks the bare bottoms of two crying children; a bonneted bird glares indignantly at the Queen Consort; and the royal hounds pursue a fox across the stage. Meanwhile, King George III sits to the side in a state of Handel-induced bliss, seemingly unaware of the chaos ensuing around him. James Gillray, in his 1787 engraving *Ancient Music,* is more concerned with providing political commentary than an accurate depiction of a Concert of Antient Music performance, but it makes a striking centrepiece to the Foundling Museum's exhibition *Music for the King: The Concert of Antient Music*.

Drawing together a wide variety of materials, the exhibition outlines the activities of this popular and long-lived concert-giving society (active 1776-1848), and introduces some of its more important characters, such as its conductor and manager, Joah Bates (c.1741-1799) (who is caricaturised as a bull in Gillray's engraving), and his wife, Sarah Harrop (1758-1811). Portraits of performers such as Elizabeth Billington (1765-1818), James Bartleman (1769-1821) and William Knyvett (1779-1856) are displayed with informative labels outlining their contributions to the Concert of Antient Music, and in some instances the pairing of these portraits with the singer's original payment receipts offers a fascinating and more tangible look into a musician's working life in Georgian London. Other ephemeral items, such as tickets and diary entries, similarly help to illustrate the experience of attending as an audience member. In one such diary entry, Handel devotee James Harris describes a 1778 concert with disarming honesty: "a little good, & much trash". The identifying and including of supplementary items such as these is one of the exhibition's many strengths.

[1] For admission charges and other information, see https://foundlingmuseum.org.uk/event/music-for-the-king-the-concert-of-antient-music/ (accessed 20 April, 2023).

One such unique item is the Concert of Antient Music's register of performances, 1776-1791. Here, works in the Concert's library are listed and annotated with performance dates. The existence of such a register allows for easy identification of the most commonly-performed works in the series, and seeing the meticulous indexing by the Concert's administrators is gratifying to the music librarian two centuries later. Several references to the Concert's large performance library are made by the exhibition, although visitors are not made aware that this impressive library is still extant at the Royal College of Music. The register of performances sits open alongside a programme corresponding to the page chosen, a clever interpretative gesture. Adjacent to these text-based materials are paintings and engravings, lending welcome variety and colour to the otherwise monotone nature of the primary source materials.

The use of a mixture of printed and manuscript materials to tell the story of the Concert of Antient Music's relationship to Handel's aria *Lascia ch'io pianga* is a particular highlight. From its re-orchestration by Henry Bishop, to its being programmed, performed and finally published, each stage of this process is documented. On display are Bishop's manuscript, arranged expressly for this performance; the performers' programme, with singer Pauline Viardot's name provided in manuscript as "Viordod"; a letter from one of the Concert's directors to music publisher Lonsdale, giving permission for Bishop's arrangement to be published; and the printed score, published by Lonsdale later that same year. This imaginative storytelling is particularly effective at highlighting not only the musical, but the administrative and business side of running such a series of concerts.

As one would expect from the Foundling Museum, much of the exhibition is centred around Handel. In this instance, however, it is the Concert of Antient Music themselves who are responsible for this particular bias. The Concert's 1827 library catalogue contained 65 pages, over 50 of which were dedicated to the works of Handel. The many programmes on display likewise testify to this fixation on Handel. As the name *Music for the King* implies, the patronage of King George III (said to have favoured Handel's music "to the exclusion of all others") was a significant endorsement for the organisation. While the Concert was not founded to promote Handel's music alone (instead promoting all "antient" music, that is, music more than twenty years old), the noble directors, to whom programming responsibilities fell, undoubtedly felt that the King's patronage was too precious a prize to risk losing. A parallel may be drawn to the modern day, where financial factors still drive many programming decisions. The King's presence at the Concerts undoubtedly sold tickets; ironically, it was widely known that the King himself was not a paying subscriber.

However, even after the King's death in 1820, programmes remained

relatively intransigent. Perhaps as an appeasement to critics, an attempt was made to add variety to later programmes: "We are happy to announce that the Concerts of Antient Music will be continued", ran a notice in *The Athenaeum* in 1833, "on the promise of Lord Burghersh, that the concerts shall be remodelled . . . one act of each performance shall consist entirely of the works of modern masters." While the opening concert of the 1833 season did not make good on this promise (consisting of eleven Handel works alongside six works by other composers, only one of whom had even been alive in the nineteenth century), slow signs of change are evidenced by other programmes of this period. This essentially amounted to the inclusion of one or two works by composers such as Beethoven and Romberg, but the pre-eminence of the likes of Handel, Pergolesi and Geminiani persisted. The inclusion of Beethoven as an "antient" composer alongside these names is somewhat jarring to the modern-day music student, who has learned to place "romantic" composers into a firmly contrasting musical period. Evidently, the Concert's directors felt this tension, too. Yet by 1850, two years after the Concert of Antient Music's dissolution, even controversial works like Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique* would have qualified for inclusion under the Concert's own definition of "antient". Had this definition become too broad for a society whose founding aims included the promotion of traditional social values through the performance of "serious" music? As time rolled on, the directors' reluctance to update programmes as promised did not go unnoticed, and the demise of the Concert of Antient Music was ironically hastened by a reputation for anachronism. While this exhibition features material from all periods of the Concert's existence, including these latter years, this interesting tale of its increasing perceived insignificance is sadly not mentioned.

This is a pity, for the exhibition's explanatory labels are extremely well written: while the information given does not presume too high a familiarity with the subject, there is detail enough to hold the attention of those more accustomed to the Georgian musical world. Technical jargon is largely avoided, although one comment regarding the relationship of ancient music to "cosmological doctrine" went over the head of this reviewer. Loan items are clearly credited, and the inclusion of library shelfmarks for these items will be especially welcomed by those who may wish to consult these or similar items when they are returned to their permanent homes. Of particular use are the explanations of Gillray's engraving and John Doyle's 1838 lithograph *Ancient Concert*, both of which use the well-known Concert of Antient Music to make light of political matters of the day. With those particular political battles long forgotten, the concise but unpatronising explanations of these images allow even today's visitor to appreciate the humour.

We are told that the Concert of Antient Music was sufficiently well-known for Gillray and Doyle to be confident that their musical engravings would be

understood by the general public. A welcome addition to the exhibition would be further examples of the public's reception to this long-running concert series. Besides Harris's aforementioned diary entries from the Concert's early days, no other accounts of attending one of these performances is given. The inclusion of a concert review, or other published references to the Concert, may help to highlight to the visitor the series' popularity and standing through the eyes of the public. One area where this is well shown, however, is through the inclusion of some of the many song sheets published as being "sung at the Concert of Antient Music" – the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century equivalent of "as seen on TV". The commercial advantage of associating a music publication with a famous singer or concert series is well-demonstrated in these items; in another nod to the Concert's preferred composer, all three are by Handel.

Music for the King is an impressive and fascinating exhibition, well worth the time of any reader of *Brio*. A permanent display on *Messiah* is also open to visitors, the material complementing the Handel-oriented Concert of Antient Music. Its few omissions are perhaps explained by want of space, and these do not detract from what amounts to a pleasant and stimulating visit in the Museum's peaceful surroundings.

Jonathan Frank

Brio Volume 60, Number 1 pp 77-84

BOOK REVIEWS

edited by Martin Holmes

Eric Saylor, *Vaughan Williams*. (The Master Musicians). New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. xv, 339 p. ISBN 9780190918569. Hardback. £26.99. [E-book version also available]

This ground-breaking biography of a familiar composer is a welcome contribution to the literature, offering fresh perceptions and based on solid research. Vaughan Williams combined a variety of roles in his life, as composer, conductor, folk-song collector, hymn-tunes editor (and composer), philanthropist, teacher and scholar. Saylor successfully encompasses the breadth of this range of activity in a well-structured and very readable biography, alternating chapters on the biographical details of a period with a study of the corresponding musical works composed at that time. This chronological arrangement avoids too much repetition and allows the reader to follow the development of the composer's musical work in the context of his life as a whole. The study benefits from drawing on newly accessible resources, including the database of more than 5,000 of the composer's letters, as well as on recent scholarship.

The composer's 'early life' – the period before Vaughan Williams achieved much critical acclaim – is particularly well-documented, with meticulous detail about the early and lesser-known works, placed in the context of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century environment in which they were composed. The reader is introduced to works composed for specific occasions, both amateur and professional, for which Vaughan Williams had regard for the musical resources available; many of these works are little-known today as performance opportunities and changing social norms have moved so far from the pre-war world. The struggle with performances of works which were less successful and the experiments with different forms are all carefully documented to provide a thorough assessment. After these early works, the compositions for which the composer is perhaps best-known today marked Vaughan Williams' public recognition, with *A Sea Symphony*, *A London Symphony*, *The Lark Ascending* and the *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis* all composed before the First World War. The composer's war experience is considered in the context of the pastoral works and the post-war classicism of the next group of works, and Saylor draws on the composer's experiences, including the loss of close friends in the war, to frame a context for these compositions. Similarly, the author shows that the composer's relationships

with his publishers (particularly Oxford University Press) and the BBC in the 1930s reinforced his status as a leading and established composer, and gave him the confidence to take more creative risks in works such as the *Piano Concerto*, *Dona Nobis Pacem*, *Riders to the Sea* and the Fourth Symphony.

The chapters covering the later years inevitably cover subjects and works which have been more fully treated elsewhere in the literature, as Vaughan Williams was by then a major figure and his works were received and discussed accordingly. Saylor delves into the radio and film music composed in the 1940s during the war years, some of the composer's most creative works of the period, while assessing his last works in the context of the new generation of young composers around him.

The chapters describing, analysing and assessing the musical works are necessarily light-touch – this is not a heavy and detailed analysis of the works, but rather draws together compositional styles and threads, and places works contextually in the composer's output. A knowledge of the works discussed is advantageous for the reader, and for those less familiar there is an enticement to listen to and study them further. Saylor highlights the various musical influences in Vaughan Williams' career – not only his teachers and mentors, but also the musical traditions of folk-song, the English musical Renaissance, and the music of his fellow composers.

For those less familiar with the composer's life, there is a wealth of biographical detail, including his work on official bodies dealing with interned musicians, refugees, and projects developed by forerunners of the Arts Council, as well as his active philanthropy and discreet personal support for music and musicians. Both an idealist and a pragmatist, Vaughan Williams combined a comfortable upbringing among the gentry with a socialist outlook, and recognised his own privilege in being able to give time to his composing career, while maintaining a concern for those who might be struggling financially. While his pragmatism recognised war as a necessary evil, his support for pacifist colleagues such as Tippett and Bush led to a clash with the BBC in 1940, when he objected to the corporation's blacklisting of Alan Bush due to his Communist connections. A letter to *The Times* articulated Vaughan Williams' views on freedom of speech and the blacklisting was rescinded. The composer also actively advocated for a Federal Union of Europe, while contributing musically and domestically to the war effort. The composer's complicated web of family and friends and their inter-relations is explained throughout the work, and his relationships with both his first wife Adeline and his second wife Ursula, and their relationship with each other, is documented dispassionately, drawing on their correspondence and that of contemporaries.

A selection of plates depicting the composer and key figures in his lifetime includes some less-familiar photographs, and there are useful appendices. A

Calendar of the composer's life alongside contemporary musicians and musical events is a helpful check on dates, although the latter is rather heavy on birth and death dates rather than musical events. It is however a reminder that Vaughan Williams started his career at the end of the nineteenth century in a very different musical landscape from that of his later years. The author cautions that the worklist in Appendix B is comprehensive but not exhaustive, and the reader is referred to Michael Kennedy's published catalogue of the works for a more comprehensive list, although this present volume does include minor corrections to Kennedy's catalogue. The third appendix provides short pen portraits of personalia and is particularly useful for those people who are not included in the major dictionaries, as well as providing useful introductory notes to those unfamiliar with the musical world of the time. A select bibliography completes the appendices, and there are extensive endnotes and both a general index and an index of works. The publication from the American offices of Oxford University Press is reflected in the language and the use of US currency comparators, and the proof-reader has missed a glaring error in the contents list ('Index of Words' instead of 'Works'). I could not quite understand the decisions behind which work titles to italicise in the text but these are a minor quibbles. Saylor's book is to be recommended for both public and academic libraries, at a welcome affordable price, as an essential scholarly work and also an accessible read.

Katharine Hogg

Caroline Davison, *The Captain's Apprentice: Ralph Vaughan Williams and the story of a folk song*. London: Chatto & Windus, 2022. xii, 386 p. ISBN 978178444540. Hardback. £20.

This is not only the best book about Vaughan Williams that I have ever read,[1] it is also one of the best books about any musician that I have ever read. It is about so much more than Vaughan Williams, and it is about so much more than one folksong or indeed folksongs generally. The author's opening account of Vaughan Williams' visit to King's Lynn in 1905 to collect some songs is not only meticulously researched but also fluently and elegantly described, setting the tone for the rest of the book and drawing the reader into this absorbing narrative. Like many of his contemporaries, RVW had become motivated to go round England collecting native folksongs before the exponents of the repertory all died out and the songs were lost to posterity. A local clergyman had tipped off RVW that he might be well rewarded by visiting

[1] Even above two other remarkable and outstanding recent volumes: Eric Saylor's *Vaughan Williams* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022) in the *Master Musicians* series; and *The edge of beyond: Ralph Vaughan Williams in the First World War* by Stephen Connock (Tonbridge: Albion Music, 2021).

Lynn (as it is known locally) to hear some local singers, fishermen living in the North End. Vaughan Williams' pursuit of these songs, and the impact on him of one in particular, is the thread running throughout this well illustrated book. I was so engaged by Caroline's account that, living just over twenty miles away, I was inspired to return even unto Lynn, which I know well, to follow in the footsteps of RVW. Caroline's evocation of the Lynn of 1905, especially the then desperately squalid North End, and of the area after its comprehensive postwar redevelopment, is moving, riveting and accurate. Thanks to her I was able to locate with ease the pub (now a douce private house but still proudly exhibiting the plaque identifying its connection with RVW) where Vaughan Williams' fisherfolk sang their songs, also to walk along the short surviving stretch of road that alone contains original housing in the area, and to have lunch at the museum in the grounds of which stand two surviving cottages the type of which housed his singers and where, in all probability, he undertook his practical collecting, listening to them singing, and noting down their songs, one of which, "The Captain's Apprentice", remained with him throughout his life, as we shall see.

From this thread the author spins a capacious and embracing garment. RVW incorporated the tragic song "The Captain's Apprentice" prominently into his first *Norfolk Rhapsody.* Caroline provides biographies for the singer, Duggie Carter, for several other singers from whom RVW collected songs in Lynn, and not least for the putative Apprentice of the song. The origins of the song are sought well beyond Norfolk, and a trip to the Outer Hebrides, her account enhanced with relevant personal observations regarding her own family, is effortlessly and seamlessly incorporated into the narrative. The tragedy of the song involves the cruel mistreatment of the Apprentice, and as well as noting a credible individual as the subject of the version collected by RVW, Caroline finds similar songs telling of similar cruelties, and discovers details of resulting court cases, including the one relating to the subject of Duggie Carter's song. She even finds the workhouse where the cabin boy himself, Robert Eastick (identified in 1999 by Elizabeth James, duly credited), was brought up; identifies the ship, its owner, and its captain who was blamed and prosecuted for Robert's death at sea in 1856 "in suspicious circumstances".

As an enchanting and perceptive counterpoint to the account of her own upbringing and its musical content, Caroline goes on to discuss Vaughan Williams' relationship with women during his life – early family life, early years of marriage to Adeline, collecting folksongs with Lucy Broadwood – and not only his own interest in folk music but also its wider ramifications for English music in the early decades of the twentieth century. In other words, every topic with which she unfailingly deals so engagingly, blossoms into a bigger picture, a fruitful seed growing into a rewarding whole, yet all those topics take their part smoothly and steadily within the quite breathtaking

sweep and landscape of this authoritative and approachable book. A beautifully judged coda brings us up to the terrible floods that created such carnage along the East Anglian coast from North Norfolk to Essex in 1953, moving Patrick Hadley to compose his 1955 cantata *Fen and Flood* of which, with his permission, Vaughan Williams made an expanded arrangement. In 1956, two years before his death, this received its premiere, in the very church in King's Lynn where, in 1827, Robert Eastick's parents were married, and where, in 1865, Duggie Carter was married. Significantly, Hadley concluded his cantata with a version of "The Captain's Apprentice", attracting RVW to the cantata itself, and confirming RVW's engagement with this song till the end of his days.

Richard Turbet

Lucien Durosoir, *Ma Chère Maman – Mon Cher Enfant: The Letters of Lucien and Louise Durosoir, 1914-1919*. Edited and translated by Elizabeth Schoonmaker Auld. Charleston: Blackwater Press, 2022. x, 544 p. ISBN: 9781735774770. Paperback. £19.99.

Ma Chère Maman – Mon Cher Enfant is a collection of the letters exchanged between the French composer and violinist Lucien Durosoir (1878-1955) and his mother Louise (d. 1934) during their daily correspondence in World War I.

Lucien had been a successful concert violinist before the outbreak of war, performing the French premières of works such as Richard Strauss's *Violin Concerto in D Minor*. His father Léon had died in 1890 in tragic circumstances (he caught pneumonia after saving two children from drowning in an icy lake). His mother Louise remarried a wealthy arts patron and Louise herself inherited a large property portfolio from her parents.

Free of monetary constraints, Lucien was free to pursue a career as a violinist, studying (briefly) at the Conservatoire Supérieur in Paris and later in Frankfurt. He spent the period 1901 to 1914 as a soloist performing concerts throughout Europe.

At the outbreak of war in 1914, Lucien joined up as an ordinary soldier and served until 1919 in a variety of posts throughout the conflict, as a front-line soldier, stretcher-bearer, pigeon-keeper and musician. He refused an officer commission offered to him in 1915.[2]

After the War, Lucien never fully returned to the concert platform – he was offered the position of first violin with the Boston Symphony Orchestra but was unable to accept after his mother became ill. He spent the rest of his life away from the concert platform in Bélus, a small commune in the far

[2] 23/3/2015, p. 81

South West of France, turning to composition and family life until his death in 1955.

His oeuvre mainly consists of chamber works for piano and violin, although he did write some works for voice and for larger forces, including a substantial and a distinctly odd orchestral suite, *Funérailles* (1930).[3] Despite a small revival of his works in the last decade, driven primarily by his family, he remains obscure; he has no entry in *Grove* for example.

Elizabeth Schoonmaker Auld, a friend of the Durosoir family, has completed an immense task of transcribing, editing and translating these handwritten letters into English from his family's archive, and the result is well over 500 pages of Lucien's correspondence with his mother on an almost daily basis. In her editorial introduction, she details her method and notes that it was "impossible to present the letters in their entirety; they are too long, there are too many, they are often repetitive".

There's a somewhat hackneyed adage about World War I that it consisted of "months of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror". This weighty tome is a testament to that viewpoint; and unfortunately, I did feel that "too long . . . too many . . . often repetitive" was still a problem with the book and that it would have benefitted from being less comprehensive. Given that letters in 1914 were the equivalent of telephone or text conversations, it does feel like reading the transcriptions of a daily phone call to a parent.

Undoubtedly, Durosoir was experiencing terrible hardships and you do get a sense of the daily life of a French soldier (albeit one whose experience was atypical) – the constant shelling, high command incompetence and hatred of the *Boche* (as he mostly calls the Germans throughout) – but the sheer number of letters means that the more interesting entries tend to get a bit buried amongst the daily drudge, where he mostly complains about food, the weather, sleeping arrangements, and what he's rehearsing that week.

His entry for 7 June 1915 for example is a blow-by-blow account of his experience of a battle to retake Neuville-Saint-Vaast, and through it we get a visceral sense of hand-to-hand, almost guerrilla combat:

> *"You cannot possibly imagine what this war is like; I will never forget. We had to move every ruin, behind every stone was a German. There were barricades everywhere with machine guns, all of that under a shower of bomb and grenades and asphyxiating gas . . . My rifle, in my hands, was broken by a bomb and all that with shells whistling an exploding constantly, day and night."*

[3] This work has been recorded by the Radio France Philharmonic as part of a survey of WW1 composers on the CD *Funéraille* (Editions Hortus: HORTUS736)

But we then get a long reply from his mother in which one senses she cannot comprehend what her son is experiencing, and doesn't really know how to answer. Like Lucien, his mother also complains quite a lot, but hers tend to be a bit trivial by comparison – complaints about the coal man, rental income and the weather. Some of his mother's letters are missing, as he was unable to retain them at the front, meaning at points in the sequence you have to piece together her message from his letters.

For some readers, the epistolatory form will be entertainingly varied, ranging as it does from sheer terror to the amusingly mundane (the day after the Battle of the Somme breaks out, Lucien asks Louise not to send him any more soft fruit in parcels as it arrived squashed)[4].

There are also some interesting vignettes of life behind the lines; when he is tasked to look after a loft of messenger pigeons in 1917, we discover that the method to get them to return to the coop is to starve them in the trenches and feed them up back at base.[5] We also hear about him having his first flight in an aeroplane in 1917[6], or his friend André Caplet returning from Claude Debussy's death bed.[7] That this came in the same week as news of the death of Lili Boulanger was a double blow for Caplet.

Indeed, André Caplet figures quite heavily in the letters. In 1915, Durosoir, the cellist Maurice Maréchal, Henri Lemoine and André Caplet formed a string quartet which played regular concerts for soldiers and officers. A sympathetic officer had recognised that this band of talented musicians would be well-placed to provide entertainment for the somewhat demoralised French forces. The travails of this quartet, playing for soldiers and officers near the front line form the topic of much of his correspondence to his mother.

In her introduction, Schoonmaker Auld tells us that her original intention had been to translate a selected edition of Durosoir's letters from 2005 which she "had trouble putting down", presumably *Deux musiciens dans la grande guerre*[8] which contains correspondence of Durosoir and the cellist Maurice Maréchal during their period with this scratch quartet.

I must admit, I did find myself thinking that I would have preferred to have been reading a translation of that book, or a wider selection of letters than simply those between Lucien and his mother.

One of the delights of letter collections can be the candid nature of correspondence between two confidants, both of whom know that their words will not go any further (or at least until researchers get their hands on them). Letters between close friends can be most revealing; one thinks of the waspish

[4] 3/7/1916, p. 262
[5] 14/11/1917, p. 413
[6] 8/8/1917, p. 391
[7] 4/4/1918, p. 456
[8] *Deux Musicians et le Grande Guerre* (Paris: Editions Tallandier, 2005).

exchanges in the *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson* where we can read their unguarded opinions on fellow musicians.[9]

Similarly, letters between lovers or spouses have the frisson of closeness or even eroticism, but as these are exclusively letters to his mother, I almost got the feeling that Lucien was playing down some of the danger he was in, and one suspects may have been self-censoring other aspects of his life. Lucien and Louise are clearly close, but does one tell one's mother everything? Quite often he just seems a bit annoyed with her.

As a research tool, the book is limited by not having an index, which makes finding specific battles, personalities or topics quite hard in such a dense book. I felt that the letters may have been more successfully presented on a website (similar to the letters on the Vaughan Williams Foundation website), or an e-book with a text search.

By contrast to the aforementioned composers, Lucien Durosoir is not well-known and I did find myself wondering who the target audience of the book would be, given its substantial heft. My thoughts are that it may appeal to people with an interest in this period of history, particularly as Durosoir survived the whole duration of the War, and saw much of the French experience at first hand, and also those interested in music played at the front line.

Ultimately it may appeal if you simply enjoy reading somebody else's letters. I just wish it had been a little more selective.

Robert Weedon

[9] *Letters of Gerald Finzi and Howard Ferguson* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2001).

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