

A Portrait of the Pianist Adolph Hallis (1896-1987)

By N. William Snedden

Prelude

An enquiry recently posted to the chairman of the Bliss Society, in turn relayed to the present author, posed an intriguing question sent in by a British film music historian: Did Arthur Bliss help to score Alfred Hitchcock's 1932 early talkie *Number Seventeen* which is credited on screen to the South African concert pianist Adolph Hallis? Behind the question was an opinion that the music sounded remarkably like Bliss, which admittedly, to some ears, it may well do when comparing the film's opening chords with, say, the 'Prologue' for H.G. Wells's film *Things to Come* which premiered in London four years later.¹ Surely if Bliss played some important role here he would have mentioned as much in his memoir and other writings. But, to this author's knowledge, there is no citation to be found in any book or dictionary regarding Bliss working with Hitchcock or collaborating with Hallis. To cut a very long story short, there can be no doubt that Hallis wrote for Hitchcock, most probably unaided, and to prove the point there is an even earlier sound film made by Hitchcock, *Rich and Strange* (1931), with a score composed by Hallis under the pseudonym/anagram 'Hal Dolph'.² His earliest piano composition was in fact stimulated by a late nineteenth century painting by Gustave Doré, so Hallis's interest in music and the graphic arts dates to a very early age (Fig. 1). Much else besides emerged from the research conducted by this author on the pianist's career, an extraordinary story worth telling about a remarkable musician whose gifts touched the lives of many, the story a man who met and played to Ravel in Paris, who championed music by a generation of young composers emerging from the British school post Delius, who accompanied Joseph Szigeti and toured with Paul Robeson, and whose first wife knew the likes of Matisse and 'Les Six'.

*Early Career Highlights*³

1896-1919

- Born 4 July 1896 in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, to Joseph Hallis (c.1866-1939, a general merchant from Austria⁴) and Clara Hallis née Lilien (c.1868-1942 from Poland⁵). Parents take him to Vienna aged seven where he studies for two years with **Paula Szalit** (c.1886-1920, a pupil of **Leschetizky**). Public debut playing Mozart's Piano Concerto K466 aged eight. Returns to South Africa taking further lessons from pianist and borough organist of Port Elizabeth **Roger Ascham** (1864-1934). Awarded overseas scholarship⁶ from the University Cape of Good Hope, studying at the Royal Academy of Music, London, under **Oscar Beringer** (1844-1922, a pupil of Moscheles and Tausig). Performs in Duke Hall RAM November 1913⁷ and in Nottingham June 1914. Awarded Challen & Son gold medal (1914), Philip L. Agnew prize, Frederick Westlake prize and Alexander Roller prize (all for piano, 1915); also awarded Battison Haynes prize for composition. Returns to South Africa for the duration of WW1 teaching at Cape Town College of Music under its principal Professor **W.F. Bell** (1873-1946).

1919-1929

- Returns to London in 1919 studying with **Tobias Matthay** (1858-1945, a pupil of Sullivan, Sterndale Bennett and Prout). Gives solo and chamber recitals in London (Wigmore Hall debut 1919), Paris, and throughout Europe, accompanying the Belgian violinist Andre Polah in 1921.⁸ Meets the French painter **Chantal Quenneville** whilst in Paris, marrying her in 1921 (see her biography which immediately follows). Gives a recital of works by British composers in the Victoria Rooms, Bristol, during 1922.⁹ Broadcasts on BBC radio from 1925 playing with the Music Society String Quartet and Samuel Kutcher's String Quartet, both of which included **John Barbirolli** as cellist¹⁰. Joins the staff of Matthay's London piano school during the following year. Performs with the distinguished American concert violinist Viola Mitchell¹¹ and

the French cellist Jacques Serrès¹² before touring Europe for a year (c.1929) partnering **Josef Szigeti**.

*Chantal Quenneville (1897-1969)*¹³

Hallis's first wife Alfrédine Chantal Quenneville (Fig. 2) was born in Criqueboeuf-on-Seine, near Rouen, Normandy. She moved with her family to Montbard in the Bourgogne region of eastern France, entering teacher training college in Dijon with the aim of becoming an art teacher. In 1915 she enrolled at École des Arts Decoratifs in Paris, also attending classes at the Académie Colarossi in Montparnasse (c.1918). After meeting Hallis in Paris the couple married during 1921 and set up home in Cleveland Gardens, London W2 where Chantal exhibited her paintings (Fig. 3) with The Redfern Gallery, The Leicester Galleries and the Valenza Gallery, becoming a member of the so-called 'London Group' in 1926.¹⁴ She spent time with Hallis living in Berlin where she met the American artist Alexander (Sandy) Calder in 1929. Chantal joined "Comité Américain de Secours Civil" in June 1940, a civilian relief organisation supported by the American Friends of France, based in Bellac in western France (Haute-Vienne region). She worked in a canteen distributing meals and directing knitting workshops in order to provide clothes to WW2 refugees from the evacuation of Alsace-Lorraine and from Paris and Belgium in the north. After the war, now separated,¹⁵ Chantal sought new horizons as an artist travelling the world, visiting America, Australia, Algeria, Greece, Sicily and South Africa. She finally returned to Montbard to live in a small house, sharing exhibitions with her friend and fellow French painter Ernest Boguet (1902-1975). In the course of her life Chantal met with many of the greatest artists of the day, writers, painters and musicians, including, for example, the poet Ilya Ehrenburg, Henri Matisse, Amedeo Modigliani, Picasso, Stravinsky, the Russian bass Chaliapin and 'Les Six'. In 1965 she donated a significant collection of Stein paintings, drawings, documents and correspondence to Yale University Library, given to her by her close friend Nina Stein, second wife of the American art collector and critic Leo Stein (1872-1947). Further recollections on Chantal's remarkable life can be found online at <http://quennewille.peintre.monsite-orange.fr/index.html>.

Pioneering Film Composer

In the midst of the great depression in Britain¹⁶ Hallis composed two early symphonic film scores for, arguably, the greatest British born film director, **Alfred Hitchcock**. Respected books on the topic, such as *British Film Music* by John Huntley (Skelton Robinson, 1947), make no mention of Hallis, which begs the question why not and what circumstances brought him together with Hitchcock. No records have yet been discovered confirming the root of their collaboration and sadly all that survives is the composer's name credited on the opening staff credit card: 'Hal Dolph' (Hallis's pseudonym) in the case of *Rich and Strange* (released 10 December 1931¹⁷), and 'A. Hallis' for *Number 17* (London opening 18 July 1932, Fig. 4) These dates place Hallis a few years ahead of Bliss, Walton, Britten, Addinsell, and Alwyn, who all entered films between 1934 and 1936. Only one other composer preceded Hallis as an early pioneer of film music in Britain, namely Hubert Bath (1883-1945), who compiled and arranged music by the song writing team Campbell and Connelly for *Blackmail*, the first all-talking picture directed by Hitchcock (British International Pictures, release date 28 July 1929).

Interviewed by Stephen Watts for *Cinema Quarterly* in 1933,¹⁸ Hitchcock was asked if he believed that every film should have a complete musical score before it goes into production, "I do" he answered, adding: "There is, somewhere, the correct musical accompaniment for almost any scene, music which will improve the scene" and he then proceeded to give a practical illustration from his latest film *Waltzes from Vienna*. Taking Hitchcock at his word, it is likely Hallis composed both of his film scores working primarily to a script (as Bliss was required to do with *Things to Come*). Copyright records¹⁹ reveal that Hallis also penned a number of popular songs at this time (1932-33), published by Sylvester Music under his pseudonym:

- “She was only a postmaster's daughter, but –”; words by Jack Jevon, music by Hal Dolphe, Emdey Wolfe and Lola Gordon; © 12 September, 1932;
- “Moths around the candle flame”; words by Jack Randal, music by Hal Dolphe and Lola Gordon © 21 June, 1933 (Fig. 5);
- “Stars, what do you foretell”; words by Colin Cross, music by Hal Dolphe © 10 August, 1933.

He also co-composed with Lola Gordon a medley of South African native tunes, ‘Fantasia of the veld’,²⁰ and music for an entertainment titled ‘A Night in Soho’, which aired during 1932 as part of the BBC radio series “In Tonight’s Vaudeville.”²¹ However, it should be noted, he never looked upon himself as a composer despite writing many solo piano pieces as well as a three movement piano concerto dedicated to the South African conductor Anton Hartman²² (1918-1982). Hallis loved all kinds of music, as conveyed by some of his pupils,²³ so it is not surprising he showed an interest in the music hall and vaudeville and devoted his energies to popular entertainment and film scoring. Whether purely for the benefit of fees, rather than for art’s sake, is hard to prove today.

The Adolph Hallis Quintet and Chamber Concert Series

Whilst resident in London, Hallis conceived and performed a series of enlightening recitals and chamber concerts, all broadcast on BBC radio, e.g. ‘Through Another’s Eyes’ (1927), ‘The Foundations of Music: Old English Piano Music’ (1929), and ‘Old Wine in New Bottles’ (1935). He was a prominent supporter of contemporary music by young composers emerging from the British school, i.e. the generation which immediately followed Delius, Holst, Vaughan Williams, Bax, Ireland, Bliss and Walton. Among the younger representatives whose music he championed were talents such as **Eugene Goossens, Constant Lambert, Elizabeth Lutyens, Elizabeth Maconchy, Phyllis Tate, Lennox Berkeley, and Benjamin Britten.**²⁴ Hallis was particularly close to two other British composers of note from this period, **Alan Rawsthorne** and **Christian Darnton**. Together they formed a group colloquially known as ‘Les Trois Amis’. The designation was appropriated from a short French poem (written c1936 by Hallis’s then seven-year-old daughter Claire, about a flower, a bee and a swallow) which Darnton set to music as a solo song²⁵ for the Swiss born soprano **Sophie Wyss.**²⁶ According to the pianist and musicologist Andrew Plant, whose Ph.D. thesis was the first major study of Darnton’s life and work:

“Hallis founded the Hallis Concerts Society in 1936 with the purpose of presenting an accessible series of concerts of little-known chamber music from all eras, but with a particular emphasis on contemporary works.²⁷ Chaired by the pianist [Hallis], with Darnton as Secretary, the rest of the committee originally comprised Rawsthorne, Britten and Sophie Wyss. Britten quickly found the atmosphere uncongenial; his presence on future occasions was sporadic and soon ceased; while Wyss only lasted a little longer. Nonetheless, the programmes were of considerable originality and interest, Darnton frequently delving into the British Library to edit a Fantasy or Ricercare of [Matthew] Locke or Palestrina, which was then played by a string quartet and programmed alongside works by Webern, Balakirev, Hindemith or [by] members of the Committee and their friends. Darnton, Rawsthorne and Britten all wrote works for the Hallis Concerts while Darnton's Minutes of the committee meetings are a lively record of racy and frequently bibulous occasions.”²⁸

Hallis gave many premières of early works by these British composers, including Darnton’s Piano Concerto Op. 1933, No. 3 (Fig. 6) and Rawsthorne’s Piano Concerto No. 1 (Fig. 7), both of which were written for and dedicated to him. Hallis’s association with Rawsthorne started shortly after the composer moved from Manchester to London in 1934, Rawsthorne arranging (under the pseudonym ‘Alan Jess’²⁹) a multitude of neglected light classical works for Hallis’s “Phil-Melodic Quintet”. The quintet, together with the soprano **Lola Gordon**, mentioned above, broadcast on the BBC National Programme for just over two years, between September 1935 and December 1937, and comprised

well known instrumentalists: Lionel Falkman (popular with radio listeners for his 'Apache Band'), second violinist Editha Braham (formerly a member of the BBC Symphony Orchestra), violist Helen Jackson (principal viola of the British Women's Symphony Orchestra) and the 'cellist George Roth (a member of the London Philharmonic). As mentioned, Hallis helped devise these programmes and accompanied on piano (Fig. 8), frequently arranging and making special orchestrations (Fig. 9) with Rawsthorne in tandem. At this time, Hallis continued to adopt the nom de plume 'Hal Dolph', although less frequently.³⁰ Hallis took full advantage of his time in London to source musical materials from the British Museum. For example, he found J.C. Bach's air from *Caractacus* while searching for old London tunes and used it as the basis of his suite 'Round About London Town' (founded on genuine old London songs, first broadcast 2 May, 1935). Curiously he found the Air in a re-arrangement titled 'The London Lass: a favourite Rondeau' and copied this without realising it had been reset for voice, two flutes, and figured bass. The Air featured in a radio recital with the Australian violinist Daisy Kennedy³¹ on 26 October, 1935.

At the beginning of 1936 Hallis joined the singer **Paul Robeson** in a nationwide tour of Great Britain and Ireland that was characteristically well received, given Robeson's immense popularity with the public. Robeson was accompanied by his usual pianist and arranger, Lawrence B. Brown, in a programme of Negro spirituals and plantation folk songs. Hallis opened the show playing piano solos by Bach, Chopin, and Liszt, and also accompanied the Viennese violinist Lisa Minghetti and the Canadian violinist Ellen Ballon (Fig. 10), who too featured in the opening half of the programme. The concert series, promoted by the impresario Harold Holt, took in a total of nineteen towns and cities across the British Isles between 19 January and 8 March 1936.³² At this time Robeson had agreed to star in several British films (*Song of Freedom*, *Big Fella* and *King Solomon's Mines*) and immediately following the tour went on to play Toussaint Louverture, staged at the Westminster Theatre, London, a political play by C.L.R. James about an ex-slave who led the Haitian Revolution (1791-1804).³³ During this period Hallis made the first complete recording of Debussy's 12 Etudes (Fig. 11).

Teacher & Legacy

Hallis returned to South Africa from London following the outbreak of WW2, initially teaching at Hilton College in Natal. He then became a staff member of the South African Broadcasting Corporation (1942-44) and later joined the music faculty of the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, teaching part-time, and working as an examiner, up until the age of ninety. During the post war period he continued to fulfil concert engagements in South Africa, the UK and Czechoslovakia (Prague, Bratislava, Brno, Ostrava and Pardubice),³⁴ the latter under the auspices of the British Council. He was the dedicatee of **Eric Chisholm's** "Hindustani" piano concerto (no. 2), which he premiered at an ISCM concert conducted by Enrique Jorda at Cape Town University on 22 November 1949.³⁵ He also gave the first British performance of Hindemith's second piano concerto in 1956 with the Hallé Orchestra under his great and good friend Sir John Barbirolli.³⁶ Tours with various chamber ensembles also continued, such as with the Johannesburg Piano Quartet, the Hallis Piano Trio and as a sonata Duo with **Walter Mony**.

In 1978, aged 82, Hallis featured in a documentary on South African television along with some of his best pupils (see below). This film was made at a time when TV in that country was still in its infancy and before there were any TV commercials. The 45 minute interview, conducted by the English born continuity announcer Dorianne Berry,³⁷ offered a unique insight into Hallis's background, education and career as pianist, composer and teacher. In this he tells many anecdotes (some reproduced herein Fig. 1), including stories about Artur Schnabel, his meeting with Ravel in Paris³⁸ and playing with Joseph Szigeti in Budapest. Concerned about ongoing developments in South Africa, and with an uncertain future following in the wake of the Soweto uprising, Hallis and his second wife³⁹ returned to the UK sometime around 1979 with a view to settling there permanently. However, London was no longer the place he remembered so nothing became of this and he continued to teach piano in Johannesburg, working with up to ten pupils daily.

Many honours were bestowed upon Adolph Hallis during the teaching phase of his career including:-

- Honorary Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Music (1950);
- An honour award from the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns-Erepenning vir Musiek in Stellenbosch on the occasion of his 70th birthday (1966);⁴⁰
- The degree of Doctor of Music Honoris Causa from the University of Witwatersrand (1975).

Nine of his piano pupils also went on to win awards and overseas scholarships. Many are well known today, including **Anton Nel**, Neville Dove, Peggy Haddon, Marian Friedman, and Petronel Malan, to name just a few. In 1996 the University of Witwatersrand held The Adolph Hallis Piano Competition (Fig. 12), won by Christopher Duigan.

Judging by feedback received from a number of his students, Hallis liked to make gentle fun, also of himself. According to one pupil, he would sing and play a song on his birthday [paraphrasing here]: "I'm eighty-one, and not yet done, I am still going strong and hear, I play the mere, pianoforte I love so dear." The song text would change each year. He also liked to be called Dr. Hallis, but confided "as long as they do not expect me to take their appendix out!"

To end on a more serious note, Hallis had a lasting influence on his students. Rina Sherman⁴¹ quoted a vital lesson from her teacher: " 'It's all about melody, everything is in the melody.' Over and over again, he would insist on this. There's a beginning, a middle and an end to a melody. But the most important and difficult thing is the fall (*la chute* in French) and making the fall succeed. I subsequently applied this idea to everything: writing, thinking, filming, and photography. He was a teacher of musicality and of technique. I was sad on the day I left him. I knew that I was letting go rare excellence."

William Sneddon

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William Snedden received his PhD from Churchill College Cambridge in 1979. Now retired he lives in Edinburgh with his wife, devoting more time to his interests which include genealogy, musicology and film music research (<https://billsnedden.wordpress.com/>). William has recently published articles on Sir Arthur Bliss for the British Music Society and the Arthur Bliss Society. Email: bill.snedden@gmail.com.

Acknowledgements

One of the benefits of the modern age of computing is that the internet can serve as a retro time machine, opening a window to the past, permitting access to online genealogy data, archived newspapers, journals, concert programs, photographs, etc. For this study I employed electronic resources such as the *BBC Genome Project*, <https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/>, the *British Newspaper Archive*, the Dutch Newspaper and Magazine database *Delpher*, <https://www.delpher.nl/>, the *Hathi Trust Digital Library*, <https://www.hathitrust.org/>, *Grove Music Online*, and *JSTOR*, the latter accessed through the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh. A number of Hallis's piano pupils from around the globe kindly provided invaluable material, insight and their personal stories for which I am most grateful. I especially wish to thank the following: Willem Scholtz (Holland), Anton Nel (Professor of Piano at the Butler School of Music, University of Texas at Austin), and Rina Sherman (France). I am also greatly indebted to Dr. Andrew Plant who provided the list of works composed by Christian Darnton involving Adolph Hallis.

Abbreviations

cond	conductor
hpd	harpsichord
ISCM	International Society for Contemporary Music
JSTOR	Journal Storage (digital library https://www.jstor.org/)
LSO	London Symphony Orchestra
pf	pianoforte
RAM	Royal Academy of Music
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
sop	soprano
va	viola
vn	violin
WW1	World War 1
WW2	World War 2

Figure 1

Gustave Doré's 'Monk's Dream' (painted ca 1880), the source of inspiration for Hallis's first piano work, which he played aged 15 to Oscar Beringer and two other British examiners from the Royal Schools of Music London, one of whom remarked that his piece was "hot stuff". The music did not survive and was destroyed (along with Hallis's grand piano) during the London Blitz.⁴² There is an even funnier anecdote told by Hallis about performing Chopin's F minor concerto when studying at the Royal Academy of Music. Prior to the rehearsal he cut one of his fingers during his favourite repast (bread and jam) which opened up on the edge of a key during the third movement. By the time he finished his performance the keyboard was covered in blood. He was later told that Sir Alexander Mackenzie, who conducted, instructed a Mr. Green to "wipe up the keys, somebody's been murdering Chopin."

**Figure 2**

Chantal Quenneville smoking her pipe c.1929 (Photo credit Cami Stone)

*"I marvelled at his playing and loved him for his kindness. He was born in South Africa, of Polish and Viennese parents, and I introduced him to some musicians from the modern world, because I had been initiated early in Debussy, Ravel, Erik Satie and 'Les Six'"*⁴³



Figure 3

Examples of works by Hallis's first wife, the French born artist Chantal Quenneville, who painted in both oil and watercolours. She painted a portrait of her husband as a young man and her daughter Claire, a brilliant but terribly excitable girl according to Benjamin Britten, who befriended Hallis and his wife in 1935.⁴⁴ Tragically, Claire ended up in a mental institution.

Graphic credit: <http://quenneville.peintre.monsite-orange.fr/index.html>.



Figure 4

Opening title and staff credit cards for Alfred Hitchcock's early British sound film *Number Seventeen* with musical score by Adolph Hallis. The opening music plays much like a silent movie, as was the case for Hitchcock's first all-talking picture *Blackmail* in 1929.

Credit: <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x21heqt>

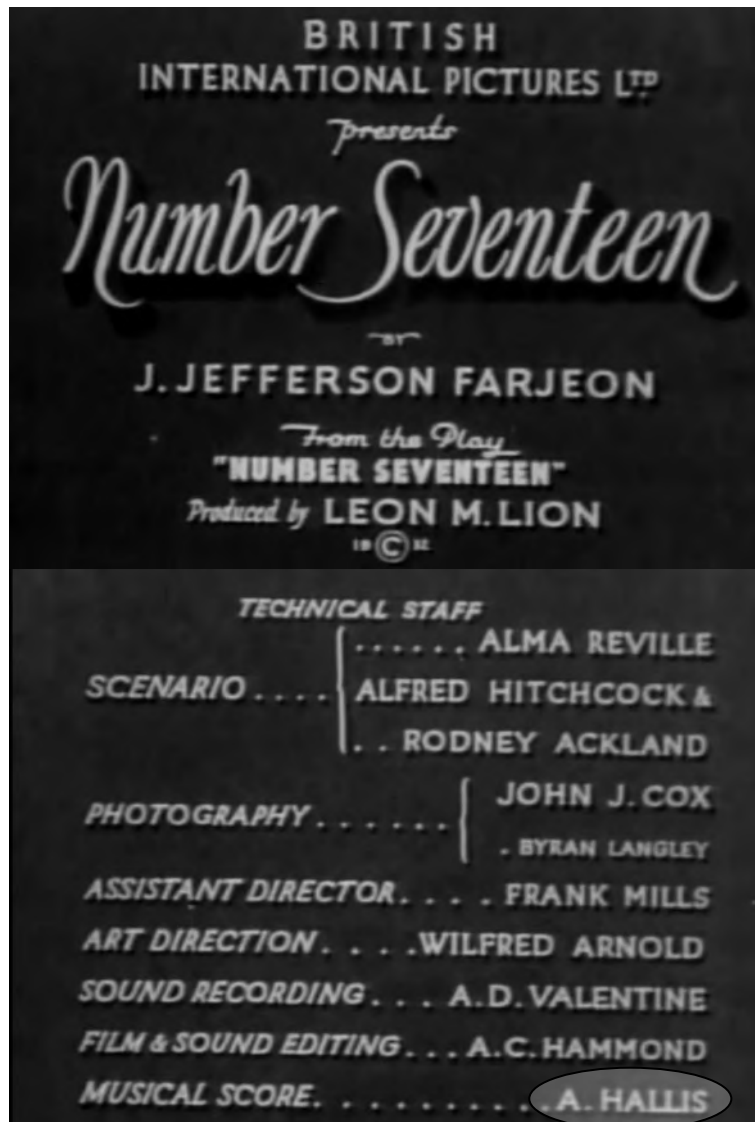


Figure 5

Adolph Hallis published several songs with Sylvester Music under his pseudonym 'Hal Dolph', sharing credit with the soprano Lola Gordon who regularly performed with Hallis. She came to prominence during the second series of The 'Ridgeway Parade' in 1931, a song and dance radio show devised and produced by Philip Ridgway with music arranged by Dorothy Hogben.⁴⁵



Figure 6

Works by Christian Darnton involving Adolph Hallis (performance date order)

Credit: Dr. Andrew Plant.⁴⁶

Composition	Performance
Sonata [no. 1] Op. XXXIII for piano solo ⁴⁷	30 March 1927 , Grotrian Hall, London. Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Three Pieces Op. XXXI for piano solo	30 March 1927 , Grotrian Hall, London. Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Suite no. 3, Op. 1932, No. 3 ('Romanza alla Siciliana' and 'Apotheosis') for piano solo	17 August 1934 , BBC National radio. ⁴⁸ Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Piano Concerto, Op. 1933, No. 3 ('To Adolph Hallis')	29 November 1935 , ⁴⁹ Concert Hall, Broadcasting House, London. Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i> , BBC Symphony Orchestra, Warwick Braithwaite <i>cond</i>
Suite Concertante per violino solo e diversi istrumenti, Op. 1936, No. 1	15 March 1937 , Wigmore Hall, London (Adolph Hallis concert series). Sascha Parnes <i>vn</i> , instrumental group, Reginald Goodall <i>cond</i>
Les Trois Amis song for soprano and piano	26 October 1937 , BBC National radio. Sophie Wyss <i>sop</i> , Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Duo Concertante, Op. 1933, No. 5 for two pianos	14 November 1938 , Aeolian Hall, London (Adolph Hallis concert series). Adolph Hallis, Max Pirani <i>pfs</i>
Five Orchestral Pieces, Op. 1938, No. 1 (a) (third movement 'For Alan Rawsthorne', fourth movement 'For Adolph Hallis')	14 April 1939 , Warsaw (ISCM Festival), Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Stanley Chapple <i>cond</i>
Capriccio for piano	19 April 1949 , Durban. Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Concertino in C for piano and string orchestra , also arr. for two pianos (commissioned by Adolph Hallis)	16 May 1949 , SABC. Johannesburg Symphony Orchestra, Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>

Figure 7

Works by Alan Rawsthorne involving Adolph Hallis (performance date order, excludes arrangements under the pseudonym 'Alan Jess')

Compiled by author from *The Musical Times* and *The Radio Times*.

Composition	Performance
Impromptu for piano	18 December 1934 , BBC National radio. Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Chamber Cantata (four movements)	15 February 1937 , Wigmore Hall, London (Adolph Hallis concert series). Betty Bannerman <i>mez</i> , Alice Ehlers <i>hpd</i> , Shadwick String Quartet
Les cigales song for soprano and piano (Chabrier arr. Rawsthorne for Sophie Wyss)	26 October 1937 , BBC National radio. Sophie Wyss <i>sop</i> , Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Sonata for viola and piano	19 November 1937 , Concert Hall, Broadcasting House, London (BBC Contemporary Concerts). ⁵⁰ Frederick Riddle <i>va</i> , Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Tema con Variazione for two violins	7 January 1938 , Wigmore Hall, London. Kathleen Washbourne, Jessie Hinchliffe, <i>vns</i> , Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i> . ⁵¹
Cantata (Nicholas Clermbault arr. Rawsthorne for piano and string quartet)	14 February 1939 , Aeolian Hall, London (Adolph Hallis concert series). Sophie Wyss <i>sop</i> , Blech Quartet, Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Concerto for piano, string orchestra and percussion (for Adolph Hallis) ⁵²	14 March 1939 , Aeolian Hall, London (Adolph Hallis concert series). Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i> , members of the LSO string section, Iris Lemare <i>cond</i>
Bagatelles for piano	25 September 1948 , BBC National radio. Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>
Sonatina for piano	20 June 1950 , BBC National radio. Adolph Hallis <i>pf</i>

Figure 8

An old image of Adolph Hallis performing piano circa 1935, reproduced from a contemporary journal. Hallis's grandmother prophesized soon after his birth: "he is going to play the piano and the world is going to come and listen to him."



Figure 9

Partial listing of chamber compositions arranged by Hallis himself for his 'Phil-Melodic Quintet'. Compiled by Snedden from recitals cited in *The Radio Times* (1932-37). Many works performed are too generic to ascertain and therefore are excluded from the list below, e.g. 'Andante' by Mozart, 'Scherzo' by Rubinstein, and 'Tarantelle' by Stephen Heller (1813-1888), who composed at least seven Tarantelles.

Composition	Composer	Broadcast Date
Paraphrase on Blue Danube Waltz	Johann Strauss II	3 Feb 1932
Oberländer	Josef Gung'l	8 Sep 1935
Fantasia on Hungarian Folk Dances	Hallis	8 Sep 1935
Invitation to the Waltzes	Hallis	18 Dec 1935
Consolation	Liszt	18 Dec 1935
Scherzo from Bunte Reihe Op. 30	Ferdinand David	18 Dec 1935
Cherry Ripe	Charles Edward Horn	18 Dec 1935
Petite suite	Jean-Philippe Rameau	17 Mar 1936
None but the weary [aka lonely] heart	Tchaikovsky	17 Mar 1936
Fantasia on West Indian Folk Songs	Hallis	17 Mar 1936
Variations on Oranges and Lemons	Hallis	3 Apr 1936
Blonde and Brunette	Hallis as 'Hal Dolphe'	3 Apr 1936
Study from Fingerdexterity	Carl Czerny	3 Apr 1936
Tre giorni son che Nina	Giovanni Battista Pergolesi	3 Apr 1936
Two Jewish Folk-Tunes	Hallis	3 Apr 1936
If I were a bird Op. 2, No. 6	Adolf von Henselt	21 Apr 1936
The Prayer Granted [aka The maiden's prayer]	Thècla Badarzewska	21 Apr 1936
Scotch Fantasy	Hallis	21 Apr 1936
Rondo?	Francesco Chabran	12 May 1936
Bell-Flowers [Die Glockenbumen]	Selim Palmgren	12 May 1936
Three Pyrenees Dances	Hallis	27 May 1936
Chula Suite Portuguesa No. 1	Ruy Coelho	9 Jun 1936
Wireless Lullaby	Hallis	9 Jun 1936
Fantasy on Welsh Airs	Hallis	9 Jun 1936
Variations on Ding Dong Bell	Hallis	19 Jul 1936
Irish Fantasy	Hallis	19 Jul 1936
La Caccia [Rondeau]	Jean-Joseph Cassanéa de Mondonville	2 Aug 1936
Variations on Au clair de lune	Hallis	28 Oct 1936
Le Tic-Toc-Choc ou Les Maillotins	François Couperin	28 Oct 1936
Minuet	Jean-Philippe Rameau	25 Nov 1936
Old Time Songs	Hallis	25 Nov 1936
Turkish Air & Bolero	Hallis	28 Oct 1936
Three German May-Day Songs	Hallis	1 May 1937
June	Tchaikovsky	13 Jun 1937
Fantasy on Spanish Songs	Hallis	3 Jul 1937
Quella fiamma che m'accende	Benedetto Marcello	3 Jul 1937
Devon Maid	Hallis	3 Jul 1937
La chapelle (The Chapel)	Hallis	26 Oct 1937
Fantasy on French Folk Songs	Hallis	12 Nov 1937
August Bank Holiday	Hallis	17 Dec 1937

Figure 10

Paul's Robeson's 1936 Tour of the British Isles in which Hallis appeared as both soloist and accompanist. The tour covered all the capital cities, London, Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin, Cardiff, plus many English towns and cities such as Hull, Sheffield, Cheltenham and Brighton.

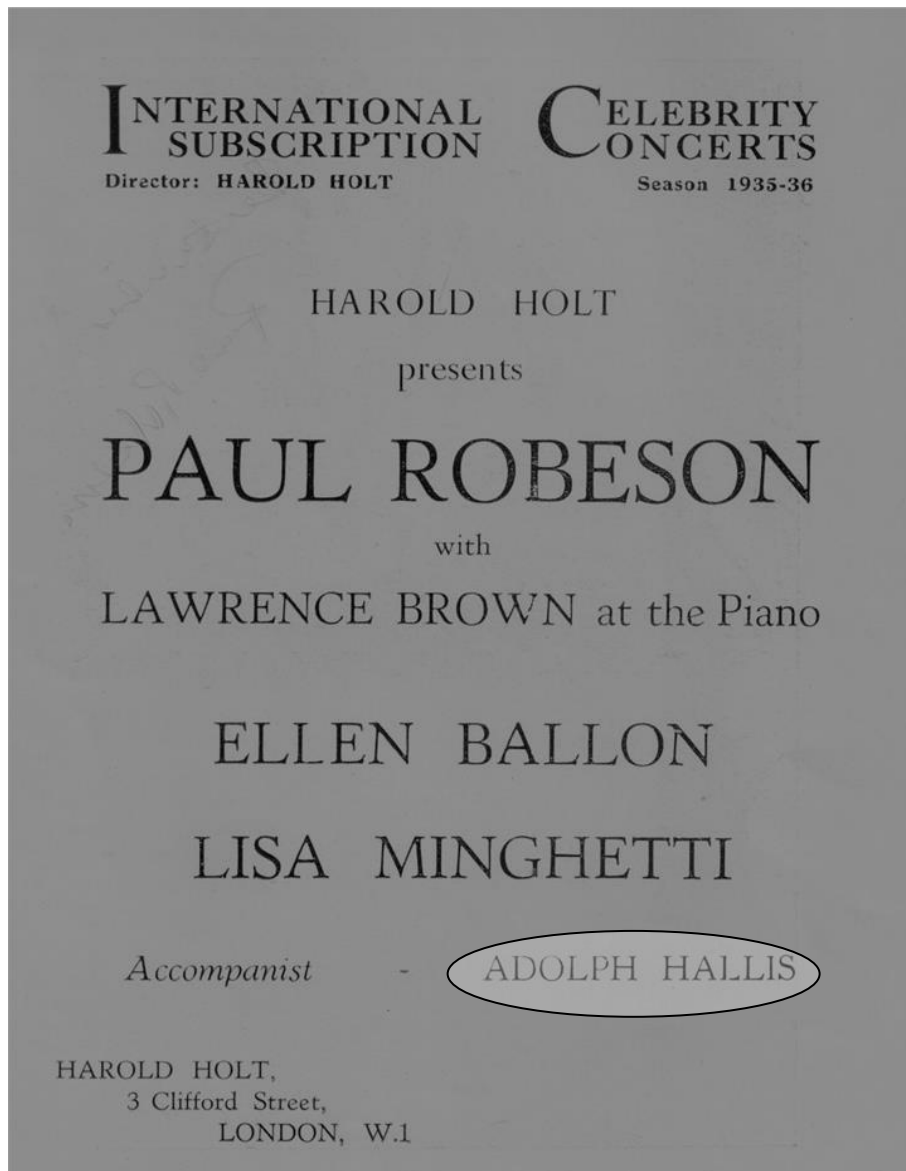


Figure 11

Hallis was the first pianist to make a complete recording of Debussy's 12 Etudes: Decca K891-6, six 12" 78 rpm records, recorded at Decca's Thames Street studios, London, 3-5 February 1938, commercially released during November 1938.⁵³

Image credit: <http://adolphs.weebly.com/blog/adolph-hallis>



Figure 12
The Adolph Hallis Piano Competition in Johannesburg August 1996.

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG
Performing Arts Administration
The School of Music, *in collaboration with SASOL*
The Royal Overseas League, SAMRO, & the Indo-Jet Travel Company

P R E S E N T

THE ADOLPH HALLIS Piano Competition

THE GREAT HALL, WITS UNIVERSITY, JOHANNESBURG

21, 22, 23, 24 August 1996

Wednesday 21 August	Thursday 22 August	Friday 23 August	Saturday 24 August
Andrew Beck Christopher Duigan	Hanja Strydom James Q Davies Jonathan Oshrey	Celebrity Recital ANTON NEL – PIANO	Finalists' Recitals and presentation of prizes

 Royal Over-Seas League   

End Notes

¹ Bliss expressed an interest in writing for the screen from an early date, 1923, during the silent era, when he tried unsuccessfully to meet up with Charlie Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks when visiting Los Angeles. In *Two Berkeley Professors: Arthur Bliss and Albert Elkus* by N. William Snedden, *Journal of the British Music Society*, Vol. 39/40, 2017-18 (double edition), p3.

² Willem Scholtz, who studied with Hallis between 1975 and 1980, confirmed that Hallis indeed composed for Hitchcock: "It was during one of our talks after lessons that I told him of my love for Hitchcock, mentioning my favourite movie and music by Bernard Herrmann for *North by Northwest*. He then told me that he had written scores for some earlier Hitchcock films, which at first I could not believe." Email to the author 10 May 2019.

³ Details compiled from a 1978 South African TV documentary on Hallis. Other sources include *A Dictionary for the Modern Pianist* by Stephen Siek, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), p.67, entry in Grove Music Online by Caroline Mears, and materials provided by Willem Scholtz, *Ibid*.

⁴ Joseph Hallis established a business in Port Elizabeth, 'Hallis & Co.', which dealt in reproductions of famous pictures, postcards, and picture framing, hence Adolph's interest in painting. His father, being Austrian, revered the waltz and in particular loved listening to his son play the second Brahms waltz (Op. 39 no. 2). The first few notes are carved on to Joseph's tombstone for, as he told his son, "that is how the angels sing".

⁵ The death notice for Hallis's mother Clara, signed by Adolph's brother Sigismund Hallis, dated Port Elizabeth 25 June, 1942, shows she was originally from Lemburg, Poland, as was Hallis's grandmother. His other brother, Frederick Hallis, worked with the National Bank in Oxford St., London during WW2. Source: <https://www.familysearch.org/en/>

⁶ The scholarship was worth £150 a year for three years. In *The Reform Advocate*, 30 September, 1911, p237.

⁷ A chamber concert given by the Academy in the Duke's Hall on 3 November 1913. Movements from works by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Dvořák, were played, as well as a song 'La Rose' composed by Hallis. In *The Musical Times*, Vol. 54, No. 850, 1 December, 1913, p807.

⁸ Polah, a former pupil of Theodore Spiering, sent a letter dated September 3, 1921 from Paris to the *Musical Courier* which opened "From the scene of great successes, which I shared with Cyril Scott, Eugene Goossens [and] Adolph Hallis." Polah introduced Goossens's violin sonata no. 1, Op. 21, the first public rendition of the work. The *Musical Courier* 27 October, 1921, p.38 includes a photograph of Hallis, Goossens, and Polah "snapshotted on a Paris by-street this summer." An earlier edition of *Musical Courier*, 26 May 1921, pp.14, 58, reports on another Paris concert in which Hallis was co-artist along with the American tenor Charles Hubbard, performing *Apple-blossom Time*, by Arnold Bax; *Procession*, by Herbert Howells; *In a Vodka Shop*, by Bax, and *Before the Dawn*, by Walton O'Donnell. Hallis also played Debussy: *Passepied*, *L'isle Joyeuse* and *Pour le piano – Toccata*.

⁹ Works by York Bowen, Leo Livens, John B. McEwen, Tobias Matthay, Thomas F. Dunhill, Edgar L. Bainton, and Harold Craxton were played. In 'Music in the Provinces,' *The Musical Times* Vol. 63, No. 958, 1 December, 1922, p877.

¹⁰ Hallis was a close friend of Barbirolli, first meeting him whilst studying at the RAM, when the young Giovanni B. Barbirolli won the Bonamy Dobree & Piatti Prizes for violoncello during 1914 and 1915, respectively.

¹¹ Viola Mitchell (1911-2002), born in Pittsburg USA, a pupil of Eugène Ysaÿe, made her European debut aged 16 performing in the presence of Elisabeth of Bavaria, Queen of Belgium. She was considered one of the world's foremost violinists until an illness abruptly ended her career in 1959. She was married to George Fearnside, a civil engineer.

¹² For example, Hallis performed with Serrès on 2 May, 1928 in the Concertgebouw kleine zaal, playing works by Willem Pijper, Georges Migot, Ravel, Faure, Schumann and Sammartini. In 'Concertnieuws,' *Het Volk, Dagblad Voor De Arbeiderspartij*, Saturday, 28 April 1928.

¹³ Biographical details in part from https://www.louisekosman.com/artists/artist_685.php.

¹⁴ In 'The London Group at the R.W.S.' [Royal Watercolour Society], *The Sphere*, Saturday, 19 June 1926, p.31.

¹⁵ The divorce from Hallis was "en toute amitié" according to Chantal, who added "la vie musicale trop agitée et bruyante." Claire could not live with the agitating noise caused by her father practising piano every day.

¹⁶ The early 1930s was a time of great depression, triggered by the Wall Street crash of 1929. Britain's world trade fell by half between 1929 and 1933, the output of heavy industry fell by a third, employment profits plunged and in the summer of 1932, registered unemployed numbered in the region of 3.5 million (source: Wikipedia). Cinema was undergoing a transition at this time but surviving largely through the introduction of the novelty of sound on film.

- ¹⁷ *Rich and Strange* contained about 20% dialogue and a musical backing for the remainder of the film. Hitchcock briefly returned to silent film technique as the picture also contains about thirty subtitle cards. See contemporary reviews in *Motion Picture Herald*, 31 October 1931, p.8 & in *Variety*, Tuesday, 29 December 1931, p.167.
- ¹⁸ "Alfred Hitchcock On Music In Films, In an Interview with Stephen Watts," *Cinema Quarterly*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Winter 1933-34, pp.80-83.
- ¹⁹ Catalog of Copyright Entries Part 3 Musical Compositions: Vol. 27, 1932, p.902; Vol. 28, 1933, p.540 & p.719 (Copyright Office, Library of Congress, Washington).
- ²⁰ Arranged by G. Walter-Goehr [the German conductor and composer Walter Goehr] © 10 October 10, 1935, United Music Publishers, Ltd., London.
- ²¹ 'A Night In Soho' lyrics by E. Segrave and Anthony Jaynes, music by Adolph Hallis, Lola Gordon and Anthony Jaynes, featuring Lola Gordon, Donald Mather, Anthony Jaynes and with Hallis at the piano. In *The Radio Times*, 26 February, 1932, p537.
- ²² Hallis's pupil, who became head of music at the University of Witswatersrand in 1978.
- ²³ Willem Scholtz mentions in his notes to this author, dated 8 May 2019, that Hallis had a wide knowledge and interest in styles and composers. Other personal accounts from students may be found online at <http://adolphs.weebly.com/blog/adolph-hallis>.
- ²⁴ Six of these gifted men and women are discussed in an article by Hermann Scherchen, originally published in *Schweizerische Musikzeitung* (15 January, 1939), subsequently reproduced in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 80, No. 1153, March 1939, p.186.
- ²⁵ *Les Trois Amis*, words by Claire Hallis, music by Christian Darnton, Winthrop Rogers ed. © Mar. 12 1937; Boosey & Co., Ltd., London.
- ²⁶ Sophie Wyss (1897-1983) settled in England in 1925. Benjamin Britten wrote many songs for her, including *Our Hunting Fathers*, Op. 8 (1936), *On This Island*, Op. 11 (1937) and *Les Illuminations*, Op. 18 (1939).
- ²⁷ Each concert programme presented three points in musical perspective: "far-distant", "mid-distant", "to-day" conjoining composers as disparate as Couperin, Busoni and Schoenberg. See 'Hallis Concerts,' *The Musical Times*, Vol. 78, No. 1127, January 1937, p.70.
- ²⁸ In *Christian Darnton 1905-1981: Discovering A Contemporary Legend* by Andrew Plant. See also <https://www.darnton.net/>. Minutes for the Hallis Concerts Society for 26 November 1936 refer to Hallis, Rawsthorne and Darnton as 'Les Trois Amis.' Plant also points out there are a quantity of letters from Hallis to Darnton in the Christian Darnton Collection in the British Library, Add. MSS 62774. Programme details are in Add. MSS 62773 B, Vol. LVII. Darnton, like Hallis, attended the Matthay School, the two meeting sometime during the 1920s.
- ²⁹ The pseudonym was derived from Rawsthorne's wife, the distinguished violinist Jessie Hinchliffe whom he married in London 14 July 1934. Jessie later played in the BBC Symphony and Philharmonia Orchestras. Rawsthorne's arrangements under the pseudonym 'Jess' are numerous and can be found in *Alan Rawsthorne A Bio-Bibliography* by John C. Dressler (Praeger Publishers, Westport, Connecticut, 2004), section W179, pp.109-110.
- ³⁰ *The Radio Times*, 27 March 1936 edition, p.71, advertises 'Dolph' as the composer of "Blonde and Brunette" for a Hallis Quintet concert broadcast 3 April 1936. Ditto for another broadcast on 17 May 1937.
- ³¹ Born 1893 in Burra Burra, South Australia, the ex-wife of the pianist Benno Moiseiwitsch, and whose second marriage was to the poet and playwright John Drinkwater. Her portrait along with Hallis can be found in *The Radio Times* edition dated 6 September, 1935, p.20.
- ³² A typical review from the concert series may be found in *Derry Journal*, Monday, 10 February 1936, p.8 which reports Hallis performing five piano solos including Liszt's Tarantelle-Venezia e Napoli.
- ³³ In *Paul Robeson: The Years of Promise and Achievement* by Sheila Tully Boyle & Andrew Bunie (University of Massachusetts Press: Amherst & Boston 2001), p.339.
- ³⁴ Hallis gave concerts of works by Ireland, Rawsthorne and Jacobson in East Europe. In *Annual Report of The British Council 1948-1949*, Activities Overseas, p.91.
- ³⁵ First performance details in <http://www.erikchisholm.com/catalogueraisonne/full.php?id=437>.
- ³⁶ In 'Music in Manchester,' *The Musical Times*, Vol. 97, No. 1361, July 1956, p.378.
- ³⁷ South African television's first ever continuity presenters were Heinrich Maritz and Dorianne Berry. SABC opened its service on 5 January 1976. In "Putting Up Screens: A History Of Television In South Africa, 1929-1976," by Carin Bevan, Faculty of Humanities, University of Pretoria, January 2008, Chapter VII Epilogue: Television Comes to South Africa, p.162.
- ³⁸ Hallis told the interviewer: "I played to him. He was a remarkable person to look at and to talk to, beautiful face, a real French 'aristocrat'. I was a wild woolly student, not like I am now, with lots of hair and I played him

several of his pieces [e.g. *Jeux d'eau*]. He was very complimentary, made one or two strictures which I value: 'trophe de pédale' - too much pedal – what the French like most is 'clarté' – clarity – and a little too much rubato – 'monsieur strict, strict' – but he was a most attractive person."

³⁹ Hallis's second wife was Else Schmidt from Munich, by all accounts a very formidable lady.

⁴⁰ The Belgian born South African artist and art teacher Maurice van Essche (1906-1977) received the Medal of Honour for Painting on the same occasion. He founded the Continental School of Art in Cape Town in 1948.

⁴¹ <http://rinasherman.com/>

⁴² Hallis played from memory a few bars during the SABC TV documentary, *Ibid*, stating: "I'm afraid it got lost, I think the German bombers who came up to London saw to that. That's all I remember unfortunately."

⁴³ Translated from Chantal's reminiscences in French found at <http://quenneville.peintre.monsite-orange.fr/index.html>: "*Je m'émerveillai de son jeu et l'aimai pour sa gentillesse. Il était né en Afrique du Sud, de parents polonais et viennois. Je le présentai à quelques musiciens du milieu moderne, car j'avais été initiée de bonne heure à Debussy, Ravel, Erik Satie et les Six...*" 'Les Six' comprised: Georges Auric, Louis Durey, Arthur Honegger, Darius Milhaud, Francis Poulenc and Germaine Tailleferre, who all worked in Montparnasse.

⁴⁴ From *Journeying Boy: The Diaries of the Young Benjamin Britten 1928-1938*, Selected and Edited by John Evans, (Faber & Faber, 2009), p454. On Monday, 27 September, 1937, Britten wrote: "Beastly day of strains ... Dinner with Chantal & Adolphe [sic] Hallis. They are having a terrible time with their brilliant young daughter, Claire, who is on the verge of becoming either a/. mad or b/. a genius - & at the moment quite violent. I found her tractable but terribly excitable. The other two are dears - Chantal esp. is charming." The earliest reference in Britten's diaries to meeting Hallis is Thursday 18 October 1935: "Go out to dinner with [clarinettist/writer] Alan Frank & wife [Phyllis Tate] – a very nice evening, esp. as Adolph Hallis comes in for coffee – a very entertaining man."

⁴⁵ 'Ridgeway Parade' first aired on the BBC National Programme September 5 1930. The second series featuring Lola Gordon commenced a year later October 2, 1931.

⁴⁶ Email to the author dated 21 May 2019.

⁴⁷ Reviewed in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 68, No, 1011, 1 May, 1927, pp.453, 454.

⁴⁸ The broadcast, titled "Music by Younger British Composers," included new works by Herbert Murrill, Lennox Berkeley, Walter Leigh, William Busch and Leighton Lucas.

⁴⁹ The work had to wait two years for its first performance due to Hallis's plans for a world tour in 1933. Source: Andrew Plant.

⁵⁰ Two new British works were given on November 19, 1937 the other being Benjamin Britten's *On This Island* a set of five songs to poems by W. H. Auden from "Look Stranger." [See note above on Sophie Wyss.](#)

⁵¹ A review of the recital in *The Musical Times*, Vol. 79, No. 1140, February 1938, p145, states: "Kathleen Washbourne and Jessie Hinchliffe gave a recital of music for two violins at Wigmore Hall on January 7. The word 'piano' was not mentioned in this connection, but ... they were assisted by Adolph Hallis."

⁵² In *The Musical Times*, Vol. 80, No. 1154, April 1939, p.299: "Music very compact and modern in a most attractive way. Adolf [sic] Hallis, being one of the best exponents of contemporary music and Rawsthorne's Concerto having been written for him, performer and performance fitted like hand and glove."

⁵³ In *The Gramophone Shop Encyclopedia of Recorded Music* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942), p.127.