

The Creel

Journal of The Rawsthorne Trust
and
The Friends of Alan Rawsthorne

Volume 7, Number 2
Issue Number 23
Summer 2012

A large, stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, likely belonging to Alan Rawsthorne, dominates the lower half of the page. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style, with the name 'Rawsthorne' being the most prominent part. The ink has a slightly textured, hand-drawn appearance.



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Published by The Rawsthorne Trust 2012

The Rawsthorne Trust

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The Creel

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ISSN 0963-0244

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Editorial

The Creel has sometimes been described as 'the Rawsthorne Trust's scholarly journal', and over its twenty-two issues it has published a wealth of material that more than justifies this claim. At other times it has been more chatty, and this is justified too, especially if its arrival on readers' doormats is to be greeted with enthusiasm rather than, in Vaughan Williams' well-known phrase, 'cold admiration'.

What is undoubtedly required here is balance, and we will welcome articles too complex for Einstein himself (Alfred the musicologist, that is, not Albert) to read straight through, on the grounds that once these are in place it is relatively easy to generate the surrounding 'easy reading'.

But whether the articles are musicological or popular, a particular requirement is that they should say something fresh, or – given that the number of things that can be said about Alan Rawsthorne's life and music cannot be infinite – that what they say has not been said in *The Creel* before. In fact, we don't even need that easement in the case of the present issue, for Graham Gough has pushed back the frontiers of Rawsthorne knowledge with his acquisition, after long searching, of the shellac disc of 'Left! Left!', and his research into the circumstances of its production. Nigel Bonham-Carter, in making the contents of his collection of Isabel Rawsthorne's art available to us for reproduction, has likewise given us a first, since only me of these items has been on public view before. And Tony Pickard, in the longer of his two contributions, has pinpointed what all journal editors want: a fresh 'angle'. In his comparison of the careers of Rawsthorne and Tippett he demonstrates some remarkable parallels, and although he is compelled at times to relate parts of the well-trodden story of Rawsthorne's life and times, you will find that in each case he adds value, by bringing together material not previously available under one cover.

Tony's other contribution contains some detailed thinking about a new proposal, which should be borne in mind if we ever again find ourselves able to sponsor recordings. His idea for a *Carmen Vitale* symphony has been criticised on the grounds of redundancy: few if any performances are nowadays given of the three actual symphonies, so why add to the backlog? As far as live performances are concerned this may be a valid objection; but recordings are a very different matter, given that our aim is to make as much as possible of Rawsthorne's work available for people to hear and study.

Another function of *The Creel* has always been documentation. At this, as in many other things, the late John Belcher excelled, and his commercial discography of Rawsthorne's works, and its later update, are rightly held in veneration. Andrew Knowles is assuming John's mantle in this regard, and he has found an encouragingly long list of recordings that have appeared since the last supplement – making the discography, and the journal, even richer.

Martin Thacker

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Printed by Information Press, Eynsham, Oxford.
www.informationpress.com

'Left! Left!' An Elusive Recording of a Lost Manuscript

Graham Gough

Graham Gough is a Production Controller for Oxford University Press. His introduction to Alan Rawsthorne's music came rather late, through Mike Smith, one half of this journal's design team. Graham and Mike were colleagues at OUP until the latter's retirement, but fate had already decided that they should become near neighbours in the same Oxfordshire village.

In setting out to buy a recording of a favourite piece of music, it is usual to address certain matters of preference: the presence of a particular soloist, or the interpretation of a favoured conductor, will almost certainly influence the final decision. It is to be regretted that the would-be purchaser of Alan Rawsthorne's music is apt to be beset by fewer such dilemmas than would be, say, a follower of Sibelius – another of my enthusiasms.

But how does one go about getting hold of a piece recorded just once, and issued during wartime on an obscure record label whose discs were available principally through membership of a club? The answer, of course, is vigilance. Every box of old records must be investigated.

I am a record collector whose speciality is discs issued by the Workers' Music Association on its Topic label. It can become frustrating when a particular recording simply refuses to turn up, whilst certain others do so regularly. Topic TRC6 is a ten-inch shellac 78 rpm record which, until 8 October 2011, resided – for me at least – firmly in the 'frustrating' category. It was at Great Malvern, Worcestershire, that a copy finally surfaced in a box containing a number of discs having a political flavour. It is the only record in the Topic catalogue to have a Rawsthorne connection: 'Left! Left!: International Marching Songs of the People' is Alan's arrangement for two pianos of a group of songs which includes 'The Carmagnole', 'Bandiera Rossa', 'United Front', 'Whirlwinds Of Danger' and 'Solidarity Forever'. It was recorded for Topic Records by the concert-pianist twins Geraldine and Mary Peppin.

In his 'Alan Rawsthorne: a commercial discography', published in *The Creel*, volume 5, no. 4 (issue 20), the late John Belcher leaves the date of this record open. In this article I define a narrow band within which that date must fall.

Topic Records came into being late in 1939 as a record club, whose aim was to record and issue gramophone records of 'songs of the people'. Seventy years on, documenting their release relies upon being able to locate, in the Workers Music Association's own publications or elsewhere, such advertisements or editorial copy as erratically declared their availability.

By February 1940 the journal *Poetry and the People* had become an agent for the Topic Records Club, able to distribute records to the club's members at any



of the journal's London poetry meetings. On page 16 of issue no. 20, probably intended for September 1940 (no cover month is given, but September would have been the expected month of publication; the copy in Oxford's Bodleian Library bears an accession stamp dated 18 November) there appears an editorial review of the first five Topic records issued. They were still available for purchase as back numbers, and on page 18 is printed a separate advertisement for them, with details of Club membership. The advertisement bears the WMA's Great Newport Street address, which is significant, for these offices had been opened only on 7 July 1940. The sixth record to be issued would be 'Left! Left!', but it had yet to be announced. Regrettably, at this point the source fails. It is not until the publication of the second number of the journal's successor *Our Time* in April 1941, that advertising starts to appear again, by which time TRC12 is receiving promotion.

The Topic Records Club had intended to offer its members a new selection each month. This aim is clearly stated in the advertisement I mention above, but since the first record had been released late in 1939, and just five records had been issued up to July 1940 or later, evidently some difficulty had been met in maintaining the release cycle during the first part of the war. Decca pressed the modest runs of many of the WMA's early records, and a study of their pressing matrices (the tedium of which I will spare you) reveals nothing which might indicate that these first five records were issued other than in the order suggested by their catalogue numbers; but a delay appears to have occurred between the recordings which became TRC4, and those which became TRC5.

'Left! Left!' was in all probability recorded during the summer months of 1940, its release having been post-July. The arrangement became the second Rawsthorne piece to have been committed to disc: Kathleen Washbourne and Jessie Hinchliffe had recorded the first, Theme and Variations for Two Violins, for Decca in 1938; 'Left! Left!' was itself followed in March 1941 by the Sophie Wyss recording of *Three French Nursery Songs*, released by Decca the following year.

TRC6 makes an appearance, with other records, on the back cover of *Our Time* volume 1, no. 5 in July 1941, under the banner 'Topic Records Have Made a Feature of Soviet Russian Music'. What's that? *Soviet Russian*? Well, it was actually the other side of the record which was receiving promotion: 'Balalaika Selection Number Two: Bravely Forward Comrades' (trad. Russian) and 'Salute to Life' (Shostakovich) were played by The Medvedeff Balalaika Sextet. It was after the war before Topic records carried the same artist, arranger, composer – or even theme – on both sides of the disc. Presumably this was a device to widen appeal and encourage membership. The Peppin twins also play a second arrangement, this one by Alan Bush; entitled 'The People Sing! A Selection of English Period Songs'; it appeared on one side of the following release, TRC7. It is tempting to speculate as to the process by which these two arrangements came into being, for they are exactly suited to the length of a ten-inch 78 rpm record, and seem likely to have been intended from the outset as recordings for Topic.

What of the artists? Geraldine and Mary Peppin were in their late twenties



Mary (left) and Geraldine Peppin in their Islington flat, May 1943

when they recorded 'Left! Left!', Geraldine being already Mrs Randall Swingler. Mary was to marry a friend of the Swingers, to whom in late 1939 had fallen the privilege of writing and recording 'The Man That Waters The Workers' Beer', one side of the very first Topic release (it was coupled with an Alan Bush arrangement of the Internationale). The duo were the subject of a feature entitled 'Twin Sisters Play Classics to the Troops' published by *Picture Post* in May 1943, photographs from which may be viewed online at the Getty Images archive. They performed *The Carnival of the Animals* with the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Henry Wood during the 1942 Proms season, a performance repeated in 1945 with the London Symphony Orchestra under Basil Cameron. They gave the first broadcast performance of Peter Racine Fricker's Four Fughettas for Two Pianos, Op. 2, in 1951; and first performances of two pieces by Bernard Stevens: Introduction and Allegro, Op. 29, in 1957, and *A Birthday Song* in 1963. They also taught at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

To me, there is something almost surreptitious in the way Geraldine and Mary sneak on 'John Brown's Body' two minutes and forty-five seconds into the record, quietly parading it before the listener, prior to a robust exit. I can't help thinking that Alan must have enjoyed creating this arrangement for them.

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Rawsthorne and Tippett – Musical Twins?

Tony Pickard

Alan Rawsthorne belongs to that group of English composers born between 1901 and 1905 which included Rubbra, Walton, Berkeley, Tippett and Alwyn – all of whom long outlived him. Michael Tippett, born in January 1905, was four months Rawsthorne's senior, and a comparison of their chronologies reveals several parallels which, taken together, offer a novel perspective on their respective careers.

1905–1932

Both composers were born into comfortable middle-class Edwardian families, who expected a good education to be followed by a secure job, preferably in one of the professions. An interest in music was all very well as a hobby, but not to be pursued as a career.

Tippett was educated at boarding schools where he had piano lessons but gave no evidence of exceptional musical talent. Attending a concert in 1919 convinced him that he should become a composer and thereafter he would not be dissuaded. Overcoming parental doubts, and on the strength of a brief interview with Sir Hugh Allen, the principal, he entered the Royal College of Music in April 1923. 'Over the next five years his venerable tutor (Dr C. H. Kitson) was not alone in expressing disbelief at the notion of Tippett entering upon a musical career. Nevertheless, Tippett persevered.'¹ He graduated in 1928: B.Mus. at the second attempt.

While at college Tippett added to his musical education by going to a variety of concerts including a whole season of Proms, and through the college, in 1924, he became the conductor of a newly formed madrigal group at Oxted, Surrey. Soon he added the conductorship of the Oxted and Limsfield Players, and with them performed, amongst other things, Vaughan Williams's *The Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains* and Stanford's *The Travelling Companion*. In 1930 he put on a concert of his own works at Oxted. Surprisingly, this was reviewed in both *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*, the critic of the latter concluding: 'The Psalm must be heard again, and with larger forces, though probably Michael Tippett will prefer to put all behind him and go on to fresh ideas. They will surely be worth it.'² Tippett did just that, and arranged with the RCM for him to undertake further studies with R. O. Morris, which he completed in 1932.

Rawsthorne's early artistic efforts were literary as well as musical, and often of a high order. Examples of his juvenilia have been reproduced in *The Creel*. But, as he told Malcolm Rayment, 'I have always been interested in composing, since I was a child. I used to compose a good deal. In fact, I once started to write an opera when I was about eleven, but didn't get very far.'³ Learning both cello and piano, he became good enough, in his teens, to play in the Southport Orchestra and to make his first public appearance as a pianist, playing movements from Beethoven's 'Pathétique' sonata, and two of his own pieces.

Despite their son's musical talents, Rawsthorne's parents were chary of his entering such an insecure profession as music. It was agreed that he should study dentistry, an occupation with which his name has ever after been linked. At least this has given him an identity in the public mind and has the merit of distinguishing him from his contemporaries! After a year he switched to architecture – with no more success – and the family finally agreed, amicably, that he could study music.

Entering the Royal Manchester College of Music in 1925 he soon made his mark as pianist and composer. He gave performances of Brahms's *Handel Variations* and Falla's *Nights in the Gardens of Spain*, and with Harry Blech (who became a lifelong friend) Beethoven's C minor Violin Sonata. He had several works performed at student concerts: a Valse in C minor was performed by Gordon Green, who broadcast it from the BBC studios in Manchester in January 1928. The *Tzu-Yeh* songs were first performed at the RMCM in March 1929, shortly before Rawsthorne graduated. Both these unpublished works have been recorded on a CD entitled *The Prison Cycle* (Campion Cameo 2021) and the Valse is also included in John McCabe's recording of the complete piano music on Dutton CDLX 7167.

After leaving the RMCM, Rawsthorne went abroad for further piano studies with Egon Petri, and, at Arnold Bax's suggestion, studied composition with Adam Carse.

1932–1940

Having completed their studies, both composers entered the musical profession during 1932. Tippett found employment with the London County Council, to conduct the South London Orchestra, formed to enable musicians made unemployed by the depression and the arrival of the 'talkies' to maintain their skills. Based at Morley College, this orchestra of about forty-five players gave concerts in South London venues, dividing any income among the players. He was also engaged by the Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society to conduct their choirs in New Malden and Abbey Wood. All these employments continued until adult education was suspended during the war.

Rawsthorne took a job as pianist and composer at the School of Dance-Mime at Dartington Hall, Devon, and began work on a string quartet, which was performed at Dartington in June 1933 by the Griller Quartet. A London performance, by the Macnaghten Quartet, followed in 1934. However, Rawsthorne became dissatisfied with it, and decided that the best thing to do was to write another quartet. He completed this in January 1935. It is not clear whether this work was performed when it was new, but it was recorded along with the three published quartets in 1997 by the Flesch Quartet, on ASV CD DCA 983. What may have been its first live performance was given by the Bridge Quartet in Ely Cathedral on 17 May 2009, with a second performance by the same quartet at Radley College on 23 May. These performances were reviewed by Andrew Knowles in *The Sprat*, issue 59 (July 2009). Tippett began work on a string quartet in 1934, and completed it the following year; it was first performed by the Brosa Quartet

in December 1935. Like Rawsthorne, he became dissatisfied with his efforts, but rather than abandon the work he replaced the first two movements in 1943 with a single movement, and in this form the quartet was performed by the Zorian Quartet in 1944. This was the earliest of his works to be acknowledged by Tippett.

In 1934 Rawsthorne moved to London and married Jessie Hinchliffe, who had been a member of the BBC Symphony Orchestra since its foundation in 1930. Under Adrian Boult the orchestra had achieved a formidable reputation for giving well-prepared performances of contemporary music. For example, in February 1934 Boult conducted Busoni's Piano Concerto with Egon Petri as soloist, and gave the first London performance of Mahler's Ninth Symphony. On 14 March, after three months' rehearsal, Boult conducted the first complete performance in Britain of Berg's opera *Wozzeck*, in which all but one of the soloists was English. In Austria, via a radio relay, Berg heard the broadcast and wrote to Boult: 'I am longing to tell you how yesterday's *Wozzeck* performance delighted me ... it equalled the finest stage performance with the work in regular repertoire.'⁴ This must rank as the outstanding achievement of the orchestra's early years and gives an insight into the musical world in which Jessie worked and with which Alan Rawsthorne would become familiar.

Jessie introduced Rawsthorne to the musical circle centred on her BBC colleague and close friend, the harpist Sidonie Goossens, and her husband Hyam 'Bumps' Greenbaum.

It [their flat] became the favourite meeting place for a brilliant group of young composers who clustered round Bumps: William Walton, Constant Lambert, Alan Rawsthorne and Patrick Hadley, together with Spike Hughes and Cecil Gray. They all adored Sidonie and fancied themselves a little in love with her.⁵

Bumps' sister, Kyla Greenbaum, recalled:

you never knew who was going to turn up at their parties in their huge attic room ... Lambert was there constantly for help with his orchestrations. I remember Walton coming to ask Bumps what he thought of his Violin Concerto and Bumps saying that it wasn't up to much because he hadn't got the beginning right and Walton saying "I'll come back again tomorrow and we'll go into it further," just like a student.⁶

Bumps' friend Cecil Gray explained why Walton, Lambert and Rawsthorne came to him with their scores: 'Not merely for advice on technical matters but also for constructive criticism in the process of composition. He had a deep understanding of, and insight into, all the problems of artistic creation.'⁷

Now married and in want of paid work, Rawsthorne became a freelance copyist and arranger for the BBC. Several of his own compositions were first performed by Jessie or her BBCSO colleagues. With Rawsthorne himself she gave the first performance of the Concertante for violin and piano. Oboist Helen Gaskell premiered the 1935 Oboe Quartet, and principal clarinettist Frederick Thurston the Clarinet Concerto, of which he gave several performances, including a

broadcast, and then made a private recording with Rawsthorne conducting. Jessie and Kathleen Washbourne gave the first performance of the Theme and Variations for Two Violins in January 1938 at the Wigmore Hall and later at the London Festival of the International Society for Contemporary Music, which brought Rawsthorne to international attention. Oxford University Press published the score, and Decca issued a recording of the work. The columnist 'Terpander', writing in the April 1939 issue of *The Gramophone* delivered a favourable verdict. This article was reprinted in *The Creel* volume 1, no. 5 (Autumn 1991), although, being reproduced in typescript, it could not convey the impression that the original three full pages in *The Gramophone* must have made on readers.

Tippett heard the first performance and wrote to Iris Lemare:

... Also do you think that you could present the Brosa [Quartet] in a chamber concert of, say, Betty Maconchy's Second Quartet, Alan Bush's *Dialectic*, my quartet, and perhaps that two-violin variations of Rawsthorne ... I very much want to get Brosa to do another public hearing of my own quartet ... and both Betty's and Alan's works are in their different ways very fine and well worth further hearings ...⁸

Whether the proposed concert took place is uncertain, but the Bush, Maconchy and Tippett quartets were included in a concert at Queen Mary Hall, London, on 11 November 1938, in which Phyllis Sellick gave the first performance of the piano sonata that Tippett had been working on during 1936–7, and would subsequently revise in 1942 and 1954. Rawsthorne's first mature piano work, the Four Bagatelles, was first performed by Gordon Green in a Radio Oslo broadcast in August 1938.

Soon after completing his Piano Sonata in July 1938, Tippett began work on his Concerto for Double String Orchestra, which he completed the following summer. Rawsthorne completed his Symphonic Studies in 1938, and it received its first performance on 21 April 1939 at the ISCM Festival in Warsaw. Its success, coming less than a year after that of the Theme and Variations for Two Violins, enhanced his growing reputation. The first British performance was given by the BBCSO under Boult on 17 May 1940, not long after Tippett had conducted the premiere of the Concerto for Double String Orchestra with his South London Orchestra at Morley College on 21 April 1940.

1940–1945

In October 1940 Tippett was appointed Director of Music at Morley College. Among the refugee musicians he recruited to the staff were Walter Bergmann, Mátyás Seiber and Walter Goehr, the last of whom became his staunchest advocate. Tippett, a conscientious objector during the war, was jailed for three months for refusing to comply with the terms of his exemption. He later wrote: 'I didn't think I was necessarily better than a colleague like, for instance, Alan Rawsthorne, who fought in the war with just as high a sense of morality: he thought he was defending civilisation against the evils of Nazism. But though I

agreed that Nazism was evil, I thought war was the wrong means of defeating it.”

At the outbreak of war the BBCSO was evacuated to Bristol, its home until July 1941. Alan Rawsthorne went there with Jessie and was described as ‘the BBC’s resident Bristol composer’.¹⁰ In 1941 he joined the army, initially the Royal Artillery and later the Education Corps, where, sometimes, he was granted leave for musical purposes. At a Promenade concert in July 1942 he conducted the first performance of the full orchestral version of the First Piano Concerto with Louis Kentner as soloist. Counting both versions of the concerto as one work composed in 1939–42 invites direct comparison with Tippett’s *Fantasia on a Theme by Handel* for piano and orchestra, composed in 1939–41 and first performed with Phyllis Sellick as soloist in March 1942. But whereas the Rawsthorne is a mature work, Tippett’s piece remains an unsatisfactory curiosity.

1945–1951

Both composers faced the post-war world having passed their fortieth birthdays. Robin Hull, writing at that time, gives a contemporary view of both men:

Taken in conjunction with the Four Bagatelles, the Variations (two violins) give at least an idea of Rawsthorne’s very impressive qualities. The Piano Concerto brings out more completely the justice of suggesting that the composer, though less spectacularly gifted than Britten, may yet stand in evident range of equality with him.

The unique art of Michael Tippett (b. 1905) springs from phenomenal gifts which in their highest application are expressive of sheer genius ... Such universality of address as Tippett achieves in *A Child of Our Time* exalts the work into a realm infinitely removed from controversy about the text. He has written, indeed, what may prove to be the most important oratorio by a British composer since Elgar’s *The Dream of Gerontius*.¹¹

Quite a billing to live up to!

Tippett now embarked upon writing his opera *The Midsummer Marriage*, which was to occupy him from 1946 to 1952.

Rawsthorne’s output was impressive on return from his enforced career break. From the reconstructed Violin Concerto of 1947 to the Second Piano Concerto and the *Concertante pastorale* of 1952, nine concert works whose combined playing time exceeds that of *The Midsummer Marriage*; and film music too.

The Piano Concerto was a great success with many performances and two commercial recordings in its early years. Reviewing the music commissioned for the 1951 Festival of Britain, Mosco Carner wrote of the concerto:

While I am not yet convinced that Rawsthorne’s new work is, in its musical significance, wholly equal to his First Piano Concerto of some ten years ago – the passacaglia of the latter seems to me one of the best things to have come from his pen – there can be no doubt that he has given us as brilliant a work

as we have had in this medium for a long time. If his first essay is regarded as perhaps the best modern piano concerto this country has produced, the new work is very likely to become a serious rival to that claim. It is a real piano concerto. Moreover, it continues that romantic lyrical vein which marks Rawsthorne’s later style, as witness the poetic slow movement. In addition, it has a remarkable variety of mood (the melodic and rhythmic ‘tease’ of the finale is most delightful) a clean lively texture, and the problem of soloist versus orchestra is solved to the satisfaction of both. In short, it seemed the most outstanding contribution to the new Festival works. (‘Clifford Curzon with the LSO under Sargent’).¹²

Of the feature films, *Sarabande for Dead Lovers* deserves a footnote in musical history, for it included what must have been the recording debut of Julian Bream. He is heard playing during the card game scene, which is about twenty minutes into the film. Bream recalled the occasion in a DVD which includes the film clip.

Well now, the following year, 1948, I was asked if I would play for a big feature film that Ealing Studios were making. And it also had quite a good, distinguished cast. There was Stewart Grainger who was at that time one of the most popular actors. I think that they could not believe that a young 13- or 14-year-old could play well enough for a good tape for them. It really went down well and they were very impressed, particularly Alan Rawsthorne, the Music Director of the film, and he was thrilled with what I could do. And of course he was to compose for me a special piece right at the end of his life, many years later.¹³

Rawsthorne and dentistry resurfaced in July 1948 when, during a broadcast introduction to a performance of *Cortèges*, Constant Lambert made his now celebrated remark which deserves to be quoted verbatim:

Our concert begins with the fantasy overture *Cortèges* by Alan Rawsthorne. Rawsthorne, though born in Nineteen Five, has only recently established himself as one of the leaders of the younger English school. The reasons for this are simple: in his youth he began his career not by studying composition, but by studying architecture and dentistry, which latter occupation he no longer pursues, even as a hobby – or so he tells me.¹⁴

The ‘or so he tells me’ is uttered almost as an aside and must have given radio listeners some cause for concern.

1951–1956

For both composers these were years of change. In 1951 Tippett resigned from Morley College and moved home from Oxted to Wadhurst in Sussex, where, in 1952, he completed *The Midsummer Marriage*. The death of Constant Lambert in 1951 was a great blow to Rawsthorne, compounded in 1953 by that of another Fitzrovia, the 39-year-old Dylan Thomas. These deaths, coupled with his own alcohol-related illness that year, must have given Rawsthorne more than mere intimations of his own mortality. Against this must be counted the personal

happiness gained from his developing relationship with Isabel Lambert, their move to Essex, and later marriage. ‘Alan and Isabel Rawsthorne were frequent visitors to the Swingers’ tumble-down cottage in Pebmarsh, Essex, and in 1954 they moved to Little Sampford, joining the Swingers and other exiled left-wing Fitzrovians such as Bernard Stevens, Jack Lindsay, Paul Hogarth, and Michael Ayrton in what Lindsay liked to call the “People’s Republic of Essex”.¹⁵

Anne Macnaghten, who lived near Saffron Walden from 1955 to 1967, not far from Little Sampford, recalls:

... then I remember an audience made helpless with laughter at a lecture he (Rawsthorne) gave on contemporary music at the Linton (Cambridgeshire) Festival one year; it was, I think, the funniest thing I have ever sat through ...¹⁶

The Linton Festival was held from 1957 to 1960. How typical of Rawsthorne that he should lend his prestige to a local venture.

The coronation was a source of much artistic expression in 1953. The Arts Council commissioned ‘A Garland for the Queen’, a new Elizabethan equivalent to the first Elizabeth’s ‘The Triumphs of Oriana’. ‘Garland’ comprised ten settings for unaccompanied mixed choir by British composers, to texts by contemporary British poets. Tippett’s madrigal ‘Dance, Clarion Air’ to words by Christopher Fry and Rawsthorne’s ‘Canzonet’, a Louis McNiece setting, were two of the more enduring pieces. Reviewing the subsequent recording (Columbia 33CX 1063) in that November’s *The Gramophone*, AR [Alec Robertson] wrote:

Bliss’s ‘Aubade’ is a charming prelude to the Garland and Rubbra’s ‘Salutation’ a moving conclusion ... Finzi’s ‘White Flowering Days’ is fresh and charming, and Rawsthorne’s ‘Canzonet’ is, I think, the most original piece of all.

Tippett was one of seven composers (Rawsthorne and Rubbra declined Britten’s invitation) who each contributed a variation to another composite work, Variations on an Elizabethan Theme (‘Sellenger’s Round’), commissioned for the 1953 Aldeburgh Festival. Britten was far from pleased when Tippett reused his own variation the following year in his ‘Divertimento on Sellenger’s Theme’.

Rawsthorne was commissioned to write a Coronation Suite for the 120-strong National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain, and was asked to include plenty of percussion as there was nothing for the players to do in the rest of the forthcoming concert programme. The score and parts were promised for March 1953, which would have been in time for the orchestra’s residential fortnight of rehearsals and concerts in April; the first at the Royal Festival Hall and three more in Brussels during the following week. The programme for all four concerts was:

Beethoven: Egmont Overture
Mendelssohn: Violin Concerto (with the 16 year-old Ralph Holmes as soloist)
Rawsthorne: Coronation Suite
Interval
Cesar Franck: Symphony

However, the score and parts had not arrived by the due date. Dame Ruth Railton, founding director of the orchestra, takes up the story:

... someone went to see Rawsthorne in London, and came back the same evening with a thin score and a few parts, ready for us to copy by hand. This meant that all the staff were up very late copying enough parts for the morning rehearsals. The promised Coronation Suite had become just one piece called Coronation Overture. It was a shoddy little work ... By the evening of the first full rehearsal Rawsthorne had given John [Dalby] permission to write in parts for everybody. This John did, and they increased daily ... with daily additions the composer was delighted. But we had no time to alter his ending, which slowed down and faded out like a damp squib.¹⁷

Throughout her account, Dame Ruth Railton is scathing about Rawsthorne, and apropos of the first Brussels concert she wrote ‘... we also discovered that the Rawsthorne programme note was for the Coronation Suite we had expected, and not for the one small item we had received. Our hosts decided not to make an announcement but just to play what we’d got and hope for the best.’ A copy of this programme note appears not to be held in the Rawsthorne archive or by OUP, and so far it has not been possible to obtain one from the National Youth Orchestra. If it is still extant anywhere, it might shed some light on what the Suite was to have contained.

We know that Rawsthorne was a slow worker who was often pushed to meet deadlines and sometimes had to resort to the help of friends and colleagues to complete the orchestration on time. His work load was not unduly heavy at that time: *A Canticle of Man* was premiered in August 1952, Four Romantic Pieces for piano in March 1953, *The Cruel Sea* in April, ‘Canzonet’ in June, *The Drawings of Leonardo* in September; and *West of Zanzibar* in April 1954. Perhaps it was ill health or events in his private life that caused this rare lapse on his part. In the 1990s John McCabe reconstructed the missing score from the orchestral parts, and though intended only for archival and study purposes the piece was recorded in 2007 and can be heard on Dutton CDLX 7203 along with other Rawsthorne premiere recordings, and a modern *Practical Cats*. Whatever the overture’s failings, it does not, as Ruth Railton claims, end by slowing down, or by fading out like a damp squib.

continued on page 39; endnotes on page 44.

Isabel Rawsthorne: Four Pictures and an Exhibition

Nigel Bonham-Carter

This will not be the first time that Isabel Rawsthorne has achieved coverage (literally and metaphorically) in the pages of *The Creel*, or in the more recent, photograph-friendly, incarnation of *The Sprat*. Isabel's support for Alan's career and their mutual devotion are both well known and have been comprehensively recorded, most notably by Tim Mottershead in a biographical study and in Gerard Schurmann's recollections in various issues of *The Creel*.¹ Isabel was an artist of at least comparable distinction to her husband, and her career was both documented and illustrated in a *Daily Telegraph* article by Martin Gayford.² There seems accordingly little need to retread old ground, and all I need do in this article is briefly to introduce, as requested, the four original works of Isabel's which I possess, with the addition of an, again, brief notice of the recent exhibition of her work.

The original suggestion, made to *The Creel's* editor, was merely to reproduce no.1, the drawing of Alan Rawsthorne's head. This is seen in profile, and is effectively a sketch or preparatory drawing, which, in Suzanne Doyle's words, 'clearly relates to Isabel's "portraits in motion", [her own description] the "dancer drawings".' Like nature, and indeed portraiture, this was an enduring strand in her artistic production.

The outline features of Alan's face have been smudged horizontally across the page. This combination of well-defined features and blurred boundaries creates an impression of movement.³

Although 'smudged' appears to be a technically correct description, the artistic effect is actually of the utmost economy and precision, with the fewest possible strokes deployed to capture Alan's likeness, in an almost Japanese manner.

The editor has also asked to include my other three original works of Isabel's, none of which, to my knowledge, has ever been reproduced before. The two small studies from nature, identical in size, were painted as a gift for her friend Anna Phillips (mentioned in Martin Gayford's article), from whom I was fortunate to inherit them. Neither is given a title (nor even signed), but comparison with other works suggests a date in the early 1970s for their composition. 'Stoats Leaping' might be an appropriate title for no. 2; 'Birds on a Wire, Moonlight' for no. 3. The stoats are certainly very much alive ... but the birds? An interest in the hidden, skeletal structure of things goes back to the very beginning of Isabel's artistic production, and a bird skeleton was found displayed in her studio after her death. She must surely have been one of the first to express, in artistic form, a concern with ecological and environmental issues.



1. 'Head of Alan Rawsthorne' Drawing 16"x 22" Late 1960s



2. 'Stoats Leaping' Oil on board 10" x 8" Mid 1970s

3. 'Birds on a Wire, Moonlight' Oil on board 10" x 8" Mid 1970s



No. 4, again untitled, is associated, on a private level, with our single personal contact with Isabel. To coincide with an exhibition of her work at the Fry Art Gallery in nearby Saffron Walden, I and my friend José-Luis Jaen-Galan had driven Anna Phillips over to Little Sampford, Essex, to visit her. We saw the picture in her studio and fell in love with it; the liveliness of the fish against the schematic, partly red background, in grid format, exerted an immediate appeal. Happily, she was willing to sell it to us on the spot – despite remarking, rather vaguely, that she had 'half promised it to someone else'.



4. 'Fish' Oil on board 19" x 23" Early to mid 1970s

Even in decline, as she then sadly was – it was now some years since failing sight had made it impossible for her to paint – a formidable personality was strongly in evidence. We remember her as caught in John Blake’s late photograph of around 1990, reproduced here.

I would personally take issue with the concluding sentence of Martin Gayford’s article: ‘It is, however, as the personality behind an image in other artists’ work that her name will survive’ – and so perhaps would others who saw and heard Dr Carol Jacobi’s absorbing presentation at the 2010 Oxford Reunion. She, together with Biddy Noakes, has since curated an exhibition, *Migrations*, centred on Isabel’s seven works bearing that title, first seen at Pateley Bridge in North Yorkshire, and then last summer in Oxford, where we visited it.

Two of the *Migration* series are reproduced on pages 15–16 of *The Creel* volume 6, no. 1 (issue 21). The series unites, albeit obliquely, Isabel’s long-standing interest both in birds and in matters ecological. Although technique and aesthetic are far different, I was reminded somehow of Monet’s progress towards virtual abstraction in his later works, featuring water-lilies in his Giverny garden. The bold divisions of colour catch the eye immediately. ‘Her previously subdued palate changed dramatically, to feature principally lemon yellow and a striking cerulean blue.’⁴ The addition of rounded areas, sometimes just of contrasting colour, sometimes with bird imagery – sometimes, too, of actual hardboard roundels applied to the canvas – gives these paintings what seems to me an entirely unique and decidedly remarkable flavour.

But it is the acknowledged expert on Isabel’s work, Carol Jacobi, who should have the last word: “Migration” is a metaphor for time and transition.⁵

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Notes

¹ Tim Mottershead, ‘Alan Rawsthorne: The Fish with an Ear for Music’, *The Creel* 5/3, issue no. 19 (Winter 2005/6), pp. 30–91. Gerard Schurmann, see for example ‘Further Recollections of a Long Friendship’, *The Creel* 5/2, issue no.18 (Autumn 2004), pp. 7–9.

² Martin Gayford, ‘Isabel Rawsthorne’, *Daily Telegraph* (25 July 1998), reprinted in *The Creel* 6/1, issue no. 21 (Autumn 2007), pp. 14–20.

³ Suzanne Doyle, ‘Isabel Rawsthorne, 1912–1992: Paintings, Drawings and Designs’, in the Catalogue for the exhibition at the Mercer Art Gallery Harrogate, November 1997 to January 1998, and at the October Gallery, London, January 1998.

⁴ Suzanne Doyle, ‘Isabel Rawsthorne, 1912–1992: Biography’, in the Catalogue for the exhibition at the Mercer Art Gallery, November 1997 (see note 3).

⁵ Carol Jacobi, *Migrations*.



Carmen Revitalised – revisited

Tony Pickard

In my article ‘Carmen Revitalised’ (*The Sprat*, October 2010) I suggested that a ‘symphony’ comprising the three soprano arias together with the orchestral Chaconne and Fugue could be extracted from *Carmen Vitale*.

John Belcher passed responses to this article to me together with a CD of a 1973 performance conducted by Donald Hunt, which, sonically, is a great improvement on the 1963 Del Mar recording upon which my article was based. This has led me to revise some of my earlier opinions.

Of the ‘symphony’: John McCabe thought it ‘an excellent idea’. Keith Warsop said: ‘it would be nice to have a recording – but surely the priority should be for the complete work. Then we can all make up our minds about the writing for choir.’ Whatever the merits of *Carmen Vitale* it has rarely been performed and would be very expensive to record.

The ‘symphony’, which contains twenty-seven minutes of the original forty-five minutes, also has the option that the Chaconne and Fugue can be played as an independent work, thereby giving two further bites at the same cherry! These would also be less expensive to record and are more likely to be performed.

The ‘symphony’ – revised

The first aria is now preceded by CV’s eleven opening bars which set the ‘medieval mood’; these lead directly into the first aria. The third verse is omitted, the second verse joining seamlessly to the oboe entry four bars after rehearsal no. 16.

Hunt’s recording uses the revised Fugue which works well and dispels my earlier reservations. Rather than make a concert beginning and end to the Fugue I suggest that this movement begins at rehearsal no. 24 and continues to the end of Part I. From the vocal score it appears that the eleven choral bars before the Fugue are doubled in the orchestra, but that the sixteen choral bars after will need orchestrating.

The second aria, Chaconne and third aria remain as published.

The ‘symphony’ timings taken from the Donald Hunt recording are:

Introduction and first aria	7'.15"
Fugue	4'.30"
Second aria	6'.40"
Chaconne	3'.10" 5'.30"
Third aria	27'.05" 3'.10"
Total	27'.05"

I sent a taped recording of the ‘symphony’ and ‘Chaconne and Fugue’ to John McCabe, who has kindly given me permission to quote his comments: ‘I think the *Carmen Vitale* symphony works well. I agree about the first aria omitting the third verse – this and the link are both fine. The Chaconne and Fugue work splendidly.’

I played the last three movements to a twentieth-century music study group at one of their 'blind listenings'. Everyone was favourably impressed, especially by the chaconne, and some said that they would like to hear more. When I revealed Rawsthorne as the composer, I found that all knew of him, though confessing to having heard little of his music – an all-too-familiar response, unfortunately.

Recently, record companies, especially Dutton, have been recording works by long-forgotten British composers. *The Carmen Vitale* symphony would fit in well on one of their future CDs.

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In Memoriam John M. Belcher (13 March 1932 – 16 October 2011)

Concert at St Andrew's Church, Grinton in Swaledale, 24 March 2012

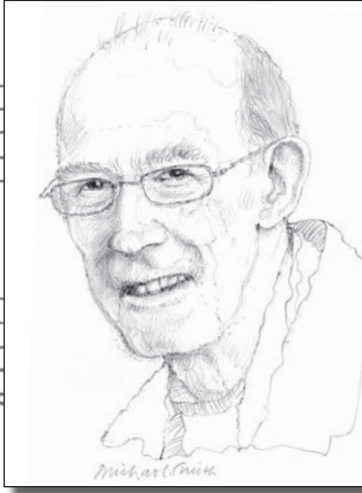
Although many of our readers will have been present in spirit at this spring's memorial concert for John Belcher, only a minority will have had the opportunity to make the journey to the Yorkshire Dales in the flesh. Hence this verbal description and pictorial record, together with reprints of the tributes contributed to the concert programme by a variety of JB's friends and colleagues.

The concert, like much of John Belcher's life's work, was a triumph of the will. March, even towards its close, was not a reassuring time to be planning an event which required the convergence of a large body of performers and listeners in a somewhat remote location renowned for its winter bleakness. At worst, the weather could have made it physically impossible for any but those who dwelt close by to reach the church. But the time and the place were both meaningful: the date was as close as possible to what would have been JB's eightieth birthday, had he lived, and the place, the parish church of Grinton in Swaledale, was in the heart of the country he loved – close to where his career as a clergyman had begun, and where his family had put down roots. So planning went ahead in faith, with John Turner as its driving force, and with the enthusiastic backing of the family, the local representatives.

In the event, fortune smiled: as can be deduced from the photographs, the climate was kinder than anything experienced for weeks afterwards, and the audience was substantial, many members travelling long distances and staying locally.

Still, there were formidable artistic problems to be overcome: Ian Thompson and the Lonsdale Chamber Orchestra, as well as the soloists themselves, took on the task of presenting a programme consisting almost entirely of highly unfamiliar works, with very limited opportunity for rehearsal. As a member of the audience commented: 'it was a more adventurous programme than would be

Remembering JOHN BELCHER



A CONCERT OF BRITISH MUSIC

WORKS BY ELGAR, DELIUS, ALWYN, and McCABE
with wind concertos by Alan Rawsthorne and Philip Wood

LONSDALE CHAMBER ORCHESTRA,
conducted by Ian Thompson
Soloists: Richard Simpson (oboe),
Linda Merrick (clarinet), John Turner (recorder)

St. Andrew's Church, Grinton-in-Swaledale,
Saturday 24th March 2012 at 2pm
FREE ADMISSION. REFRESHMENTS

Supported by the Rawsthorne Trust, the William Alwyn Foundation,
the Ida Carroll Trust, the RVW Trust and the Belcher Family.

heard in London on forty-nine nights out of fifty!’ The nave of the church (never forgetting that its primary function is as a place of worship) made a commodious auditorium, but the only room for the performers was in the sanctuary, so that there had perforce to be an organ-recital-like separation between performers and listeners. All these difficulties were taken in the artists’ stride; a testimony to their musicianship, depth of experience, and professionalism.

As can be seen from the programme, no fewer than three works by Alan Rawsthorne for soloist and string orchestra were persuasively represented. A further work from the same era, his friend William Alwyn’s *Autumn Legend*, displayed the evocative and sometimes uncanny tones of the *cor anglais* against the background of the strings.

Two living composers, both present on the occasion, contradicted the notion that classical music is a ‘museum culture’. John McCabe’s *Six-Minute Symphony* is a new kind of minimalism: the desired end is to say a great deal in a short space. In this respect it rivals the degree of compression demonstrated by Webern (whose own symphony actually occupies ten minutes, without its unwritten last movement). Philip Wood, at forty one of the youngest of those present, scored a hit with his *Recorder Concerto*, which in spite of containing its own elegy, sorting well with the ‘*Allegretto con morbidezza*’ of Rawsthorne’s *Oboe Concerto*, excelled in energy and lightness of touch. And of course the Elgar and Delius works, terra firma amid all the new experiences, were a delight to hear. Ian Thompson, who himself devised the order of performance, was emphatic in his desire that the concert should end with the last chord of the Elgar *Serenade*, deservedly one of its composer’s favourite works.

By John Belcher’s wish, each half of the concert began with a hymn, accompanied by his old friend Alan Cuckston. ‘Praise my Soul the King of Heaven’ began the first half, and John Bunyan’s ‘He who Would Valiant Be’ the second.

The introduction to the whole concert made reference both to John Belcher’s local connections and to the diverse fields in which his name is held in honour. John McCabe, President of the Friends of Alan Rawsthorne, introduced the second half, drawing attention in particular to JB’s professionalism in seeing through – properly – what he undertook, and to his sound judgement and far-sightedness in reviving and transforming the Alan Rawsthorne Society into ‘the Trust’ and ‘the Friends’.

The concert was professionally recorded by Steve Plews of ASC records and his team, and it is hoped to make this available for sale at a reasonable cost. In the first instance, it is requested that all those who would like a copy of the CD would signify this desire to Andrew Knowles, so that an order can be made up.

Thanks are due to the William Alwyn Foundation, the Ida Carroll Trust, the RVW Trust, and John Belcher’s family, for financial support for the concert; and to all the artists, who appeared without charge.

PROGRAMME

Six-Minute Symphony (1997) John McCabe (b. 1939)
Grave - Allegro deciso – Tempo Primo (Grave) – Adagio – Allegretto, scherzando – Adagio – Allegro piacevole – Tempo Primo (Grave)

Concerto for Oboe and String Orchestra Alan Rawsthorne
(1905–1971)
Maestoso appassionato – Allegro – Allegretto con morbidezza – Vivace
Richard Simpson: Oboe

Concerto Lirico for Recorder and String Orchestra Philip Wood
(b. 1972)
Allegro grazioso – Andantino – Allegro comodo
John Turner: Recorder

Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra Alan Rawsthorne
(1905–1971)
Preludio: Moderato – Capriccio: Allegro molto – Aria: Adagio – Invention:
Allegro giocoso
Linda Merrick: Clarinet

INTERVAL

Two Aquarelles Frederick Delius
(1862–1934)

Autumn Legend for Cor Anglais and String Orchestra William Alwyn
(1905–1985)
Richard Simpson: Cor Anglais

Suite for Treble Recorder and String Orchestra Alan Rawsthorne
(1905–1971)
orch. John McCabe

Sarabande: Maestoso – Fantasia: Andante con moto – Air: Andante grazioso –
Jig: Allegro
John Turner: Recorder

Serenade for String Orchestra, Op. 20 Edward Elgar (1857–1934)
Allegro piacevole – Larghetto – Allegretto



St Andrew's church, Grinton in Swaledale



The Bridge Inn, a most convenient hostelry

The bridge over the River Swale



The Swale from the bridge





Nigel Bonham-Carter decides to do without his anti-theft device



Mike Smith in expansive mood

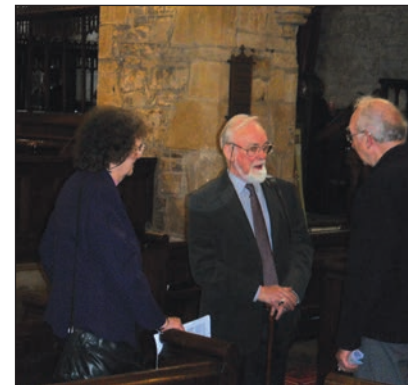


Martin Ellerby (left) and Andrew Knowles



Tony Pickard

John Belcher's daughter Mary Allison presides over the refreshments



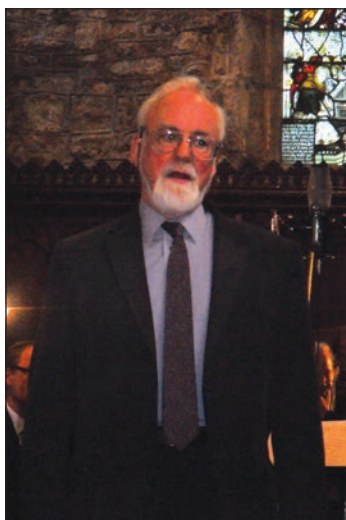
Monica McCabe, John McCabe, Dick Blackford



Richard Simpson, Janet Simpson



Linda Merrick talking to John Turner



John McCabe introduces the second half of the concert



Ilan Thompson and John Turner call for Philip Wood

Philip Wood acknowledges applause for his concerto



Ilan Thompson



Remembering John Belcher – A Note of Thanks from the Family

Mary Allison

We would like to acknowledge the hard work of all the Rawsthorne members who have made it possible for this event to take place; John Turner for the music and musicians, Mike Smith for the wonderful posters and art work, and Martin Thacker for his help and support with the event. Also to all the musicians who have donated their services – amazing! It is great to think that John has left this legacy for Rawsthorne music lovers. We know how much he enjoyed participating in the Trust, especially the trips to Oxford, which were always the highlight of his year. The family are very grateful.

Tributes to John

From John McCabe

A man of wide interests, and deep concern for society's less fortunate people, John Belcher demonstrated, through his spiritual life as a minister and his administrative life as a moving spirit behind what became the South Yorkshire Housing Association, a profound sense of people's needs and aspirations. His private memoir (*A Musical Pilgrimage*) revealed the sources of his own self-deprecatory and essentially immensely private personality – it is not surprising that he felt drawn to the music of Alan Rawsthorne, elusive, subtly expressive of an often hidden emotional depth, and yet often witty and light-hearted.

John's friendship was essentially warm and affectionate, often expressed with delicious irony and humour – his own writings are testament to the wry wit with which he communicated. It is in connection with Rawsthorne that I encountered and worked with him, having known and admired Rawsthorne's music since my own childhood. When the Alan Rawsthorne Society was re-formed in 1989, John became its guiding light, and the determination, skill and imagination with which he steered its progress and that of the Trust was often deeply impressive – as was the enormous amount of physical work he did, including editing publications such as *The Sprat*, compiling lists of works and recordings, writing record and other programme notes, researching performances, and persuading performers, recording people and musical managements to take up this fine body of music.

His commitment to what he saw as a cause of great importance meant that Rawsthorne's music continues, however tentatively, to have a toehold on the repertoire. Without John's absolute commitment and knowledge, this would almost certainly not be the case. In a country where native composers are still, with a few notable and sometimes over-exposed examples, overlooked to a greater or lesser extent, we needed John very much – he was devoted to the cause, understood the personalities involved, and was determined that this art should not be lost. Our gratitude is immense.

© Copyright 2012 John McCabe

From Mervyn Jones

I first met John in 1983 when I moved to Sheffield to start work at South Yorkshire Housing Association. By the time John retired, we had worked together for thirteen years.

Working with John was a great experience. He was passionate about social housing and making a difference to people's lives. He also had the priceless leadership quality of letting his colleagues get on with the job. He trusted and believed in people. When we made mistakes, as I did frequently, he was patient and tolerant. He was always there if advice or support was needed, and he showed how much he cared about his colleagues. John never seemed to shed his pastoral care role!

John had a good sense of fun and a sharp wit. He was always ready with a quip to lighten the most boring of meetings. Frustrated by bureaucracy, some of his driest jokes came at the expense of the 'paper pushers and jobsworths' he felt got in the way of helping people.

I learned such a lot from my time spent with John at South Yorkshire. After he retired I lost touch with him for some years. Happily, I did see him again and was able to thank him for all the support and help he had given me. Even though his health was failing, it was wonderful to see his sharp mind still at work and his passions (especially music and email!) still evident.

John was a good man, a friend and a colleague. Thank you John and farewell.

From Jenny Brierley

I should have guessed from my first encounter with John that he would turn out to be a rather unusual boss. He had no time for job descriptions. A passion for tackling homelessness and a refusal to accept 'no' for an answer were all he asked. In return, he offered trust, unfailing support and, as it turned out, a lifelong friendship that taught me far more than housing management.

Establishing Sheffield Family Housing Association (later SYHA) made huge demands on John's time and energy in the early years. With typical generosity of spirit, he was always quick to acknowledge that many people had a hand in nurturing this new venture, but the heaviest responsibility clearly fell on John's shoulders. It was John who ensured that his values of caring and concern for the individual were embedded in the association, an ethos that continues to characterise SYHA today. In the many memorable battles with bureaucrats that he fought for the association's survival and growth, John's passion for social justice, expressed with unarguable logic, in awe-inspiring English, invariably won the day.

John was anything but a directive manager, but on my first day in the job he needed to sort out with me an issue that was clearly significant for our working relationship. We had the same initials, so I was promptly instructed to drop my middle M, as there could only be one JMB. It was nearly twenty years before I could reclaim my middle initial, but that was a tiny price to pay for what I learned from John in that time – about housing, people and leadership, about music and life, about him and about myself.

In the years since moving on from SYHA, he enthused me with the music and

writing that he loved. He encouraged me to make music, even though he found my enthusiasm for contemporary works deeply suspect. He kept me on track as I discovered for myself the pitfalls and dilemmas of leadership, struggling to live up to the high ideals that he inspired. There was only one JMB, and he was indeed an unusually compassionate and insightful boss and a very dear friend.

From Alan Cuckston

John was my friend and confidant for thirty years. For that I must thank the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music. He came to hear me narrate 'Facade' at Wentworth Woodhouse in Summer 1981. I had met his partner Sibyl shortly before at her Rotherham College which I had visited as an AB Examiner. In the first part of that concert I played the piano and accompanied each of the Walton instrumentalists in their party pieces. John compared my accompanying favourably with Britten's. After the concert we went back to their house and I was introduced to their special musical tastes. John's favourite singer proved to be the voluptuous Régine Crespin, and Poulenc his favourite song composer. He had the music for all the songs of 'the divine Francis' (his words), so I always knew where to come for whatever copies I might professionally require.

As a gifted photographer, John was later delighted to receive pictures from Paris of Poulenc's residence taken by one of Sibyl's lifelong friends. Also, as keen gardeners, both John and Sibyl cultivated their patch with special varieties and heavenly fragrances, happily sharing plants with friends and sampling the stock of many a nursery and garden centre round Yorkshire.

My acquaintance with them blossomed, and they helped to move my career in new directions. Through them I was introduced to saxophonist Richard Ingham, then a Rotherham 'peri', and to jazz singer Norma Winstone, who performed Britten's Cabaret Songs with me. John asked Norma and myself to give his retirement concert in Sheffield when his time with the South Yorkshire Housing Association came to an end. He had also suggested I record all Alan Rawsthorne's piano music, as well as his songs, which I did with soprano Sandra Dugdale and tenor Martin Hindmarsh. These recordings were welcomed by Peter Dickinson in *The Gramophone*.

Sibyl managed to extend her teaching career beyond the statutory retirement age required by the Education Authority. But when the time came, they 'upped sticks' and became neighbours of Vivien and myself, and of Sibyl's son Laurie, in Hemingbrough. Sibyl's need to teach prompted her to sign up as a lecturer with the WEA. So once a week John and she would depart early for Penistone and Barnsley, down the motorways. The weekly scripts in Music Appreciation were their shared preparation during the winter months, all the musical illustrations scrupulously recorded by John in advance on cassette. New friendships with class members were of course now established. Right up till the last Sibyl's urge to devise material for these mature students was indefatigable. John told me she was dictating notes for the next lecture session only hours before she died.

As a widower, John felt the need to commemorate Sibyl's life and work in a Memorial Concert which we devised together and gave in Hemingbrough at St

Mary's church. He asked for my choir to sing Howells' 'Like as the hart' and that I play Ravel's Sonatine. Two former Rotherham pupils he also invited to take part: oboist Jill Crowther, now with the Philharmonia, played Rakhmaninov's Vocalise, and organist Nigel Bellamy a Bach chorale prelude. Some years later, when my wife Vivien passed away, John also put together a sequence of choral music which we duly sang at her funeral service.

Now a widower myself, and with John's health in marked decline, I would take him once every Sunday to Tesco's for our week's groceries. And often during the week we would share lunch or tea – he would bake his own bread, right from our earliest acquaintance he had demonstrated culinary skills. Conversations embraced opinions on new music, the latest recordings or broadcasts and TV programmes heard, and politics (definitely left of centre) and religion. Of his time as a clergyman in Swaledale there were several tales. I learned of his compassionate dealings with the Catterick squaddies and their wives and girlfriends. His time in training for the priesthood had been particularly influenced by the Reverend (later Most Reverend) Dr Stuart Blanch and by his studies in Hebrew.

On all these matters he would open up, with additional reminiscences of his London childhood and his schooling in Leeds (near where I was raised) and as a junior in the Yorkshire Bank. The memories of the Yorkshire Symphony Orchestra and of the Leeds Musical Festivals we could share – visits by Britten and Pears were highlights. There were invariably many moments of humour and quick-witted remarks from him on personalities in the news or whom we knew in common.

I still miss him.

From Herbert Morel

While I never met John, we were friends brought together by admiration for the musical language of Alan Rawsthorne's works, and perhaps our similar times – his last letter to me is dated 22 August 2011.

He was a child of the Blitz. I was evacuated with my twin brother to an uncle in Canada in June 1940, and missed it.

John was also a poet and a profoundly dedicated citizen of English life and culture.

Sometimes those of us who live south of the River Thames are overpowered by the capital city and its self-obsession.

To me the 'great wen' had lost any charm fifty-five years ago, but music lives anywhere.

What a nice and good man was John Belcher.

From Mike Smith

Just to add that it has been my pleasure to have had twenty years' working relationship with John, collaborating on many AR projects, and, of course *The Creel* and *Sprat*. He was a good friend, always cheerful – I too shall miss him.

Alan Rawsthorne Discography – Addenda

Andrew Knowles

John Belcher's masterly 'Alan Rawsthorne: a Commercial Discography' appeared in The Creel, volume 5, no. 4 (2006), and was supplemented in volume 6, no.1 (2007). This is a second supplement, updating the information to mid-2012.

Fantasy Overture, Cortèges (1945)

Coupled with works by Henry Hugo Pierson, David Morgan, Francis Chagrin, Peter Warlock, and Malcolm Arnold

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Barry Wordsworth

LYRITA – SRCD 318 (2007)

Divertimento for Chamber Orchestra (1961–2)

Coupled with works by Michael Tippett, Benjamin Britten, Lennox Berkeley and Malcolm Arnold

English Chamber Orchestra conducted by Norman Del Mar

LYRITA – SRCD 257 (2007)

Symphonic Studies (1939)†

Street Corner Overture (1944)‡

Piano Concerto No. 1 (1939 rev. 1942)†

Piano Concerto No. 2 (1951)†

Malcolm Binns (piano)†

London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Nicholas Braithwaite†

London Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir John Pritchard‡

LYRITA – SRCD 255 (2007)

Bagatelles for Piano Solo (1938)

Coupled with works by Beethoven, Brahms and Britten

Sarah Beth Briggs (piano)

SEMAPHORE MULTIMEDIA (2007)

Violin Sonata (1958)

Coupled with works by Bantock, Dunhill, Fricker and Stanford

(English Violin Sonatas – 2 CDs)

Susanne Stanzeleit (violin)

Julian Jacobson (piano)

PORTRAIT (2007)

Street Corner Overture (1944)

Madame Chrysanthème Ballet Suite (1957)

Practical Cats – An entertainment for speaker and orchestra (1954)

Theme, Variations and Finale (1967)†

***Medieval Diptych* for Baritone and Orchestra (1962)†**

***Coronation Overture* (1953)†**

†World premiere recordings

Simon Callow (narrator)

Jeremy Huw Williams (baritone)

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by David Lloyd-Jones

DUTTON – EPOCH CDLX 7203 (2008)

Piano Concerto No. 1 – original 1939 version for piano,

string orchestra and percussion†

Coupled with works by Howard Ferguson, Gerald Finzi and Frederic Austin

†World premiere recording

Mark Bebbington (piano)

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra conducted by Howard Williams

SOMM – SOMMCD 241 (2008)

Bagatelles for Piano Solo (1938)

Sonatina for Piano Solo (1949)

Four Romantic Pieces for Piano Solo (1953)

Coupled with works by Bernard Stevens

James Gibb (piano)

LYRITA – REAM 1107 (Mono Recordings 1958) (2008)

Quartet for Clarinet, Violin, Viola and Cello (1948)

Coupled with works by Lennox Berkeley, and Alan Bush

Members of the Aeolian Quartet (Sydney Humphreys, violin, Margaret Major, viola, Derek Simpson, cello) with Thea King, clarinet

LYRITA – SRCD 256 (2008)

Sonata for Cello and Piano (1948)

Coupled with works by John Ireland, Edgar Bainton, and Cyril Scott

(Northern Lights – English Cello Sonatas 1920–1950)

Emma Ferrand (cello)

Jeremy Young (piano)

MERIDIAN – CDE 84565 (2008)

Theme and Variations for Two Violins (1937)

Coupled with works by Jim Aitchison, John McCabe, E.J. Moeran, Croft, and David Matthews

(British Works for Two Violins)

Retorica – Harriet Mackenzie and Philippa Mo (violins)

(NMC – NMCD 182) – To be released in September 2012

Rawsthorne and Tippett – Musical Twins?

continued from page 17.

Three years after completion, Tippett's opera *The Midsummer Marriage* was premiered in January 1955 at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. It received widespread press coverage across the spectrum of newspapers, with most comment concentrating, not for the last time, on Tippett's self-prepared libretto. This overshadowed the music, which was generally praised, as was the performance of the principals, chorus and orchestra under the direction of John Pritchard. In April of the same year, Rawsthorne had a work premiered at Covent Garden (not a sentence that his early post-war critics would have expected to write); this was the ballet *Madame Chrysanthème*, with choreography by Frederick Ashton and scenery and costumes by Isabel Lambert, as the Covent Garden poster styled her. Though generally admired, the ballet did not stay in the repertoire. Rawsthorne extracted from it a suite, which he conducted at the 1957 Proms and later recorded. Most unexpectedly, the whole ballet was recorded in 2003 as part of a two-CD tribute to Sir Frederick Ashton: Sanctuary Classics CD WLS 273. Philip Lane, who produced the recording, reported on the studio sessions in a *Creel* article (2003). He found 'the sound world constantly engaging, but in the same way that many of Rawsthorne's film scores are: on the surface understated compared with some by his contemporaries. The score probably lacks the dramatic edge overall to appeal to the gallery ...'

Tippett began work on his Piano Concerto in 1953. It is the last full flowering of the *Midsummer Marriage* style and was first performed in October 1956, as was Rawsthorne's Second Violin Concerto. In retrospect, these works marked the end of a composition 'period' for each composer – although these things are rarely cut and dried. Rawsthorne's and Tippett's names will be forever linked in some readers' minds by virtue of the 1955 LP recording which coupled their first orchestral masterpieces, each conducted by their respective staunchest advocate and friend at the time. The 1946 recording of Rawsthorne's Symphonic Studies conducted by Constant Lambert, and the 1952 recording of Tippett's Concerto for Double String Orchestra under Walter Goehr, both coincidentally played by the Philharmonia Orchestra, had originally been issued on 78 rpm records, but now at last could be heard without the irritation of side changes. This LP, issued by HMV (CLP 1056 and later MFP 2069) must have been the first contact a generation had with the works of either composer.

1956–1971

Hugh Wood, writing around 1960, neatly encapsulates the Rawsthorne situation during the 1950s:

Rawsthorne's earlier works are splendidly decisive and consistent: they include the Bagatelles for Piano, the Symphonic Studies, the First Piano Concerto, the popular

Street Corner overture; and they culminate in one of the composer's finest works, the Concerto for String Orchestra, a work in a line from Elgar's Introduction and Allegro and the Tippett Double Concerto. The danger inherent in a style so completely formed and a manner so self-sufficient is obvious: the character of the music may fail to develop and gesture may degenerate into mannerism. Rawsthorne's later music is not free from these dangers, as a comparison of the Bagatelles with the Four Romantic Pieces (1955) will show. But they are offset by a new sparseness of texture and seriousness of thought in the Second String Quartet (1954) and renewed vigour in the recent Violin Sonata (1959).¹⁸

Might the failure of the Second Violin Concerto in 1956 be in part due to the composer's dissatisfaction that he had not fully realised what he had in mind, and might the experience of writing the Violin Sonata and subsequent works have helped clarify his thoughts by the time of the concerto's 1962 revision?

Tippett's Second Symphony, composed 1956–7 and first performed in 1958, has been described as a 'transitional work', looking back to the style of *The Midsummer Marriage* and forward to the block sounds of *King Priam*. The first movement is indebted to Stravinsky's Symphony in Three Movements. Now events begin to mirror those of a decade earlier, albeit on a smaller scale. Tippett worked on his opera *King Priam* from 1958 to 1961 and moved home from Wadhurst to Wiltshire in 1960. During this period Rawsthorne composed the Violin Sonata, *Hallé* overture, Second Symphony, *Improvisations on a Theme by Constant Lambert*, and Concerto for Ten Instruments, as well as film and incidental stage music. In his last decade, he produced three large-scale and rarely performed works with orchestra: the forty-five minute choral suite *Carmen Vitale* (1963), the thirty-minute Third Symphony (1964), much praised at the time, and the thirty-five minute Cello Concerto (1966). Tippett's Concerto for Orchestra (1963) and *The Vision of St Augustine* (1965) suffer similar neglect. Rawsthorne's last works were for smaller forces and usually of fifteen minutes' duration or less.

Roger Wimbush wrote an obituary of Rawsthorne in the September 1971 issue of *The Gramophone*:

Alan Rawsthorne has died at the age of 66. A fastidious composer, his music may yet command a greater interest than in his lifetime, for there must always be a public for music so well written ... the 1939 Symphonic Studies, of which my copy bears the inscription: 'Final chord suggested by Constant Lambert in The George, Great Portland Street' is dedicated to John Ireland and had its first performance at the ISCM in Warsaw. Leslie Jones told me that he found the Concerto for String Orchestra of 1949 popular when he played it in the North. His record of it (Pye Golden Guinea GSGC 14042) survives, as does fortunately a good deal of the chamber music.¹⁹

Careers compared

Despite the many parallels in their chronologies, Rawsthorne's and Tippett's careers followed very different trajectories. Rawsthorne, perhaps because of his ISCM successes and BBC colleagues, established himself with, it seems, no effort on his part. Sir Adrian Boult was a long-term champion of his music, giving the British premiere of the Symphonic Studies in 1940, and further performances of the work, including a 1963 BBC studio recording. In February 1945 he conducted the First Piano Concerto in Paris with the Conservatoire Orchestra, and Moira Lympany as soloist, and later that year performances of *Cortèges* with the Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam and The Hague. He premiered the First Symphony in 1950. The Concerto for String Orchestra was a particular favourite of Boult's and he made a BBC studio recording of it in 1966; this was briefly available on CD (Carlton Classics 15656 91632). Rawsthorne, like many British composers, is indebted to Boult for his advocacy.

The piano concertos and *Street Corner* overture, together with the music he wrote for films, especially *The Cruel Sea* (1953), brought Rawsthorne to a wider audience. It is a measure of his standing that Cyril Clarke in his sleeve note to the first recording of the First String Quartet (Argo RG3) could write: 'Alan Rawsthorne is rightly regarded as one of the "big four" among British composers – the others being Vaughan Williams, Walton and Britten.' But that was in 1953, and within a few years a new generation of composers and changes at the BBC, namely the 'Glock' era (1959–1972) would combine to push him down the pecking order.

The fallout from that period still inflames passions in British music. The following passage encapsulates feelings at the time:

Manduell admired the Invitation Concerts, but like some other members of the Music Division he became aware that Glock's passion for the avant-garde was keeping out other kinds of twentieth-century music: 'There were quite individual voices like Alan Rawsthorne, who became rather sad, simply because they were being cold-shouldered, or thought they were.'²⁰

Rawsthorne fared better than many. Writing of the Proms under Glock, Robert Simpson asked: 'Why was Rawsthorne included every year except 1969 while Rubbra got nineteen minutes in fourteen years ... ?'²¹ Rawsthorne continued to receive commissions for new works and much of his later music was admired. He was not forgotten during his lifetime.

Tippett's career got off to an unpropitious start: the Piano Sonata and Concerto for Double String Orchestra were rejected by Boosey & Hawkes and OUP before being accepted by Schott, who became his lifelong publishers. The Concerto was also rejected by the British section of the ISCM and the BBC, so Tippett had to give the first performance with his Morley orchestra. With financial help, he took the unusual step of having these works privately recorded in order to help promote his music. The records were later offered for sale and reviewed in

The Gramophone and elsewhere. In 2005 these wartime recordings and the 1948 recording of the Second String Quartet were brought together on a CD (NMC D103) to celebrate his centenary. The performers, Phyllis Sellick, Walter Goehr and his orchestra and the Zorian Quartet, have the measure of Tippett's idiom and play with a freshness and vitality that often go with first recordings. The disc is completed with the first-ever recording of Tallis's motet *Spem in Alium* with Tippett conducting his Morley choir.

In 1943 William Glock, then music critic of the *The Observer* and later a Tippett supporter, wrote in an influential article:

a new composer has emerged in English Music. All I know so far of Michael Tippett's is the Piano Sonata of 1938 and the Second String Quartet of 1942; but these will serve as adequate background, I think, for a few words on his style and possible significance ... Meanwhile I suggest that such pianists as Clifford Curzon, Kendall Taylor, Denis Matthews, and Noel Mewton-Wood should play this sonata regularly; and that our best quartets should study Tippett No. 2.²²

A Child of Our Time, first performed in 1944, brought Tippett to national attention, and this and the Concerto for Double String Orchestra were, for many years, the only works of his that one was likely to hear in the concert hall. Throughout the 1940s he was busy with Morley College, expanding his broadcasting: he became a frequent giver of radio talks on the Third Programme, which began in 1946; these were a source of income for him. His Peace Pledge Union activities and writing *The Midsummer Marriage* occupied him into the 1950s.

It's my recollection that, though well known, he was not much performed until after the landmark 1963 BBC studio broadcast of *The Midsummer Marriage* conducted by Norman Del Mar. This was heard by Colin Davis, who suggested that Covent Garden put on a new production of the opera, which they did in 1968. There followed a recording by Davis which became a best seller on both sides of the Atlantic. In 1972 Tippett reached possibly his widest audience when his Fantasia Concertante on a Theme of Corelli was used by Peter Hall in his television film based upon Ronald Blythe's book *Akenfield*. As I remember, it was the haunting 'Adagio alla pastorale' section which struck a chord with the audience, and for a time became very popular. From 1965 Tippett was a frequent visitor to the USA and became something of a cult figure:

... there was a considerable following for Tippett amongst young American musicians and music lovers (such as the four students who turned up in Chicago in 1974 wearing T-shirts bearing the slogan 'Turn on to Tippett').²³

It's difficult to imagine an equivalent 'Rock with Rawsthorne' T-shirt! Such was the world-wide demand for Tippett that Schott's had to set up a 'Tippett office' to manage his diary and business affairs. Had Rawsthorne lived, he would have felt alienated in this media-driven world.

Tippett's later years began to resemble those of the post-war Vaughan Williams, when with the announcement of each new work the critics asked 'what's the old boy done now?' In his late eighties he produced three works, each of more than twenty-five minutes' duration: *Byzantium*, the Fifth String Quartet and *The Rose Lake*. The infirmities of old age, especially his blindness, rather than a lack of ideas, forced him to put down his pencil.

Envoi

The war years left their heavy mark on him and I do not think he ever really recovered from them, though many of his best works were composed long after 1945 ... [of the Elegy for guitar:] it is of a melancholy haunting beauty, perhaps a not inappropriate epitaph to what may seem to have been a somewhat frustrated and unfulfilled career, which started full of promise for great achievement. This somehow eluded him, in comparison with Michael Tippett his exact contemporary, who has no need of praise or recognition for his considerable and well deserved success ...²⁴

So wrote William Walton in October 1980, towards the end of his own life. Was he hinting at something Rawsthorne had confided to him, or perhaps projecting onto Rawsthorne some of his feelings about his own post-war career? Walton's post-1945 works were invariably unfavourably compared by critics to his music of the 1930s, though we now feel that these later pieces were better than they were judged to be on their appearance. However, Walton's words are not inapplicable to Rawsthorne's experience: in the summer of 1939 the latter had been building an international reputation: the piano Bagatelles had been premiered in August 1938 in Oslo; the Symphonic Studies in April 1939 in Warsaw; and his First String Quartet was due to be performed at the Venice Festival later that year: a performance that was cancelled because of the outbreak of war. Was some inner spark lost during the six years that followed?

Were Rawsthorne and Tippett musical twins? Perhaps this is going too far, despite the number of parallels which almost exceed coincidence. But to ask the question can lead us to reassess our view of both composers. One fact, though there all the time, has been brought into prominence by the telling of the two composers' stories in this article: although Tippett was four months older than Rawsthorne, he did not enter upon the full height of his fame until after he had outlived him by several years.

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Notes

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- ¹ Meirion Bowen, *Michael Tippett* (Robson Books, 1985), p. 4.
- ² Anonymous review, *Daily Telegraph* (7 April 1930), reproduced in *A Man of Our Time: Michael Tippett* (Schott, 1977).
- ³ Malcolm Rayment, 'The Composer Speaks: Alan Rawsthorne talks to Malcolm Rayment (24 May 1962)', *The Creel* 4/4, issue no. 16 (2002).
- ⁴ Nicholas Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra: the First Fifty Years, 1930–1980* (BBC, 1981), p. 97.
- ⁵ Carole Rosen, *The Goossens: a Musical Century* (Deutsch, 1993), p. 92.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 191–2.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 192.
- ⁸ Michael Tippett, quoted in a biographical essay in Alan Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, 3 vols. (Bravura Press, 1984), vol. II, p. 26.
- ⁹ Michael Tippett, *Those Twentieth-Century Blues* (Hutchinson, 1991), p. 121.
- ¹⁰ Kenyon, *The BBC Symphony Orchestra*, p. 164.
- ¹¹ Robin Hull, 'What Now?' in A. L. Bacharach, ed., *British Music of Our Time* (Pelican Books, 1946), pp. 221, 224–7.
- ¹² Mosco Carner, 'Concerts in London in the Festival Year', in Alec Robertson, ed., *Music in 1952* (Pelican Books, 1952), pp. 183–4.
- ¹³ Julian Bream, *My Life in Music* (DVD) (Avic Records, 2006).
- ¹⁴ Constant Lambert, BBC Radio Broadcast, 2 July 1948.
- ¹⁵ Andy Croft, 'Poet and Composer: Randall Swingler and Alan Rawsthorne', *The Creel* 5/1, issue no. 17 (Autumn 2003), pp. 7–13.
- ¹⁶ Anne Macnaghten, biographical essay in Alan Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, 3 vols. (Bravura Press, 1984), vol. II, p. 43.
- ¹⁷ Ruth Railton, *Daring to Excel* (Secker & Warburg, 1993), pp. 161–6.
- ¹⁸ Hugh Wood, 'English Contemporary Music', in Howard Hartog (ed.), *European Music in the Twentieth Century* (Pelican, 1961), p. 150.
- ¹⁹ Roger Wimbush, Obituary of Alan Rawsthorne, *The Gramophone* (September 1971).
- ²⁰ H. Carpenter, *The Envy of the World* (Phoenix Giant, 1996), pp. 203–4.
- ²¹ Robert Simpson, *The Proms and Natural Justice* (Toccata Press, 1981), p. 10.
- ²² William Glock, article in *The Observer*, 25 April 1943, reproduced in *A Man of Our Time: Michael Tippett* (Schott, 1977).
- ²³ Meirion Bowen, *Michael Tippett*, p. 43.
- ²⁴ William Walton, Preface to vol. III of Alan Poulton, ed., *Alan Rawsthorne*, 3 vols. (Bravura Press, 1984), vol. III, pp. 1–2.

Performances of Works by Alan Rawsthorne, 2011

Andrew Knowles

Such is the current dearth of live performances that this list is longer by only one item than that in The Creel issue 22, published half way through 2011.

30/4/11	<i>The Cruel Sea</i> suite	St. Albans Symphony Orchestra/John Gibbons	St Albans Abbey
29/5/11	Four Seasonal Songs	Syred Consort, dir. Ben Palmer	Dorchester Abbey, Oxon
18/9/11	String Quartet No. 1	The Adderbury Ensemble	Holywell Music Room, Oxford
4/12/11	Piano Trio	The Lawson Trio	Shakespeare Institute, Stratford

Manchester Reunion

Readers of the previous issue of *The Creel* will remember that, after the cancellation of the 2011 Oxford Reunion, an event in Manchester was tentatively scheduled for October 2012. Indeed, but for a clash of dates, there was a very good chance that this would have taken place.

The aim now is to host a reunion in autumn 2013, in Manchester, and details will be circulated when arrangements are more definite.

From the Rawsthorne Trust archive



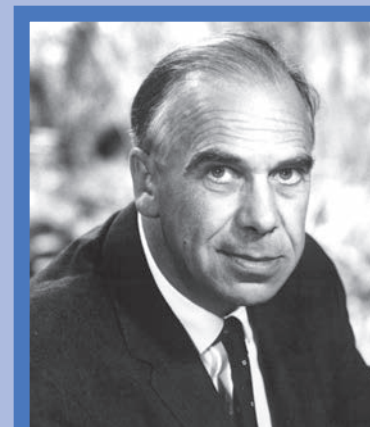
Alan Rawsthorne, left, Muir Mathieson, centre, with William Alwyn at the recording session of Alwyn's score for *The True Glory* at the Scala Theatre, London, 1942. Rawsthorne had helped with Alwyn's orchestration

Alan Bush, left, with Alan Rawsthorne in Russia, 1963.



The William Alwyn Festival

Thursday 4th – Sunday 7th October 2012



The 2012 Festival will take place in the following rural Suffolk locations: Aldeburgh, Blythburgh, Orford and Westleton. There are many B&B's, hotels, etc. from which to choose.

Amongst the roster of performers appearing at the festival this year are the following critically acclaimed artists: John Turner (Recorder), James Bowman (Counter-Tenor), Madeleine Mitchell (Violin), Sarah-Jane Bradley (Viola), Ashley Wass (Piano), the Cavaleri Quartet and the Prometheus Orchestra under the direction of Edmond Fivet CBE.

This year Alwyn will be represented by twelve works that show the wide diversity of his craft. Three of these will be orchestral, with the remainder being divided between chamber and instrumental. Alongside these works will be music from contemporary composers (including three world premieres from David Matthews, Martin Shaw and John LeGrove) and from the standard repertoire. In addition to this, given that Alwyn was a highly respected and successful film composer of some two hundred scores, there will be a screening of one of his classic films at the Aldeburgh Cinema. Also there will be an illustrated talk on his life and career.

A website is under development. For the present please use www.musicweb-international/alwyn

for further information about Alwyn and last year's festival, or contact Andrew Knowles on apkmusicprom@ntlworld.com

