Voices from Darkness

The First Clun Valley Music Festival

2018

November 9 - 11

George Butterworth

Vaughan Williams

Rebecca Clarke

Ivor Gurney

Frank Bridge

Ravel

Elgar

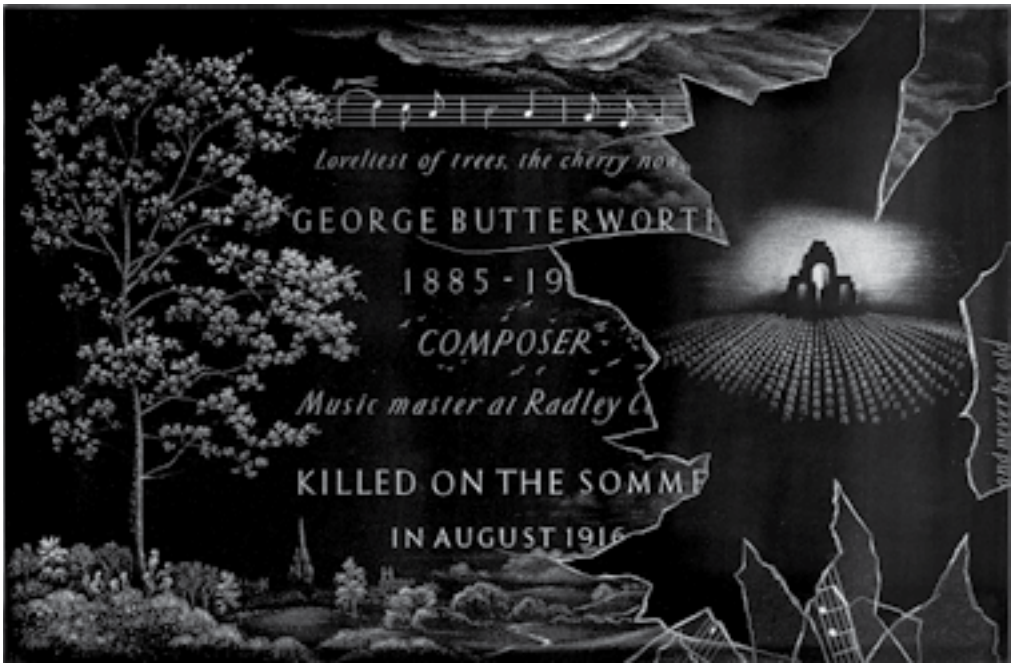
Introduction

A Very Warm Welcome to the First Clun Valley Music Festival

The initial impetus for this Festival was a simple one - the desire to present some of the greatest chamber music in the beautiful space and fine acoustics of St George's Church, where we have both played many times.

On realising that we would coincide with the centenary of the Armistice however, we soon found a deeper theme for our programme, deciding to concentrate on music written in the years before, during and just after WW1. In the first decades of the last century many artists in Britain and elsewhere realised that they were witnessing the end of an era and a way of life, and the war as it were brought down the final curtain on this era.

Of course, the music written at that time - music being perhaps the least representative of the arts - would not necessarily reflect the events of the war; in fact one could argue that composers and the public wished to seek refuge in music from the daily horrors which were unfolding. These were to find expression later in darker post-war works such as Ravel's La Valse or Frank Bridge's Oration for cello and orchestra.



Memorial window at Radley College © Estate of Sir Laurence Whistler

'I'm not a musician, I'm a professional Morris Dancer' George Butterworth

Song - and folk-song in particular - is a thread running through this year's festival. The collecting of folk songs from traditional singers has been a stimulus to many composers and for Butterworth and Vaughan-Williams, who spent many happy days travelling in the English countryside, it was the key which truly unlocked their creativity. Butterworth also studied Morris Dancing on these trips, taking great pains to notate the steps accurately and he became a proud member of Cecil Sharp's 'demonstration' team.

The melodies, modes and rhythms of English traditional music are always present in Butterworth's music, and can be heard in all his works this weekend. In our final concert we present our own arrangements of some of the songs he collected, as well as other pieces based on folk music; duos by Bartok and Lutosławski which re-work folk tunes collected in, respectively, Hungary and Poland and, more tongue-in-cheek, Frank Bridge's ebullient quartet based on the old English dance tune Sir Roger de Coverley. We also explore the way folk song has permeated "classical" music with some fresh arrangements of Bach and some well- known tunes of Purcell.

Richard and Luba Tunnicliffe

The Festival at a glance

Artists

The Auric String Quartet
Pavlo Beznosiuk & Oliver Cave - Violins
Luba Tunnicliffe - Viola
Richard Tunnicliffe - 'Cello

Gretel Dowdeswell - Piano
Giles Underwood - Baritone
John Kirkpatrick - Voice, melodeon, concertina, button accordion
St George's Clun Handbell Ringers

CONCERT ONE **9 NOVEMBER 2018**

Butterworth Suite for String Quartet
Butterworth Love Blows as the Wind Blows
Ravel String Quartet in F

The Auric String Quartet & Giles Underwood

7.30pm.
St. Mary's Church
Hopesay SY7 8HA

CONCERT TWO **10 NOVEMBER 2018**

Songs by Ivor Gurney and Samuel Barber
John Jeffreys and Vaughan-Williams
Selections from Ravel "Le Tombeau de Couperin"

Giles Underwood & Gretel Dowdeswell

1pm.
St. George's Church
Clun SY7 8JH

CONCERT THREE **10 NOVEMBER 2018**

Bridge 3 Idylls for String Quartet
Rebecca Clarke Piano Trio
Elgar Piano Quintet Op. 84

The Auric String Quartet & Gretel Dowdeswell

7.30pm.
St. George's Church
Clun SY7 8JH

CONCERT FOUR **11 NOVEMBER 2018**

Music by Purcell, Bach, Bridge, Bártók, Britten & Lutosławski
Songs from the George Butterworth Collection
at the English Folk Song and Dance Society
Readings from WW1 poets

John Kirkpatrick, Auric String Quartet & St. George's Handbell Ringers

6pm.
Memorial Hall
Clun SY7 8NY

PROGRAMME ONE St. Mary's Church, Hopesay
Friday 9 November 7.30pm.

Giles Underwood – Baritone
The Auric String Quartet
Pavlo Beznosiuk and Oliver Cave – violins
Luba Tunnicliffe – viola
Richard Tunnicliffe – cello

George Butterworth (1885 -1916) – Suite for String Quartet c.1910

1. Andante con moto, molto espressivo
2. Scherzando – non allegro
3. Allegro molto
4. Molto moderato ed espressivo
5. Moderato

George Butterworth – Love Blows as the Wind Blows 1911-12
for voice and string quartet, to words by W.E. Henley

1. In the Year That's Come and Gone

In the year that's come and gone, love, his flying feather
Stooping slowly, gave us heart, and bade us walk together.
In the year that's coming on, though many a troth be broken,
We at least will not forget aught that love hath spoken.

In the year that's come and gone, dear, we wove a tether
All of gracious words and thoughts, binding two together.
In the year that's coming on with its wealth of roses
We shall weave it stronger, yet, ere the circle closes.

In the year that's come and gone, in the golden weather,
Sweet, my sweet, we swore to keep the watch of life together.
In the year that's coming on, rich in joy and sorrow,
We shall light our lamp, and wait life's mysterious morrow.


George Butterworth

2. Life in Her Creaking Shoes

Life in her creaking shoes
Goes, and more formal grows,
A round of calls and cues:
Love blows as the wind blows.
Blows! . . . in the quiet close
As in the roaring mart,
By ways no mortal knows
Love blows into the heart.

The stars some cadence use,
Forthright the river flows,
In order fall the dews,
Love blows as the wind blows:
Blows! . . . and what reckoning shows
The courses of his chart?
A spirit that comes and goes,
Love blows into the heart.

3. Fill a Glass with Golden Wine

Fill a glass with golden wine,
And the while your lips are wet
Set your perfume unto mine,
And forget.
Every kiss we take and give
Leaves us less of life to live.

Yet again! Your whim and mine
In a happy while have met.
All your sweets to me resign,
Nor regret
That we press with every breath,
Sighed or singing, nearer death.

4. On the Way to Kew

On the way to Kew,
By the river old and gray,
Where in the Long Ago,
We laughed and loitered so,
I met a ghost to-day,
A ghost that told of you –
A ghost of old replies
And sweet, inscrutable eyes
Coming up from Richmond
As you used to do.

By the river old and gray,
The enchanted Long Ago
Murmured and smiled anew.
On the way to Kew,
March had the laugh of May,
The bare boughs looked aglow,
And old immortal words
Sang in my breast like birds,
Coming up from Richmond
As I used with you.

With the life of Long Ago
Lived my thought of you.
By the river old and gray
Flowing his appointed way
As I watched I knew
What is good to know –
Not in vain, not in vain,
Shall I look for you again
Coming up from Richmond
On the way to Kew.

20 minute INTERVAL with wine

Maurice Ravel (1875-1937) – String Quartet in F major 1903

1. Allegro moderato –Très doux
2. Assez vif – Très rythmé
3. Très lent
4. Vif et agité


Maurice Ravel

PROGRAMME TWO St. George's Church, Clun
Saturday 10 November 1pm.

Giles Underwood
Gretel Dowdeswell

Songs by Ivor Gurney (1890–1937)
Samuel Barber
John Jeffreys
Vaughan-Williams

Selections from Ravel - Le Tombeau de Couperin


Ivor Gurney

Silent Noon	Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)
With rue my heart is laden	Samuel Barber (1910-1981)
Three settings of poems by Housman If it should chance your eye offend you With rue my heart is laden Thirteen pence a day	John Jeffreys (1927-2010)
Forlane No. 3 from Le Tombeau de Couperin	Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)
Grenadier	Michael Berkeley (b.1948)
Hollow fires	Michael Berkeley
Look not in my eyes	Lennox Berkeley (1903-1989)
Rigaudon No. 4 from Le Tombeau de Couperin	Maurice Ravel
Twilight	Ernest Moeran (1894-1950)
The sky above the roof	Ralph Vaughan Williams
Severn Meadows	Ivor Gurney (1890-1937)
In Flanders	Ivor Gurney
Ménuet No. 5 from Le Tombeau de Couperin	Maurice Ravel
Six Songs from A Shropshire Lad Loveliest of trees When I was one and twenty Look not in my eyes Think no more, Lad The lads in their hundreds Is my team ploughing?	George Butterworth (1885-1916)

Notes on Programme TWO
by Giles Underwood and Gretel Dowdeswell

A great deal of poetry and song arose from the First World War. Here we concentrate mainly on Housman, whose poetry almost defined the rural idyll. He was responsible for creating and reminiscing about a world that perhaps never really existed in the first place. In A Shropshire Lad he helped to shape a sense of Englishness that still resonates today and it has never been out of print since its publication. It represents a picture of, mainly masculine, adolescent love as well as of simple life, loss and the waste of youth and it had its inspiration in part from the massacres of the Boer War. The practice of sending young men off to be slaughtered was something which resonated with many composers and the short, simple verses and uncomplicated rhymes lent themselves to being set to music. George Butterworth's settings of A Shropshire Lad are maybe the most famous and well-loved of all, but the vast number of settings available - from Vaughan Williams, Ernest Moeran, Arthur Somervell, John Ireland, Arnold Bax and Ivor Gurney, among many others – meant that it was a tough task to pare them down. We've also included one poem, Grenadier from Housman's collection Last Poems published in 1922, a bleak look at the so-called recruitment during the Boer war which seems even more relevant to the practices of conscription during WW1.

In order to try and temper this sense of futility (the word is itself the title of a poem by Wilfred Owen) there are some songs with texts from a different age. Ernest Moeran was known almost exclusively for his song output and Twilight is his beautiful setting of a Masefield poem which echoes a few of the broader themes of this recital; the sense of lost loved ones and the beauty of the English countryside.

It's very hard not to include works by Ralph Vaughan Williams in a concert of English Song, and Silent Noon is arguably one of the finest songs in the English language. It harks back to that - illusory? - age of unencumbered love and the hopefulness of youth. The Sky above the Roof expresses almost the opposite sentiment dealing as it does with wasted youth and opportunities (but very different from the wasted youth of Housman's verses). This poem, entitled Prison, was written by Verlaine about his incarceration after the shooting of his lover, the poet Arthur Rimbaud.

Ivor Gurney and John Jeffreys were both poets who set their own words to music. The two Gurney songs were both written in the trenches during 1917, 'In Flanders' at the ominously named Crucifix Corner, Thiepval in January and 'Severn Meadows' at Caulaincourt near the Somme in March. Gurney tinkered endlessly with his works, sometimes to the extent of editing so much that he ruined and felt compelled to destroy them. We're lucky that so many of his compositions, both musical and poetic, still exist.

Ravel - Le Tombeau de Couperin

Written between 1914-17, Ravel's neoclassical nod towards traditional French baroque forms has six movements, each a memorial to friends or relatives who lost their lives fighting in World War 1. Using structures and ornamentations from the music of the 17th century French composer François Couperin, but with piquant 20th century harmonies, Ravel produced what some critics described as a rather light-hearted and reflective composition.
Ravel responded 'The dead are sad enough, in their eternal silence'.
Along with no. 1, Prelude, these 3 movements were later orchestrated:

III) Forlane - á la mémoire de lieutenant Gabriel Deluc - a painter from the Basque region
IV) Rigaudon - á la mémoire de Pierre and Pascal Gaudin - two brothers who died in the same attack
V) Menuet - á la mémoire de Jean Dreyfus

PROGRAMME THREE St. George's Church, Clun
Saturday 10 November 7.30pm.

The Auric String Quartet — Pavlo Beznosiuk and Oliver Cave – violins
Luba Tunnicliffe – viola
Richard Tunnicliffe – cello
Gretel Dowdeswell – Piano

Frank Bridge (1879-1941) 3 Idylls for String Quartet
Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979) Piano Trio
Elgar (1857-1934) Piano Quintet Op. 84


Frank Bridge


Rebecca Clarke

Frank Bridge Three Idylls for String Quartet (1906)

1. Adagio molto espressivo
2. Allegretto poco lento
3. Allegro con moto

Rebecca Clarke Trio for violin, violoncello and piano (1921)

1. Moderato ma appassionato
2. Andante molto semplice
3. Allegro vigoroso

20 minute INTERVAL

Edward Elgar Quintet, Op. 84 for Piano and String Quartet (1918)

1. Moderato
2. Adagio
3. Andante

When considering Elgar's chamber music, we might at first think of the charming salon pieces written early in his career. However, during the Summer of 1918 whilst staying with a friend in the peaceful Sussex countryside, he worked on three major chamber works, the Violin Sonata, String Quartet and the Piano Quintet, premiered in 1919. This magnificent piece, which is now finding its rightful place in the repertoire, combines some almost orchestral writing with deeply expressive music such as we find in the cello concerto which came immediately afterwards.


Elgar on his sickbed in 1933, listening to a recording of his string quartet

PROGRAMME FOUR Memorial Hall, Clun
Sunday 11 November 6pm.

John Kirkpatrick
Auric String Quartet
St. George's Handbell Ringers

Music by Purcell, Bach, Bridge, Bartok, Britten and Lutoslawski
Songs from the George Butterworth Collection at the English Folk Song and Dance Society
Readings from WW1 poets

Introduced by the performers, this concert explores some of the ways 'non-classical' music has permeated the writings of 'serious' composers over four centuries and provides a celebratory finale to our Festival.

Folk Music of Four Centuries

Two songs from the George Butterworth collection at the English Folk Dance and Song Society
The Green Mossy Banks of the Lea arr. J.K.
As I roamed out one Midsummer Morning arr. R.T.

Frank Bridge - Sir Roger de Coverley for String Quartet

Two Songs from the George Butterworth collection
Willie the Waterboy arr. J.K.
The Highland Soldier arr. L.T.

JS Bach (1685-1750) -Three Pieces for Concertina and Strings arr. R.T.
Gavottes I and II and Sarabande from Cello Suite No 6 in D (BWV 1012)
Bourees I and II from Cello Suite No 3 in C (BWV 1009)

30 minute INTERVAL with bar

With St George's Handbell Ringers
The Bell Ringing traditional arr. R.T.
The Ash Grove (instrumental traditional arr. R.T.
Upon Christ Church Bells in Oxford - round (Purcell)

Bela Bártók (1881-1945) - A selection from 44 Duos for two violins

Two Songs from the George Butterworth collection
Come, my own one (The Saucy Sailor boy) arr. L.T.
The Banks of Green Willow arr. J.K.

Witold Lutosławski (1913-1994) 'Bucolics' for viola and cello

Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
Dances from 'The Fairy Queen' and 'Harvest Home'
from 'King Arthur'


Béla Bartók recording Slovakian folk songs

Voices from Darkness
How the First World War affected British composers
by Clare Stevens

The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in for the fair
There's men from the barn and the forge and the mill and the fold,
The lads for the girls and the lads for the liquor are there,
And there with the rest are the lads that will never be old.

Of the many musical responses to A E Housman's verse collection A Shropshire Lad, few are more poignant or prescient than the setting by George Butterworth. Often assumed to date from the first world war, the poems were in fact published in 1896, but their themes of fleeting youth, grief, death and patriotism appealed to the generation of young men who enlisted in 1914, and sales soared. Butterworth had set six of the poems around 1908-10. Little did he know that he was foreshadowing his own early death.

Prompt to join up, Butterworth was commissioned in the Durham Light Infantry and turned out to be a surprisingly good soldier. 'He was one of those quiet, unassuming men whose path did not appear naturally to be a military one … when the offensive came he seemed to throw off his reserve, and in those strenuous 35 days in which we were fighting off and on, he developed a power of leadership which we had not realised he possessed,' wrote his commanding officer to his father, before describing the incident at Pozieres on the Somme in which Butterworth was shot by a German sniper in August 1916.

Before enlisting he had 'edited' his compositions, destroying all those that didn't entirely please him, leaving the sadly small collection of song settings and orchestral works for which he is remembered today. Butterworth is just one of the generation of composers whose careers were just coming to fruition when the First World War broke out. Many joined up over the course of the next four years, and while some returned to resume their musical lives, all too many did not.

When the poet Rupert Brooke died of blood poisoning on board a French hospital ship on his way to take part in the Gallipoli campaign, two composers were among the group of friends who buried him on the Greek island of Skyros.
William Denis Browne, considered by one of his tutors, E J Dent, to be 'by far the cleverest of the musicians' then at the university was killed at Gallipoli just two months after Brooke's death. Frederick Septimus Kelly was born in Australia but educated at Eton. He provided an eloquent written account of the poet's death and burial, and wrote an orchestral response, Elegy in Memoriam Rupert Brooke. Kelly survived to see service on the western front but was killed during the last days of the Battle of the Somme in November 1916.

The Scottish composer Cecil Coles studied at Edinburgh University and the London College of Music. Through his landlady, who ran the orchestral library at Morley College, he met its director of music Gustav Holst, who was impressed by the younger man's compositions. Working as a stretcher-bearer rather than a combatant, as music was considered so important in maintaining morale, Coles survived until April 1918 when he was killed by a sniper while retrieving wounded comrades from a battle area.

One of the youngest musical casualties was Francis Purcell Warren, aged just 21 when he died on the Somme. Hubert Parry, the director of the Royal College of Music where Warren was a student paid tribute to the young man in his director's address for 1917: 'There was a subtlety and a dexterity about his compositions which made us look upon him as likely to make a personal mark.'

Another alumnus of the RCM who died right at the end of the war was Ernest Farrar, who left more than forty catalogued works. He had studied chiefly with Charles Villiers Stanford, who wrote of him: 'I always thought very high things of him as a composer and lamented his loss both personally and artistically.'

Who knows what an impact these composers would have made upon British music had they lived? The pain of losing so many students and graduates was expressed by Stanford in his large-scale Mass Via Victrix that is only now receiving its first complete performance. One reason for this is that his music, as well as that of his colleague Parry and even Elgar, the pre-eminent composer of the previous era, fell out of popularity after the war, as it was felt to have been influenced too much by the eighteenth and nineteenth century German tradition.

The first decades of the twentieth century, however, had already seen the beginning of a reinvention of British music. The standard-bearer for this movement was Ralph Vaughan Williams, who drew on the vast wealth of English folk melodies as a starting point for new works, supplemented by an appreciation of Tudor church music, and also by a period of study with Maurice Ravel.
It was Vaughan Williams who introduced the folksong repertoire to George Butterworth, saying 'To him, as to me, the folk-song was not an inhibiting but a liberating influence.' Butterworth returned the favour by helping Vaughan Williams to revive a forgotten ambition to write his first symphony, and to assemble a full score from its orchestral parts when the original was lost.

Vaughan Williams served throughout the war as an orderly in the Royal Army Medical Corps, never shirking the most menial, distasteful or dangerous of tasks. He was deeply affected by the loss of younger friends, 'especially of course George Butterworth … I sometimes think now that it is wrong to have made friends with people much younger than oneself,' he wrote to Holst. His wartime experiences can be heard in many of his later compositions, both in a deepened intensity and emotional range, and in the breadth of his musical palette.

No account of British music in this period would be complete without a mention of Ivor Gurney, the impoverished son of a tailor who compulsively wrote both poems and music – primarily songs – throughout his short time as a serving soldier. He was invalided out of the army after a gas attack in 1917, and survived until 1937, but the last 17 years of his life were spent in a mental asylum. In his many letters Gurney described how the sounds and sights of battle affected an artist's mind and soul; he even reproduced as notation the 'tunes' played by the machine-gunners 'to make their job interesting'.

Sir Arthur Bliss, Master of the Queen's Music from 1953 until his death in 1975 was 23 and a student at the RCM when war broke out. He and his brother Kennard, also a musician though his real ambition was to be an artist, served a cycle ride away from one another on the Somme. Bliss was wounded, but Kennard was killed. 'As the years passed I came to realise more and more what a poignant loss to the family Kennard's death had been,' wrote Arthur in his 1970 autobiography. 'Poet, painter, musician, he was the most gifted of us all.' In a lecture delivered to the Royal Institution in 1934, Bliss summed up how many of his generation of composers, artists and writers felt, and how they were able to produce such great works of art in the midst of the traumatic experiences of war:

'One cannot as a young man face the immediacy of death without becoming filled with excitement for the values of life … A butterfly in a trench, the swoop and note of a bird, a line of poetry, the shape of Orion became as it were more vividly perceived and actually felt than ever before … one saw objects for the first time, simply because, I imagine, it might conceivably have been for the last.'

ENTENTE MUSICALE
The Influence of French Music on British Composers
by Nigel Simeone

Modern French music played a significant part in London's musical life around 1900. Henry Wood introduced Debussy's Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune at the Promenade Concerts in 1904 and invited the composer himself to conduct his own works at concerts in the Queen's Hall in 1908 and 1909, including La Mer and the Nocturnes. French composers were also regular visitors to the Bechstein Hall (now the Wigmore Hall): Reynaldo Hahn gave a concert of his songs in 1906 (even singing two of them himself) and Fauré (who had been a regular visitor to London as the guest of his friend Frank Shuster) appeared in March 1908 at the Bechstein Hall performing an extensive programme of his songs with the mezzo-soprano Jeanne Raunay, including La bonne chanson. The following year, two of Fauré's most brilliant pupils, Ravel and Florent Schmitt, appeared at Bechstein Hall playing their own works. Highlights of this concert – Ravel's first appearance in England – included Shéhérazade sung by Jane Bathori, and songs from the Histoires naturelles. Ravel returned in 1913 for a programme including his Quartet (played by the English String Quartet, with Frank Bridge on the viola) and the Introduction et Allegro, which the composer conducted. For two concerts of Ravel's chamber music in London during the 1920s, the viola player was Rebecca Clarke.

As soon as Debussy's music started to become better known in Britain, he was quickly seen a pivotal figure for a number of younger British composers wanting to move away from the predominantly Teutonic aesthetic of their teachers (notably Stanford and Parry). Though some critics found Debussy's 'ultra-modern' music too 'advanced', others were much more receptive. In an essay for the Edinburgh Review in 1906, William Henry Hadow wrote that Debussy was 'a true artist, a master of half-lights and delicate shadows, of colours that shift and intertwine and baffle our gaze, of a kind of beauty that is as inexplicable as it is literally beyond question.' Gustav Holst was an early enthusiast for Debussy's music and he probably attended at least one of the concerts Debussy conducted in London in 1908–9. Several passages in The Planets (for instance 'Neptune' with its female chorus echoing 'Sirènes' from Debussy's Nocturnes) show the impact Debussy had on Holst, and he was also influenced by Dukas, particularly The Sorcerer's Apprentice which he knew well.

Cyril Scott was one of the first British composers to hail Debussy's originality (and in turn Debussy – notoriously hard to please – praised Cyril Scott's music). Scott's solo piano works in particular were influenced by the Frenchman's harmonic language, and to some extent by his refined aesthetic too. It's a delightful coincidence that Frank Bridge wrote his orchestral work The Sea in Eastbourne, the very town in which Debussy had completed La Mer a few years earlier. Bridge's knowledge of Debussy was extensive and he passed on his love of the music to his brilliant pupil Benjamin Britten. Almost every forward-looking British composer found things to admire in Debussy, and Rebecca Clarke later described Debussy's String Quartet as heralding 'an entirely new era in chamber music'. The influence of the Debussy Quartet is particularly apparent in the third of Frank Bridge's Three Idylls – and it's no surprise to discover that Bridge had played the viola in its British premiere.

The influence of Debussy on the impressionistic Delius is obvious, but his importance is also apparent in works that might appear to be more firmly rooted in British soil. For instance, in the enigmatic harmonies of a song like Butterworth's 'Is my team ploughing' or the subtle orchestral colours and delicate, shifting chords of the Shropshire Lad rhapsody, we find a young composer who was almost as familiar with the Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune as he was with the English folksongs that lay at the heart of his music. As for Vaughan Williams, he was another enthusiastic admirer. Constant Lambert singled out the London Symphony as a work in which Debussy's influence could be detected (as well as Ravel's), and according to his widow Ursula, Pelléas et Mélisande was 'one of Ralph's favourite operas.' Presumably he would have agreed with Hadow's assessment of the work in 1906: 'Soft in tone, subtle in workmanship, exquisitely scored, it has all the delicate loveliness of Maeterlinck's play: the silent shadowy lake, the transparent nightfall, the dim castle with its tiny beacon-fire, the gentle hesitating figures that speak in the voices of dreamland.'

Pelléas was a work that divided opinions. While Vaughan Williams loved it, Cyril Scott, one of Debussy's most fervent supporters, found it monotonous. Constant Lambert described it in Music Ho! as 'one of his weakest and most mannered works', placing it among Debussy's 'technical experiments'. But Lambert recognized the singular importance of Debussy's innovative use of harmony: 'Debussy takes a certain chord and, by leaving it unresolved, or by putting it under every note of a phrase … he draws our attention to this harmony as an entity in itself, with its own powers of evocation. … Debussy's real revolution in harmony consists in the way he uses chords rather than in the chords he uses. It is a development in harmony more far-reaching than any of Liszt's or Wagner's developments of harmonic vocabulary.' This is a point well made and it is one worth stressing: Debussy's conception of chords having individual expressive power, achieved 'by suspending a chord in space', as Lambert put it, is something that can be heard in the work of Bridge, Butterworth, Clarke, Vaughan Williams and many others including Holst, Delius, Bax and Scott. By absorbing this aspect of Debussy's art, these composers did not dilute their national character, but enriched it. The same could be said of composers such as Falla in Spain, Respighi in Italy, Kodály in Hungary and Szymanowski in Poland: all were greatly indebted to Debussy's harmonic innovations but all remained entirely true to their national roots.

Though Vaughan Williams greatly admired Debussy, his closest French connection was with Ravel. He was given an introduction through the critic (and Ravel's friend) Michel Calvocoressi and studied in Paris for three months in 1907–8. Vaughan Williams wrote to Calvocoressi to thank him 'for introducing me to the man who is exactly what I was looking for.' He later recalled his lessons with Ravel: 'I learned much from him. For example, that the heavy contrapuntal Teutonic manner was not necessary. Complexe mais pas compliqué was his motto. He showed me how to orchestrate in points of colour rather than in lines. It was an invigorating experience to find all artistic problems looked at from what was to me an entirely new angle.' The results were immediately apparent in works such as On Wenlock Edge and the London Symphony.

Rebecca Clarke played for Ravel in two chamber music concerts in London during the 1920s and at a party afterwards she even read his fortune using Tarot cards. Clarke was thoroughly familiar with Ravel's music, and his harmonic language, particularly that of a work such as the Piano Trio or the String Quartet, had a decisive influence on her. Bryony Jones has written that 'Clarke's eclectic musical style and harmonic language – with its various modal, chromatic and octatonic characteristics – reveal the numerous sources that influenced her writing: the importance in this respect of Clarke's contemporaries Debussy and Ravel should not be underestimated.' The same could be said of all the British composers in this year's festival.

Maurice Ravel - 1912

Viola, viola: the parallel lives of Rebecca Clarke and Frank Bridge
by Richard Bratby

It's possible to take a viola joke too far. 'Its career has been an interesting and singularly chequered one' wrote Rebecca Clarke (1886-1979) about her instrument, in Cobbett's Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music (1928). 'Originally the oldest and most important of the string family, its prestige gradually diminished until it became a mere drudge…hardly considered worthy of much notice in itself'. It's not strictly true that musicians come to resemble their instruments. But it's hard not to see, in that melancholy appraisal, an echo of the careers of the two great viola-playing British composers of the early twentieth century. Most listeners today probably only encounter the name of Frank Bridge (1879-1941) through the Variations on a Theme of Frank Bridge (1937) by his most brilliant pupil Benjamin Britten.

Still, at least Bridge got to keep his name. At the moment of her greatest success as a composer, Rebecca Clarke wasn't allowed even that. She'd published her earliest compositions under the name 'Anthony Trent'. Having (as she put it) 'killed him painlessly', in 1919 she entered her Viola Sonata in a composition competition organised by the American philanthropist Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge, where it tied for first place with a work by the Swiss composer Ernest Bloch. Whereupon - since the competition required entries to be submitted anonymously, a British newspaper later claimed that 'Rebecca Clarke', too was a pseudonym – and that the two winning pieces had both been written by Bloch.

'Getting a clipping to say that there wasn't such a person as me was rather a strange experience' she told an interviewer years later in 1977. 'I take this opportunity to say that I do indeed exist and that my viola sonata is my own unaided work!' Like its counterpart, Clarke's Piano Trio of 1921, it's an impassioned, superbly-wrought work, in a vein of fervent, muscular late romanticism that – to the mindset of that era – suggested masculinity. In fact, both the Viola Sonata and Trio were published under Clarke's own name, and if it took until the 1970s for her achievement to be fully recognised, the Sonata at least has never left the viola repertoire.

These two large-scale chamber works would be the high-water mark of Clarke's career as a composer. She was too active as performer (she was the viola player of the English Ensemble, a piano quartet) to have much time for composition. But while visiting relatives in the USA in 1939, she was prevented from returning to Britain by the outbreak of war (The British Consulate told her that a single female viola player was an 'unproductive mouth' and refused to give her the necessary visa). She settled for the rest of her life in America, where in 1944 she married an old college friend, the composer James Friskin.

And when she was interviewed by Robert Sherman of WQXR Radio, New York, at the age of 90, she hadn't composed any music for over 30 years. "I know, and I miss it" she explained, 'because there's nothing in the world more thrilling – or practically nothing… But you can't do it – at least I can't […] unless it's the first thing I think of every morning when I wake and the last thing I think of every night before I go to sleep'. Her impulse to compose, she explained, had simply 'dried up' in the mid-1940s, despite Friskin's encouragement. When, in early 1941, news reached her of the death of Frank Bridge, she agreed to play in a memorial concert organised in Washington by Britten and Sprague Coolidge. Liane Curtis has speculated that one of Clarke's later compositions, the Passacaglia on an Old English Tune for viola and piano, is a sort of viola player's lament: for Bridge but also for a lost homeland, and perhaps a lost career.

By then, Bridge's own fate as a composer had also taken an unhappy turn. The two viola players knew and respected each other. Bridge had studied with Charles Villiers Stanford at the Royal College of Music from 1899 to 1903, and Clarke had become Stanford's first female composition student (in the teeth of brutal opposition from her father) from 1907 to 1910. It was Stanford who suggested that the viola was the ideal instrument for a composer: 'right in the middle of the sound'. Bridge and Clarke were both committed chamber musicians (Bridge was the viola player of the English String Quartet for over twenty years from 1902), but Bridge quickly moved into orchestral composition. His suite The Sea was premiered at the 1912 Proms, and would later have a decisive impact on the young Britten.

'How beautiful a delight to make the world joyous! The song should never be silent, the dance never still, the laugh should sound like water that runs for ever' wrote Bridge, quoting the poet Richard Jefferies, on the score of his Two Poems for orchestra (1915), and his transparent, melodious and luminously colourful music was increasingly popular before the Great War. But Bridge was a committed pacifist, and the War transformed his outlook. His creative response was neither to fall silent, like Elgar, nor to retreat to pre-war certainties. He looked to the Second Viennese School, with results that dismayed his British listeners.

Bridge, wrote The Times, was seeking 'to uglify his music to keep it up to date'. Another critic wrote that "he can no longer be regarded as a 'young British composer'". Bridge was hurt by the response - as he saw it, his change of style was a natural evolution. Still, he maintained, 'that there can be any compromise between what is expected by others and what my instinct insists upon is utter impossibility'. And if modernist works such as his Third Quartet (1925 – another commission from Sprague Coolidge) and the epic cello concerto Oration (1930) are self-evidently the product of the same lucid, searching musical imagination, they effectively cost Bridge his audience. Bridge continued to compose right up to his early death, but in 1939, as his protégé Britten departed for the USA (just before Clarke found herself unable to return), he presented his viola to the younger man.

It's hard not to see the gesture both as a renunciation, and a passing of the torch. "So that a bit of us accompanies you on your adventure", Bridge wrote to Britten. "We are all 'revelations' as you know. Just go on expanding." The world of music, happily, continues to do just that. Acclaimed and then neglected in their own lifetimes, recordings have brought both these great viola-player composers to a wider audience than either, perhaps, can ever have expected. Frank Bridge is too complex, fascinating and important a figure to be remembered as merely a theme for Britten's variations; just as Rebecca Clarke's music is too vital, individual and enjoyable to be treated merely as a ticked box in a diversity exercise. Clarke liked to quote Vaughan Williams's advice: 'Whatever comes out best is the best way for you to do it'. The best way to appreciate the music of Frank Bridge and Rebecca Clarke is to put preconceptions aside and just listen.

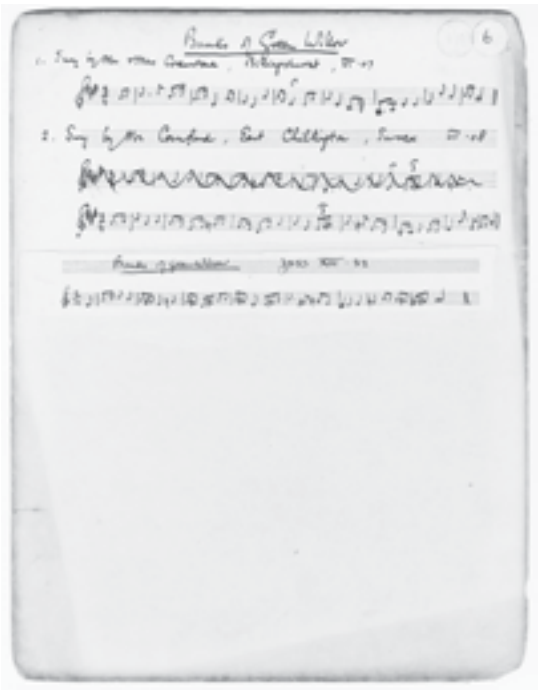
Some observations on the "Folk music" revival.
An edited excerpt from **The Folk Music of Shropshire**
by John Kirkpatrick - S.W. Shropshire Archeological Society, 2014

The use of the word 'folk' to describe certain aspects of the culture of the underclasses of English society arose during the middle of the nineteenth century. Before that you would come across expressions such as 'songs of the peasantry, 'music of the common people', 'relics of ancient pastimes', or more generally 'antiquities', and the academics who studied this material were known as 'Antiquarians'. As well as in formal printed collections, the words of old songs could be found scattered amongst a bewildering variety of other subjects in publications such as 'Notes and Queries' - founded in London in 1849 and still going strong today - and similar journals more locally based; 'Shreds and Patches' published in Shrewsbury and 'Bye-Gones' published in Oswestry and relating to Wales and the Border Counties.

The founder and editor of 'Notes and Queries', W. J. Thomas is usually credited as being the first to use the word 'folk' in the sense that we understand today. First of all we had the new word 'Folklore', giving rise to people called 'Folklorists'. Thomas was a founder of the Folklore Society in 1878, which continues to flourish today, publishing an annual journal, regular magazines, and a breathtaking number of books.

Arising from this new discipline were 'Folk Songs', 'Folk Dances', and 'Folk Music'. A small but growing band of enthusiasts travelled round the country noting down songs from the lips of simple country people. It is unthinkable to us today, but these early collectors discovered that everybody sang, all the time, as they went about their daily lives. Flora Thompson describes this exquisitely in her book 'Lark Rise' first published in 1939 and harking back to village life seventy years earlier. Thomas Hughes' book 'The Scouring of the White Horse', written and set in the 1850's, also places many of these pieces in their natural setting and Thomas Hardy's writings are full of references to particular songs that he grew up with in Dorset.

Collections of songs noted down directly from the singing of living singers began to be published, prominent amongst which was 'Ancient Poems, Ballads, and Songs of the Peasantry of England', edited by J H Dixon in 1846.



George Butterworth 'Banks of Green Willow'

The Folk Song Society

The Folk Song Society was founded in 1898, its membership including the young-bloods Ralph Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth, Gustav Holst, Percy Grainger and the man who eventually became England's foremost collector of its native folk music, Cecil Sharp. Sharp would go on to found The English Folk Dance Society in 1911 which, joined with The Folk Song Society became The English Folk Dance & Song Society in 1932. This remains the national body dedicated to preserving and celebrating English traditional music and its headquarters at Cecil Sharp House in North London is home to one of the best libraries of folk music in the world – The Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.

During visits to Shropshire in 1907-8 George Butterworth noted down a number of songs, including versions of As I Roamed Out, The Trees They do Grow High, and Willie the Waterboy from Mrs Whiting and Mr Smith in Broseley, and Green Mossy Banks of the Lea from Mr Lockley at High Ercall. A selection of these will be performed in Concert 4 of this festival. A few years later Cecil Sharp was cycling around the country, and he also unearthed a considerable number of hymns and carols.

Sound Recording of Folk Songs

Although the early collectors were assiduous in writing down the tunes and the words there was no point of reference to the way the songs were delivered in performance. The first published compilations were arranged with piano accompaniments, with any quirks and odd moments ironed out, so they could comfortably be sung in the parlour though traditional singers hardly ever sang with any accompaniment. Very occasionally in recordings, you might get somebody squeezing away on a melodeon or piano accordion behind a song but these are very rare exceptions.

The first hearing of a recording of a traditional singer performing a piece they have picked up from within their family, or from hearing it constantly repeated in their neighbourhood, is like discovering an alien life form. In no other field of music do you hear people singing without accompaniment, in their own regional accent and their natural voice, freely varying the melody and the scansion of the words to fit the demands of the song. It is thrilling, and links the listener back to the time when this approach was considered absolutely normal amongst those who pursued it. It reminds us that there were other ways of making music available to us before the days of recording and broadcasting. To those sections of the community who had very little in the way of wealth or material possessions singing was about all they did have, and was all the more precious because of it. Nothing can give you a firmer sense of belonging to a shared past than joining in a song you've known all your life, with people you've known all your life – people whose parents knew your parents.

In my own performances I sing numerous songs that are based on variants I first heard from a number of Shropshire singers not only because they spring from my adopted county, but also because they are so distinctive and unusual.

John Kirkpatrick has been dancing, singing, and playing his way round the English folk scene since he joined Hammersmith Morris Men at the age of twelve, in all kinds of duos, trios, and bands including spells in Steeleye Span, The Albion Band, Trans Europe Diatonique, Band of Hope, lengthy stints with Richard Thompson's Band, The Sultans of Squeeze, and Brass Monkey.
He is an enthusiastic Morris Dancer and started one of England's most influential teams, The Shropshire Bedlams.
John has contributed music, song, and dance to many plays in the theatre, and also radio, television, and film. As a virtuoso session player his squeezeboxes can be heard on hundreds of recordings, and he has an enviable reputation as a creator of new work in all these fields. On his own gigs, however, you're more likely to see him pursuing his first love - traditional English music and song.

Giles Underwood (bass-baritone) is a versatile singer and teacher. He was a chorister at Westminster Abbey and read Biology at Magdalen College, Oxford before going on to study at The Guildhall School of Music and Drama (GSMD) under Susan McCulloch.
Well known for both stage and concert work, he has also recorded widely, and his performance on Opus Arte's disc of Membra Jesu Nostri by Buxtehude has received critical acclaim, as has his work with the solo voice ensemble, I Fagiolini, with whom he sang for nine years.
He is Professor of Singing at both GSMD and The Royal Academy of Music and is Director of Music at University College, Oxford. Here he founded and directs The Martlet Ensemble and Martlet Voices, the two ensembles in residence. Both these enterprises give students the opportunity to perform alongside professional musicians in a wide variety of challenging repertoire.

Gretel Dowdeswell studied with Hamish Milne at the Royal Academy of Music and subsequently with András Schiff and György Kurtág at IMS, Prussia Cove where she is now resident pianist and a regular guest at the annual Open Chamber Music seminar. This has brought her into contact with some of the world's finest string players with whom she is in demand as a duo partner, performing at all the major chamber music venues in the UK and broadcasting frequently for BBC Radio 3. As Associate Artist at Brunel University, London, she completed a Beethoven Piano Sonata cycle and collaborated with the University in a three-year project featuring the keyboard works of J.S. Bach. In 2016 she founded the Rural Music Initiative bringing workshops, tuition and performing opportunities to children in Suffolk, UK where she now lives.

Pavlo Beznosiuk is one of Europe's most renowned and respected Baroque violinists with a busy international career as soloist, chamber musician, and increasingly as director.
He has a remarkably large and eclectic repertoire, stretching from the 13th Century to the present day, from Medieval and Baroque improvisation to the works of Berio and Bartok, and has performed in many television dramas and films, the West End and Broadway. His extensive discography includes a ground-breaking survey of the music of Charles Avison and celebrated recordings of Biber's Rosary Sonatas, Vivaldi concerti and J.S. Bach's sonatas and partitas for unaccompanied Violin.

Oliver Cave is an alumnus of the renowned Yehudi Menuhin School and a graduate of Guildhall School of Music & Drama, where he studied with Natasha Boyarskaya, Pavlo Beznosiuk, Simon Fischer and Alexander Janiczek.
Oliver is second violin in the Ruisi Quartet, who have a busy schedule of performances throughout the UK. As a lover of a wide range of music, he performs music on both modern and period instruments, and has played with groups such as the Philharmonia Orchestra, La Serenissima, Academy of Ancient Music, Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment and City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

Luba Tunnicliffe studied in London and Berlin with David Takeno, Pavlo Beznosiuk and Simone Jandl. She was the recipient of many awards including Countess of Munster, Help Musicians UK, Martin Musical Scholarship, Worshipful Companies of Haberdashers and Musicians and is a Yeoman of the City of London.
She has given solo recitals at the Royal Festival Hall and St John's Smith Square and made her debut as concerto soloist with the Philharmonia Orchestra in June 2016. In addition to recital and concerto appearances she is regularly invited to play with ensembles such as Britten Sinfonia, Aurora and the London Symphony Orchestra. Luba devotes much of her time to chamber music as a member of award-winning ensembles the Pelléas Ensemble and the Ruisi String Quartet.

Richard Tunnicliffe studied at the Royal College of Music where he now teaches. An interest in early music and instruments has been a major influence throughout his long career, and he now divides his time between recitals, chamber music and orchestral playing. He has recorded a wide range of music spanning six centuries, including highly acclaimed discs of Bach's 6 Cello Suites and the Concerti by John Garth. He is a regular visitor to Dartington International Summer School, coaches at University College Oxford and has given master classes and lecture recitals in several countries. He also plays the mandolin and enjoys walking in the Shropshire hills.

Clare Stevens is a writer, editor and publicist, specialising in classical music, choral / church music and music education. Born and brought up in Northern Ireland, she graduated in English and Medieval History and spent 30 years in London before moving to the Welsh Marches in 2010.

Nigel Simeone writes extensively on twentieth-century music and has published books on Leonard Bernstein, Olivier Messiaen, Leoš Janácek and music in Paris. He also writes on opera including programme notes for the Royal Opera House and articles for Opera magazine.

Richard Bratby, former manager at the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, writes on music for The Spectator, Gramophone and The Arts Desk, and is assistant music critic of The Birmingham Post. He is currently writing a new history of the CBSO, to be published in December 2019.

Robert Cunning has lived and painted in the hills of South Shropshire for the last 30 years, and continues to find the people and the landscape a great source of inspiration.

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