



Chairman's Message

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It seems hard to believe that another year is drawing to a close and that very shortly the Museum will be adorned with a Christmas tree and seasonal foliage. Looking back there have been many ways in which the Museum has had a successful and exciting year. However, as Trustees I guess we spend more time on the issues that remain to be dealt with rather than wallowing in successes. For as long as I have been involved, our biggest issues remain generating income and finding and retaining Volunteers, without whom - as has been demonstrated in recent months - the Museum cannot open.

One area of income that we would dearly like to increase is that generated from visitors. This would not only boost our finances but also improve the Volunteer experience by having more activity around the house. We feel that one way of increasing numbers is to put greater emphasis on the **'period house'** aspects of the Museum and its collection. Visitors often comment that they are both surprised and delighted to see parts of the Museum that reflect what the house was like to live in when Holst was a resident, but are not specific to the man or his music. By promoting this more in our marketing and communications we would hope to attract people who are not especially interested in Holst or music but rather in the Victorian age and life at the time. Our thinking is at an early stage and we will need to do some 'audience research' to see if there is interest in visiting a period house in Cheltenham. We need to take care not to lose our Holst 'unique selling point', but we do believe that this is an area worth pursuing.

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On the evening of 7th September the **Queen's Award for Voluntary Service** was presented at the Museum by Dame Janet Trotter, Lord Lieutenant of Gloucestershire. Sue Adlard, our current Volunteer of longest standing, accepted the award on behalf of the Museum. Dame Janet said some very nice things about us and after the formalities we adjourned to the Sudeley Arms for fizz and canapés. The whole evening proved to be most enjoyable. Many of you will be aware that we are reviewing our opening times for 2019. This is partly driven by the challenge of finding Volunteers to staff the Museum whilst at the same time remaining open at the times when most visitors are likely to come. However, in the meantime we are pleased to welcome new Volunteers Lucas Wide, Peter Hale and Nick Haycock.

The Events Committee has organised two events since the last Newsletter: the Birthday Concert in conjunction with Cheltenham Choral Society, and Nigel Simeone's talk on *'Holst as an Opera Composer'*. These events were both successful and very enjoyable. We are most grateful to Nigel and also to James Gilchrist and John Wright, who performed most wonderfully at the Birthday Concert.

In addition, other events held at the Museum over the recent past include the ever popular 'Bake Back in Time' sessions, 'Knit Your Bit' - with enthusiastic knitters enjoying a sociable time along with tea and biscuits in the Victorian kitchen - and David Addison's talks *'A Taste of Cheltenham'* which he illustrates with paintings in the Regency room. During the Cheltenham Literature Festival the Museum was one of the venues for the Lit Crawl, which featured *'Poetry and the Planets'*. All of these events attract visitors to the Museum, in many cases people who have not previously visited.

As I mentioned at the beginning, Christmas is coming and so I would like to wish all Friends a very merry Christmas and both you and the Museum a prosperous 2019.

Steve Wood

Holst Piano Fund

Museums today have limited resources, yet the task of looking after their collections is as important as ever: monitoring for temperature, humidity and light, checking for pests, and occasional conservation. Our Museum relies on grants for conservation support; for example The Leche Trust grant for the 1815 Erard harp. The annual clean depends on having money to employ a conservator for a few weeks in the closed period. The importance of this was illustrated last year when items in the scullery were found to be riddled with woodworm. But what of more significant items such as Holst's piano?

This came up at a conference I attended in Edinburgh this month with members of The Social History Curators' Group and The Musical Instruments Network, where I presented on Holst's piano. Attendees included the Royal College of Music Museum, the Horniman, and the Ringve Music Museum in Trondheim. There was much discussion of current thinking about playing instruments in collections. One speaker asked if "museums with non-playing instruments are mausoleums, places for the display of the musical dead?" Indeed everyone wanted their instruments to do what they were made for - to make sound. To that end a clear maintenance programme for each instrument should be established.

Since minimal conservation in the early 2000s, there has been a move towards playing our piano. It brings us closer to Holst, listening to the very notes he would once have struck. As one visitor recently remarked on hearing the piano recording: "It's amazing to think that he touched it and we're now hearing it." As well as the recording, this year we have enjoyed intimate recitals, most notably by Adam Heron in July. They provide a much-needed income stream, but the Museum will need a more structured approach. Therefore the Museum is launching a fund specifically for Holst's piano. If you would like to support such a project please get in touch with either me or Steve Wood.

Laura Kinnear

Book Review: *Concordant Cheltenham*

In this meticulously researched and enormously entertaining account of Cheltenham's musical heritage, **Graham Lockwood** chronicles the musical life of the town from its earliest days, including Handel's visit in 1744 (admittedly to take the waters rather than make music), to 1944.

Music has always played a major role in Cheltenham. At first musical entertainment was usually provided by local musicians playing for visitors to the spas, but by the end of the 18th century national musicians were coming to perform. By the first half of the 19th century, with more home-based music and affordable pianos, music shops began to be established and more music teachers settled in the town including the Holst family. Over the century Cheltenham enjoyed visits by celebrities from Liszt to Jenny Lind. Later in the century the opening of Cheltenham College and then Cheltenham Ladies' College contributed to the musical life and the demand for yet more music teachers. The erection of the Winter Gardens in 1876, the Opera House (now the Everyman) in 1891 and in 1903 the Town Hall made larger events possible. Music continued to play an important role in town life into the 20th century, with visits from Dame Nellie Melba, the Hallé Orchestra and even Sibelius, who came in 1909 to conduct three of his own works. The Competitive Music Festival was founded in 1926, and continues to this day, as does the pioneering Jazz Festival. Music carried on during World War Two, with visits from the London Symphony and London Philharmonic Orchestras, and Glenn Miller in 1944. The first Music Festival took place in 1945 and remains one of the highlights of Cheltenham's musical year.

It's a fascinating story, ably narrated in a lively and accessible way. An excellent selection of high quality illustrations enhances the text and adds to the reading pleasure. Although the book focuses specifically on music in Cheltenham, and will obviously appeal to anyone interested in the town's history, it has a much wider application and is of relevance to anyone interested in the evolution of music culture more generally. Musicians, music lovers, social historians and the general reader will all find much to enjoy and learn here. Copies can be purchased from the Museum shop at £9.95.

Mandy Jenkinson

Ed: We were sad to hear the news of Graham's recent passing. His generous support to the Museum and Cheltenham music scene will be greatly missed. A full obituary will appear in our February edition.

Holst's Media Star Shines

It seems that the combination of *The Planets* centenary and the First World War commemorations have been beneficial to Holst and his presence on TV and radio, in newspapers and social media. Since The Proms in the summer there has been a steady flow of features across all media. The Museum has been involved with many of these, firstly providing images of Holst from its collection for **The Proms** programme and for their slide projections at the two Holst concerts. The Museum also made available to BBC researchers, preparing for **Brian Cox's Planets** event at The Barbican, its catalogue for *The Planets* exhibition in 2014. The Museum's most recent exhibition catalogue (*Gustav Holst's WW1 - With the Salonika Forces*) was also used by the BBC for the programme **Our Classical Century**, which included a good 20-minute exploration of Holst's work 100 years ago, reflecting on the impact the war had on him. Indeed Lenny Henry's speech to camera about Holst's inability to fight and subsequent war work was very much reminiscent of the Salonika catalogue! A recent BBC2 programme explored the friendship between **Holst** and **Vaughan Williams**, with some scenes filmed in the Museum earlier in the year.

One of the most enjoyable Holst media experiences has been on **Richard Atkins'** Armistice Day programme on Radio Gloucestershire. Richard presents the Sunday morning show and is a real fan of British classical music, particularly Holst and Vaughan Williams. His Armistice show focused on Holst's work in Salonika and included interviews with me as well as Salonika expert **Alan Wakefield** from the Imperial War Museum. Richard hopes to record a longer feature in the future.

Laura Kinnear

Away From The Western Front

Laura's research for the *Gustav Holst's WW1 with the Salonika Forces* exhibition attracted the attention of a national organisation 'Away from the Western Front' who asked us to take part in their project to explore the heritage of often overlooked aspects of that war. Feeling that we couldn't build on Laura's already extensive research we decided to look at it through a different lens. So in October we held an event '**Food Away From The Western Front**' at the School House Café in St Paul's. Volunteers from the Museum reinterpreted research from the exhibition to find out what soldiers on the battlefields had to eat. Some of the research was quite surprising. Soldiers in Salonika were given an allowance and could buy "spiced sheep's meat and round loaves of maize bread", whilst grapes and oranges grew in "great profusion". We used the research to inspire recipes for food served at the event, which also provided music and entertainment. The recipes including chapattis, maize bread and chutneys were published in a free '**Salonika Cookbook**' which is now available from the Museum.

Lucy Moriarty

The Holst Society

We recently held our first AGM on the afternoon of the Birthday Concert. If you attended the concert, I am sure you would agree that the six songs performed by James Gilchrist and John Wright were a great find. You will no doubt be pleased to hear that a recording is scheduled for late November 2018. The soloists will be Kitty Whately and Roddy Williams. This is a joint recording between the Holst Society and Albion record label (part of the Vaughan Williams Society). The CD will feature no less than nine world premières of Holst's songs, plus new recordings of songs by Vaughan Williams. Albion have estimated that the Holst Society contribution will be about £4,000.

We do need more members. You can become a member for just £15 per annum (£24 for couples), applying a 40% discount to members of the HBT on the usual £25 (£40) per annum subscription. We are also looking for donations towards the cost of the new CD. Please write to me at Hammetts, Kings Nympton, Devon EX37 9ST or email me at chairman@holstsociety.org. Please also visit our website at www.holstsociety.org.

Chris Cope

Future Events

Friday 30th November, 7.30pm at Christ Church's Harwood Hall: *'The Stained Glass of William Morris and Edward Burne-Jones'*

A talk by **Adrian Barlow** who is President of the English Association and an authority on Victorian architecture, ecclesiology and stained glass.

Friday 22nd February 2019, 7.30pm at St Luke's Church Hall: Wine and Cheese Tasting

This event has been organised in conjunction with Majestic Wine.

Saturday 23rd March, at Christ Church's Harwood Hall: *'A Woman's Life'*

A play by Holst Volunteer **Sally Jones**, who is a BAFTA-nominated professional writer, about an imagined meeting between Clara von Holst and Isabella Beeton.

Saturday 11th May, at Bishop's Cleeve Tithe Barn: Concert with Clive Carroll (acoustic guitar) and Lily Neil (Irish harp).

Programme details to follow.

Alan Parker

Membership of the Friends

We are delighted to welcome new members **Carole Clifford** and **William MacLeod**. Sadly, in September we lost **Paul Bassett**, but his widow **Sharron** will retain their membership in his memory. Our thanks to the many members whose renewals are coming in. Membership cards are being sent regularly.

If you are not already a subscribing Friend of the Trust, please do consider joining and also tell your friends. Not only will you have the satisfaction of giving financial and general support to the Museum, but you will also enjoy many other benefits. The Museum leaflet contains an application form.

Annual Membership rates are:

Single £20, Joint/Family £30, Young £5, Single Benefactor £60, Joint/Family Benefactor £100, Single Life £300, Joint Life £400, Gift Membership £20.

For further details contact me at membership@holstmuseum.org.uk or 01242 227720.

Please note that we have a reciprocal arrangement with the **Holst Society**, whereby Friends of the HBT are entitled to a 40% discount on membership of the Society. More details can be found on their website at <http://www.holstsociety.org/>.

If you would like to become a **Volunteer** at the Museum, and thus a Volunteer Friend, please contact Lucy Moriarty at volunteers@holstmuseum.org.uk or 01242 524846.

We would like to be able to deliver this newsletter exclusively by email where possible, which would save us both postage costs and effort. If **any readers** (whether already on our mailing list or not) would like to take up this option, please email membership@holstmuseum.org.uk.

Tom Clarke



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