



SUNDAY CONCERT

**The Great Hall of Hart House
University of Toronto**

The Music Committee of Hart House Presents
The Five Hundred and Thirty-sixth Sunday Concert

UPSTAIRS, DOWNSTAIRS

The Aldeburgh Connection

WITH

Jennifer Robinson, soprano
Jacqui Lynn Fidler, mezzo
James Westman, baritone
Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubukata, piano

Sunday, 5 February, 1995, 3:00 o'clock in the Great Hall

This afternoon's programme presents an overview of the English musical scene from about 1900 to 1930. Featured are tunes which appealed to the leisured upper classes in their London drawing-rooms and concert halls on the one hand, and to the working classes in their taverns and music-halls on the other.

Jennifer Robinson is a native of Saint John, NB. She holds a Bachelor of Music from Mount Allison University, an Artist's Diploma from McGill, and is a graduate of the Opera Division at the University of Toronto. Her operatic credits include performances in *Gianni Schicci*, *Dido and Aeneas*, and Mozart's *The Goose of Cairo*. She has also appeared in concert and oratorio, notably *Messiah* in Montreal, Saint John and Charlottetown, as well as Haydn's *Creation* and *Paukenmesse*, Mozart's *Requiem*, *Davidde Penitente*, and Bach's *Magnificat*. Her upcoming engagements include Mozart's *Requiem* with the Metropolitan United Church's Festival Choir and Orchestra this Easter.

Jacqui Lynn Fidler began her musical studies in Calgary, where she performed with the Calgary Opera Chorus, Debut Opera and Folks Opera, as well as with numerous orchestras and choirs. She attended last summer's opera and song programme at the Banff School, and is currently in her final year at the University of Toronto Opera Division. Ms. Fidler has been the recipient of scholarships from the Canadian Opera Women's Committee and won the 1993 Wagner Society of Toronto Scholarship. Roles to her credit include Maurya in *Riders to the Sea*, Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, Buttercup in *HMS Pinafore*, Mrs. Noye in *Noye's Fludde*, and Mother Goose in *The Rake's Progress*. She will sing the role of the Fairy Queen in the Opera Division's production of *Iolanthe* in March, and in April will appear with the St. Lawrence String Quartet in a performance of Respighi's *Il Tramonto*.

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'I was born into a generation that still took light music seriously. The lyrics and melodies of Gilbert and Sullivan were hummed and strummed into my consciousness at an early age. My father sang them, my mother played them, my nurse, Emma, breathed them through her teeth while she was washing me, dressing me and undressing me and putting me to bed. My aunts and uncles, who were legion, sang them singly and in unison at the slightest provocation. The whole Edwardian era was saturated with operetta and musical comedy. In addition to popular foreign imitations, our own native composers were writing musical scores of a quality that has never been equalled in this country since the 1914-18 war.

'In the years immediately preceding the first world war, the American invasion began innocuously with a few isolated song hits, until Irving Berlin established a beach-head with *Alexander's Ragtime Band*. English composers, taken by surprise and startled by vital Negro-Jewish rhythms from the New World, fell back in some disorder; conservative musical opinion was shocked and horrified by such alien noises and, instead of saluting the new order and welcoming the new vitality, turned up its patrician nose and retired disgruntled from the arena.

'At this moment the war began, and there was no longer any time. It is reasonable to suppose that a large number of potential young composers were wiped out in those sad years and that, had they not been, the annihilation of English light music would not have been so complete. As it was, when finally the surviving boys came home, it was to an occupied country; the American victory was a *fait accompli*.'

Thus Noël Coward summed up the state of English popular music in the 1920s. English composers of light music like Coward or Ivor Novello were exceptions which proved the rule; and even they made no attempt to match the craze for transatlantic jazz, preferring to rely on a typically English, nostalgic blend of operetta and music-hall.

Our programme this afternoon attempts the mammoth task of presenting an overview of the English music scene from about 1900 to 1930. In doing so we shall concentrate on the middle ground of taste rather than on the higher forms of art music. We shall include the kind of songs which appealed to the leisured upper classes in their London drawing-rooms and concert halls on the one hand, and to the working classes in the taverns and music-halls on the other.

Those 'upstairs', of course, took frequent trips 'downstairs' to hear the popular entertainment which was perhaps more to their taste. The greatest music-hall artistes were big stars in the West End, and the best known female performer, Marie Lloyd, was once howled off the stage by an East End audience who considered the lyrics of her songs, all the rage 'up West', far too indecent for their ears (or for those of their wives).

At the turn of the century, the household names of the entertainment world were either prima donnas of the opera house or artistes of the music-hall. By 1930, both had been ousted from preeminence by the stars of the Hollywood film and the Broadway musical, who received the adoration of peers and commoners alike.

Our spoken extracts are taken from the following:

Clara Butt: her life story
by Winifred Ponder (1928)

Old Days and New
by Lord Ernest Hamilton (1923)

Gervase Elwes
by Lady Winefride and Richard Elwes (1935)

The diary of Sir Hubert Parry, Bart. and newspapers and journals of the period.

PROLOGUE: CONTRASTS

Love's old sweet song (*Clifton Bingham*)

James Molloy

The lyricist of this most popular of late Victorian ballads reported that various composers vied for the privilege of setting his poem to music. Molloy won, being the first to contact him via the electric telegraph. This duet arrangement was made some time in the 1920s.

Let's all go down to the Strand

Harry Castling & C.W. Murphy

A typical music-hall song with its gentle xenophobia and its topical references, this time to polar exploration.

THE PRIMA DONNAS: 1. Dame Clara Butt (1873-1936)

When Clara Butt sang *Land of hope and glory* at a rally in Hyde Park she could be heard, it was said, more than a mile away. With a height (six foot two) to match the size of her voice, she so impressed the venerable Saint-Saëns that he urged her to undertake the role of Delilah. But English law, alas, forbade Biblical subjects in opera. She preferred to make her name in oratorio and, above all, in the sentimental ballad.

In haven (*Sea Pictures*) (C. Alice Elgar)

Sir Edward Elgar

Clara Butt gave the first performance of *Sea Pictures* at the Norwich festival in 1899; this song had already been published as *Lute Song*.

How sweet the moonlight sleeps (*Shakespeare*)

Liza Lehman

Dame Clara gave many concerts with her husband, Kennerley Rumford, 'a modestly endowed, typically English baritone, whose natural elegance and refinement were both an example and a restraining influence' (Michael Scott). This duet, written for them, uses words from *The Merchant of Venice*.

A fairy went a-marketing (*Rose Fyleman*)

Arthur Goodhart

The words appeared in *Punch*, January 2, 1918. The composer, amazingly enough, was a music master at Eton.

THE PRIMA DONNAS: 2. Nellie Melba (1859-1931)

With a stage name derived from her birthplace, Melbourne, this Australian soprano made her debut in 1887 after only twelve months' study. Success was instantaneous, and her operatic career continued for thirty-nine years. 'In her brilliant execution of the most difficult *fioriture* nothing impressed more than a wonderful flexibility, unless it was the unfailing ease and perfect sense of restraint with which the singer accomplished her *tours de force*' (Grove).

Goodbye! (*G.J. Whyte-Melville*)

Sir Paulo Tosti

Melba often sang the songs of the Italian composer, Tosti, who in 1880 was appointed singing teacher and accompanist at the English court. On the strength of this, he was able to charge one shilling a minute for piano lessons.

The banks of Allan Water

Scottish folk-song

The greatest opera stars would often achieve success with the simplest of folk-songs.

ART SONG VERSUS MUSIC-HALL

Upstairs and downstairs, the same themes, usually love and marriage, occurred repeatedly in the bulk of songs. But the direct, humorous approach of the music-hall often contrasts amusingly with the more introverted, soulful poetry of the drawing-room.

Written in 1913, this is one of the last of Bridge's early songs, relating back to the Victorian ballad and forward to the later songs which were to make his voice a far more individual one.

Josh-u-ah

George Arthurs & Bert Lee

A waltz song of the music-hall, dating from 1916.

Waiting at the church

Frank Leigh & George Arthurs

This was a favourite of Marie Lloyd (1870-1922), 'Queen of the Halls'.

T.S. Eliot described her as 'the most perfect, in her own style, of British actresses'.

Two songs from *A Shropshire Lad*

Sir Arthur Somervell

1. Bredon Hill
2. The street sounds

Somervell's cycle (1904) is the earliest, and one of the best, of many collections of songs written to Housman's poetry. First published in 1896, the poems of *A Shropshire Lad* seized the imagination of the literary public in decade leading up the Great War, which they often uncannily prefigure.

THE HOME FIRES

Keep the home fires burning (*Lena Guilbert Ford*)

Ivor Novello

Appearing in the first year of the war, this song was its composer's first great success and the guarantee of his lasting fame.

A hymn for aviators (*Mary Hamilton*)

Sir Hubert Parry

Parry's twelve volumes of *English lyrics* comprise one of the finest collections of English song. This occasional piece, while not part of the collection, is a fine example of its composer's aristocratic style.

Marching song of the Royal Flying Corps

C. Converse

This kind of parody song was particularly popular in the Great War, and would have existed in various versions according to the unit singing.

With rue my heart is laden (*Housman*)

George Butterworth

Lieutenant George Butterworth was killed in August, 1916, in the Battle of the Somme.

INTERMISSION

ENGLAND ON HOLIDAY

1. A day trip

I do like to be beside the seaside

John A. Glover-Kind

Day trips to Margate or Southend were the best that most of the music-halls' patrons could hope for in the way of holidays.

Tango-Pasodoblé (*Façade*) piano duet

Sir William Walton

Walton's 'Entertainment', based on poems of Edith Sitwell, brought its composer great notoriety in the 1920's. This movement is based on the music-hall song just heard.

And her mother came too (*Dion Titheradge*)

Ivor Novello

Here we see an upper class gentleman on rather grander outings. The song shows the new sophistication of the 1920's revue - it appeared in 1921, in *A to Z*, a show starring Gertrude Lawrence and Jack Buchanan.

2. The folk-song craze.

The pastime of folk-song collecting seized the imagination of the artistic world during the 1900's and '10's. Whole parties of upper class people would tour the countryside, pumping the bemused countryfolk for the last dregs of popular melody remaining in their collective memory. Practically all major English composers indulged, and produced their own versions - Grainger arranged some sixty-odd songs and dances.

It is impossible to deny the incalculable value of what was done, both in purely artistic terms and also as a massive rescue operation; at the same time, the craze can be seen as a last-ditch attempt, conscious or unconscious, by composers to bridge the ever-widening gulf between popular and 'art' music.

Willow, willow

Percy Grainger

This folk-song was the original of the song which Desdemona sings in *Othello* Act IV. The arrangement was Grainger's earliest, published in 1912 with a dedication (in Maori!) to Roger Quilter.

British waterside (or The jolly sailer)

Grainger

Grainger took this song down from Mr Samuel Stokes, at the Retford Almshouses, Nottinghamshire, on August 3rd, 1906. The setting was made in September, 1920.

Grainger also toured Denmark and the Faroe Islands collecting songs, including this one, 'Let's dance gay in green meadow; 'Neath the mould shall never dancer's tread go.' It is dedicated 'to the memory of my friend John Singer Sargent'.

3. Abroad with the jazz set

The real American folk-song (*Ira Gershwin*)

George Gershwin

This, the first song which the brothers Gershwin wrote together, was interpolated in a revue, *Ladies First* (1918), in which George accompanied Nora Bayes. Singer and pianist soon fell out because of his creative approach to accompaniment, and the song fell into oblivion. Other early Gershwin songs, like *Swanee*, crossed the Atlantic and became all the rage in London.

Someday I'll find you (*Private Lives*)

Noël Coward

One of Coward's more successful waltz songs, it was used in his most famous play as the theme song of the lovers, portrayed by Coward and his favourite leading lady, Gertrude Lawrence.

The tale of the oyster

Cole Porter

Originally written as *The Scampi* in 1926, this song eventually found its way into *Fifty Million Frenchmen* -but was soon dropped as being in bad taste.

Let's do it

Cole Porter

This song was first introduced in *Paris*, a New York musical by Porter starring Irene Bordoni (1928). It was then interpolated in London in *Wake Up and Dream* (1929), where it had better luck than *Oyster*. Even the Lord Chamberlain congratulated Porter on the lyrics and the extensive research that had gone into naming the myriad creatures who 'do it'.

James Westman is a fourth year undergraduate student at the University of Toronto's Opera Division's. He has already had a lengthy career as a chorister, appearing as a boy treble with distinguished choirs such as the Vienna Boy Choir, American Boys Choir, Paris Boys Choir, and performing with major Symphony Orchestras. He was the first boy treble to perform and record Mahler's *Fourth Symphony, Fourth Movement* (typically sung by soprano) with the Boston Symphony under Maestro Benjamin Zander. In 1983 he also recorded a solo album *Jamie Westman -Treble* with King Recording. More recently he has appeared with Tafelmusik, the Orpheus Choir, the Assembly of Voices, Omphalos Chamber Choir, Jubal's Lyre and the Gentlemen and Boys of St James' Cathedral, and can be heard as the baritone soloist in their recording of Theodore Dubois' *Les Sept Paroles du Christ*.

Stephen Ralls began his musical career in England, following completion of a Master's degree at Merton College, Oxford. He was soon involved in frequent recitals throughout England and in regular broadcasts for the BBC. His work with the English Opera Group led to recital appearances with Sir Peter Pears and to Mr. Ralls' appointment to the staff of the Britten-Pears School in Aldeburgh. In 1978 Mr. Ralls came to Canada to join the faculty of Music, University of Toronto. He has accompanied many well-known Canadian singers including Maureen Forrester, Rosemarie Landry, Catherine Robbin and Mark Pedrotti.

Bruce Ubukata has established a reputation as one of Canada's leading accompanists. For several years he has worked with Mary Lou Fallis in her successful one-woman shows, *Primadonna, Mrs. Bach* and *Fräulein Mozart*, as well as with the Canadian Children's Opera Chorus. His other musical activities have included engagements with Festival Ottawa and the Canadian Opera company, as well as regular engagements each summer in Aldeburgh, England. Mr. Ubukata is also a noted organist and harpsichordist.

Aldeburgh is the small town on the east coast of England where Benjamin Britten, Peter Pears and Eric Crozier founded the Festival of Music which flourishes to this day. Stephen Ralls and Bruce Ubekata are the founders and directors of **The Aldeburgh Connection**, a Toronto-based group which presents concerts of vocal and piano music. Each year The Aldeburgh Connection produces two concert series: at Walter Hall, University of Toronto, and at the Glenn Gould Studio. Information about these concerts may be obtained by telephoning (416) 423-9318.



Steinway Grand Piano Courtesy of
TORONTO COLLEGE PARK

Next Concert
26 February 1995
3:00 p.m., The Great Hall
WILLIAM AIDE, piano