

A close-up photograph of the tailpiece and tuning pegs of a double bass. The instrument's body is a deep, polished red wood. The tailpiece is a large, circular, flared piece of wood. Below it, the tuning pegs are made of brass and silver. The background is black.

BSO

BROMLEY
SYMPHONY
ORCHESTRA

CENTENARY 1918 - 2018

A Short History of Bromley Symphony Orchestra



INTRODUCTION

By Paul Jenner BSO Chairman

It is a privilege to be Chairman of the Bromley Symphony Orchestra, one of the best non-professional orchestras in the country, in this, our centenary season. Since its origins during, or even before, the First World War, the orchestra has attracted many of the musical glitterati of the day. From humble beginnings of the exclusively female string Chislehurst Amateur Orchestra in 1910, Gwynne Kimpton, a largely forgotten pioneer of women's and amateur music, established the regular Bromley Orchestral Concerts. She brought the likes of Myra Hess and Jelly d'Arányi down from London, with the local string players supplemented by wind and brass from the Queen's Hall and London Symphony Orchestras.

Marjorie Whyte and her sisters continued the tradition, making use of their close friendship with Adrian Boult, both to obtain the services of LSO leader Billy Reed as conductor, and to maintain the high standard of music-making. How else could they have attracted the services of a young Norman del Mar?

Under John Coulling, the reliance on imported (and importantly, costly) wind and brass began to wane. Today, barring the occasional extra or horn bumper, the Orchestra comprises almost exclusively regular, local members.

Adrian Brown is now BSO's longest-serving conductor - 40 years next season (which we will mark by reprising the programme of his first ever concert). Under his tutelage, with skills in part learned directly from one of his predecessors, Sir Adrian Boult, the Orchestra is given an insight into the intricacies and intellectual structure of the works we perform, and the nuances of conducting technique that enable us to start rehearsing where other amateur orchestras leave off.

An orchestra is a strange entity, very much greater than the sum of its individual parts. To play in an orchestra is a special form of music-making. Our members, past and present, play for the love of the music, the physical and mental challenges, and the sheer joy of the performance. Some pass through en route to a musical career, others stay for decades.

The Constitution of the Bromley Symphony Orchestra sets out our charitable objects:

... to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of music in all its aspects by any means the trustees see fit, including through the presentation of public concerts and recitals.

We owe Gwynne Kimpton, Marjorie Whyte and all that followed them - musicians, committee members, loyal audience - a great debt of gratitude for what they achieved in enabling us to fulfil this mission. Their legacy lives on in us and we will strive to honour their efforts over the next hundred years as we continue in what Marjorie Whyte dubbed, "the great cause of music".



ORIGINS

Gwynne Kimpton



It is no accident that the centenary season of the Bromley Symphony Orchestra should coincide with events marking the end of the First World War. According to a 1953 concert programme:

The orchestra was formed in 1917 by Miss Beatrice Fowle and Miss Gwynne Kimpton, teachers at Bromley High School for Girls, the latter of whom became its first and very successful conductor. The earliest concerts were given under the title "Bromley Patriotic Orchestral Concerts" with the double object of raising public morale as well as helping to raise funds for war charities.

Gwynne Kimpton (1873-1930) was an accomplished violinist, winner in 1897 of the Taylor Gold Medal from The Guildhall School of Music for "the most distinguished student, male or female ..." and a licentiate of the Royal Academy. She led and frequently conducted the Guildhall orchestra, and in 1901 gave a charity event with "an excellent little

ladies string orchestra."

In 1902 she co-founded The Strings Club, "for the purpose of encouraging the practice and performance of Chamber Music". A later advertisement refers to:

Meetings for practice are held on Thursdays, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. (and later if specially arranged), at 9 Linden Gardens, Notting Hill Gate Tube, by kind permission of Miss Steele. The Entrance Fee is 10s. 6d., and the Club Fee £1 11s. 6d. per term (Ten Meetings of one hour each). The Quartet Parties are very carefully graded, and Members may occasionally be asked to play for a second hour in order to make up another party; they may also listen to other Quartets during the day, and in that way learn much. The new scheme provides for personal coaching by a competent player in each party ...



Miss Gwynne Kimpton
Founder and Director of the London Strings Club

In 1910, while on holiday in Berlin, she chanced to go to a Philharmonic Orchestra given for children. She brought the idea home and inaugurated concerts for children during the War, where her orchestra consisted largely of "young ladies, the male sex being confined to the double-basses and wind instruments" [Times 13.1.1911]. "Over twenty lady string players were supplemented by fifteen well-known orchestral men in the double bass wood and brass departments. The whole performance was dainty and graceful, fluently fingered, and well contrasted under the clear indications of a thorough mistress of conducting" [Musical Herald 1911, p47]. The programmes featured short lectures and took place initially at the Steinway and later at the Aeolian Hall.

Kimpton described the organisation of the children's concerts as follows - and this seems to have been the model for the subsequent Bromley concerts:

Ruth Howell, the violinist, collected the string players for me - the best women-talent available - but the woodwind and brass were men professionals from some of the leading orchestras. I don't believe in antagonism between men and women - I believe they ought to co-operate - and the men orchestral players have always been good friends and so helpful. I say I learned to conduct on them - with them playing in the band they just carried me along

ÆOLIAN HALL, NEW BOND STREET, W.
ORCHESTRAL CONCERTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.
CONDUCTOR: MISS GWYNNE KIMPTON.
Saturday, January 22nd, at 2.30 p.m.
Overture, "Der Freischütz"Weber
Concerto in C minor (Köchel No. 491) for
Pianoforte and OrchestraMozart
Mr. LEONARD BORWICK.
"Short Musical Talk" on Beethoven Symphony
.....Mr. Stewart Macpherson
Symphony in F major, No. 8Beethoven
Mr. Macpherson's Notes are included in the Book of
Words, and can be obtained beforehand, price 6d.
10/6, 5/- (reserved); 2/6, 1/- (unreserved). Concert Secretary,
109 Earl's Court Road, W., Hall and Agents.
The remaining Concerts of the Series will be on Saturday, Feb. 19,
and Saturday, March 18, in Æolian Hall at 2.30 p.m

Intriguingly, the first mention of Kimpton conducting a local orchestra was as early as July 1910:

Miss Gwynne Kimpton has been most successful in training the Chislehurst Amateur Orchestra. The ladies play with remarkable technique and expression. For their closing concert in the Bromley Grand Hall, Mr Henry Wood brought his wind players [from the Queen's Hall Orchestra] and conducted.

[Musical Herald p224]

And an article in The Times on 29 March 1924 reported that "Kimpton [had] conducted the Bromley and Chislehurst Orchestra since 1909."

A friend is said to have remarked "Wherever Gwynne Kimpton goes, orchestras spring up". She founded The London Amateur's Orchestra in 1916 in support of the war effort, and it seems likely that

the local "Kimpton and Fowle Patriotic Concerts" (as they were also known) were given by the nascent Bromley and Chislehurst Orchestra. After the war, the concerts continued under the auspices of "Bromley Orchestral Concerts" and the largely female local string orchestra was supplemented by male professional wind players on concert day in the same way as her Children's concerts had been.

Kimpton commented on the difficulties facing women players:

But I sometimes wonder whether I ought to have had all women from the outset. Only it was so hard to get capable women wind players. There was no good market for them and they didn't find it worthwhile to learn the instruments. Even now they are usually forced to take work in the tea shops and cinemas and thus when they come to the Symphony Orchestra they have to learn all their classical repertoire from the beginning, whereas the good men are getting classical music all the time in their daily work. That's one difference, and it has meant a lot of training in the British Women's Orchestra. But the brass are coming on nicely now and things will improve. It's a question of providing a market in classical music for the brass and wood wind.

The critics, however, were not overly-impressed. "A more finely-pointed beat on the part of Miss Gwynne Kimpton might produce a quicker responsiveness" [Musical Times 1924 p455]. "The upper strings were numerous and capable. Double-basses were few and rather weak. As for the wind, women have apparently not taken to those coy and elusive instruments long enough to have won their obedience. They were often shy and restless in the hands of their new feminine captors. Some would not speak up at the appropriate moment, others seemed bent on bolting back to their native woodlands (the horns particularly)" [Musical Times 1925 p63].

The concerts were not an economic success and Kimpton resigned after the third concert of the winter season, passing the baton to Malcolm Sargent and later Grace Burrows. It seems ill-health may also have influenced this decision.

Even allowing for the sexism of the day, her legacy seems largely, and strangely, forgotten: a 1934 BWSO programme refers simply to its having been founded "by various leading women musicians in England". She has been described variously as "the forgotten British conductor" and a "musical suffragette".

She resigned her conductorship of the Bromley Orchestral Concerts in 1926. In her letter to the Chairman, Cllr Arthur Howe, written in a large hand in green ink, she says:

sempre crescendo, begun in a drawing-room, continued along the road to Victoria Station, and ended at the train [to Bromley perhaps?]. There are no delays or wastings of time about this tall woman, who drives straight on with her work and play like a perpetual sea breeze.

BROMLEY AND CHISLEHURST ORCHESTRA.		
First Violins.	Violas.	Clarinets.
Miss Marjorie Whyte.	Miss Dorothy Whyte.	Mr. G. W. Anderson.
Miss Muriel Findlay.	Miss Phyllis Harding.	Miss M. King.
Mrs. A. J. Mathers.	Miss E. Newcombe.	
Miss B. Stanley Jones.	Mrs. Chapple.	Bassoons.
Mrs. O. Tuck.	Mrs. Green.	Mr. P. Draper.
Miss E. Poole Smith.	Miss K. Mathews.	Mr. E. Dubrucq.
Mrs. Morton Crouch.	Mr. G. S. Thompson.	
Mrs. Langdale Smith.	Mrs. E. F. Harding.	Horns.
Miss M. Palmer.		Mr. J. Mason.
Miss O. Beddome.	Violoncellos.	Mr. A. P. Barnes.
Miss S. Bellas.	Miss Edith Hanson.	Mr. G. Burdett.
Mrs. Ball Wade.	Miss C. Poole Smith.	Mr. E. Chipchase.
Mrs. Hone.	Mrs. Edwell Sutton.	
Miss L. T. Howe.	Dr. M. Best.	Trumpets.
Miss Barnard.	Miss D. Palmer.	Mr. G. Eskdale.
Miss O. Haydon.	Mr. R. S. Thompson.	Mr. W. Overton.
Mrs. Diamant.	Mr. C. Roos.	
Mrs. Acres.	Miss M. Spencer.	Trombones.
Mrs. Sparey.	Miss Brain.	Mr. H. B. Ashby.
Miss Margetson.	Miss B. Higgs.	Mr. A. Garvin.
	Miss Macadam.	Mr. T. H. Guttridge.
	Miss Langdale Smith.	Tuba.
	Miss E. Mathews.	Mr. F. Ash.
	Miss J. Weston.	
Second Violins.	Double Basses.	Tympani.
Mrs. C. Lowell Ackroyd.	Mr. A. Lotter.	Mr. E. Gritton.
Miss P. Norman Bath.	Miss B. Batten.	
Miss M. Pole.		Percussion.
Miss E. Isard.		Mr. Hendy.
Mrs. Cole.	Flutes.	Pianist.
Miss H. Cormack.	Mr. Gordon Walker.	Mrs. E. F. Harding.
Miss E. Pearce.	Mr. M. Whaley.	
Miss O. Campling.		Hon Librarians.
Miss D. Bolton.	Piccolo :	Miss O. Campling.
Miss O. Weston.	Mr. M. Whaley.	Miss E. Isard.
Miss W. Howard.		Hon. Sec.
Mrs. E. R. Adams.	Oboes.	Mrs. Todd.
Mrs. J. Nussey.	Mr. H. Halstead.	
Miss D. Batten.	Mr. A. Fawcett.	
Mrs. Allen.		
Mr. E. J. Walls.		
Miss E. Piggott.		
Mrs. G. S. Thompson.		
Miss M. Bouch.		
Mrs. Partington.		

Kimpton founded the British Women's Symphony Orchestra, a response to the returning male musicians who wanted their jobs back. The BWSO's inaugural concert was given, under Kimpton's baton, on 3 April 1924 at the Queen's Hall involving Maud Warrender and Beatrice Harrison as soloists and with the entirely British programme including works by Ethel Smyth and Phyllis Norman Parker, as well as Elgar. Kimpton was interviewed by musicologist Marion Scott, shortly after the event - an interview described as:

Am sure you and the cttee will understand that the concerts are a tremendous strain – and altho I adore conducting as an act – I don't think the gain in pleasure or income is commensurate to what it cost me in the way of nervous exhaustion – Mixing amateurs and Professionals is a problem – and rather tiring to accomodate [sic] oneself to their joint needs – I have to thank you for the most loyal backing a conductor could have – altho I think your policy in engaging 2nd rate artists is a short-sighted one - as regards spending money & getting it back - in my 25 years experience of conducting, I have never failed to get money back on a big fee artist! I feel very pleased that I am leaving the Society with such good prospects & such a minute deficit ...

Indeed, 1924 saw the orchestra set up a guarantee fund (up to £2 each) and this was called upon just a year later when the season ended with a deficit of £62.

A "Concert of Appreciation" was given on 17 November 1926 (flowers for Miss Kimpton £1 1s!); sadly we have no record of what music was played to mark the occasion.

Gwynne Kimpton died after several years of ill-health and an operation on 26 November 1931,

aged 56. Her short obituary in The Times the following day states: "Her personality made her particularly successful in training players which is testified to by the fact that both Sir Henry Wood and Sir Landon Ronald conducted her Amateur Bromley and Chislehurst Orchestra." While we have no programmes of these concerts, we know that the enterprise Gwynne Kimpton started all those years ago (alongside many others) is in rude health. How thrilled she would be to know that a century of music-making continues in her name here in Bromley.

But what of her co-founder, Beatrice Fowle? She was also a teacher at Bromley High School for Girls and for many years was the Honorary Secretary of Bromley Orchestral Concerts - as well as The New Strings Club and, probably, the London Amateur's Orchestra. "Probably", because her address, like Gwynne Kimpton's, was 109 Earl's Court Road W8 (Telephone 2527 Western). There is nothing much to read into this as many unmarried professional women shared accommodation at that time.

There is some administrative correspondence from her but this provides no insight into her personality. She continued to sit on the Organising Committee until at least March 1938, by which time she had moved to 207 Woodstock Road, Oxford. After the war, her name no longer appears...



ESTABLISHMENT

Marjorie Whyte and Billy Reed



The orchestra's leader was Marjorie Whyte, who had close connections with Adrian Boult; they had studied together in Berlin before the 1WW. On the back of this, it appears that Whyte was able to obtain the services of WH (Billy) Reed as conductor (as well as a regular guest appearance by Sir Adrian himself). Reed was leader of the London Symphony Orchestra which Boult conducted at the end of the 1WW.

When approached by Marjorie Whyte, he said:

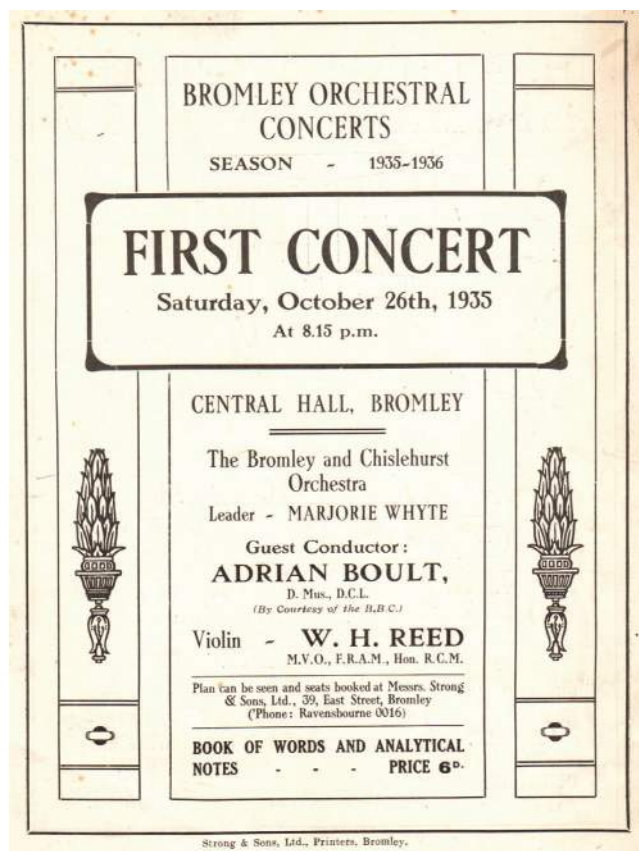
I will accept the position on two conditions: First that there is real enthusiasm among the players, and second, that I may be allowed a free hand to perform only the best music with all the parts presented as required by the composer.

And so "... it was under [Reed] that the orchestra developed into the first-class combination that it is to-day."

Reed is perhaps best known for his long association with Elgar. They first met at a rehearsal of the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1902 where Reed asked whether he gave harmony and counterpoint lessons - to which Elgar replied: "My dear boy I don't know anything about those things." The acquaintance endured, however, and a chance meeting in Regent Street in May 1910 led to Reed advising the composer on the writing of the *Violin Concerto*.

Reed first played the Concerto from the manuscript, as well as the *Violin Sonata* (with Landon Ronald in March 1919) and the first public performance of the *Quartet* and *Quintet*, in May 1919 (with Albert

Sammons playing first violin). In October 1935 Reed played the Elgar Concerto with the Bromley and Chislehurst Orchestra - and threw in Vaughan Williams' *Lark Ascending* for good measure! Boulton - "by courtesy of the BBC" - conducted.



The close collaboration on the Concerto continued on and off with Elgar's early sketches for the Third Symphony after it was commissioned in 1932. After Elgar's death in 1934, and despite avowing to the composer's wish that no one should "tinker" with the work, Reed published the sketches along with some explanation of them in his memoir *Elgar as I Knew Him* (1936). Reed's anecdotes proved invaluable to BSO President Anthony Payne when he later successfully elaborated the symphony early this century. BSO gave one of the early performances in 2006.

He was also "a composer of some repute" (according to Philip Scowcroft), even before he met Elgar; his obituary said he "had taste and fastidious musicianship, but no conspicuous inventive gift"!

As a composer Scowcroft suggests Reed's lighter music was perhaps the more popular; some even gained first performances at Henry Wood's Promenade Concerts e.g. the *Valse Brillante* (1898), the overture *Touchstone* (1900), *Valse Elegante* (1903), symphonic poem *Among the Mountains*

of *Cambria* (1922) and the *Suite Venitienne* (1903). And his chamber music was also well-regarded: his *String Quartet* no 5 in A minor (1916) won second prize in a composition competition that year, noted for its "graceful writing and striking harmonic effects."

His *Symphony for Strings* (1934) was written for the Bromley and Chislehurst Orchestra and dedicated to Marjorie Whyte. It was first performed on 7 December 1933 in Bromley Central Hall (though the first movement had been premiered earlier that year at the Three Choirs Festival). BSO performed it again this season (on 16 March 2019) – the first time since 20 December 1947.



Reed conducted not only the BSO, but also the Redhill Society of Instrumentalists (for some 40 years) and the Croydon Symphony Orchestra.

One final link between Reed and the Orchestra (or, more specifically, our conductor) is worthy of mention. Mike Johnstone plays the bassoon in the Corinthian Orchestra and Elgar Sinfonia, both conducted by Adrian Brown. His father had Reed as his music examiner, as he recounted many years later:

On July 1 1942 I took my Grade 8 piano in Dumfries with 'Billy' Reed as examiner. The candidate after me had withdrawn and so, with half an hour free, Billy Reed was happy to talk with me about Elgar. He asked me what was my favourite work - at that time, with newly acquired records and score, it was Falstaff. When I asked him what he liked best, he said that The Wagon Passes had more of 'my old friend' (I remember his exact words) in it than anything else. He then proceeded to play it for me and finally signed my copy of his book. His performance of The Wagon Passes was probably the last music of his beloved Elgar that he played as he died suddenly the next day.

W H Reed and Edward Elgar

Billy Reed (1876 – 1942) was a fine violinist who studied at the Royal Academy of Music and later became a member of the Queen's Hall Orchestra. He was leader of the London Symphony Orchestra from 1912 to 1935.

Reed is best known today for his close association with Elgar. A chance meeting in May 1910 led to Reed advising the composer on the writing of the *Violin Concerto*. This is how Reed describes what followed:

At this point the author of this volume comes somewhat closely into the picture, since he had the good fortune to be invited to the flat in new Cavendish Street, to help with the arrangements of the passage-work, the appropriate bowings and fingerings, also to play over passages in different ways so that the composer could hear the effect and get it down on paper exactly as he wished it to be played.



The first visit was a unique experience. There was the composer, striding about, arranging scraps of manuscript in different parts of the room, pinning them to the backs of chairs and placing them on the mantelpiece with photograph frames to hold them in position. It was wonderful to note the speed at which he scribbled out another passage or made an alteration or scrapped a sketch altogether as being redundant.

Many visits were made to this flat, as also to The Hut, a home owned by Mr Frank Schuster near Maidenhead, close to the river. Elgar went there to say for a while after he gave up the flat in London and wrote most of the slow movement in that lovely environment near the Thames. Then, when he went back to Plas Gwyn on 2nd June, the first and second movements being practically complete, he worked hard at the finale, frequently summoning the author to come to Hereford to play the new section, new passages and the cadenza, which he decided should be accompanied and form an intrinsic part of the Concerto, summing it up, as it were, in once section in which he brought back themes from the first movement, dwelling upon each of the phrases lovingly, elaborating them and looking at them from many different points of view before resuming the wild exuberance of the finale and leading on to the final coda. Small wonder that the author, privileged as he was to be allowed to lend his aid and to play for the very first time the different passages, to help in the evolution of the arabesques and to be asked for advice upon all technical points, was overcome with admiration and affection for the composer, and felt very much honoured when Elgar asked him to play it all through on its completion to a select circle of friends at a private party organized by Frank Schuster on the Sunday evening preceding the Gloucester Festival of that year. The composer himself played the orchestral part on the piano.

[Elgar by WH Reed pp101-102]

Reed was also a key character in the drama around the Third Symphony. He attempted on numerous occasions to encourage the composer to work on the piece. While 1933 saw Elgar gather together various manuscript fragments he had already written, which he augmented, sometimes with Reed playing themes on the violin for him to harmonise, the work remained unfinished at his death in 1934. Indeed, Elgar made Reed promise that no one was to tinker with the manuscript, a view strongly supported by another close friend, Bernard Shaw.

All the attempts to complete the Venus of Milo with a pair of arms have failed. In Elgar's case, we have the arms without the statue: a much more insoluble problem.

[Elgar As I Knew Him (1936), Preface]

Reed nevertheless published the sketches along with some explanation of them in his memoir *Elgar as I Knew Him* (1936).



W. H. REED and Sir EDWARD ELGAR
Taken at one of the recent
Three Choirs Festivals.

After Reed's sudden death in 1942, Boult returned to Bromley to conduct a Memorial Concert (24 October 1942), in which the Elgar *Concerto* was played by Albert Sammons.



Albert Sammons

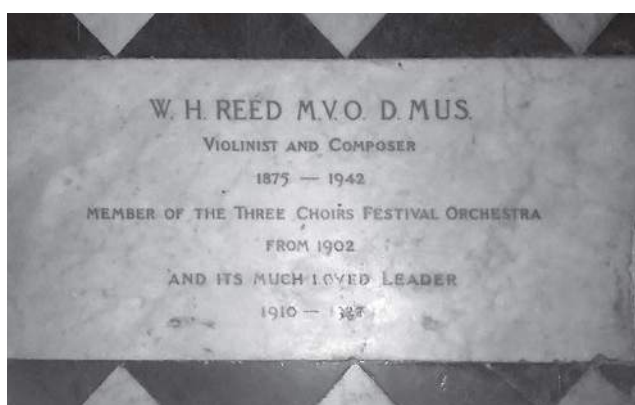
Sadly, we do not have a copy of the programme for this concert, but the sum of £138 17s 9d was raised for the RCM's Fund. There were subsequent performances of Reed's works by the Orchestra, for example, *Merry Andrew* (6 February 1943), and his own *Elegie* was played by the LSO at this memorial service at The Parish Church, Croydon on 18 July 1942.



Reed's obituary paid homage to this dedication to amateur music:

As a soloist he played frequently at public concerts, but he never rose to the highest honours, no doubt because he was too much of an all-round musician, and too much drawn into varied professional work, to pursue the narrow path of the virtuoso to its end. Probably the musical world was a gainer, for his heart was in his work as teacher and conductor, and his greatest gift was that of stimulating learners and amateur players by his enthusiasm and his engaging personality... It is among the hosts of people in this suburban region [Bromley, Croydon and Redhill] to whom he was instructor and friend that his loss will be most deeply felt.

[The Musical Times, August 1942]





Marjorie Whyte and sisters

CONSOLIDATION

Marjorie Whyte, Sir Adrian Boult and the post-war years

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Chairman, Arthur Howe, wrote to the Orchestra's subscribers:

In preparation for our 21st Season the Committee had arranged attractive programmes and had booked distinguished artists as well as the usual professional members of the orchestra. The prospectus also was in the hands of the printers ... All these arrangements of course had to be cancelled on the outbreak of war, to our infinite regret. The Committee is ... very desirous to do what we can to help the professional musician, who perhaps more than most people is hard hit at the present time. Though there is very little likelihood that evening concerts will be permissible during the coming winter, it is hoped that when things get a little more settled it may be possible to arrange for an occasional concert on a Saturday afternoon ... (letter 23 September 1939)

The Orchestra has few programmes from the concerts that took place during the 2WW, but performances continued, nevertheless; the only concessions being that concerts were held in the afternoon and programme books were reduced to

a single sheet of paper. We have in the archive a list of some 21 concerts between 1940 and 1946 that raised funds for various causes, including: Hospital Supply Depot, Musicians Benevolent Fund (Myra Hess wrote from her temporary address in Abbey Road to express her thanks), Aid to Russia, Aid to China, Addis Ababa Hospital and Women's Land Army Benevolent Fund. It seems that the Patriotic Concerts of the 1WW were essentially resurrected.

Billy Reed died suddenly in 1942 while in Dumfries examining for the Associated Board (see above). Marjorie Whyte stepped up to the BSO conductor's rostrum - but only on occasion and most concerts were conducted by a guest. Conducting duties were shared with her friend Boult, of course, but also: George Dyson (composer, and Director of the Royal College of Music); Edric Cundell (Head of the Guildhall School of Music); Reginald Jacques (conductor inter alia of the Bach Choir); Percy Hull (organist, composer, and great friend of Elgar, having helped revive the Three Choirs Festival); and Clarence Raybould (who conducted the first performance by the LSO at the new Festival Hall in 1951).



Sir Adrian Boult



George Dyson



Edric Cundell



Reginald Jaques



Percy Hull



Clarence Raybould

Under these luminaries' guidance there were none of the "second rate artists" to which Gwynne Kimpton had alluded back in the early 1920s. A succession of world-class artists appeared with the BSO at the Central Hall (until it was destroyed in 1942 in an air raid) and later at the Boys' County Grammar School (now The Ravensbourne School). Guilhelmina Suggia played the Lalo *Cello Concerto* in February 1936, and Jan Smeterlin the Rachmaninov *Third Piano Concerto* the following month. The great Hungarian violinist Jelly d'Áranyi (dedicatee of Bartok's violin sonatas) appeared at least twice before the 2WW. Albert Sammons played Dyson's *Violin Concerto* with the composer (February 1946).

Kathleen Ferrier sang a clutch of arias, and Moura Lympany played the second Rachmaninov *Concerto*.

Emanuel Feuermann played Haydn's *D major Concerto* in February 1934. LSO violinist Ralph Nicholson recalls the occasion in his memoir, *A Fiddler's Life*:

Very many years ago, when I was a student at the Royal College, I was sent down to Bromley to augment their Symphony Orchestra for a concert in which Feuermann was the soloist ... I've hardly ever heard such cello playing... His playing of the Haydn was something quite unforgettable, most especially his performance of the cadenza in which the 3rds and 6ths were quite superb with absolutely impeccable intonation.

One interesting story in particular was a very early performance of Vaughan Williams' *Oboe Concerto* (which Caroline Marwood played with the orchestra only last season). The work was commissioned for Leon Goossens and it was going to receive its first performance at the Proms in 1944. But doodlebug raids forced the early closure of the Proms that year and Goossens instead gave the first performance with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra under Malcolm Sargent in Liverpool on 30 September 1944. The first London performance on 4 May 1945 was at the Wigmore Hall where Goossens was accompanied instead by the Bromley and Chislehurst Orchestra string section, conducted by Marjorie Whyte.

The orchestra, until recently fostered by the late Dr WH Reed, was quick in its response to its present conductor, Miss Marjorie Whyte, who was herself acutely sensitive to the music's demands.

[*The Times*]



Central Hall after WWI

The review, however, concludes in less flattering terms: "the orchestra was found wanting in good, solid foundation tone from the lower strings"! Goossens apparently recalled the composer's presence at preparations for the London performance: "The rehearsal presents a vivid picture in my mind of Vaughan Williams sitting on the platform as solid as a statue, holding an old-fashioned ear trumpet for all the world like a reincarnation of Beethoven" [Emily Kupitz/Michael Kennedy].

Goossens reprised his performance in Bromley in February 1947, this time with Boult.

Two other events around this time are worthy of note. First, as noted above, with the bombing of the Central Hall in 1942, the concerts moved to the Boys' County Grammar School in Hayes Lane, now The Ravensbourne School.



Ravensbourne School

With some gaps in the 1970s and 1980s (with visits to Stockwell College/Civic Centre, Bromley High School for Girls, and the Churchill Theatre) this was to be the Orchestra's home until the completion of the Langley Centre for Performing Arts in 2012. Second, the programme for 7 December 1946 quietly dropped the "and Chislehurst" and the name settled on Bromley Symphony Orchestra. "Bromley Orchestral Concerts" remained the organisation's formal title, however; we did not amend the bank account from BOC to BSO until the early 2000s!

Other soloists from the 1940s included: Lafitte, Frederick Grinke, Isobel Baillie, Arthur Grumiaux, Ivey Dickson, Paul Tortellier, Dennis Matthews and Phyllis Sellick. A particularly memorable concert must have been that on 22 April 1950 when

Peter Pears and Dennis Brain performed Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* - only 7 years after its composition.

Through all this, there was a vital and central thread of continuity - **Marjorie Whyte**. She was the eldest of four daughters to Robert and Margaret Whyte, themselves both accomplished cellists and musicians, who lived at Ripley.



Ripley

With her sister Jessie, Marjorie was sent to study in Berlin at a time when Joachim's influence dominated the musical life of the city. There they met Boult and forged a lifelong friendship that was to benefit BSO so greatly.

Ripley, the family home, was given an independent music room: a small private concert hall, big enough to rehearse a small orchestra or choir, and with a raised platform at one end for the piano. Here the Whyte sisters made music with their many famous musician friends, the Ripley Choir was founded, and Boult gave conducting courses to young amateur musicians (with music played by some of the BSO strings). Local historian, Muriel Searle, gave a splendid account of her attendance at once such course in 1958 (Kent Life, April 1987 pp20-21): "we were let into the secret of the famous Boult hold on the baton, so relaxed but totally under control... Even such basic problems as sweaty hands in a hot hall were dealt with; his own batons provide to be tightly wound round with rubber bands to prevent slipping."

Today the Whyte family house is the Ripley Arts Centre and many will have enjoyed the splendid music room and the lovely garden it opens onto.

Marjorie led the orchestra from its inception (according to Boult) and conducted on occasion after Billy Reed died. Dorothy was the principal viola, Jessie principal cello, and Joyce led the second violins. Violinist Ralph Nicholson recalls:

The Bromley Orchestra had a rather special character. There were three - if not four - sisters who were all excellent string players who led the various string sections of the Orchestra.

As Lady Ackroyd, Joyce later became Lady Mayoress of London and there were performances for the Orchestra at the Mansion House and Guildhall, the latter in October 1956, to raise funds for the Lord Mayor's Bow Bells Appeal Fund with Boult, Cundell and Norman del Mar conducting, and Clifford Curzon playing Beethoven's *Emperor Concerto*.

Boult was knighted in 1937 and Marjorie's letter of congratulation hints at the closeness of the friendship between them:



Lady Joyce Ackroyd

Telephone
Ravensbourne 4473

Ripley
Bromley
Kent

March 4th 1937

Dear Sir Adrian

We were so delighted to hear of the honour conferred upon you and we send you our very sincere congratulations. How fortunate the country is to have someone like you who give your time and energy so unstintingly in the great cause of music.

Dorothy wants me to tell you that her Bazaar which you so generously helped (people fought over the gramophone records!) raised £1550 and she thanks you my dear very much.

With Kentish regards from us all.

Yours sincerely

Marjorie Whyte



Sir Adrian Boult

When Marjorie died in 1963, Boult wrote to The Times:

... she was never tired of entertaining guests to her orchestra and choir, and since William Reed's weekly visits in the early days, a long succession of well-known artists - instrumentalists, singers and conductors - have delighted to come to Bromley to enjoy the splendidly serious musical enthusiasm of everyone concerned with the concerts...

His association with the Whyte sisters would have helped too, no doubt!

BSO double bass player Beatrix Batten wrote this tribute to Marjorie Whyte in the programme for her memorial concert on 19 October 1963:

Members of the Bromley Symphony Orchestra, the Ripley Choir and lovers of music, have suffered a grievous loss through the death on August 2nd of Marjorie Whyte, our conductor and teacher for so many years. Always an encourager and never a discourager of those less gifted than herself, she was able to inspire

in others the wish to attain the high standard she always set herself. There were many difficulties to overcome, two wars took their toll of musicians, and the rising cost of music made it hard for amateur orchestras to survive, but nothing daunted her and her indomitable courage and enthusiasm inspired both players and audiences alike. The memory of Marjorie Whyte will endure, and to keep alive the love of music is the greatest tribute we can offer to a fine musician and our beloved teacher.

Both Marjorie and Dorothy have a permanent place in the Musician's Chapel at St Sepulchre-without-Newgate, where some musicians are commemorated in embroidered kneelers. Theirs quotes a fragment of Dyson's *Canterbury Pilgrims* ("Love Conquers All") in tribute to their championship of that composer.

It was on Marjorie Whyte's suggestion that a young conductor called **Norman del Mar** came to the conductorship of the Orchestra. He conducted the last concert of the 1951/52 season and stayed for nearly ten years! Del Mar initially pursued a career as an orchestral horn player, while also composing and conducting. Beecham heard that his Royal Philharmonic Orchestra horn player was conducting a concert of Wagner, Strauss and Listz; he came to the concert and promptly appointed del Mar his assistant conductor at the RPO. He made his London Debut in 1947, conducted the leading London orchestras and abroad, and was invited by Britten to conduct the English Opera Group. All this and Bromley too!



Norman del Mar

The Bromley tradition of attracting great soloists continued: Grinke, Tortellier and Goossens returned; newcomers included Eric Harrison, William Pleeth, Clifford Curzon, Joan Cross, Kathleen Long, Manoug Parikian and Yfrah Neaman.

In February 1960, del Mar wrote to Arthur Howe, the Orchestra's Chairman:

I am very sorry to have to tell you that I am writing to resign my position as Conductor of the Bromley Symphony Orchestra. I have been forced to this decision owing to my appointment to the BBC Scottish Orchestra. Will you please tell the committee ... how very much I have enjoyed working with the orchestra all these years. It has been true music making in its finest sense, and a real pleasure to me.

Del Mar returned twice to perform with the orchestra – in the 1968 Jubilee season and in a Bromley Festival performance at the Churchill Theatre in 1990. The orchestra dedicated a concert to his memory in 1994. His son Jonathan also conducted on one occasion and has worked with the orchestra and Adrian Brown on various musicological matters, including playing through new, corrected editions of standard repertoire.

Edric Cundell, many years a guest conductor of the Orchestra and Vice President, took the rostrum for a couple of concerts in del Mar's last season, with a view to occupying the position permanently. He was taken ill and sadly died on 19 March 1961 before being able to do so. **John Coulling**, principal viola of the LPO and later the BBC Symphony Orchestra, appeared as guest conductor for the last concert of the season. Marjorie Whyte wrote to the orchestra members in June 1961 to announce that "this young man of outstanding musicianship and ability ... has agreed ... to become our Conductor for next season ... We are greatly privileged in having Sir Adrian Boult's willing consent to take the final concert as Mr Coulling will be away on tour."

Coulling had grown up in Beckenham and studied the viola and horn at the Royal College of Music. War service saw him wounded while in Burma but he returned to the RCM in 1947 to complete his studies. Boult had encouraged Coulling to pursue his interest in conducting; when Cundell was ill, Stanley Castle, upon whom the ageing Marjorie Whyte had come to rely "to strengthen the strings", put his name

John Coulling



forward. Boult conducted a concert on 25 May 1964 with Coulling as viola soloist in works by Telemann and Hindemith; a recording of the concert was issued on LP (and is available on the orchestra's website).

John Coulling presided over four major changes in the Orchestra in his subsequent 20-year stint, gradually moving it away from the way it had generally operated since its inception.

First, was the passing of Marjorie Whyte, leader for some 45 years or more, on 2 August 1963. She was succeeded by Stanley Castle, violinist in the LSO, who had already appeared as a guest leader on a couple of occasions; he took over permanently in December that year, deputised by Ronald Good and Sylvia Cornish when LSO commitments took him elsewhere.

Stanley Castle



Second, was the gradual phasing out of imported professional wind and brass players from the London orchestras. When the committee discussed the matter in June 1969 they agreed that, if amateur players were to be used, they would have to be "very carefully selected." Programmes gradually

start to include names of permanent woodwind and brass members of the orchestra: Piers Cocker and James Turner (oboes) and Gordon Carr and Peter Hastings (horn) had already appeared on 27 January 1968; Ann Wilkinson (clarinet) and Alan Meyer (horn) crop up in October 1969. The first full complement of largely local amateur players performed on 2 December 1972 and included Robert Long (flute), Hilary Davey (clarinet), Mark Fitz-Gerald (bassoon), Richard Allen (trumpet) and James Handy (horn). Our longest-serving wind or brass player, Frank Cottey (horn), first appears in a programme on 7 December 1974 - just one concert after Helen Griffiths (then Helen Wood) and Andrew Condon, our second longest serving string players.

Third, was the establishment of a new layout of the orchestra on-stage, pioneered by Cundell in a 1951 appearance at least.

The orchestra had been rearranged so that the 'cellos and double basses were on the right of the conductor on the extended platform. There was no noticeable difference in the ensemble and the new arrangement is likely to become permanent.

It was left to his successor, Adrian Brown, to get the strings of the orchestra off the cramped stage at Ravensbourne School, with the woodwind on rostra.

Fourth, the rehearsal venue for many years had been the Robert Whyte Hall at 33 London Road. Following an increase in the hire charges, St George's School, Tylney Road, Bickley became the regular venue in 1970 - until the Orchestra outgrew its modest hall in 2010 (it now rehearses at Bishop Justus School).

The big names kept coming, among them being Anne Pashley, Norman Nelson, Alexander Kok, Rohan de Saram, Colin Horsley, Joan and Valerie Trimble, Kenneth Sillito, Liza Fuchsova, William Overton and Ralph Holmes. But there was also a more express policy (noted in a Jubilee season programme, for example) of supporting young as well as established soloists. So Philip Jenkins, first recipient of the Academy's Marjorie Whyte Memorial Prize, appeared in 1966 (Mozart *Piano Concerto K482*). And on 15 April 1967, the soloist Steven Savage being indisposed, a young John Lill (then aged 23) stepped in to play the Schumann *Piano Concerto*. BSO welcomed him back this season for the first time since then!

THE MODERN ERA

Adrian Brown



John Coulling announced his intention to retire in 1979; his last concert with the Orchestra, other than a guest appearance as the viola soloist in Berlioz Harold in Italy in November 1982, was in May 1980. The word had gone out that Bromley was looking for a new conductor. Valerie Bryant (née Lardner), oboist in the Orchestra, was a contemporary of Adrian Brown's at the Royal Academy of Music and the British Youth Symphony Orchestra: she called him to let him know about the opportunity "south of the river." Adrian recalls that this was "just after

the 1979 election." Prospective conductors were auditioned by taking part of a rehearsal; by all accounts, Adrian was the stand-out candidate.

Adrian was born in Suffolk and attended Northgate Grammar School for Boys in Ipswich. The school took part in the first performance of Britten's setting of *Psalm 150*, with the composer conducting, on 24 June 1964 at the Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh. Adrian recalls the day vividly, not just because they changed on the beach (no room in the hall), but because it was the day he decided music was for him!

Adrian joined the BYSO in 1966; other than Valerie Lardner, a certain Simon Rattle played the tamps, in short trousers! He led the second violins from 1968 and, in 1969, the conductor Trevor Harvey, knowing Adrian's interest in conducting, offered him the chance of picking up the baton himself in Tchaikovsky's *Symphony no 5* - to great success. In 1970 Boult conducted the BYSO in Elgar's *Froissart Overture* and Brahms *Symphony no 2* in 1970 and made a great impression on the aspiring conductor.

Even at that time, there were some links with Bromley. In 1966 the BYSO was coached by the Amici Quarter but then members of the BBC Symphony Orchestra took over, among them Richard England, Peter Poole and his wife Muriel; the Pooles lived in Green Street Green and Peter had played several times with BSO. Sidney Sutcliffe



Jubilee Hall, Aldeburgh

was the wind coach and Bill Overton the brass - and he was closely involved in the Bromley Salvation Army band. Indeed, he played for BSO in the early years as one of the imported professionals and came back in the 1970s as soloist; it is no accident the BSO Principal Trumpet for many years was local SA stalwart, Dave Evans. The fact that Adrian's parents were members of the SA in North London is perhaps just a coincidence. He also got to know John Coulling as he was in the BBC SO too, as well as Colin Davies.

Later, having studied at the RAM, he was one of the young conductors whom Boult in his last few years would receive for what he called "talks". ("I will not call them lessons when the instrument - the orchestra - isn't there.") Boult would discuss a work "as if it were the first time he'd ever seen it," recalls Adrian. "That was quite special. You'd go to somebody else and they would, as it were, dictate a way, the way they did it. He would be discovering it with you, and nudge you into his little ways, his little techniques and traditions: one didn't have to do them, but they were wonderful traditions."



Sir Adrian Boult

In 1909, Boult had presented a paper to an Oxford musical group, the Oriana Society, entitled Some Notes on Performance, in which he laid down three precepts for an ideal performance: observance of

the composer's wishes, clarity through emphasis on balance and structure, and the effect of music made without apparent effort. These guiding principles lasted throughout his career and were clearly a great influence on his namesake. For his part, Sir Adrian wrote of Adrian Brown:

"He has always impressed me as a musician of exceptional attainments who has all the right gifts and ideas to make him a first-class conductor."

By the time of the call about Bromley, Adrian had been busy in numerous conducting roles. While at the Academy he formed the North London Sinfonietta (again with Rattle on timps), as well as appearing with several other local orchestras. Hugh Bean (BBC SO and Beckenham resident) played the Beethoven concerto with him and became a firm friend.



Hugh Bean

Adrian started to conduct the Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra in 1972 (where he stayed 40 years!) and the Glasgow Youth Orchestra from 1973-1977. He remains the only British conductor to have reached the finals of the Herbert von Karajan International Conducting Competition in Berlin in 1975. He conducted the BBC SO in 1976 and the Salomon Orchestra in 1979. He was offered the job of conducting the Insurance Orchestra but they rehearsed on Mondays and he turned them down for Bromley!

Adrian's first concert with us on 18 October 1980 comprised Berlioz' *Le Corsair* overture, Brahms' *Violin Concerto* (with Ralph Holmes) and Sibelius' *Symphony no 5*. He'd met Holmes at the Newbury SO and he of course was another local, born in

Penge. We are repeating that concert in November 2019 to mark Adrian's 40th season as the conductor of Bromley Symphony Orchestra (with Sasha Rozhdestvensky).

In a 1988 interview to mark the orchestra's 70th season, John Castle (then principal trumpet and son of the leader, Stanley) asked Adrian what he thought made a good conductor. His immediate response was "Boultism: not talking too much. A good conductor is one who can get results with the minimum of speech. ... [but] we all suffer from talking too much." Grace Follett – who had played under all BSO conductors from WH Reed onwards – said that Adrian was "quite simply the best".

Adrian Brown



His rehearsal style then, as now, reveals how much he has thought about the music intellectually and musicologically: his enthusiasm is contagious and for an amateur orchestra, his explanations and anecdotes, liberally peppered with humour, play a large part in bringing the music to life.

He told John that a conductor needs "an ability to make works convincing", to act as "musical midwife... you are at the service of the composer." Nothing pleases him more than someone saying that they did not like a piece before, but now they do. We've even managed to persuade him to come around to a piece which he had thought perhaps he did not really rate – Britten's *Prince of the Pagodas* is one such example.

"Bromley's reading and ability to play is quite remarkable. It's probably a sign of the times, that we've gone through 20 or 30 years of good musical education." Having a full complement of players at rehearsals (most of the time) is also significant. "We've a wonderful working relationship. There's a great willingness to learn, there's mutual respect. There's a real nice humility about the way

people approach the music, and I think that's very memorable, very gratifying ... and very unusual."

The BSO tradition of supporting young soloists has been consolidated during Adrian Brown's tenure as conductor. An early highlight was Emma Johnson winning the BBC Young Musician of the Year competition in 1984.



Emma Johnson

We have also made a point of supporting young soloists through the Making Music scheme, as well as those Adrian has spotted at Stoneleigh YO and elsewhere – such as Janice Watson (who played the flute in SYO), Daniel Benn and Sheida Davis.



Daniel Benn

There was also homegrown talent from within the orchestra – Bernard Brook, Alice McVeigh, the horn section in Schumann's *Konzertstück*, Hale Hambleton, and Caroline Marwood reprising the

Vaughan Williams *Oboe Concerto*, and many others. At the same time, big names continued to appear: Hugh Bean and Ralph Holmes of course, but also Erich Gruenberg, Janice Graham, Richard Watkins, Leslie Howard, Jamie Walton, Christine Teare, Donald McIntyre, Malmfrid Sand and Sasha Rozhdestvensky. Johnny Morris and Christopher Timothy both appeared as narrator (*Peter and the Wolf* and *Paddington's First Concert*).

There has also been a gradual widening of the Orchestra's repertoire. Many amateur orchestras have played Beethoven Symphonies and a smattering of Mozart and Schubert. But few will have tackled the Bliss *Colour Symphony*, all bar a couple of the Mahler *Symphonies*, the symphonies of Prokofiev, Nielsen, Rachmaninov, Shostakovich, Sibelius and Walton, or the major ballet suites by Ravel and Stravinsky. We have also been lucky enough to give one of the early performances of Elgar's *Symphony no 3* in the "elaboration" by Anthony Payne (BSO President) and to play *The Planets*, a work that Adrian Brown had studied with Boult using his original score with Holst's markings! And who could forget Act 1 of *Die Walküre*, with Janice Watson, John Upperton and Oliver Gibbs in 2014, some of the most dramatic and technically difficult music the Orchestra has ever performed.

Other highlights have included a performance of Delius *Piano Concerto* in its original form in 1996 and working on new editions prepared by Jonathan del Mar, a great friend of the orchestra and Adrian Brown. This goes back to Boult's maxim of "observance

of the composer's wishes", too often ignored by editors or meddling conductors.

While the Ripley Choir disbanded in 1972, the BSO has carried on something of the tradition of working with choirs, though somewhat less frequently. For some years in the 1990s there was involvement with the Bromley Summer Choral Festival which included a performance of Elgar's *Gerontius* at the Fairfield Halls, and, particularly memorably, the massive Berlioz *Requiem* in a freezing hangar at Biggin Hill. We are marking this tradition with Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* this centenary season, with the BYMT Adult Choir and Sine Nomine, performing at our current orchestral home at Langley Park Centre for the Performing Arts.

There have been times throughout its history when the Orchestra has struggled to find full-paying members in all sections, aside from the extras required when we put on larger works. But in recent years we have been lucky with sustained interest from prospective members. We now have a permanent bass section, a big group of former Bromley Youth Music Trust students and some former members of Stoneleigh Youth Orchestra.

Other than reprising that first concert, next season's highlights include Vaughan Williams' *Symphony no 6*, Tchaikovsky's *Suite no 3*, Tippett's *Concerto for Double String Orchestra*, Prokofiev's *Symphony no 5*, Strauss' *Macbeth* and Mendelssohn's *Scottish Symphony* - a varied and ambitious selection that few professional orchestras would enjoy. It is no wonder that one of Adrian's favourite maxims is "to begin rehearsing where other orchestras leave off"



A NOTE ON REPERTOIRE

The early concerts given by the Orchestra would have seemed unusual to our modern ears, used to the typical overture-concerto-symphony structure or similar. The oldest programme we have seen, for example, 17 November 1923, included not only Beethoven's *Fourth Symphony* and the Tchaikovsky *Violin Concerto* (with Jelly d'Arányi) but also various songs for voice and piano (John Voss and Phyllis Norman-Parker) and Quilter's *Children's Overture*. Similarly, when Jelly d'Arányi returned in 1928, Beethoven's *Coriolanus Overture*, Brahms' *First Symphony* and her performance of Mozart's *D major Concerto* were supplemented with various solo pieces for violin and piano, including a Sarasate *Spanish Dance* (with Eric Gritton). Soloists like Kathleen Ferrier or Phyllis Sellick often turned up after the interval to perform short virtuoso or lyrical pieces.

Another feature of concerts over the years has been the inclusion of contemporary compositions. Muriel Searle, in her article about her attending Boult's conducting course in the late 1950s, notes that:

Few concessions were made to the box office. Where London managements shied away from modern composers, the BSO would give a whole evening to a contemporary composer, such as Sir George Dyson conducting his own Canterbury Pilgrims.

Indeed, a perusal of programmes up to the end of the 2WW shows many concerts including "modern" works by not only by Dyson, but also WH Reed, Ethel Smyth, Imogen Holst, Stephen Storace, Järnefelt, or Stanley Wilson. There was Britten too, of course. The performance of the *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* in 1950 with Peter Pears and Dennis Brain was only seven years after its composition.

That tradition has endured. Orchestra flautist Robert Long had his *Summer Excursion Overture* performed in 1974, his *Guitar Concerto* in 1977 and his *Rhapsody on a Windy Night* in 1982. Adrian Connell's *The Flower will Bloom* was performed in 2002. And in this centenary season, the Orchestra has sponsored a composition competition:

Muilwijk's *Europa* will be performed at our May gala concert, and two of the other entries in forthcoming seasons.

Each season there would usually be a strings concert, partly to avoid the cost of hired woodwind and brass, no doubt. A March 1946 concert featured Bach, Elgar, Sibelius and the Tchaikovsky *Serenade*, alongside various arias sung by Kathleen Ferrier. In recent years, with the Orchestra having achieved a full local membership, the Bromley Symphony Players, directed by Bernard Brook, have given two concerts each year. A newer ensemble, the Bromley String Soloists, has also been set up. The Bromley Wind Soloists give occasional concerts too. All three groups have put on special concerts to help mark the centenary season. And many orchestra members play chamber music together from time to time.

Our programme in the centenary season has been specially chosen to reflect this long tradition. The Armistice concert marked the centenary of the end of the 1WW with Butterworth's *A Shropshire Lad*, Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand* (written for Wittgenstein who lost his arm) and Elgar's *Second Symphony* which seemed to presage the forthcoming conflict as the Edwardian era came to an end.

Our second concert saw the welcome return of John Lill to perform Beethoven with us, after an interval of 52 years.



John Lill

The third concert included WH Reed's *String Symphony*, written for the Orchestra in 1933 and dedicated to Marjorie Whyte.

Our fourth gala concert not only includes the composition competition winner, Marco Mulwijk,

Marco Mulwijk



but is also a celebration of the orchestra's long history of performing with the Ripley Choir. Marjorie Whyte set up the choir in about 1941: there was a performance of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with a Special Choir "trained by Miss Marjorie Whyte" with the Bromley and Chislehurst Orchestra. By the time of a 1945 *Messiah*, the Ripley Choir name had appeared.

THE RIPLEY CHOIR
Conductor - MARJORIE WHYTE

The Hall of the BOYS' COUNTY SCHOOL, Bromley
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 24th, 1945, at 6 p.m.

THE MESSIAH
HANDEL

MARGARET FIELD-HYDE (*Soprano*)
KATHLEEN FERRIER (*Contralto*)
BRADBRIDGE WHITE (*Tenor*)
HENRY CUMMINGS (*Bass*)

THE RIPLEY CHOIR

THE BROMLEY & CHISLEHURST ORCHESTRA
Leader—VERA CHEESEMAN
At the Piano: DOROTHY WHYTE

Conductor: MARJORIE WHYTE

PROGRAMME - THREEPENCE

Regular concerts followed until the Choir's dissolution in the late 1970s. Since then there has been collaboration with several other choirs, notably for Bromley Festival Chorus in Berlioz' *Requiem* at Biggin Hill in 1990.

So this May we are joined by the BYMT Adult Choir and Sine Nomine to perform Beethoven's monumental *Choral Symphony*.

BSO BROMLEY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Conductor Adrian Brown
Leader Andrew Laing

Centenary Series 1918 - 2018

Saturday 18th May 2019 at 7:45 pm

Centenary Finale

Parry Blest Pair of Sirens

Mulwijk Europa
(The winning work in our Centenary Composers' Competition)

Beethoven Symphony No 9 in D minor (Choral)

with The BYMT Adult Choir and Sine Nomine
Soloists Janice Watson, John Upperton, Tristan Hambleton, Nicola Ihnatowicz

Langley Park Centre for Performing Arts
Langley Park School for Boys
South Eden Park Road
Beckenham
BR3 3BP
Reg Charily No. 1112117

Tickets £16.00, £13.00 & £9.00
(children half price)

Available online at www.bromleysymphony.org/tickets or at the concert

www.bromleysymphony.org

We will continue to provide a mix of well-known and less well-known or even challenging works in our future programmes. We enjoy the large-scale symphonic repertoire but there is a vast number of works out there by familiar and not-so-familiar composers that we have never performed. After all, our charitable objectives are:

"... to advance, improve, develop and maintain public education in, and appreciation of, the art and science of music in all its aspects ... through the presentation of public concerts and recitals."

ORCHESTRAL CHARACTERS

This account so far has naturally focused on the key personalities that formed, led and conducted the Orchestra, particularly those famous figures who helped put BSO on the map. But there was a host of others involved - committee members, stewards, writers of programme notes, and of course, the players. Here are some brief snapshots about just some of the notable characters associated with the Orchestra over the years.

Claire Dillon is the orchestra's longest-serving playing member. She attended Bromley Girls' Grammar School in Nightingale Lane (now Bickley Primary School and La Fontaine Academy). She learned the violin at school with Barbara Strudwick; her piano teacher at school, Joan Moss, played percussion in the orchestra. At Barbara's suggestion, Claire started selling programmes for the concerts in 1960. After a spell at the Orpington Junior Orchestra (run by Joan and Alan Kiss) she joined BSO as a violinist in October 1963 (Marjorie Whyte's memorial concert), along with her fellow schoolstudent, Annette Williams, and Denys Strelling. Her audition was with John Coulling and she remembers being in awe of two "grand old ladies" in particular, violinists Elsie Piggott and Mary Farquharson. Claire's husband Terry audited our accounts from 1974 until very recently.



Grace Follett LRAM was auditioned by Billy Reed in about 1936, and she appears in the earliest programme in the Orchestra's possession (9 December 1937). Grace was taught by Marjorie Whyte and played in the Orchestra for 66 years, she was involved as a committee member in various roles, including Secretary, Treasurer and Librarian. When asked about Adrian

Bromley Symphony Orchestra's Opening Concert of Season



Boult she commented that she found his beat very difficult to follow! She apparently always wore a hat for church concerts (with Ripley Choir). On her retirement from the orchestra in 2002, we played Brahms' *Hungarian Dance* no 6 by way of tribute and she became our President.



Beatrix Batten played double bass in the orchestra for many years between the wars, and her elder sister **Dorothy** the violin. Trixie, an early graduate of Girton College, Cambridge, volunteered for the Red Cross in 1913 and rose to become Area Commandant. She was subsequently awarded the CBE and continued to support the Red Cross during the 2WW. She was a tall, formidable woman, apparently, and was well-known for driving around Chislehurst with her bass strapped to the roof of her Morris traveller!

Marjorie Whyte: we have few first-hand accounts of the orchestra's founding leader and long-time conductor. But her conducting style was described as something like a "windmill". And when Paul Tortellier sought her emotional response to the music in the famous duet with the first violin in

the Dvorak *Cello Concerto*, she was apparently totally unmoved.

Barbara Strudwick

taught the violin at Bromley Girls' Grammar School. She joined the orchestra on 9 December 1937, and her cellist sister Nancy followed in 1941. Their sister Jean taught at St Hilary's in Sevenoaks. Barbara was on the committee for many years and died only recently, aged 98!



Fred Cole was a gentleman in every sense of the word and a fine violinist. He joined BSO on 10 January 1953 and for many years sat at second desk of the First Violins behind the leader. He is recorded in the minutes of one AGM asking that the National Anthem be reintroduced (it having been dropped at some stage by John Coulling) as it was such a good way to warm up at the start of a concert - as well as being patriotic. We think he was related to Barbara (double bass), Valerie (cello) and Mrs WH Cole (violin). For many years Fred sat next to **Denys Strelling**, another fine player. They didn't really get on, but efforts to separate or move them were fiercely resisted!

Stanley Castle met his wife **Margaret** (née Banks) in the Orchestra (we think) and their sons played too (Peter as violin soloist alongside his father in the Bach Double Concerto, John as principal trumpet). Stanley was a talented photographer and we have many of his photos of the orchestra in rehearsal in our archive.

Arthur Howe was the orchestra's chairman from its inception until he retired in 1963, though there are indications he was involved before that in the Patriotic Concerts and other fundraising events earlier than that during the 1WW. When he tried to resign in July 1954 (after 36 years in the role!), Marjorie Whyte persuaded him not to: "as you have been our only Chairman and have steered us so admirably through all the ups and downs of our existence and are held in such esteem and affection by all our members, we do indeed hope that you will consent to remain at the helm for a while longer."

Shirley Griffiths (née Handy) joined the orchestra as a young cello student on 28 October 1950 (Jean Pougnet and Douglas Cameron played the Brahms Double Concerto, with Edric Cundell conducting).

She was joined by her brother **Peter Handy** and his wife to be **Eloise Beeton**. They were later joined, on occasion, by Peter's children, **Thelma, Lionel and James**, the former as soloists too. Their younger sibling, Edward, is a celeste



maker! Shirley's audition was with Barbara Strudwick and Marjorie Whyte at Ripley. She recalls that Edric Cundell was the subject of a big banner advertisement for HMV at the time and so a very familiar face, and that Norman del Mar's beat was so low she could rarely see it! She was very impressed that Denis Matthews brought his own piano for his performance of Beethoven's Emperor Concerto in December 1950!

Shirley's husband **Geoffrey Griffiths** was Treasurer and Chairman at various times; alongside Adrian Brown, he presided over efforts to bring younger string players to the front desks, with strong resistance from some of the older players at the front! He also built the ingenious folding rostrum which Adrian uses every week at rehearsals.

David Griffiths joined the orchestra almost as a matter of course! He was one of the first people to be auditioned by Adrian Brown. He is married to **Helen Griffiths** (née Wood). Helen joined the orchestra in September 1974, the same day as Andrew Condon and one concert before Frank Cottee. Her audition was in Ernest Rainer's gloomy Chislehurst house with John Coulling and Barbara Strudwick – who had invited her to do so, as another Bromley Girls' Grammar School pupil.



Rosemary Coulling is recorded as playing in the orchestra on 25 March 1961; **Pauline del Mar** played regularly between October 1955 and March 1958. Current violinists **Rosie** (née Welch) and **Mark Cousins** met in the Orchestra too. There are several other couples in the orchestra, though they did not meet there, including: **Alice** and **Simon McVeigh**, **Mary** and **Roy Banks**, **Penny** and **Richard Longman**, **Vicky** and **James Dowsett**, and **Peter Bicknell** and **Amanda Stephen**.

Bernard Brook was our leader between 1989 and 2012, having joined the orchestra in May 1981. **Ruth Brook** (née Parr) was a member of the orchestra between 1970 and 1974, leaving to teach yoga on Monday evenings, alongside her various violin teaching and accompanying commitments. She accompanied Bernard in his audition for Adrian Brown in the Elgar Concerto, and rejoined the orchestra herself in 1984.



Myfanwy Tripp was a large woman with a booming voice and was an accomplished composer. She could play complete orchestral bass parts from memory, and did so on the cello, which was slightly unnerving for whoever sat next to her. Her most famous moment came in about 1970: during an afternoon rehearsal on the day of the concert, she, plus cello, fell off the stage at Ravensbourne. Somehow she twisted in the air (like a cat) and landed on her back holding the cello aloft. "Is the cello alright?" was the universal cry from her sensitive fellow musicians!

Dr Ernest Rainer was an ENT specialist. He had performed a very painful ear syringe on David Griffiths and, on seeing him at a rehearsal while still very young, David hid under a chair! Ernest did his stint as chairman too. He had an unnerving habit of suddenly standing up during the music and wandering over to the front

desk to check a bowing - but thankfully not during a performance.

Barbara Amor-Wright and **Doris Vosper** sat together on the front desk of the cellos for many years until the early 1980s. Sadly, as their eyesight deteriorated, each had their individual stand which meant everything stopped when they turned the pages!

Jim Turner (oboe) was a quiet man. But on one occasion at Ripley, people did turns. Jim turned up with a guitar and sang a number of delightful comic songs – everyone was amazed!

The first concert **Malcolm Smith** ever attended was by the BSO. He was to become a key personality in the musical life of the country as a long-term manager

of Boosey & Hawkes Hire Library, someone on whom both lowly amateur and lofty opera house might rely for putting the right parts on the music stands. He was a champion of British music and persuaded Boosey and Hawkes to take on Payne's elaboration of Elgar's sketches for the 3rd symphony which the BSO performed in 2006. He was a larger than life character, surrounded by friends in the pub after our concerts, with his ever present pipe.



For the many years when the orchestra consisted of strings plus professional wind brought in on concert



day, **Laurence Gerrish** used to play the wind parts on the piano. He did this from the score, transposing individual lines on sight. He also wrote the programme notes for many years, manually typewritten with “old-fashioned” punctuation. He was a quiet, kind and gracious intellectual. He and his wife used to cycle everywhere – he had a trailer on his bicycle, usually full of music! Other writers of music notes in the past include: **F Gilbert Webb**, **Rosa Newmarch** and **Eric Blom** before the 2WW and **Cynthia Cox** afterwards.

David Griffiths recalls three very dear people in the violas – **Donald Wheeler**, **Jennet Campbell** and **Beryl Morreau**. Donald was the sweetest man, made a lovely sound, couldn't count to save his life and always got the bowings wrong. He sat next to Jennet who was a fiercely intelligent Welsh woman and a stickler for correct bowings. When David joined the orchestra Beryl said she only stayed on to sit next to David so they could both cause trouble. On the rare occasion Jennet herself made a bowing error, Beryl would poke her in the ribs!

Frank Cottee is our longest-serving non-string player: he joined the orchestra in December 1974 at the invitation of the then first horn, John Redfern, at the time that we were still building up a home-grown wind and brass section after many years of LSO imports on



concert days. (Jim subsequently emigrated to Australia but Frank thinks this is unconnected with his arrival in the Orchestra!) He served on the committee with Ernest Rainer when Adrian Brown was appointed. He particularly remembers David Parkhouse's stunning performance of the Brahms *Second Concerto* (May 1986), and the vast forces and audience for Berlioz' *Requiem* at Biggin Hill (March 1990) bringing traffic to a halt!

Emma Johnson was a pupil at Newstead Wood School and was principal clarinet played in the BSO in the early 1980s. She won the BBC Young Musician of the Year Competition in 1984 and returned to play Spohr, Crussell and Mozart concertos in subsequent years.

We also know that we have relied over the years on many non-playing supporters. These include the stewards – such as **Terence Smith** and **Barrington Pearce**. And then there were those who assisted with concert seating (**Miss K Jarman**), or more recently our concert managers (**Helen Connell**, **Colin Barrett**, **Neil Selby**). And there was on occasion a programme steward (**Mary Hanson**, **Miss J Barnes**). We owe much to these unsung and little known stalwarts, without whom our concerts could simply not take place.

But there are so many others about whom we know so little. Who for example were: The Lady Davies, Captain G Liddell, Colonel JL Morton, Miss E and Miss C Poole Smith, Mr and Mrs Cecil Roos? Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a one-line biography of every member of the orchestra since its inception, particularly the female string players who formed the nucleus of the original Bromley and Chislehurst Orchestra?



LEADERS

Marjorie Whyte leader 1919 - 1963

Marjorie was the eldest of four daughters to Robert and Margaret Whyte, themselves both accomplished cellists and musicians, who lived at Ripley. With her sister Jessie, Marjorie was sent to study in Berlin at a time when Joachim's influence dominated the musical life of the city. There they met Boult and forged a lifelong friendship that was to benefit BSO so greatly. It was her influence and enthusiasm – and probably financial support – that enabled the orchestra to carry on after Gwynne Kimpton's departure, to thrive under Billy Reed and through the 2WW, and to persuade a young Norman del Mar to become its conductor in 1950.



Stanley Castle leader 1963 - 1989

Stanley was born in Romford and started learning the violin at the age of nine. After National Service in the RAF he studied at the RCM with Henry Holst and, on leaving, joined the City of Birmingham Orchestra. In 1956 he moved to the first violin section of the LSO. He became BSO leader in 1963 and retired at the end of the 1988/89 season. He was also a very talented amateur photographer.



Other guest or occasional leaders include:

Vera Cheeseman

Nancy Phillips

Ronald Good

Ruth Newton

David Measham

Peter Hall

Sylvia Cornish

David Burton

Clare Wibberley

Bernard Brook leader 1989 - 2012

Introduced to the violin by his father, Bernard is a product of the School Instrument Training system, which used to be available to all. He studied at the Blackheath Conservatoire under Bob Hewitt and latterly with Reginald Morley. He was leader for 23 seasons from October 1989 until May 2012. During this time he played the solo part in many orchestral works including Strauss' *Ein Heldenleben*, Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty*, Vaughan Williams' *Job, a mask for dancing*, and Rimsky Korsakov's *Scheherazade*. He also appeared as soloist in Prokofiev's *Second Violin Concerto*, the Bliss *Violin Concerto*, Vaughan Williams' *Lark Ascending*, Berlioz' *Träumerei und caprice* and the Khachaturian *Violin Concerto*. Bernard also regularly performs with the Bromley Symphony Players, which he directs, and was also the leader for many years of the Militaire Orchestra, which performs at prestigious venues such as the Mansion House, Guildhall and various Livery Companies in the City of London.



Andy Laing leader from 2012

Andy was born in Aberdeen. He started learning the violin when he was five years old and by the age of sixteen was appointed leader of the National String Orchestra of Scotland. He studied at the Royal Academy of Music with David Martin and later with Frederick Grinke (soloist in several appearances with BSO between 1948 and 1958). Andy won numerous prizes and scholarships at the RAM and while still a student was appointed leader of the Morley College Symphony Orchestra, as well as regularly leading the Ealing Symphony Orchestra, the Hatfield Philharmonic and the Forest Philharmonic.

At the RAM Andy formed and led the Locrian String Quartet under the guidance of Sidney Griller. The Quartet was appointed 'Quartet in Residence' at the University of Hertfordshire, broadcast on BBC radio and TV and gave numerous first performances of works by composers such as Nyman, Crosse and Panufnik.

After leaving the Locrian Quartet, Andy was appointed sub-leader of the BBC Radio Orchestra, then Leader of the London City Ballet Orchestra. In the 1990s, Andy spent much time on stage at



the Royal Shakespeare Company, where he met his wife, Rachel (also a professional violinist, and daughter of violinist Jurgen Hess.) They now have two teenage sons, Peter and Calum, both of whom play violin. Andy is a keen amateur astronomer!



SOLOISTS 1918-2018

This is a list of all the soloists we know have performed with the orchestra since its inception - from the great virtuosi of the day, and young players embarking on their careers, to various members of the orchestra who on occasion have stepped into the limelight.

Joyce Ackroyd
Alex Afia
John Anderson
Victoria Anderson
William Armon
Betty Artis
Bertram Ayrton
Isobel Baillie
George Baker
Mary Banks *
Roy Banks *
Betty Bannerman
May Bartlett
Ethel Bartlett
Hugh Bean *
Mathieu van Bellen
Daniel Benn *
Burak Besir
Anna-Liisa Bezrodny
John Bigg
John Bingham
Malcolm Binns
Carey Blyton
Grace Bodie
Catherine Borner *
Kenneth Bowen
Dennis Brain *
Owen Brannigan
Dorothea Braus
Ronald Bristol
Alan Brittain

Bernard Brook *
John Brown
Iona Brown
Jack Brymer
Martin Bunce *
Christopher Bunting
Robert Burton
David Butt
Douglas Cameron
April Cantelo
John Case Carol
Peter Castle
Stanley Castle
Alan Civil
Harold Clarke
Julia Cload
Raymond Cohen
Judith Coleman
Susan Cook
John Coulling
Arthur Cranmer
Philip Cranmer
Joan Cross
Lamar Crowson
Eileen Croxford
Diana Cummings
Clifford Curzon
Maria Czyrek
Jelly D'Arányi
Sheida Davis
Ivey Dickson

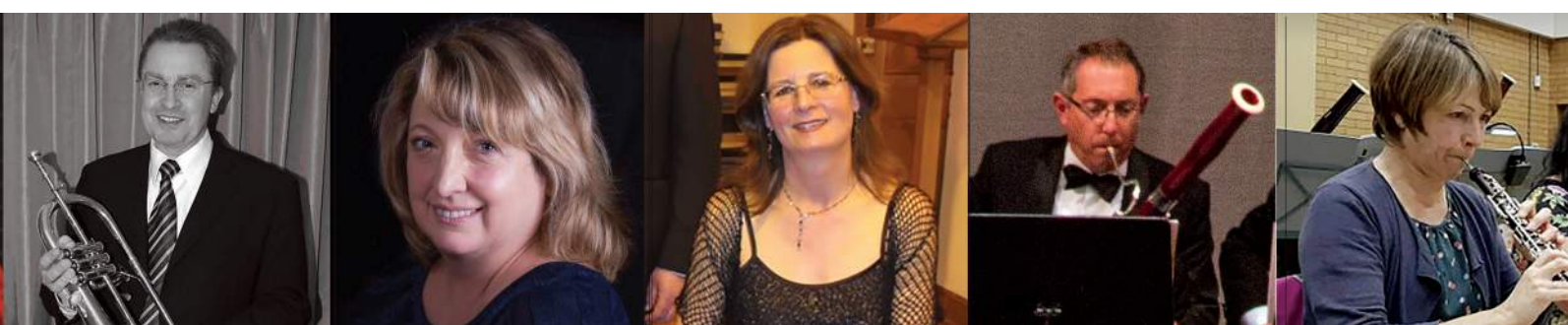
Schlomy Dobrinsky
Lance Dossor
Simon Duggan
Noel Eadie
Mark Eager
Iso Elinson
Natasha Elvin
George Eskdale
Keith Falkner
Kathleen Ferrier *
Emanuel Feuermann
Christopher Field
Eileen Field
Margaret Field-Hyde
Matthew Fletcher
Sylvia Follet
Liza Fuchsova
Stephen Fuller *
David Galliver
John Georgiadis
Laurence Gerrish
Oliver Gibbs
Barbara Gill
Tracey Golding
Anthony Goldstone
Katharine Goodson
Leon Goossens
Sidonie Goossens
Christine Gough
Janice Graham
Eric Greene
Olwen Griffin
Frederick Grinke
Sara Grint
Edward Grint
Eric Gritton
Erich Gruenberg

Arthur Grumiaux
Jan van der Gucht
Hale Hambleton
Tristan Hambleton
Michal Hambourg
Emilien Hamel
Thelma Handy
Lionel Handy
Jane Hanna
Edith Hanson
Eric Harrison
Mary Harrison
Caroline Harrison
Keith Harvey
Thomas Hemsley
Alfred Hepworth
William Herbert
Myra Hess *
Roy Hickman
Philip Hill
Ralph Holmes
Gwen Honeychurch
Colin Honour
Colin Horsley
Leslie Howard
Martin Hughes
Katherine Hunka
John Hunt
Gordon Hunt
Nigel Hutchison
Clare Ibbott
Thomas Igloi
Nicola Ihnatowicz
Niel Immelman
Jack Irons
Garfield Jackson
Gerald Jackson





Ifor James	Lorraine McAslan	Stephen de Pledge	Roger Stalman
Mary Jarred	Nicholas McCarthy	Anthony Pleeth	Guilhelmina Suggia
Chris Jeffrey	Oskar McCarthy	William Pleeth	Masa Tayama
Philip Jenkins	John McCaw	Peter Poole	Patricia Taylor
Raymond Jeremy	Andrew McGhee	Ross Pople	Christine Teare
Dominic Jewel	Donald McIntyre	Jean Pougnet	Lionel Tertis
Emma Johnson	Alice McVeigh *	Karen van Poznak	Michael Thompson
David Jones Neil	Laurence Meikle	Arthur Reckless	Jeanine Thorpe
Gillian Jones	Clarissa Melville	Paul Redpath	Christopher Timothy
David Jones Andrew	Mewton-Wood	William H Reed	Martion Tiramo
Scott Joynt	Nina Milkina	Franz Reizenstein	Paul Tortellier *
Peter Katin	Ena Mitchell	Tracey Renwick *	Joan Trimble
Alexander Kelly	Johnny Morris	Margaret Ritchie	Valerie Trimble
James Kirby	Gareth Morris	Rae Robertson	Oliver Tunstall
Margaret Kitchen	Viola Morris	Massimo Roman	Robin Tweddle
Alexander Kok	David Mottley	Philip Rowson	John Tye
Maria Korchinska	Simon Mulligan	Sasha Rozhdestvensky	John Upperton
Maxine Kwok	Elizabeth Mynett	Roy Russell	Elizabeth Vaughan
Laffitte	John Nash Heddle	Albert Sammons	John Voss
Andy Laing *	Yfrah Neaman	Laura Samuel	Penelope Walker
Ian Lake	Norman Nelson	Harold Samuel	Peter Wallfisch
Maureen Lehane	Lilian Newman	Malmfrid Sand	Jamie Walton
Bryan Lester	Celia Nicklin	Rohan de Saram	David Ward
John Lill *	Phyllis Norman-Parker	Ulrika Schaeffer	Janice Watson *
C Thornton Lofthouse	William Overton	Irene Scharrer	Richard Watkins *
Robert Long	Lucy Parham	Alan Schiller	Andrew Watkinson
Kathleen Long	Manoug Parikian	Elizabeth Scora	Moray Welsh
Alan Loveday	David Parkhouse	Margaretta Scott	Nellie White
Iris Loveridge	William Parsons	Phyllis Sellick	Stephen Whittaker
Moura Lympany	Anne Pashley	Howard Shelley	Marjorie Whyte *
Geoffrey Lynn	Peter Pears	Kenneth Sillito	Dorothy Whyte
Hilary Macnamara	Anthony Peebles	Paul Silverthorne	Frank Wibaut
Alexander Main-Ian	Karl Pendlebury	Callum Smart	Sarah Williamson
Angela Malmsbury	Eurico Pereira	Jan Smeterlin	Clare Wilson
Peter Manning	Melissa Phelps	Krzysztof Smietana	Anne Wood
Caroline Marwood *	Anthony Pini	Shirley Smith	Sophie Wyss
Denis Matthews	Alison Pink	Alexander Soares	Yu Yasuroaka
		Cyril Somers	* Pictured



CONDUCTORS

The Orchestra has had essentially just six conductors - the founder and musical suffragette, Gwynne Kimpton, Elgar's friend, WH Reed, the indefatigable Marjorie Whyte, Norman del Mar early in his conducting career, John Coulling and Adrian Brown. In between times, there was a host of guest conductors: Sir Adrian Boult the most eminent and prominent. The following is a list of all those conductors of the orchestra that we know about. There are references to Malcolm Sargent and Henry Wood too, but we have no evidence they ever accepted invitations to Bromley.

Carey Blyton

Adrian Boult

Adrian Brown

P Colliss

Gerry Cornelius

John Coulling

Edric Cundell

George Dyson

Mark Fitz-Gerald

Christopher le Fleming

Percy Hull

Reginald Jacques

Gwynne Kimpton

Norman del Mar

Jonathan del Mar

Simon McVeigh

Clarence Raybould

W H Reed

Ernest Tomlinson

Sydney Watson

Marjorie Whyte

COMMITTEE OFFICERS

Presidents

Sir Thomas Dewey Bart JP
Mayor of Bromley

Rt Hon Harold
Macmillan MP

Marjorie Whyte

Dorothy Whyte

Arthur J Howe

Lady Ackroyd

JCH Twallin

SJ Follett

Grace Follett

Anthony Payne

Chairmen

Arthur J Howe

Edward Harding

John Shuttleworth

JCH Twallin

Ernest Rainer

Geoffrey Griffiths

Pauline Ross-Martyn

Andrew Condon

Stephen Fuller

Mike Ibbott

Roy Banks

Helen Griffiths

Paul Jenner

Hon Secretary

Beatrice Fowle

Muriel Pole

Mrs Todd

Eleanor Bruce

Olive Campling

Keith Campbell

James W Mills

David Moss

Howard Aston

Grace Follett

Sylvia Cornish

Pauline Ross-Martyn

Geoffrey Griffiths

Philip Starr

Phillipa Regan (née
Gibson)

Ruth Brook

Helen Connell

Paul Jenner

Sarah Norman

Treasurer

WH Paton

C Bertram Price

CG Young

JCH Twallin

Col George Warden

Geoffrey Griffiths

Gerard Kelly

Phil McKerracher

David Rodker

CONCLUSION

Looking forward to the next 100 years

We in the Orchestra today have inherited this wonderful legacy from those many local musicians who came before us. The key figures - Kimpton, Reed and Whyte in particular - put Bromley on the map. Boult commented that "a long succession of well-known artists ... have delighted to come to Bromley to enjoy the splendidly serious musical enthusiasm of everyone concerned with the concerts...". For Norman del Mar it was "true music making in its finest sense, and a real pleasure". John Coulling and Adrian Brown have upheld this splendid tradition: long may it continue.

The Orchestra has sometimes struggled to find a suitable venue for its concerts, particularly as the repertoire has expanded to the full panoply of 20th century symphonic output. This is nothing new: it dates back to the loss of Bromley Central Hall in 1942 and the occasional use of venues other than

Ravensbourne School – including the Churchill Theatre, Stockwell College (later the Civic Centre), and Bromley High School for Girls. But the opening of the Park Langley Centre for the Performing Arts in 2012 has provided the Orchestra – and others, such as the Bromley Youth Music Trust – with a high-quality venue that has a suitable acoustic and lighting, enables everyone in the audience to see the whole orchestra, and has the necessary back-stage spaces to accommodate soloists, the conductor and orchestral performers.

This short history has merely skimmed the surface of events and personalities, of good times and bad. Our archive is sparse, particularly from the very early years, and more research needs to be done.

What is clear, though, is that the musical enthusiasm is undimmed and we will be making and performing music for many years to come.



Langley Park Auditorium

Allegro con brio.

A FINAL NOTE

This short booklet sets out some of what we know about the Orchestra's history. But our archive is far from complete and the narrative necessarily skips over the breaks in order to present a clear timeline: the reality must have been very different. The reliance on hired wind and brass in the early years put a great strain on orchestral finances, a perennial topic of committee deliberations to this day. And a perusal of the minutes from committee meetings in the 1960s and 1970s shows the same discussions about humdrum organisational tasks behind the scenes, programme choice, problems with the availability of venues, and fundraising.

Dozens of musicians have appeared with the Orchestra in the last 100 years. We know something about some of them, but many listed in our older programmes live on in name only. We aim to put our archive online in the hope that our loyal

audience and local historians can begin to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge.

I am indebted to the many orchestral colleagues and others who have assisted in putting together this account. I could not mention everyone who has contributed to the life of the orchestra and apologise now for the many names that go unremarked; by sharing our archive we hope, perhaps, to put that right.

If you have any snippet of information you think might be of interest or any old programmes, do please contact any member of the orchestra or send an email to: history@bromleysymphony.org. Only last year we obtained a decade's worth of programmes from the 1950s from the estate of a couple of sisters who clearly enjoyed their local concert-going in the immediate post-war years!

Mike Ibbott

Researched and written by Mike Ibbott

Design by Judy Brown

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9th May 1987 Ravensbourne



19th May 2018 Langley Park