



AGS News

5 Summer 2005



Welcome to the latest edition of AGS News, the forum of The Armstrong Gibbs Society, which covers events, people, and music.

AGM **May** **2005**

Pewter Trophy

The Society was delighted to receive a magnificent trophy from the Gibbs family for presentation at the very first Gibbs class in the annual Chelmsford Competitive Festival of Music and Drama. It is hoped that the inauguration of the class will lead to wider performance of the composer's music.



From the records

Gibbs writes to his daughter, Ann in October 1955

'Mother and I and the Brig. (Brigadier Hawkes – often called Hawkie – a good friend living in Danbury) went up to the RAM and there met Adrian and some 150 teachers who are going to teach my big choral work 'The High Adventure'* to their choirs. We played the work over on the pianos and discussed the tempi and other points. Everyone was amazingly enthusiastic. The great performance (choir of 1000 and orchestra of 150) is in the Albert Hall early next May.'

* The High Adventure – A cantata for mixed chorus and orchestra Opus 136, composed 1955 with words by Benedict Ellis.

The Editor has had a number of enquiries regarding a recording of this work from those who have fond memories of taking part in this particular performance.

CAG Soundbites

"To my ears this stuff is plain ugly. Tell me, do you think it's ugly, or is it that I'm too old-fashioned to hear the beauty in it which you hear?"

An extract from Gibbs unpublished autobiography in which he speaks to a student at the RCM who has just submitted some compositions. The student actually agrees with Gibbs, saying, 'Of course it's ugly. We live in an ugly world and I'm a realist.'



NEWS AND VIEWS

Electronic Catalogue

The Society was very pleased to take up the kind offer, made by Michael Pilkington (author of British Solo Song) at the AGM, to compile an electronic catalogue of Gibbs' complete works. The executive committee would like to thank Michael for his continuing work on the project.

Chelmsford Competitive Festival of Music and Drama

The first Gibbs class is to take place this year at the Chelmsford Competitive Festival of Music and Drama, to be held in November 2005. Entrants are asked to perform one song by Armstrong Gibbs and another by one of his contemporaries. For details please contact:

**The Honorary Secretary, Mrs P Carey,
156 Maldon Road,
Great Baddow
Chelmsford
CM2 7DQ**

From the records

Honor Gibbs writes to her daughter, November 1949

Dad has been sunk fathoms deep in composition lately and has produced a set of De La Mare for female voices that he thinks is the best stuff he has done for years if ever.* Result – Friday night Ernie Roast on the phone “we wonder if the doctor is coming to the cricket meeting” – and off he went in a cloud of dust.

Saturday – 10.30 a voice on the phone: “Mrs Forsyth speaking from the Odeon – I have 300 school children who have been waiting since 9.30 for Dr Gibbs to come and adjudicate their carol singing in connection with the eastern area portion of the competition organised by the Star”- and off he went in a cloud of dust; got there in 15 minutes, did the job by 12.30 to such an effect that they asked him to judge the all area finals in London on December 29th when the finalists will be given a Christmas dinner and taken to the circus afterwards. No expenses spared. 17 guineas + hotel and expenses for 2 hours work! Dad has accepted for the lunch but not the circus”.

*In a Dream’s beguiling - Suite of songs by De La Mare written for mezzo-soprano solo (or semi-chorus), women’s choir (SSA) string orchestra and piano. Published by Boosey and Hawkes in 1951.

In the same letter Honor Gibbs continues:

“ ... dear Walter de la Mare spoke of her (granddaughter aged 8 months) in a letter and got a bit mixed with her age – saying 'Do you think she might be allowed to come and have tea with me quite by herself?’ “



Memory Lane

Rachel Firman, a former organist at Danbury Parish Church, remembers Armstrong Gibbs.

'I remember Dr Gibbs driving to and fro from church with his wife, + for village concerts, in a very large (in those days ('50s) silver car – make unknown to me! He made an impressive figure, with his height, wearing his academic gown of scarlet + white fur trimmings, processing in the church on special occasions!'



Subscriptions

If you have not yet paid your subscription for this year (January to December 2006) The Treasurer, Douglas Potter, would be very pleased to receive a cheque for £10 from you.

Kindly make cheques payable to:
The Armstrong Gibbs Society, and send them to:

Douglas Potter,
'Goulburn'
Hay Green
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*See Next Issue for **CAG Soundbites, Memory Lane, and your News and Views.** Please send contributions – **BY END OF OCTOBER PLEASE** – to The Editor, Angela Aries, 16, Runsell Close, Danbury, CM3 4PQ, or by FAX (01245225452 or e-mail (angela.aries@btinternet.com)).*