



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

Gibbs Concert Highlights of 2006

The Essex Chamber Orchestra gave a performance of the third symphony of Armstrong Gibbs, *the Westmorland* at a concert in Felsted on 2nd April.

Echoes of Essex, a concert held in Chelmsford Cathedral on 14th May as part of the Chelmsford Cathedral Festival featured music by Essex composers. Music by Armstrong Gibbs comprised three of the four preludes for piano, an extract from the String quartet in A and three of his solo songs.

Creative Explorations (2)

by David Rust

I decided to see recently if I could connect in a more deliberate way with both poet and composer. I gathered together paper, coloured pens and pastels, and chose one of Armstrong's songs, a setting of de la Mare's *The Bells* on the CD *English Song*, released by Naxos.

First I prayed that the Spirit of the Living God would open up my spirit and join with my creativity to express visually something of the heart of the words and music. I listened to the song a couple of times, and then just let my hands move freely across the paper, letting colour express mood, line express feeling. Then I played it over and over, maybe for ten times or more, and let the power of the song etch itself deeply into my consciousness, allowing forgotten memories to rise to the surface. I found myself building up a picture of the clanging bells, the ploughman with his team of horses, children playing under distant trees, and reverberating sound waves merging into long furrow lines and echoing out towards the night stars. It was not by any means an accomplished piece of art, and yet I felt deeply

satisfied, perhaps because, even in this small exercise I had employed a range of different senses and faculties. I had made connections between mind, emotion, will and spirit; between conscious memory, dreams and the subconscious; between words and music combined by art; between my past, my present and my future; between the tiny details of our routine existence and the infinite majesty of the universe. It had become a form of worship. I experienced a sense of wholeness and shalom.

Armstrong's interpretation of de la Mare's words seemed to me to be just perfect. Somehow, too, he had helped me to go beyond the role of just passive listener, rushing from one emotion to another as we so often do in our media-frenzied modern lives, without giving time to digest and reflect. He had helped me to become an active participator in the creative process, exploring my own feelings in a 'Quest for another, richer self, and another, essential reality'. Thank you, Danpy.



From the records

Honor Gibbs writes to her daughter, Ann, about a visit to Walter de la Mare - 1952/3

... Most of important of all was our visit to Walter de la Mare on Tuesday at Richmond ... We got there at 4 o'clock. We found him in a lovely old house called South End House, almost on the river. Very Georgian and very de la Marish. He lives there with a housekeeper /nurse as he has a bad heart. He was just as ever and greeted me with - 'Honor, you look 3 months and a week younger than when I saw you last'. We had a superb tea all home made by the housekeeper, a charming person ... We had quite a merry evening, for Wr. De la Mare asked us to stay to supper and took us out to a little Italian restaurant where we had a jolly good dinner and much laughter. Jack noticed that his usual waiter was absent and asked after him and was told he was in hospital. 'Oh,

I'm sorry, what is the matter with him?' 'Well' said the waiter confidentially, 'It's 'is 'eart, liver and kidneys – in fact as you might say it's a mixed grill complaint'. We got home about 11o'clock.



CAG Soundbites

"I can praise you for one thing. You certainly caught the spirit all right, and not much soda with it either!"

An extract from Gibbs unpublished autobiography in which he describes his adjudication of an all male choir at a county festival in the south of England. Unbeknown to Gibbs, the choir had been on a pub crawl during the lunch break and the Vicar had had great difficulty in rounding them up for the afternoon performance. The adjudication provoked a hurt letter from the vicar, but he was somewhat mollified when Gibbs explained that his praise, as well as his criticism of the choir's technical faults, had been entirely ingenuous.



NEWS AND VIEWS

Electronic Catalogue

The Society is delighted with the excellent electronic catalogue of Gibbs' complete works, compiled by Michael Pilkington (author of British Solo Song). He is currently refining it, and exploring any possible anomalies. His fellow members on the executive committee would like to thank Michael for his continuing work on the project.

For more information contact the secretary, Angela Aries (see below).

Chelmsford Competitive Festival of Music and Drama

The second successful Gibbs class took place in November 2006. Entrants were asked to perform one song by Armstrong Gibbs and another by one of his contemporaries.

The London Piano Trio CD

The recording of Gibbs' trios by the London Piano Trio will be available following an official launch in May 2007.

AGM 2007

This will take place on Saturday 19th May at 11.00a.m. in the Meeting Room at Danbury Parish Church.

From the records

Honor Gibbs writes to her daughter, November 1952

... 5.45 Tuesday – Gosh what a hectic time. There were 350 guests at the Trocadero. The dinner was given by the Incorporated Society of Musicians to Vaughan Williams in honour of his 80th birthday - and all the musical world & his wife were there and over 200 had been turned away.

... We weren't at the high table but at quite a lofty one with Arthur Bliss, Rubbra and other shining ones. 'Me black' did its best and Dad is always sweet and says I look nice that I feel it makes me look my best ...

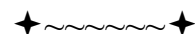
... VW made an excellent speech – his notes propped up by chrysanthemums and his ear trumpet handy. He advised the young composers, 'by whom I mean anyone younger than me' to speak their own language & not write Wagner & watch or search the wastepaper baskets of Debussy.

...

... this is what I always consider Daddy has done & does, which is good I felt proud to see him greeted & acclaimed by so many of the great – and it has done him a lot of good and made him feel he is someone among those who count musically...

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... After the speeches by Herbert Howells as President, VW in reply, Sir Ronald Storrs and Sir George Dyson it was nearly 11 & the entertainer got a bit pushed out



Subscriptions

Subscription are currently due for this year (January to December 2007) If you do not pay by direct debit, Douglas Potter, the treasurer, 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:

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See Next Issue for **CAG Soundbites**, **From the Records**, **Memory Lane**, and **News and Views**. Please send contributions to the editor:

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