



The Eric Thiman Singers of Caterham School singing at Southwell Minster

The Eric Thiman Collection Newsletter No 15

This is the fifteenth Newsletter detailing the progress of the Eric Thiman Collection. If you know anyone else who would like to be included in emailing/ mailing list, please send their details to Guy Turner (contact details at the end of the newsletter). Thank you.

THE ERIC THIMAN COLLECTION

Patrons

*Professor Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, CBE, Principal, The Royal Academy of Music
The Revd. Ian Howarth, Retired Chair of the Methodist Church, Birmingham District*

*Frances Thimann, Eric Thiman's Niece
Paul Hale, Rector Chori Emeritus, Southwell Minster
Guy Turner, Archivist*

THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY RECITAL

As we celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Eric Thiman Collection, we were pleased to welcome the Eric Thiman Singers, the Junior Choir of Caterham School, to give a lunchtime recital of Thiman's music at Southwell Minster on October 11th. The choir sang the following pieces:

*I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud
The Little Flowers
The Path to the Moon
Evening in the Birchpath
The Swans
The Man in the Moon
Traveller's Song
Madonna and Child*

Solo singers performed *Where Go the Boats?* and *I Love All Graceful Things*, and *Flood time* was performed on the piano.

It was a pleasure to welcome and to hear such talented young musicians.

There are still some copies available of the CD featuring the Eric Thiman Singers available. See below.

OUR PATRONS

We are sad to report the death, on 14th July, of our Patron, The Very Revd Dr John Moses. John had been a supporter of the collection since its inception. Formerly Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, he retired to Southwell in 2006. He will be much missed.

You can read his Church Times Obituary here:

<https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2024/16-august/gazette/obituaries/obituary-the-very-revd-dr-john-moses>

Another of our Patrons, the Very Reverend Nicola Sullivan, has retired and will shortly be moving to the West Country. We thank her for her support, and wish her and Terry well for the future.

PERFORMANCE OF THE PIANO SONATA

Karen Romer, Thiman's niece, has kindly provided this report of a further performance of the recently discovered Piano Sonata

On May 16, in Providence, Rhode Island, we held a house concert for friends and music lovers to hear Eric Thiman's piano sonata performed. Andrei Baumann, an outstanding pianist with a reputation on both the east and west coasts of the United States, was the pianist.

Written in 1922, when Eric was 22, the sonata has the scope and vision of a gifted young man with the confidence of youth in his capacities, as he stands at the brink of his career.

At 22, Eric had come through difficult years. When he was 11, his father, a congregational minister, had died, leaving his mother with four sons without income. She started what became a resident school for girls from Europe, sent by their parents to learn English, and was able to send her sons to a boarding school that gave scholarships to the sons of ministers. This was fortuitous: the school had an organ, and Eric soon became the school organist, recruiting his younger brother Kenneth to manage the bellows. Between them they cared for the organ and resolved problems, and exploited the rich possibilities of the organ for inspiration and camaraderie away from home.

Their older brother, Ralph, an emerging scientist, was also at the school, and was something of a substitute father and mentor. Then in the last year of the war Ralph was killed in France, leaving his brothers bereft. Eric was then 17. Five years later, when he wrote the piano sonata, he had finished his collegiate education, and apparently been recognized, so that he could believe in and aspire to his own future in a way that might not have been possible in the decade of his teens.

At our house concert, Baumann began the program with an improvisation of his own, and then went on to a totally elegant performance of Haydn's Piano Sonata in D Major, Hob.

XVI:42, before moving to the piece de resistance. Before he began, he took a few moments to introduce us to the structure and play the key themes. He also shared that he had not immediately liked it, but that it had grown on him as he mastered it, and that he totally loved the second theme. He noted that the work was challenging for the piano, and that when he learned that Eric was an organist, he recognized that the sonata embodied the power and scale of an organ work.

The performance was outstanding, highlighting contrasts, dramatic tension, and melodic variations. In the conversations that followed, many in the audience were eager to learn more about the composer; and for those who were not already acquainted with the pianist, eager to learn more about him and his career.

<https://www.andreibaumann.com/> <https://www.fandmusic.com/?product=FM245>

THIMAN ON WIKIPEDIA

We were very pleased to discover recently that the Wikipedia article on Thiman has been extensively updated and expanded. The rules of Wikipedia prohibit those with a vested interest (such as the Thiman Collection in this case) from writing or updating entries, so it is good to discover that someone else has so much trouble to do so.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eric_Thiman

Of particular interest were the reference given to entries in the Radio Times, noting broadcasts of Thiman's music:

9th September 1935 – Sidney Hall, Violin accompanied by Thiman: **Violin Sonata**. We know the sonata was written for Hall in 1934, but we have no copy in the collection – this is probably the most substantial piece missing from the collection.

6th January 1938 – The Bronkhurst Trio (piano, violin, cello): **Two English Dances** and the **Miniature Trio**. The two dances are also pieces of which we have yet to find a copy.

8th December 1940 – The BBC Orchestra, conductor Clarence Raybould: **Variations on a Theme of Elgar** (string orchestra). Sharing a programme with the music of Rimsky-Korsakov and Liszt.

1st January 1942 – BBC Singers, conductor Leslie Woodgate: **Songs of Travel**

Although we know Thiman struggled to get his work broadcast, it is pleasing to see that he did get some exposure.

THE ERIC THIMAN FUND AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

Thiman's widow Madeline left the ongoing Thiman royalties to the Royal Academy of Music. From these they make awards to support students.

Recently the fund has supported flautist Alexia Pasquariello, who has been mentioned in previous newsletters. You can see her performing at the Savile Club here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wTapPuevy4>

Alexia writes:

This academic year has been full of chamber music projects including one focused on works by Damase, coached by Anna Noakes. This was my first encounter with contemporary chamber music, and it has lit a passion inside of me.

I am honoured to have had lots of recitals in venues such as St. James' Piccadilly, Cadogan Hall, St. James' Sussex Gardens and at the Academy itself. These have reminded me of the joy of being a solo performer, as in previous years I have mainly focused on enriching my orchestral repertoire.

This year's orchestral performances featured works such as Daphnis and Chloe by Ravel and Petrushka and Pulcinella by Stravinsky which were both challenging but rewarding to perform.

I have always dreamt of being a successful musician and conveying strong emotions through my performances. This award has enabled me to start a professional journey I would not have been able to start in my home country of Romania. Without your support, I would not be able to cope with all the expenses required to live and study in London. I am forever grateful to you for giving me this chance.

This award helps me to be the best version of myself. I believe music is a universal language that inspires people and brings them together. Through my music, I am able to convey my feelings, thoughts and emotions to the public and set my creativity free. As I come to the final stages of my undergraduate course, I look forward to starting a master's course and continuing my chamber music collaborations, my orchestral engagements and constantly seeking solo performance opportunities. Thank you for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime!

Masters Piano Accompaniment student, Jiayi Huang, has been selected to be associated with the Eric Thiman Fund Award for this current academic year. Originally from China, Jiayi Huang studied at the Capital Normal University in Beijing, where she was awarded a Bachelor's degree. She has won numerous prizes for her piano playing, including first prize in the Global Association of Music Educators' Teen Artist training programme, first prize in the Xiamen Music Season's International Piano Competition, and second prize in the Singapore International Piano Competition.

SCULPTURE AT THE RAM



Amongst the documents recently supplied by Frances Thimann, was a Royal Academy of Music Magazine for Autumn 1982, including an obituary for Madeline Thiman, which stated: *Madeline was very keen for Eric's name to be remembered at the RAM, and this is why she donated in his memory Dennis Mitchell's abstract bronze **Bryher**, which now stands at the base of the main staircase*

Bryher still has pride of place at the bottom of the main staircase and 'is very much a talking point to many people who visit the Academy.'



Denis Mitchell (1912 – 1993) , for several years Barnbara Hepworth's assistant, was a Cornwall-based abstract sculptor. *Bryher* is one of the Scilly Isles. This piece was made in 1977.

THE CITY TEMPLE ORGAN MOVE TO CHICAGO



The process of restoring Thiman's organ from the City Temple continues in the workshops in Chicago, prior to its installation in St James Cathedral. Here are some photos of the restoration and re-leathering of the note pneumatics supplied by Stephen Buzzard, Director of Music at St James.



SHORT TALK BY PHILIP BRUNELLE

You may be interested to watch this short talk about Thiman by Philip Brunelle of Plymouth Congregational Church in Minneapolis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ygPSrBV6spc>

RECORDINGS AVAILABLE FROM THE COLLECTION

Anthems and Part-songs by Eric Thiman (2016)

Thiman playing his own music on the City Temple Organ in 1967

The Silver Swan – song by Thiman and Head (Emily Gray/Nicole Johnson (2022))

All the above available for £10 plus £1.50 post and packing (payment details below)

DONATIONS TOWARDS THE WORK OF THE COLLECTION ARE OF COURSE ALSO WELCOME

PAYMENTS

For payment of donations or for CDs:

Either by bank transfer to Southwell Minster Choirs Association

60-20-15 68034652

Reference: Thiman Collection (and either 'donation', or 'CD')

Or post a cheque made out to 'Southwell Minster Choir Association', with 'Eric Thiman Collection' written on the back, to Guy Turner.

CONTACT

Guy Turner, 11 The Old Silk Mill, Maythorne, Southwell, Notts, NG25 0RS

01636 816393

guyscottturner@gmail.com

<https://www.southwellminster.org/eric-thiman-collection/>