

The Robin Milford Trust

Newsletter January 2011



Sadly, Marion Milford, who founded the trust to promote her uncle's music, died on April 20th 2010. A highlight of her funeral was the recording of her singing *The Night*

Has Come, played at the end of the service; the recording is on the website.

Marion had witnessed the rebirth of the Trust in her last two years. She would have been delighted with what has been happening since then.

Anumus has published twenty-two of the songs in 2010 in four volumes. This is very welcome.

Ian Abernethy, a long-time friend of Robin and Kirsty, retired from teaching in July 2010, and has devoted many hours since to creating scores and parts of Robin's music, using the excellent Sibelius software. A growing number of works are now available as free downloads from the website. The value of this gift to Robin and his legacy can hardly be over-estimated to my mind. We are most grateful for all of Ian's effort.

This attracted some criticism from a music publisher, who complained that what we were doing would put him and other music publishers out of business. He pointed out that none of the other societies promoting English composers are doing what we are doing.

I can see his point. We don't want to undermine those who make a living from publishing music.

On the other hand, the whole world is talking about free downloads these days, and if we want to promote Robin's music, then the less barriers there are in people's way, the better. Personally, I can't understand why the other composer societies don't do the same as us.

The solution seems to be for us to continue to publish works that commercial publishers are unlikely to be interested in, and hold back on those works where they might want to step forward.

Milford's works fall roughly into seven categories, with a good deal of overlap, in that some solo songs have also been set for SATB, etc. As regards availability in print, the statistics in descending order are

- Solo Songs (54) : 31 in print : 0 downloads
- Piano works (18) : 5 in print : 1 download
- Solo Instrument and Piano (12) : 4 in print : 2 downloads
- Choral Works (63) : 1 in print : 1 download
- Organ Works (22) : 1 in print : 0 downloads
- Chamber Music (11) : 1 in print : 3 downloads
- Orchestral/Instrumental (36) : 0 in print : 12 downloads
- Total works (180) : 43 in print and 19 downloads = 62, or one third of Robin's output available.

Cathedral Music plans to publish all the organ music in two volumes, which is pleasing. It will shunt the organ works to the top of the list and mean that nearly

half Robin's sheet music will be out there.

There is a long way to go, but our aim is that eventually all of Robin's music will be available one way or another.

As regards performance, we are not making much headway yet. However, the number of recordings is growing all the while. 59 of his works are available on CD in whole or in part, and another CD is on its way from John Turner, a long time friend of Robin and the Trust.

We also began hosting amateur recordings this autumn, on the basis that a less than perfect recording is better than none. Once again, we will not compete with commercially available recordings.

You can now enjoy the Epsom Choral Society singing the carol Midwinter (how appropriate), pensively consider my version of Winter Sketches (continuing the seasonal theme) and endure my Diversions (it was fun having a crack at it).

Now all you musicians reading this - have a go with a mike and send us your rendering in any format. We can turn it into an mp3 for the ones that cannot go jogging without earphones in place. It's a chance to get your name up in lights (well, almost).

One recording of historical interest is a privately made LP of the Newbury Players playing the Elegy on the Death of the Duke of Monmouth in 1962, which Marion gave me along with a suitcase full of Robin's music. This is on the website, along with its spoken introduction.

Plans for 2011 include a recording of the first symphony. (There was a second symphony, but it seems to be lost. Please don't throw anything away from your loft without careful scrutiny first!)

Ian and I are currently busting a gut trying to get the parts prepared in time.



He has the full score, and is putting it into Sibelius (a mammoth task), and I have found a set of parts under one of the mounds of precious stuff on my study floor. (Don't ask - just be grateful that my wife told me to tidy my room in December, and despite there always being something more exciting to do, I humbly obeyed, unearthing this precious archaeological find in the process).

I am compeering Ian's work with the parts. Each discrepancy has to be checked and counter-checked, and in some instances of dubious legibility lengthy discussion may be required. From our knowledge of all Robin's other works, his use of harmony and rhythm, and maybe even his living circumstances and diet at the time of composition, is an F or a G most likely in a given instance?

It's a fascinating insight into the world of musicologists. It's all very well for composers once they have died - all they have to worry about is decomposing, but for those of us still here, their unclear instructions can leave something of a headache. Still, it is great fun and gives a sense of achievement.

In short, the work of the trust is going well. May you experience success yourself in 2011.

David Pennant, Trustee, along with Peter Hunter and Auriol Milford.