

Basingstoke Concert Club Newsletter – 2008

Basingstoke Concert Club is delighted to launch its 2008-09 Concert Season, with six concerts from outstanding musicians.

Subscription tickets for all 6 concerts are only £68! A big saving on the individual ticket prices (£14.50). See the enclosed leaflet for full details.

You can buy your tickets from Bridget Tivey on 01256 328589 or James Graydon on 01256 780785. Or on the door at concert nights.

Join us on Saturday 11 October for our first concert.

All concerts are at Trinity Methodist Church, Sarum Hill, Basingstoke, and start at 7.30pm. Free parking is available nearby from 7pm.

You can find out more about our concerts at our website:
www.basingstokeconcertclub.org.uk.

We look forward to seeing you – enjoy great music with us!

“I believe in God, Mozart and Beethoven”
Robert Wagner 1813-83.

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President's Message, Spring 2008

What a wonderfully varied programme has been arranged for the Concert Club's 2008-09 season! I wish I lived nearer Basingstoke.... There are two perfect works that stand out for me among all these wonderful programmes: the Mozart Sonata in D Major, K.576, in the piano recital on 6 December, and the Beethoven String Quartet in C Sharp Minor, Op.131, on 21 February.

It is said that Mozart wrote the Sonata K.576 for a pupil. What a pupil that must have been! I remember working at this Sonata for **months** before a London recital! It is an amazing piece of music writing, mostly just in two parts. The Beethoven Quartet Op.131 is an absolute masterpiece, in seven movements, and it is totally impossible to do it justice in a short introduction like this. I would just like to mention a thrilling fifth movement (a Scherzo) which is just one of the many examples of Beethoven's astonishing originality in his late style.

I send you best wishes for an excellent season.

Bernard Roberts (President of Basingstoke Concert Club)

Chairman's Reflections

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the sudden death, in June, of Adrian Furtado, one of our Club's committee members. You will recall Adrian taking your ticket on the door at concerts; behind the scenes, he was our sponsorship manager and recently, begun to plan our new marketing strategy. His ideas helped to create the stunning leaflet for our new season. Adrian was passionate about getting more people in Basingstoke to love chamber music - and he certainly leaves us in a better position to reach out to new and different people. I hope you will help us to spread the word - please pass on leaflets, and your endorsement of a good night out, as widely as you can.

Adrian played the piano and was looking forward to our 3 concerts involving pianos. In particular, we have a real coup in booking Chiang-Yun Hu, joint winner of this year's

Reubenstein piano competition, known as "the piano Olympics". What could be more fitting in this Olympian year? Her UK debut tour starts with us in Basingstoke - fantastic!

A particular favourite of mine is Morgan Szymanski - I saw him at Newbury Spring festival two years ago. He explained he had wanted to be a rock star, but his father said to do that, he must first study the guitar properly (!); Morgan found he enjoyed classical guitar so much, he never got onto the rock bit. Which reminds me, the Club continued last season to help more young people experience great chamber music - 53 young people received free tickets thanks to support from the Cavatina Trust, compared to 34 in 2006-07.

Our other new ventures to encourage local young musicians were also very successful. Our first-ever Masterclass, with Bernard Roberts, enabled 4 young pianists to have expert tuition - those of us in the audience also found it very enlightening to hear something of playing technique and the incredible difference in sound it makes. A pertinent reminder of what hard work it takes to be a concert virtuoso. We are planning another masterclass for strings on 21 February, with the Tippett Quartet - more details will be announced later.

Finally, I want to thank our contributors for their articles – it is good to see how much musical knowledge and experience we can call on to keep chamber music excellent in Basingstoke.

Sarah Denly Ball (Chairman)

Letter from Cornwall

Our friend in Cornwall, Martin Fisher, sends greetings once again from West Country:

We are emerging from a pretty miserable winter and looking forward to a good summer, in both weather and music. The brightest prospect is probably the St Endellion Festival featuring Peter Grimes under Richard Hickox with Mark Padmore in the title role. The Dante Quartet's festival should also be good, though programme details are awaited.

Welsh National Opera brought Eugene Onegin to Plymouth recently, yet another example of the London Bus Syndrome that bedevils the south west: only a year ago English Touring Opera brought another staging to Truro! WNO's Tatiana was Nuccia Focile, a very credible teenager in the early scenes and a convincing young wife at the end. Brilliant acting considering that she has had a career since the mid-1980s, and her singing was at least as good as her acting. For those who love the stage but have yet to be captured by opera, this work might be a good place to start. It is a long way removed from conventional grand opera. For example, when Onegin shoots his friend Lensky in a duel, Lensky simply falls dead rather than singing for five minutes! Arias and ensembles illuminate the inner life of the characters rather than enacting public spectacles. I really won't mind too much if a third bus shows up with the same destination board!

My big opera purchase on CD has been another Ring cycle: a great set in a small box for a remarkably small outlay. It is the 1953 Bayreuth cycle under Clemens Krauss on the Allegro label, available for less than £25. For those familiar with the Solti cycle it is good to hear a younger, less wobbly Hotter as Wotan, particularly when he gets to sing the Rheingold Wotan as well (Decca seems to have thought that the 1956 Hotter was well past singing the young heroic Wotan, and used George London instead). The recent BBC

Building a Library series on the Ring ignored this issue because it isn't an officially authorised release but if this doesn't bother you, many think it the finest recorded performance of the cycle. The sound is mono of course, but generally very good mono.

The Henschel Quartet from Germany gave an epic programme for Truro Three Arts: Britten's 3rd quartet and Schubert's G major D887, with Beethoven Op 18 No 6 for openers. The Britten is clearly a special work for them – they were coached by the Amadeus for whom it was written and they have been to Aldeburgh to view the manuscript (we were told that even the bar lines show Britten's shaking hands). The Henschels managed a stunningly beautiful sonority at the start, and the end of the last movement was heart-stopping, if this isn't a cheap play on words when the music seems to portray Britten's wait for his own diseased heart to give out. Perhaps their playing in the Schubert was a little less startling, but the greatness of the work still came across in full measure.

The Naxos label has continued to encourage exploration of unusual repertoire. My renewed interest in the music of Taneyev led me to his first and third quartets on 8.570437 with the Carpe Diem Quartet, while Voces Cantabiles under Barnaby Smith give us a large slice of Robert Parsons's 16th century polyphony for the Catholic and the new Anglican churches (8.570451).

Martin Fisher

Remembering Sir Robert Meyer

Keen concert-goer, Lynn ten Kate, recalls her personal experiences of meeting a national music figure:

The theory of six degrees of separation is always good fun to contemplate - I thought of this during our last concert of the 2007/2008 series, listening to the splendid Doric quartet playing the Brahms string quartet in C minor.

In 1979 I was asked by the BBC to interview Sir Robert Meyer for the celebration of his 100th birthday. I was a bit apprehensive - perhaps he would be hard of hearing, hesitant about answering questions or, even worse for editing, rambling in his replies. But it was a wonderful opportunity to meet such a remarkable man and of course I jumped at the chance.

The interview was to be recorded in his home and I arrived with the small amount of high-tech equipment which is all that is necessary for making a radio programme. Humble it may be but at least a radio programme is all your own work without the razzamatazz of a team. From the moment we met and he smiled and shook my hand firmly, I knew there was going to be no difficulty in making a good programme with Sir Robert.

Meyer's father was a rich brewer in Mannheim and, showing a precocious talent, Robert, born in 1879, went to the conservatoire for piano lessons from the age of six. He intended to make a career in music and at seventeen came to London to continue his studies at the Guildhall School of Music, taking British citizenship in 1902. He was indeed to make a great contribution to music though not in the way he originally anticipated.

Robert Meyer became a successful business man and a major philanthropist helping to found the Royal Philharmonic orchestra. He formed the first children's orchestra in London which inspired the world-wide Jeunesse Musical. He also set up the Youth and Music movement, but he is best remembered for the annual Robert Meyer children's concerts which, for the first 30 years, were held at the Methodist Central Hall before transferring to the Royal Festival Hall. The great and the good took part in these. Conductors included Adrian Boult, Malcolm Sargent, and Edward Heath. In all these ventures Robert was enthusiastically supported and indeed urged on by his wife the soprano Dorothy Meyer.

One day in debate in the House of Lords, film producer David (now Lord) Puttnam had this to say. "A very important hero who is no longer much discussed is Sir Robert Meyer to whom I owe an enormous debt. Robert Meyer's Music for Children resulted in my going at the age of eleven to the then newly built Royal Festival Hall to hear a Saturday morning concert. It was, for me, utterly transforming." I believe it was at one of these concerts that Sir Malcolm Sargent said he overheard two ladies, who were accompanying children, talking. "I do envy Sargent " one said, which made him prick up his ears to hear the praise which would surely follow. "He's got such a neat little bottom!"

Sir Robert said of himself that he was a late starter, not really beginning as a musical entrepreneur until he was in his forties. He did himself less than justice. Until then he was busy working to make the vast fortune which enabled him to plough so much into educating and entertaining young people and enriching their lives. He was a man of little hubris to whom power was of no consequence and influence was everything. When he was one hundred, Robert Meyer became the oldest man to be knighted. At the centenary celebration concert in the Festival Hall, he sat between Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip - Meyer himself a prince among men.

And now, how about Brahms and the degrees of separation I mentioned at the beginning of this article? Here is an example of two degrees. Among the many anecdotes related during the interview, Sir Robert told me how, as an eleven year old student at the Mannheim conservatory, he received encouragement for his piano playing from the great composer himself and sat next to him during a concert. So you see, my hand has been shaken by someone who actually held the hand of Brahms.

Lynn ten Kate

Brendel to Retire

Pianist Alfred Brendel is to give his final performance this December after a career lasting 60 years. "It has always been Brendel's intention to stop performing while still at the peak of his powers, and he makes this decision while continuing to attract capacity audiences throughout the world," say his managers.

The Club has been privileged to engage Brendel on several occasions through its history, and we're sure would wish him all the best on his retirement. Brendel will be 77 when he steps off the concert stage for the final time, after performing Mozart's Piano Concerto No.9, with the Vienna Philharmonic and Sir Charles Mackerras, at Vienna's Musikverein.

Julian Woodward

Tartini and the Tunnels

You may think listening to music is a straightforward business. However, there is more to it than we think – and that science has been put to all sorts of uses! Theodore Chaplin, committee member, tells us about his experiences using Tartini tones in bridge-building!

The violinist and composer, Giuseppe Tartini, was born at Pirano in 1692 and died at Padua aged 77. He advanced the potential of the violin more than anyone before him - modern bowing technique owes its origins to him. He also observed what has become known as the “Tartini Difference Tone”, which has brought great benefits to modern engineering. Theodore recalls.....

If two steady tones are sounded, e.g. at 400 and 661 cycles per second, the brain perceives a rather faint tone at the frequency difference $661 - 400 = 261$ Hz. That is the frequency of middle C. I still have my tuning fork from childhood violin playing, with New Philharmonic A = 440 Hz. An orchestra uses that frequency for tuning its stringed instruments.

Tartini difference tones seem to be unknown to many musicians. How do they originate? It could be a nonlinear response of the auditory system in the ear, or some effect within the brain itself, or both. Perhaps when I have the time I might do a numerical simulation on my computer which would give a mathematical answer. Then I might also discover what happens when three steady notes are sounded with that response.

While I was at the Building Research Station in my first job after Cambridge, we were measuring earth pressures on tunnel linings with vibrating-wire strain gauges. In each gauge, a polarised electromagnet, as used in headphones, was placed very near a magnetic stainless steel wire stretched between two steel posts, screwed with locknuts into the structure under test. The head of engineering had once used clamp-on vibrating-wire displacement gauges (kept in continuous vibration) to measure dynamic strains in railway bridges as trains passed over. In the 1930s he had vigorously proposed the Severn Barrage for generating power, which at last is in the news again.

Our first study was on two large new tunnels being built in Central London. The main vibrating-wire gauge job was a one-off opportunity but at short notice. At three sites in Central London, a number of existing tube railway tunnel segments had supported earth pressures from the London clay for some forty years or more. (Some flanges had been cracked by the resulting bending.) The segments of some rings were about to be removed to make way for local enlargements of the running tunnel. A totally new design of vibrating-wire strain gauge was needed in very large quantity; to be cheap it had to be easy to make. I made the prototype gauge posts myself. Using the best wire nails, I filed down the pins which would actually grip the vibrating wire - a test showed all was well.

The lowest quotation for 300 sets of parts (including a cast-iron cover and a resin-bonded insulating strip) to support the electromagnet was a mere £150 in 1953. The polarised electromagnets were separately supplied by a local firm for five shillings each with special low-height polepieces and coils. When the wire was vibrating they generated a tiny voltage, around 2 millivolts. When tensioning each gauge on the job, I did make some use of Tartini tones to get the wire tension about right after raising the comparison frequency in the head-phones. No great accuracy in frequency was needed: I set up many gauges by

ear alone, which led some people to think that I had perfect pitch (I can still get middle C plus or minus a semitone). To get a steady vibration I slightly displaced the taut wire with a screwdriver, close to one post only.

The late Dr W. H. Ward then decided he wanted a set of about 40 waterproof load cells in stainless steel. My design allowed external adjustment of the electromagnet. It (a) made the wire vibrate, and then (b) generated a tiny output voltage, only about 5 millivolts, while the wire vibrations died away. With a raised comparison frequency of about 200 cycles per second above the desired frequency, I slowly slackened the wire until the decaying Tartini tone had dropped to a semitone or so below middle C. Then I clamped the wire with my other hand. That dodge both reduced set-up time and achieved the desired consistency.

Some 13 years later, I saw a published picture of a tall "BRS Standard Load Cell." On looking at its small cross-section, it seemed internally identical to my squat load cell. They had simply added a few inches at each end to the wall. That is my claim to have achieved a design classic.

I also identified a way to save the Water Board about £1 million on the project, by modifying one of the very simple control sets we had borrowed - it took me only 40 minutes with my soldering iron to replace the usual direct-current pulse excitation by a continuous tone excitation at the comparison frequency. This novel "resonant plucking" technique avoided expensive alterations of some extensometers designed by Ward for the Metropolitan Water Board. In use, those extensometers showed that the movements of an experimental flangeless concrete tunnel lining, when filled with water at 140 ft head, were so small that there was no need to have the costly steel pressure lining which the Water Board engineers had previously demanded for that type of lining. All it took was £20,000 for equipment.

Dr Ward also asked me to develop an All-Electronic Control Set, which included resonant plucking. With much advice I designed it, and got the prototype working successfully. I took it up to Glasgow for Hugh Sutherland of Glasgow University to use with our re-used vibrating-wire gauges available after the London tube tunnel measurements were over. His tunnel, about to be constructed under compressed air, was needed to carry urgently needed water mains under the Clyde from Govan/Linthouse on the south bank to Balshagray Avenue on the north bank.

Dr Theodore Chaplin

Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C Major, Op.53

Among the works performed in our President Bernard Roberts' wonderful recital last October was Beethoven's Piano Sonata in C Major, Op.53. To increase even further our insight into this seminal work, Bernard has kindly offered the following notes....

This, of course, is the famous Waldstein Sonata, dedicated to the Count Ferdinand von Waldstein who became a friend of Beethoven in his early years in Bonn. In 1791 Beethoven wrote eight variations for piano duet on a theme written by Waldstein, and a very nice theme it is, with some very amusing and characteristic variations provided by Beethoven. When Beethoven left Bonn for Vienna in 1792, Waldstein wrote in Beethoven's autograph album a very touching inscription: "With the help of assiduous labour you shall

receive Mozart's spirit from Haydn's hands". This says much for Waldstein's perception of the powers of the young genius, even though Beethoven's revolutionary tendencies drove them apart in later years.

The first few lines of this Sonata already contain these revolutionary tendencies which may well have upset the more sober and conventional musicians of that time (in 1803 when Beethoven was 33). This Allegro con brio in four-four time is very characteristic of Beethoven: I always find it quite thrilling, especially as the tempo of an arresting first movement. It has a very special life-giving energy. Contrast this with the beautiful Second Subject at bar 35: a wonderful legato melody in E major, a "mediant " key which has a wonderful element of surprise in its relationship with C major, the tonic.

All the ideas presented in the exposition of this movement are then developed in the most exciting manner in the middle section which is called, of course, the "Development". And then, at bar 249, we have the Coda, which, in a way, is another development of most of the main ideas of the movement, but in a way that brings them together for a conclusion.

In the volume of Beethoven's Piano Pieces (as opposed to his 32 Sonatas) you can find a beautiful Andante in F major, which was going to be the slow movement of the "Waldstein" Sonata; but Beethoven rejected this rather long Andante (in Rondo form) replacing it with the "Introduzione" which links the first movement with the 3rd movement Rondo. This Introduction is in very slow six-eight time, gradually creating the situation where the 3rd movement Rondo theme can appear. This theme is one of Beethoven's most beautiful melodies, and, being a Rondo, we will hear it several times! There are two energetic episodes which interrupt the three gentle appearances of this Rondo theme, but after this there is a Prestissimo coda where our beautiful theme is heard at high speed in several guises. This brings this wonderful Sonata to a brilliant conclusion.

For performers, the chief problem in this Coda is from bar 465 to bar 475. Beethoven gives a separate fingering for each octave along here, but they are not separate octaves played from the wrist: they are glissando octaves. If you have a big stretch, and an action that is light, you may be able to manage the octave glissandos, which is what was possible on Beethoven's piano. But on our modern heavier pianos, we have to fake it! The right hand octaves are possible with two hands, but the Left Hand can only be played as a single line, starting on the low G (with lots of pedal). I have a feeling that this is a fairly universal fake, but some pianists have more subtle methods, I am sure!

Bernard Roberts

The age-old problem of young people and classical music

Our friend, Luke Aldworth Davis, ponders the challenge of introducing young people to classical music....

The problem of introducing new admirers to classical music is not a new one, but it is perhaps an issue which is raised more frequently now than it ever has been. One only has to look around at most classical concerts to see that young people make up a relatively small proportion of most audiences. Although this could be seen as an alarming sign for

the future of concerts, perhaps this is no new phenomenon. Could it be that people simply appreciate classical music at a more mature age?

It is a fairly familiar story for a child to be introduced to classical music when he/she begins learning an instrument, then to 'forget' classical music when careers, families and the pressures of modern life take over, only to return later on. However, with fewer children learning classical instruments (especially within the state sector, where music now seems to be a low priority), can we rely on this pattern continuing?

If this is a problem, then, what can be done about it? We are fortunate enough to have wonderful schemes in place, such as the Cavatina Trust, which aim to bring classical music to young people. However, even these schemes face great difficulty when faced with uninterested educational establishments.

What then, is the future for classical music when faced with such a crucial problem? We are hardly helped when the classical music world is so divided over what to do. Only very recently, the Royal Opera House came under fire for allegedly dumbing down in an attempt to appeal to a new, 'cool crowd'. Whatever the truth (or not) in that argument, I believe that if classical music is still played to a great standard, and with passion and integrity, concert-going will never die out.

Luke Aldworth Davis

CD Suggestions 15

Spring 2008

Despite the seismic shifts in the music recording industry, we the punters are blessed with a tempting array of those little silver discs, with recorded content ranging from the memorable performances of the past, to the seemingly inexhaustible flow of talent from today's youth.. In the former category, a towering figure who has eluded these columns so far, is Thomas Beecham. Sir Thomas, who famously described Elgar's A Flat Symphony as 'the musical equivalent of St.Pancras Station,' was not unfond of the composer, contrary to popular belief: and consulted him on matters of interpretation - not least concerning the Enigma Variations. Sir Edward confided that he was less than happy with his own interpretation of the work and 'would Sir Thomas record the work in accordance with his wishes when he felt that recording techniques had sufficiently improved'. A date was set for 26 November 1954, but a few days before that, Sir Thomas and his Royal Philharmonic Orchestra performed the Enigma Variations for a St Cecilia's Day concert in the Royal Festival Hall, which was recorded, and now appears on the new SOMM label. It's far from Hi Fi, and the playing is a bit untidy, but Sir Thomas's attributes of dignity, humour, and above all affection, seem to fit hand in glove with these delightful vignettes of Elgar's friends. The CD also includes some less well-known pieces by other composers, which Beecham feels are unjustly neglected. Judging by their warmth of applause the audience agrees with him. An informative booklet is included, albeit with slightly muddled track details. SOMM-BEECHAM 22.

Those who need higher quality sound, could turn to Beecham's contemporary, Pierre Monteux. His Enigma has made a welcome return on Decca's "Original Masters". Both technical sound and interpretation are out of the top drawer, the famous "Nimrod" variation arguably the finest on record. This comes in a treasure chest of seven CDs featuring

Monteux, mostly with the London Symphony Orchestra, who, incidentally, offered him a 25 year contract as chief conductor at age 86, with an option to renew on completion! Included among the many gems is a fine Brahms 2nd Symphony. DECCA 475 7798

It is surprising how many music lovers remain sceptical as to the source of the Enigma tune. After half-baked assertions that it was linked to Auld Lang Syne, God Save the King, or even Pop Goes the Weasel, in 1991 the pianist Joseph Cooper discovered that it: derived from Mozart's Prague Symphony K504. Don't take my word for it. Play the Prague slow movement (marked Andante) to yourself, and at 4.5 minutes in and again at 8.5 minutes in (approx.), you will hear note for note the Enigma theme. No wonder Elgar said "It is so well known that it is extraordinary that no one has spotted it".

The British (myself included) are somewhat equivocal about Scriabin. His works might be described as sort of philosophical programme music. In Russia he is mainstream. The young St.Petersburg pianist we have eulogised over in previous 'Suggestions' , Yevgeny Sudbin, has turned up trumps yet again, with a Scriabin recital including three substantial sonatas, representing early, middle and late periods interspersed with Etudes, Mazurkas and other shorter pieces. "It is as if the music's very nerve ends are exposed to view ... rarely have I heard a pianist prepared to take such risks on record" says the Gramophone critic, "he takes virtuosity to the very edge at the end of the Fifth Sonata, and his daredevil aplomb is at its height in the Ninth". Sudbin is clearly in love with Scriabin's music and includes a fascinating 9 page in-depth essay on the composer. BI5 SACD 1568

These superlatives notwithstanding I must draw the reader's attention to a similar recital by another Russian pianist, Alexander Melnikov. He overlaps Sudbin in Sonata No.2 and Sonata No.9 - this latter not inappropriately subtitled 'Black Mass'. Melnikov characterises its dark mood to a nicety, as he does his own selection of shorter items including the gently poetic "Deux Morceaux". Nothing is gained in trying to pick a winner between these two artists. Melnikov appears attractively packaged on the Harmonia Mundi 'Nouveaux Musiciens' series HMN 911914.

Harmonia Mundi pick their artists well, and Alexander Melnikov features on another of their CDs as the pianist in a fine performance of Dvorak' s Dumky Trio, along with Isabelle Faust, violin, and Jean-Guihen Queyras, cello. Czech they may not be, but they adopt the Dumky idiom juxtaposing lively dance with melancholy song better than most.

Also on this CD is the much loved Cello Concerto conceived in America under Dvorak's conflicting emotions of affection for that country and a yearning for his homeland. In Queyras' hands this seemingly translates into an evocation of the scents and sounds of the great American outdoors mingled with those of the Moravian forests. The Prague Philharmonia under Jiri Belohlavek offer sensitive support. HMC 90 1861.

Recommended too on Harmonia Mundi is Queyras playing the Britten Cello Suites. HMN 911670 - a gift at budget price - and more recently, the Bach Cello Suites. HMC 901970.

Also causing a great stir in the music world with his recent recording of the Bach Cello Suites, is Steven Isserlis. Winning both the Gramophone Instrumental Award and the BBC CD Review Listeners' Award last Autumn, this recording, even amongst a sea of distinguished recordings, will sit among the pantheon of the very great - Casals, Rostropovich, Fournier and so on. Whether or not, like Isserlis, you see the Suites as a meditative cycle on the life of Christ, it is hard to disagree with the critic who describes the

playing as "Surely among the most consistently beautiful to have been heard in this demanding music, as well as the most musically alert and vivid. Few will fail to be charmed by Isserlis' sweetly singing tone and perfectly voiced chords." Hyperion CDA67541/2

(PS. It is not widely known that Steven Isserlis is also the author of some humorous books for children - 'Why Beethoven Threw the Stew' (Faber and Faber £4.99) is a good example, and will undoubtedly be found irresistible by all right-thinking grown-ups.)

Rising like a phoenix out of the ashes, the much-venerated Lyrita label is undergoing a re-birth on CD. It was founded nearly 50 years ago by Richard Itter, in reaction to the neglect of British music by the recording companies. However, Lyrita went into limbo at the onset of the CD era, Mr Itter being unhappy about the poor quality, as he saw it, of digital sound. Today he's satisfied that the CD's teething troubles are over, and a massive re-launch of Lyrita's catalogue of over 100 recordings is well under way.

Richard Itter's courtesy and gentleness belie his considerable negotiating skills. He demanded quality of artists, quality of recording staff and equipment, and quality of venue. He also demanded commitment.

The outcome of all this to us music lovers is a vast new store of delectable music. By far the best thing you can do, is pick up the phone and ask for a free copy of Lyrita's comprehensive and colourful catalogue. 01600 890 007

There is no point in trying to establish a pecking order in such a great field, but I'll just mention a couple of CDs that have got talked about. E.J. Moerem's Symphony in G minor played by the New Philharmonia under an 84 year old Boult has achieved an 'Historic Re-issue' award in both the Gramophone and the Classic Record Collector. It is described as 'gloriously warm hearted'. SRCD247. Arnold Bax's 6th Symphony with the New Philharmonia under Norman del Mar, 'No rival performance has surpassed the white-hot urgency that these artists bring to the first movement's storm-tossed Allegro'. SRCD 296. And finally a treasurable CD that gives the lie to the notion, prevalent at the time of its original recording, that women can't conduct. It consists of a delightful selection of works by Gustav Holst played by the English Chamber Orchestra under the entirely authoritative baton of the composer's daughter, Imogen Holst. SRCD 223.

Almost all the Lyrita CDS are at full price. Anyone baulking at this should refer themselves to the words of Sir Henry Royce regarding his legendary cars: 'The quality will be remembered long after the price is forgotten!

Julian Woodward

LAST WORD.....

Don't forget to book your subscription ticket for membership of the Basingstoke Concert Club. Where else can you hear such wonderful music performed by inspiring musicians and learn more about chamber music? Here are the dates for your diary:

Saturday 11 October –

7.30pm - Chamber Domaine, Piano Trio

Saturday 16 November –

7.30pm – Gemma Rosefield (Cello) and Simon Lepper (Piano)

Sunday 23 November –

3pm – - **Family Concert** at Central Studio featuring the Thorne Trio

Saturday 6 December –

7.30pm – Ching-Yun Ho (Piano)

Saturday 17 January 2008 –

7.30pm – Morgan Szymanski, Classical Guitar

Saturday 21 February –

7.30pm – The Tippett Quartet

Saturday 21 March –

7.30pm – Armonico Consort, Eight Voices

Meanwhile, have a lovely summer!