

NEWSLETTER

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2010: THE YEAR OF RUTLAND BOUGHTON

January 25th, 2010 marks 50 years since the death of Rutland Boughton. At the height of his fame in the 1920s and 1930s, Boughton was as popular as Elgar surpassing, even, contemporaries such as Vaughan Williams and Holst. His innovative and highly successful annual festivals at Glastonbury between 1914 and 1926 were the first of their kind in England and *The Immortal Hour* achieved a yet unbeaten world-record for the number of consecutive performances of any serious opera written in this country. Yet despite his remarkable success Boughton became an unjustly neglected British composer; an “unsung national hero”. We have compiled an impressive list of activities to commemorate this 50th anniversary; the current list (which will be updated periodically) is shown on the following pages.



Events in 2010

- **16 January – 28 February.** Small display at Aylesbury Museum. Details at www.buckscc.gov.uk/museum
- **25 January.** Barnet Hospital Radio: Commemorative live broadcast interview with Ian Boughton on the life and music of his grandfather.
- **6 February.** Havant Symphony Orchestra, conductor Peter Craddock
Serenade for Small Orchestra, Arnold
Suite Love's Labours Lost, Finzi
Concerto for Flute and Strings, Boughton (soloist Catherine Nicholson)
Symphony No 1 in C minor, Mendelssohn
(Pre-concert talk on the Flute Concerto by Pauline Buzzing)
Details: www.havantorchestras.hampshire.org.uk
- **12 February.** Letchworth Recorded Music Society. Illustrated talk by Paul Adrian Rooke on the life and music of Rutland Boughton. Details contact David Colbeck on 01462 646583
- **19-21 February. Farncombe Estate Centre –** Weekend Music Appreciation on Rutland Boughton. Tutor Paul Adrian Rooke, Music Adviser to The Rutland Boughton Music Trust. Details www.FarncombeEstate.co.uk
- **2 March.** Ruislip Gramophone Society. Illustrated talk by Paul Adrian Rooke on the life and music of Rutland Boughton. Details contact Muriel Clayton, Secretary, at murielclayton@tiscali.co.uk
- **20 March.** Birmingham Clarion Singers, conductor Jane Scott. Boughton Commemorative Concert with extracts from *The Immortal Hour*. Details visit www.clarionsingers.org.uk
- **22 March.** Bournemouth Gramophone Society. Illustrated talk by Ian Boughton on the life and music of Rutland Boughton. Details contact Philip Giddens, Chairman, on 01202 424023 or email sylviagiddens@tiscali.co.uk
- **28 April.** Stroud Valleys Music Club. Illustrated talk by Ian Boughton on the life and music of Rutland Boughton. Details contact Clare Govier, Chairman, on 01452 529707
- **1 May.** Amaretti Chamber Orchestra, conductor Andrew Hodkinson.
Serenade for Strings, Tchaikovsky
Oboe Concerto No 1, Boughton (soloist Philip Dewhurst)
Rumanian Dances, Bartok
Details. Andrew Hodkinson at lordbuxton@hotmail.com
- **14-16 May "2010 Rutland Boughton Festival"**
 - 14 May** Festival launch
 - 15 May** Lunchtime Song recital with Louise Mott, mezzo.
Evening Commemorative Concert
Hitchin Symphony Orchestra, conductor Paul Adrian Rooke

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Overture to the Cycle of Arthurian Music Dramas (world première), Boughton

Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra, Boughton

Symphony No 2 ("Deidre"), Boughton

16 May The Astaria Quartet

String Quartet No 1 in A major (*On Greek Folk Songs*) and String Quartet No 2 (*From the Welsh Hills*)

16 May evening concert

Violin Sonata in D. Violincello Sonata

Details: www.hitchinsymphonyorchestra.com & www.pauladrianrooke.com

- **15 May.** Newent Orchestra, conductor George Taylor
"Newent, The Home of Rutland Boughton", Commemorative Concert featuring Boughton's *Three Folk Dances*.
Details: www.newentorchestra.org
- **8 June.** Southwold Classical Music Society. Illustrated talk by Ian Boughton on the life and music of Rutland Boughton. Details from Ros Eden, Secretary at ros-eden@tiscali.co.uk
- **June/July.** Hitchin Festival – English Song Recital.
Concert of songs and arias by Boughton and his contemporaries.
Details: Ian Boughton on 01462 434318 or email ianrboughton@aol.com
- **8 September.** Norwich Music Society. Illustrated talk by Ian Boughton on the life and music of Rutland Boughton. Details from Brian Pearce, Chairman at brianpearce@cmac.com
- **20 November.** Manchester Beethoven Orchestra, conductor Frank Levons. Concert to include Symphony No 3 in B minor. Details to be released.

In addition:

Strode Theatre in Street, Somerset, will be releasing a new documentary film about Glastonbury and its cultural history from the early 20th century to the present day using archive film and other source material. This will of course include Rutland Boughton and the creation of his festivals in the town from 1914 to 1926.

The Boughton Trust is sponsoring a commercial recording of three early symphonic poems which will appear under the Dutton Epoch label. Plans are also being made to sponsor a commercial recording of *The Queen of Cornwall* with the New London Orchestra, soloists and chorus under Ronald Corp on the Hyperion label.

Further information about the film and the recordings will be made known at a later date.

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We hope the music of Rutland Boughton will be heard on radio during the coming year, though any encouragement by readers in this respect would be much appreciated.

2010 promises to be an eventful year; we hope you will join us in the celebrations.

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Administrator & Librarian, The Rutland Boughton Music Trust

Rutland Boughton dies: composed 'The Immortal Hour'

THE death has occurred at the age of 82 of Mr. Rutland Boughton, the composer, who for many years has been living in retirement at Newent. A largely self-taught man, he was best known for his opera "The Immortal Hour."

This work had an amazing run to close on 300 performances at a semi-suburban theatre in London in the early 1920s after earlier successes at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre.

Rutland Boughton was born at Aylesbury, Bucks, but in his youth had little opportunity of studying or cultivating his musical desires and it was not until 1900, when he was 22 years of age, that he managed to enter the Royal College of Music and study under Sir Charles Stanford and Sir Walford Davies.

He did not stay at the college for any more than three terms, however, and it was not until 1904 that he made much further progress. He was then offered a post as singing teacher at the Midland Institute School of Music in Birmingham, where he remained until 1911.

Created own style

He was greatly influenced by Wagner's music and style and it was whilst he was working in Birmingham that he decided to create his own special type of music-drama.

Rutland Boughton later moved to Glastonbury where, with the help of Christina Walshe, he assembled a company which performed his work 'The Immortal Hour' in 1914. It was immediately acclaimed a success. It contained many bewitching melodies.

With the resumption of the Glastonbury Festivals in 1919 and 1920 came the first complete performance of 'The Birth of Arthur' and 'The Round Table' — two plays which formed part of an Arthurian cycle based on libretto by Reginald Buckley.

It was in 1920 that the 'Immortal Hour' was taken to London and the composer's reputation rapidly spread.

Last month Rutland Boughton's Nativity choral drama 'Bethlehem', which he wrote in 1915, was produced on the radio. Other well-known works of his included 'The Queen of Cornwall', 'Alkestis', and 'The Lily Maid'.

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Rutland Boughton - a review of the last 50 years



Rutland Boughton with Kathleen (third wife) and Joy (daughter) at Kilcot, circa 1958, where he lived with his family from 1927 to 1960

During the 1960s and early 1970s, under the auspices of the original Boughton Trust set up by Adolph Borsdorf, attempts were made to revive interest in Boughton's music which began with the publication of a biography by Michael Hurd - "Immortal Hour". There were semi-staged performances of Boughton's *The Queen of Cornwall* and *Alkestis* in 1963 and 1964 and the first performance of his *Reunion Variations* was given in 1967 as part of a memorial concert by the Aylesbury Orchestra under lifelong friend, Charles Pope. In 1972, The London Opera Centre gave a fully staged production of *Bethlehem*. All of these, though, were met with only partial success. It was not until 1978 when Michael Hurd both encouraged the BBC to broadcast substantial extracts from the music-dramas to commemorate the composer's Centenary year and encouraged the establishment of the current Boughton Trust, to which he became its Music Adviser that a real appreciation of Rutland Boughton began.

Through royalties generated from performances and occasional broadcasts of Boughton's music (such as *The Immortal Hour* in 1979 conducted by Vilem Tausky) it was possible for the Trust to pursue commercial recordings. With the support of Ted Perry at Hyperion a number of highly successful CDs began to emerge. These recordings, together with the subsequent broadcast of the Symphony No 3 in 1986 by the BBC Philharmonic under Edward Downes, proved a revelation and convinced even the strongest critics that Boughton was a composer worth taking seriously.

In 1985, as part of the "British Opera in Retrospect", the Trust part-sponsored *Opera 70* in a fully-staged production of Boughton's *The Lily Maid*, the fifth opera in the cycle of Arthurian Music-Dramas. It was conducted by Michael Hurd who had spent some months previously preparing (and reducing in length) the scores for performance. Following his highly successful recording of Boughton's 3^d symphony and *Oboe Concerto No 1* for Hyperion in 1989, the late Dr Vernon Handley was appointed President of the Trust. In the same year John Wallace gave the first public performance of the *Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra* composed in 1943. This led to him recording the piece some years later with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra conducted by Simon Wright. And in 1996, artist and Glastonbury resident, Paul Branson, created the *Glastonbury Arts*



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Festivals, a charitable organisation to promote the arts and music in Glastonbury inspired by Boughton's festivals. There was a revival of *The Immortal Hour* at Street in Somerset that was well received by the national Press and in the following year Branson encouraged the Bournemouth Sinfonietta to give the world première performance of the *Concerto for String Orchestra*. Mr Branson had to withdraw future plans for the new Glastonbury Festival because the charity went into liquidation.

In 1993, Michael Hurd revised and republished his biography under the title of *Rutland Boughton and the Glastonbury Festivals* and during the following years, enquiries of interest in Boughton increased with a number of performances of his music materialising, particularly the 3rd Symphony and *Bethlehem*. Rutland Boughton became firmly on the British musical map again.

Due to financial constraints, the Trust struggled with its main objective to have *The Queen of Cornwall* - considered by many as Boughton's best work for the stage – committed to disc. Subsequent appeals and fund-raising concerts were organised and only very recently have sufficient funds been realised to make the recording of this work a probability.

The loss of Michael Hurd in 2006 was a bitter blow to the family and the Trust. He was universally recognised as the champion of Rutland Boughton and his knowledge and insight into the composer and his works are irreplaceable. However, in recent years the Trust has been fortunate in finding in Paul Adrian Rooke (who succeeded Hurd as Music Adviser) someone who was not only sympathetic to Boughton's music but had "Sibelius" skills that would enable complete unpublished works to be edited for performance and/or recording. Since Rooke's involvement, some of Boughton's early works have been explored for the first time in years resulting in some extraordinary surprises. These have included the Symphony No 1 (*Oliver Cromwell*), completed in 1904 and originally abandoned by the composer, and the *Songs of the English*, last performed by David Ffrangcon-Davies at the beginning of the 20th Century. The symphony subsequently received its world première performance in Hitchin in 2005 and was quickly accepted for a commercial recording by Dutton with the BBC Concert Orchestra conducted by "Tod" Handley. A recording of three of the five *Songs of the English* for baritone and orchestra soon followed, also featuring the BBC Concert Orchestra with Simon Yates conducting and Roderick Williams as soloist. Both recordings proved to be successful ventures under the able supervision of Lewis Foreman. In 2006, and under its own label, the British Music Society collaborated with the Trust to produce a quality CD of 23 songs with mezzo-soprano Louise Mott and pianist Alexander Taylor.

It was evident to the Trust that by 2010, the year which marks the 50th anniversary of Rutland Boughton's death, renewed vigour was required to promote the composer and as a result of a national campaign, the Trust has been able to compile an impressive list of activities.

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***Honoris Causa*, Rutland Boughton F.B.S.M. - Portrait at Birmingham revived**



Back row (l to r), Peter Ward, BCA Founder Secretary and Trustee; John D Smith, BCA Secretary and Trustee, and Conservatoire Hon Archivist; Dr George Caird; Helen Mills, BCA Treasurer and Trustee; David Saint, Conservatoire Vice-Principal

Front row. Jeremy Patterson, BCA Chairman and Trustee; Caroline Abraham and R Sherman Boughton

Issue 11 of "Fanfare", the Newsletter of the Birmingham Conservatoire Association (BCA), reported a search for the 12 portraits of Honorary Fellows painted by G H B Holland. Four had been "discovered" – those of Sidney Taunton, Julius Harrison, Daniel Roberts and Rutland Boughton. Each one was restored and they all now hang (again) in the foyer of the Conservatoire alongside those of Sir Granville Bantock (past Principal of the School) and Dr Christopher Edmunds (past editor of "Fanfare").

In October 2009, Chairman (eldest surviving son of the composer) R Sherman Boughton and Caroline Abraham (his niece and former student at the Conservatoire) met Principal Dr George Caird and members of the Association to study the portraits, as seen in the photograph above. This was the first time that members of the family have viewed the portrait of Boughton since it "disappeared"

Rutland Boughton was offered a Fellowship by the then Midland Institute School of Music in 1948 on the occasion of his 70th Birthday (Boughton taught at the school from 1905 until about 1911). His portrait, commissioned that year, hung in the School foyer until the mid-1960s.

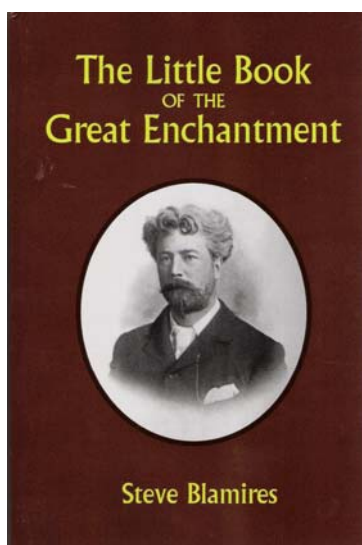
A former pupil of Rutland Boughton – George Painter - paid tribute to Boughton's contributions at Birmingham in an article he prepared for "Fanfare" dated 1948 noting in particular the series of concerts he had conducted at Saltley Church

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devoted to the music of Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Wagner and other modern composers of the time, as well as his lectures and his conductorship of The New Choral Society. Some of his comments about Boughton are as true now as they were then. Here is an extract from that article: -

“We should like to hear more of his music. We ought to hear more of his music! *The Immortal Hour*, which had such a phenomenal run in London some years ago, is known to most of us. But though it is a work of great beauty it only partly represents him and is not his greatest work. The *Alkestis*, which the School recently produced, is another and less familiar side, and many of us have heard and admired *Bethlehem* and other shorter works which indicate his strong interest in folk music. For many years, since my path in life deviated from Boughton's, I have, alas, seen but little of him or of his music.....I am perfectly sure that his work deserves very much more attention than it has received. We cannot afford the neglect of music which is as vigorous, individual and sincere as the rest of his activities and I hope the BBC will do something about it”.

William Sharp/Fiona McLeod



The Little Book of the Great Enchantment is a new biography by Scottish writer Steve Blamires on William Sharp (1855-1905) alias Fiona McLeod, the author behind the story of *The Immortal Hour* which later was adapted to music by Rutland Boughton.

It is claimed that Mr Blamires offers previously unknown material from the life of William Sharp and are the first authentic primary accounts from the Realm of Faery on faery gods, goddesses, folk lore and magic. Mr Blamires provides a deep analysis of *The Immortal Hour* and, drawing mainly on material in “Avalonians”, the book by Patrick Benham, and from the programme notes compiled by Michael Hurd for the Hyperion recording of the entire opera, he explains how Boughton

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approached the text for his music-drama. According to his letter, it was very much the inspiration of the Hyperion recording that led Mr Blamires into his research on William Sharp.

The Little Book of the Great Enchantment is published by R J Stewart Books, USA, and available in the UK at £15.95 (see www.rjstewart.net).

In Memoriam

Ethel Irene Harriett Boughton (1923 – 2009), devoted wife to R Sherman Boughton and loving mother to Shelagh, Anita, Sally and Aubrey, sadly died last November.

Acknowledgments

The Trust would like to thank the Trustees of the Birmingham Conservatoire Association for supplying the group photograph which appears in this *Newsletter*.



The Rutland Boughton Music Trust was established in 1978 as a registered charity to encourage performances and more particularly sponsor recordings of Boughton's finest works. The Trust's financial resources depend mainly on royalties generated from performances and broadcasts and donations from third parties. If you would like to make a contribution, please contact the Trust at the following address: 25 Bearton Green, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, SG5 1UN, UK. Tel: 01462 434318. Email: Boughtontrust@aol.com www.rutlandboughtonmusictrust.org.uk Charity No: 276012/ACL