

NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2006

AGM & ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual General Meeting of the Association was held at the Royal Overseas League on Sunday March the 12th at 5.00 pm. Being a typical British spring day several members were snowbound and I only managed to get to the meeting by leaving Shropshire at a very early hour helped at different points by two snowploughs! Members heard that last year's events had been varied and well supported. The Thomas Hampson master-class raised enough money for the Junior Recital Competition to be restarted, hopefully in October/November. The Patricia Routledge Song Prize was strongly contested in May 2005 at the Guildhall and won by Nathan Lane, who unfortunately had to cancel his AESS Amersham recital due to being offered work at Glyndbourne for the whole season.

Membership has increased dramatically to about 165. A website, AofESS.org.uk, is in the process of being set up and a Patron for the Association is being actively sought.

We were fortunate to have Chris Smith as our guest speaker – especially as he had to fight his way to snowbound Prestwick to get down from Troon where he had been speaking the night before!

OFFICER & COMMITTEE ELECTIONS & RE-ELECTIONS

Eileen Price, Betty Roe, Marie Hayward Segal, Marian Lines and Mark Wildman were re-elected to the committee and I was re-elected as chairman.

I am very grateful to Chris Loake for being my secretary for a year. Being Mark's assistant at the RAM he agreed to help Mark out temporarily when Emma left and he stayed on to help me. I am delighted that he will continue to help us with the Senior Competition and to book rooms for our committee meetings.

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Don Manning has been our treasurer for 9 years. He has done a terrific job and has wanted to stand down for a while as he and his wife have not been in the greatest of health and he has a long way to travel to meetings. I thank him for all his work – the committee decided that he should be offered Honorary Membership in recognition of his contribution, which he accepted.

Margaret Cable is standing down after five years. Margaret has been to virtually every meeting and every event in that time and has always been willing to take on any task. I thank her for all her help to me personally when I became chairman and indeed for taking the minutes whenever the secretary has been absent.

Mary Mogil is standing down as Membership Secretary. She has several new commitments including a big charity project in Sri Lanka. She has worked non-stop this year on the membership lists and address files as well as being in charge of ticketing events, organizing the annual dinner and collecting subscriptions. She deserves a rest!

I have appointed Sally Croft to be our Honorary Reporting Accountant – we are not of a size that needs an auditor under Charity rules but it does ask for a second person in our constitution. Sally is eminently qualified to undertake this role.

In line with other charities I have appointed Richard Bolton to be our Honorary Chaplain. Richard is a Priest in Ordinary to her Majesty the Queen at St. James Palace and chaplain at Haberdasher Askes School.

Sue Field, who is our new Treasurer, is a Chartered Accountant who has her own firm mainly dealing with Charity Accounts. She is also President of the London Society of Chartered Accountants.

Pat Williams, our new Membership Secretary, is a long-standing AESS member – singer, teacher, pianist and choir director. She is one of the organisers of the Blackheath Festival and teaches at Morley College.

Judy Hildersley, our new Secretary, is a singer and teacher and one of the organizers of the Richmond Festival. She has been the administrator of the Songmakers Almanac for out President, Graham Johnson, since its inception.

Sarah Leonard and Stephen Varcoe have been elected to the committee which brings it up to its full complement as per our constitution. Molly Petrie and Carolyn Richards who were nominated at a later time than Sarah and Stephen have been elected onto the committee as co-opted members.

Graham Trew - Chairman

KATERINA KARNEUS

On November 28th 2005, a group of AESS members were lucky enough – thanks to our Chairman – to meet with the internationally acclaimed mezzo-soprano Katerina Karneus over tea and biscuits in the American Bar of the Coliseum, where she was appearing in *Xerxes*. Katerina, winner of the 1992 AESS Singer's Prize and, in 1995 chosen as Cardiff, Singer of the World, gave us a vivid and illuminating sketch of how her professional life had expanded dramatically after the prize awards.

A singer of great charisma and presence, Katerina answered questions from us on her approach to choosing roles, how she balanced family life in S Africa with the solitary existence of a travelling soloist, keeping fit, and on the continual process of learning new repertoire and developing the qualities which make a singer of her calibre unique. A delightful meeting.

PS: It was therefore a great pleasure, on December 28th, to attend a BBC Lunchtime Concert at the Wigmore Hall, when Katerina and her accompanist, Johan Ullen, performed songs by Schubert, Debussy, Poulenc and Wagner with point and empathy to a packed and appreciative audience. Schubert's *Bei dir allein* and Wagner's *Traume*, were particularly affecting.

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THE HOLY BOY

Our pre-Christmas days were enlivened on Tuesday December 6 by the treat of an Advent Concert in words and music – *The Holy Boy* – given by Rosamund Shelley, Actress, and Graham Trew, Baritone, with David Williams at the piano.

The setting for the concert was the elegantly modern music room offered by our hosts, Mr and Mrs Hildesley, a truly wonderful space with a fine acoustic and providing a beautiful setting without imposing itself upon the performers.

The programme was full of warmth, and for this listener, nostalgia *Star Candles*. *The Little Road to Bethlehem* and *The Monkey's Carol* particularly resonated with me, while Graham's robust rendering of Sterndale Bennett's *Carol Singers* made his audience laugh aloud.

Rosamund Shelley's finely spoken prose and poetry – moving and diverting – ranged from Eliot's *The Journey of the Magi* to the delightful *Child's Christmas in Wales* by Dylan Thomas, while David Williams' sensitive accompaniments added a magic touch to this splendid evening in a beautiful setting.

A.E. HOUSMAN: A Celebration in Words & Music:

St Gabriel's Church Hall was the appropriate venue January 15 2006, for this Housman programme – *The Land of Lost Content* -performed by the actor, Gabriel Woolf, Graham Trew, baritone, and accompanist Simon Weale.

To me, like many people, Housman mainly means *A Shropshire Lad* – so it was fascinating to have Gabriel Woolf flesh out, so expertly, a broad picture of the poet's life, with his most important academic work in the translation of Latin verse and both his early and later life at Cambridge. Housman's struggles with relationships and acknowledgement of sexual preferences were sensitively touched on, but perhaps the most revealing of his personality were the wry and witty verses on more domestic subjects.

The many settings of Housman's *A Shropshire Lad* poems were finely interpreted by Graham Trew – an expert in the genre – to an appreciative audience and sympathetically accompanied by Simon Weale. A memorable and mind-expanding afternoon event (followed by tea and delicious cakes – lucky AESS.)

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THE LAND OF LOST CONTENT

The day was dismally grey but the setting in Pimlico at St Gabriel's Church Hall was perfect for the material in this concert. Here was a period church hall indeed, circa 1900, pushed behind Pimlico's elegant terraces. Here were lofty ceilings, thick brown paint, a stage replete with bric-a-brac of every kind, and period lavatories that had to be tested to be believed.

A.E. Housman would have appreciated the setting chosen for a superb presentation of his words and music by Gabriel Woolf, actor, Graham Trew, baritone and current Chairman of the AESS, and Simon Weale, piano. Graham of course was equally at home with the words as with the music which is unsurprising because he has lived with the Housman legacy for a long time and his CD entitled 'A Shropshire Lad' was Gramophone 'Vocal Record of the Year' in 1980.

We were treated to a commentary on Housman's life interspersed with his poems and prose, either read or sung, to settings by Butterworth, Vaughan Williams, Orr, Peel, Armstrong Gibbs and Moeran. The tone throughout was light and semi-humorous in spite of the loveless and lonely life that was being celebrated.

This was a vintage occasion in a vintage setting, and we in the audience certainly experienced the love devoted to the words and music by all three artists.

Philip Swallow

FUTURE EVENTS – 2006/7**FARJEONALIA**

Sunday July 16th at 3.30 pm

Lauderdale House, Highgate Hill, London N6 5HG

Anne Harvey, Stefan Bednarczyk and Richard Furstenheim

The artists will give a programme of biography and song about the Farjeon family – Harry, Eleanor, Joe and Bertie, who grew up with little formal education in an imaginative Hampstead nursery in the 1890s, and made their mark on the world of 20th century music, literature and theatre.

Members £7.50 Non-members £10 Students £5

Tickets can be reserved in advance from Marian Lines 020 8969 2210

GRAHAM JOHNSON MASTERCLASS

Graham Johnson, one of our Honorary Presidents, has offered to give a masterclass on the evening of October 26th. It will be held at the Royal College of Music and his theme is 'Night Songs & Serenades'.

JUNIOR RECITAL COMPETITION

The junior Recital Competition will be restarted this October/November with performers 14-19 being asked to give a memorized, themed, 15 minute programme of song to original texts, to include one piece of spoken verse. It will be run on the same lines as the senior competition with entries from those at Junior Conservatoires and Specialist Music Schools as well as students of AESS members. Entries close on September 30th.

There will be a preliminary round in London and another in Manchester, both on October 21st, 2nd the final will be on November 11th at the central London home of Bob Boas, who runs a charity in memory of his son from 22 Mansfield Street.

The prospectus and application form is available from the administrator: Carolyn Richards 29 Petersfield,

Chelmsford, Essex CM1 4EP Tel: 01245 440004 email: Singer7306@aol.com

THE PATRICIA ROUTLEDGE SONG PRIZE

At 6.00 pm Wednesday May 3rd the final of the 2006 AESS English Song Competition - most generously sponsored by Honorary President Patricia Routledge – was held in the Concert Hall of the Royal College of Music.

The finalists, chosen from 16 selected entrants, included: Adrian Ward - tenor, Rhona McKail – soprano, Iestyn Morris – counter-tenor, Katherine Allen – mezzo-soprano, Oliver Hunt – bass-baritone and Emma Peaurt – soprano.

The jury were: Marie Hayward Segal, Richard Jackson, Marian Lines, Eileen Price and Rosamund Shelley.

The finalists individual programmes were wide-ranging and thoughtful, creating a stimulating concert for the substantial audience.

WINNERS WERE:

1st IESTYN MORRIS (Spirits, Ayres & Enchantments) most engaging and lively, with songs by Finzi, Tippett and Purcell and speeches from Shakespeare's Henry V111, Tempest & Merchant of Venice.

2nd KATHERINE ALLEN (Songs of the Sacred) singing Ireland, Elgar Holst & Vaughan Williams – speaking a poem by Keats; a performance of great depth and sincerity.

3rd OLIVER HUNT (The Pity of War) singing Ives, Finzi and Butterworth, and speaking Wilfred Owen's 'Strange Meeting' – a sombre and moving programme. The accompanist's Prize went to Jennie-Helen Moston for her fine and sensitive playing.

Jury members wish particularly to commend the very high standard of presentation and performance by all 16 entrants.

The AESS committee would like to thank The Royal College most warmly for hosting the final and preliminary rounds of the competition.

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RECORDING

Dunelm Records have sent a CD of English Song performed by Paul Martyn-West (tenor) and Nigel Foster (piano). It includes Moeran's Norfolk Folksongs and Seven Poems of James Joyce, Warlock's Candlelight nursery jingles plus 4 other songs including 'The Fox' and some settings by Geoffrey Stern. Paul Martyn-West sings tunefully and with exemplary diction and he is well-partnered by his accompanist. The record balance is generally fine, occasionally the piano dominates in the more powerful songs. The repertoire is interesting, there are not many recordings of these settings. The Stern songs are melodious without being particularly memorable. Dunelm Records can be contacted by email on info@dunelm-records.co.uk

AofESS.org.uk

Our website is now up and running. Presidents, committee, officers and members are listed with some history of future events and downloadable membership applications and competition prospectuses. All time consuming however. If any member would like to take on the job of developing the website please contact Graham Trew: graham.trew@virgin.net

AGM 2007

Next year's AGM and dinner will be held on March 18th at the Royal Overseas League.

BRUNEL: The Little Man in the Tall Hat

A community opera about Brunel's life, work and the railway town of Swindon by Betty Roe and Marian Lines has been commissioned by The Janice Thompson Performance Trust to celebrate the bicentenary of Brunel's birth.

Gala Performance on Saturday evening September 16 at St Marks Church, Railway Village, Swindon.. Sunday Sept 17, afternoon and evening performances. To reserve tickets please contact Janice Thompson, 20 Norman Rd, Swindon SN2 1AZ: Tel 01793 535185. Email Jtprust@aol.com

