



*The Association of English Singers & Speakers*

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## **NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2011**

### **A NOTE FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

A Happy New Year to you all. 2010 saw continued growth in our membership and the first final of the 'Courtney Kenny Award'. With three generous sponsors, the Association is able to promote the communication of the English language in speech and song in competitions spanning the ages of 13–32, as well as continuing to do so through workshops and concerts. One who always communicated the language in song, and who supported the AESS through being an individual member as well as through the corporate membership of the Jackdaws Educational Trust, was Maureen Lehane who sadly died just after Christmas, having fought a degenerative illness for several years. She will be much missed and all good wishes go to those at Jackdaws carrying on and developing what was a very dear and personal enterprise for Maureen.

The AESS is helping to sponsor three enterprises in 2011. Two are English Song Festivals organised by two of our enthusiastic accompanist members, Nigel Foster and William Vann and the third is a DVD of Catherine Lambert talking about her life and giving a masterclass at the Royal College of Music. This recording is to be shown at a joint RCM/AESS event on March 9<sup>th</sup>, with Catherine attending to answer questions about her life and work. Details will, of course, be available on our website and circulated to the email group. There are now only 18 members out of 180 who, as yet, have no access to email but we strive to keep them informed as much as possible by post.

Please consider coming to the finals, if you possibly can. A reasonably sized audience attended the recent Catherine Lambert Recital Competition at St John's School, Leatherhead, but apart from organisers and judges there were no members present. The 2011 final may well be held in Lincoln so that could be a challenge!

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The judges for this event were a little concerned about the way these of our youngest age-group, approached the compilation and delivery of their 'themed' programme, so, in consultation, I have set out a few ideas for prospective competitors which will be sent with every application form in future.

The AGM/Annual Dinner will be on Sunday March 20<sup>th</sup> at the Royal Overseas League. In the year of the Royal Wedding in April, our guest speaker will be the Domestic Chaplain to HM the Queen and Sub-Dean of HM Chapels Royal, the Reverend Prebendary Bill Scott. Entertainment will again be organised and performed by Rosamund Shelley and friends after their terrific reception at last year's Dinner.

**Graham Trew**

### **MUCH DESERVED RECOGNITION of an AESS COMMITTEE MEMBER**

Very many congratulations to **BETTY ROE** who, in the Queen's New Year's Honours List, has been made an MBE for services to Classical Music and to Composition. The committee and members of the Association will be delighted that Betty's lifelong career in music, especially in the field of English Song, has been so notably recognized.

### **THE CATHERINE LAMBERT JUNIOR RECITAL PRIZE FINAL 2010**

The 2010 final was held in the modern chapel at St John's School, Leatherhead, courtesy of the Headmaster and Nicholas Smith, the Director of Music. Thomas Payne, the 2009 winner, attends St John's and we were most grateful to Nick for offering to host this year's event. It is good to be able to move the preliminary rounds and the finals to more regional venues as befits a national association such as ours.

As always, the event was staged efficiently by Carolyn Richards. There is much 'behind the scenes' work involved in the three competitions and the AESS is lucky to have Carolyn and Stephen Miles as administrators. I am constantly working in spare moments throughout the year to find venues and judges at minimal cost to the Association. It is wonderful to have sponsorship and for our Prizes to be recognised as unique and important national competitions, but all have to be paid for out of members' subscriptions. We also do not want to neglect concerts and workshops and I am grateful for the work undertaken by the voluntary committee.

The panel of judges, all working for very minimal expenses, was Alison Horriben, David Kirby-Ashmore and Garry Humphreys. Their discussions were wide-ranging and many important points were raised to do with programming and presentation. I have decided that there should be an advice slip sent out with the application forms for this particular

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age group (13-18) stressing the need for their 'theme' to be reasonably specific, for the songs and poems to be relevant to the theme and for the spoken element to consist of more than just stating that 'My name is..... and my first song is..... and my poem is..... etcetera. All this information is contained in the programme and it would be good if there were links made between the pieces and the 'theme'.

As chairman I took no part in the final judging, although I had chosen finalists from the preliminary round in Burton-on-Trent. Thanks are due to Coral Gould for lending her studio for this and indeed for providing the £100 third prize as usual. Judy Hildesley again allowed the AESS to use her music room for the London preliminary and judges there were Judy herself, Marian Lines and Betty Roe. Many thanks to them.

My personal thoughts on the finalists were as follows. Melissa Davies sang well and was very sympathetically accompanied by a young student, Olga Jorgensen. The judges wished her to have a prize. Some years ago Judy Hildesley offered £50 for a possible pianist's prize. Usually, this age group is accompanied by teachers or other professionals, so it was good to be able to award the money to a young player on this occasion. Melissa was slightly underpowered in the acoustic of the chapel and her choice of Britten's 'Charm of Lullabies' needed more variety to be totally effective. Milly Forrest looked and sounded very polished. She was rather indulgent with sound and tempi however. Her breath control was not quite up to some of the slow speeds chosen and although her top notes were beautiful, they were occasionally far too soft. Kieran Brunt showed off a sweet-toned, light tenor voice and a nice stage-presence. The voice needs more time to mature and some climaxes were not as robust as they needed to be. Ellie Smit has a sweet voice and communicated well but the voice needs to develop a wider range of tone colour as yet. Kirsten Lloyd-Leach was the only competitor to try to link her songs with a story. This worked well and her voice was nicely focussed. However, her memory was not working efficiently enough and this hampered her performance. Cameron Richardson-Eames sang with a fine mature voice but again there were too many slow songs and the one faster piece 'Let the Florid Music Praise' was not secure in notes or intonation and rather a surprising choice for a young singer. Rosanna Cooper had a comfortable platform manner and performed well. She has an extremely fine voice which she used skilfully. Her developing mezzo-soprano could not quite deliver the ecstatic mood of 'My Heart is like a Singing Bird' but much of her programme was very effective. Davina Brownrigg had a dark voice with much potential but some of her choices were not suited to her present stage of development.

You will notice that I have not mentioned 'speaking' much. On the whole the poetry chosen was performed with little real sense of the meaning. Some was adequate but there was no one item, which made one, sit up and take notice. There was, as I mentioned earlier, far too much bland introduction and this part of the prize needs to be addressed by the entrants.

Catherine Lambert had sent a message of greeting to all the finalists, which I read out. The AESS is so grateful for Catherine's continued interest and sponsorship. She is amazingly active for 93 and I look forward to sending members details of an event at the RCM next March, when a DVD, that we have helped to sponsor, made by and with

Norbert Meyn and Janis Kelly, in conversation with Catherine, will be shown, with Catherine hopefully present to answer questions.

The judges were sure of the first three places in this year's final, although there was some discussion about the preferred order. The winner of the £300 first prize was Rosanna Cooper, the runner-up (£200) was Kieran Brunt and third (£100) was Milly Forrest.

Veronica Veysey –Campbell (Junior RCM) was the teacher of the first two performers and Sara Reynolds (Junior RAM) the teacher of the third placed singer.

Rosanna is currently at school in Lincoln Minster School and all there would be delighted if the AESS held next year's final at that venue. It would be good to have a regional final and to see if more entrants can be enticed from the North-East and North-West.

## **Graham Trew**

### **MAUREEN LEHANE Obituary**

September 18th, 1932 / December 27th, 2010

It is with great sadness that we have learned of the death of Maureen Lehane of the Jackdaws Educational Trust after a long and courageous battle with her illness.

The English mezzo-soprano studied at the Guildhall School of Music in London and continued her training with Hermann Weissenborn in Berlin and with the English teachers John and Aida Dickens. Maureen Lehane made her debut in 1967 at the Festival of Glyndebourne in the Baroque opera *L'Ormindo* by Cavalli and made a great career in England and abroad. In 1966 she married with the composer Peter Wishart (1921-1984), for whose work she had special affinity. She sang numerous opera roles, among them for the Handel Opera Society works like *Arianna* and *Faramondo* by Georg Frideric Handel England as in the USA. She appeared with great success in concerts at the Carnegie Hall New York, in England, Poland, Sweden and Germany. She sang also at the Festival of Aldeburgh, at the Stravinsky Festival, at the Three Choirs Festival, in Cologne and at the Göttingen Händel Festival. She undertook an Australia tour, a two-month USA tour and a three-month concert tour in the Middle and the Far East. In 1971 she made a guest appearance in the Dutch as on the Belgian television, visited in 1979-1980 in Berlin Lisbon and Rome, in 1981 in Warsaw. In 1974 she performed at the Sadler's Wells Opera London the title role in *Ariodante* by Händel, in 1976 at the Netherlands Opera Amsterdam Dido in *Dido and Aeneas* by H. Purcell. In 1974 she sang in London the title role in the opera *Clytemnestra*, a work of her husband Peter Wishart, in 1982 in the opera *Adriano in Siria* by Johann Christof Bach in 1984 at Reading University in Peter Wishart's *The Lady of the Inn*. In 1986 she launched an annual Festival, dedicated to the memory of her late husband and his work. In 1993 the Jackdaws Educational Trust, a natural development of the festival, was founded. A Peter Wishart Memorial Prize is awarded annually to a final year undergraduate student in the Department of Music at the University of Reading.

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Maureen Lehane continued her career, particularly in radio and television broadcasts, and

worked also within the music-educational area. Already during 1972-1973 she gave in Holland courses for introduction to the Händel interpretation, and operated in a similar form in England.

Recordings: Numerous recordings on various labels, on Decca (*Belshazzar* by G. F. Handel, *Elektra*), HMV (*Theresien-Messe* by J. Haydn), BASF (Bach Cantatas, sacred vocal works of J. Haydn, Mozart, *Magnificat* by Johann Christian Bach, Westminster (Arsamene in *Serse* by G F Handel, Songs of H. Purcell in arrangements by her husband Peter Wishart.

## THE JOYS OF COLLECTING

Perhaps I was born fifty years too late. I say this because I feel that I am really a child of the first half of the twentieth century, although I am only too grateful to have been born after the second-world war, benefitting from the technological benefits that have enhanced the performing arts.

My early life was spent, idyllically, on a farm in beautiful countryside. I believe that this experience acted as an introduction and a link to my other great loves and appreciations which are music and painting, particularly those of Britain in the last century.

My stepmother was a gifted painter, although her output was restricted by glaucoma in later years. I have some fine examples of her work, mainly landscapes, from the area of North Essex, where we lived. Sadly, I have no talent for painting but am nevertheless usually drawn to the most expensive painting in a gallery, which, with the lack of empty wall space, helps to restrict purchasing!

Collecting paintings began with local artists in Highgate, where I lived very close to the North Hill house with its Blue Plaque, which signifies that this is where A E Housman wrote 'A Shropshire Lad'. However, finding the Much Wenlock Fine Art Gallery (when holidaying in Mid Wales), which is still run today by the irrepressible Peter Cotterill, with his passion for C20th British Art, further cemented my love for this period.

Teaching at Highgate School, I knew that at one time the fine Welsh painter Sir Kyffin Williams has also been a staff member. I began to look for Kyffin's paintings. Peter Cotterill, mentioned above, sold me one of Kyffin's works which was unsigned. I wrote to Kyffin asking if he would sign it and he wrote back saying he would, if I took him to lunch! It was fascinating to talk to him and to see his studio and I have a photograph of him signing the painting concerned. He informed me that at Highgate School he had often been reprimanded for going to Hampstead Heath to paint, leaving a class waiting! His best students, he said, were Patrick Procktor and John Rutter, although John Rutter denies this!

I had much liked a painting of 'Maida Vale Canal ' by Robert Hurdle, pictured in a volume of Camberwell Artists. At another exhibition I saw Robert Hurdle's signature in the Visitors' Book and wrote to him, asking to call. Robert was an extremely sprightly

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eighty year-old, still painting in Bristol, as he is today. He did not know where this particular work had gone but I persuaded him to part with another small oil from the same period. Robert kindly send me a press cutting from the 1940's showing him

standing in a sunny French field painting the scene that I had acquired. I often talked to Peter Cotterill about 'Maida Vale Canal' and after knowing him for about five years he confessed that it had been on his wall at home all the time and he thought that he would now offer to sell it to me!

Collecting art in a small way has led to many such stories, many friendships with artists, gallery owners and other buyers. Often a painting or a search for one has been linked to poetry or music, such as going to an exhibition of paintings by Benedict Rubbra just after singing some of Edmund Rubbra songs in the BBC Concert Hall; or giving a recital of Housman settings at the Machynlleth Festival, which included a commission of Gabriel Jackson's work for me to sing of a Housman setting, with a visual component, completed in collage by the Ruralist Artist, Graham Arnold.

My intention is to open a gallery in Shropshire specialising in 20<sup>th</sup> century British Art but also to highlight the many outstanding local Welsh and English Border artists living nearby. Hopefully there will be room for poetry and music making and that the AESS core aim of communication will be continued, enhanced by visual arts.

**Graham Trew**