



The EMFS Newsletter

November 2020 Issue 12

Hallo!

The weeks roll by, and although we're getting tired of the Covid restrictions, there's an element of familiarity with it. I hope you've managed to find ways to cope, especially those of you who live alone. I wonder if you've managed to sing or play music during the last months? I'm afraid my viol-playing and singing have been rather neglected, but I've made progress on the fiddle. I hope my neighbours agree. The MEMF website gives a fantastic overview or participatory early music activities online. (<http://memf.org.uk/online-early-music-in-lockdown/>) It's well worth investigating.

Of course, most events these days are online, and a good selection is listed below. In addition, there are many real life events planned south of the Border, which may or may not go ahead. As always, please check before you commit yourself. I am indebted to Victoria Helby of TVEMF who allowed me to use a lot of the

material in their last newsletter, including the listings information.

Alison, our Chair, has written a message for you below. I must close my eyes and bypass that page or I will blush. Seriously though (as I said to Alison), communicating with you has been something positive for me to do. It seems "not much" compared to the activities of friends & family out there - working in the NHS, in care homes and volunteering in the community at food banks, etc. Keeping EMFS informed and in touch is something I *can* do in the comfort and safety of my own home.

Finally, please scroll to the end of this document for news of the first EMFS Zoom event on 12th December. It would be great to see you there. Keep well!

Sue

sue@emfscotland.org.uk

Page 2

Message from EMFS Chair

Pages 16-17

Review of early music courses at Benslow

Pages 3-9

Events, Workshops, Diary Dates, Websites of Interest

Pages 18-20

Miscellany from TVMS

Pages 10-12

Early Music CD Reviews

Page 21

Poetry with early music theme

Pages 13-14

Gargoyles of Gargunock

Pages 22-24

Book Reviews



Message from our EMFS Chair

Dear all

I hope that you continue to stay well and safe in these troubled times.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Sue Owen for her continuing work in circulating details of online early music events, and for producing interesting EMFS newsletters, to keep us engaged despite the absence of live music-making. Thank you, Sue, you are a star!

Given that mixed household indoors music-making is unlikely to be possible over the winter months, let's view this as a positive opportunity to practise our musical skills, listen to lots of music and take part in some of the online lessons, courses and workshops set up by enterprising musicians. This is of course a very difficult time financially for many professional freelance musicians and ensembles; if you are able to help with donations or fees, it will be appreciated.

In the next few weeks, I will circulate a document about the future direction of EMFS and ask for your comments. Please take the time to respond to this. It's important that you, the members, speak up about how we should continue, once live music-making is possible again.

Best wishes

Alison

Events, workshops and other treats for your diary In real life! (Online events in next section)

NOVEMBER 2020

- Fri 13 - Sun 15 The Women Troubadours workshop, led by Leah Stuttard.
Benslow Music, Benslow Lane, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 9RB
<https://benslowmusic.org/>
- Thu 19 or Fri 20 Consorting Viols (Alison Crum, Roy Marks, Ibi Aziz, Peter Wendland)
- Sun 22 Benslow Music, Benslow Lane, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 9RB
<https://benslowmusic.org/>
- Fri 20 - Sun 22 Jackdaws. Recorder weekend (Anna Stegmann)
www.jackdaws.org.uk

JANUARY 2021

- Mon 8 - Wed 10 Viol Consort Music (Alison Crum)
West Dean College of Arts and Conservation - The Edward James Foundation Ltd,
West Dean, Nr Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 0QZ
www.westdean.org.uk; short.courses@westdean.org.uk
- Thu 21 or Fri 22 Baroque Chamber Music at 415
- Sun 24 Benslow Music, Benslow Lane, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 9RB
<https://benslowmusic.org/>
- Mon 25 - Thu 28 Consorting Viols
Benslow Music, Benslow Lane, Hitchin, Herts, SG4 9RB
<https://benslowmusic.org/>

FEBRUARY 2021

- Fri 12 - Sun 14 Jackdaws. The City Musick course on late 16th/early 17th Century instrumental
music (William Lyons and Richard Thomas)
Jackdaws Music Education Trust, Great Elm, Frome, Somerset, BA11 3NY, UK
www.jackdaws.org.uk

MARCH 2021

- Sun 21 - Fri 26 Lacock. Corsham Lamentations: a course for choral singers led by Rory McCleery
Town Hall, 65 High St, Corsham, Wiltshire, SN13 0EZ
www.lacock.org

APRIL 2021

- Wed 7 - Mon 12 Chalemie School at Easter. Headington School, Oxford. Early music, dance,
commedia, solo singing, costume making
<http://www.chalemie.co.uk/SummerSchool.htm>

Events, workshops and other treats for your diary In real life! (Online events in next section)

MAY 2021

- Fri 9 - Wed 14 Lacock. Ambleside Music Week – Esquivel (Eamonn Dougan)
www.lacock.org
- Wed 14 - Fri 16 Bristol Early Music Festival (sponsored by SWEMF) All Saints, Pembroke Road,
Bristol, BS8 3ED
http://bristolearlymusicfestival.uk/
- Wed 14 - Fri 16 Worcester. International Festival of Town Pipers
http://www.townwaits.org.uk/

JUNE 2021

- Sat 19 SEMF Workshop for singers (David Allinson)
Smarden Village Hall, Chessenden Ln, Smarden, Ashford TN27 8NF.
www.semf.org.uk

JULY 2021

- Sat 3 - Fri 9 Lacock. Music at Monteconero – early Latinoamericana (Gabriel Crouch)
www.lacock.org
- Sun 11 - Fri 16 Lacock. Edinburgh Early Music Summer School – Carver et al. (Rory McCleery)
www.lacock.org
- Sat 31 - Sat 7 Barnard Castle NORVIS 50 summer school
www.norvis.org.uk

AUGUST 2021

- Sun 1 - Sat 7 Beauchamp Early Music Course for singers and players of Renaissance instruments,
at Rendscomb nr Cirencester. “O quam gloriosum” - large & small-scale music
associated with saints and sainthood (David Hatcher, David Allinson & Sue
Addison)
www.glosacadmusic.org
- Sat 14 - Sat 21 Irish Recorder and Viol Course in Termonfeckin near Drogheda, north of Dublin
https://www.irishrecorderandviolcourse.org
- Sun 15 - Sun 22 Baroque Week summer school at Queen Anne’s School, Caversham. The Grand
Tour: Italy (Theresa Caudle, Ann Allen, Amanda Babington, Clare Beesley, Zoë
Cartlidge, Steven Devine, Satoko Doi-Luck, Jane Francis, David Miller, and Kate
Semmens)
www.baroque-week.org.uk (dates tbc)

Events, workshops and other treats for your diary In real life! (Online events in next section)

SEPTEMBER 2021

- Fri 3 - Sun 5 Jackdaws. Stylish Baroque (Theresa Caudle & Alastair Ross)
www.jackdaws.org.uk
- Sun 5 - Fri 10 Lacock. Trogir Music Week – Jacobean music (Patrick Craig)
www.lacock.org
- Fri 10 - Sun 12 Jackdaws. The City Musick course on late 16th/early 17th C instrumental music
(William Lyons and Richard Thomas)
www.jackdaws.org.uk
- Fri 17 - Sun 19 Medieval Music in the Dales at Bolton Castle
<https://www.medievalmusicintbedales.co.uk/>
- Sun 19 - Sat 25 Lacock. Lucca Consort Week – Frescobaldi et al. in small groups (Robert
Hollingworth)
www.lacock.org

Events, workshops and other treats for your diary

Online

NOVEMBER 2020

- Tue 10 - Sat 5 Dec Run by Singers. Mozart Requiem at Midnight, Vienna. Online rehearsals and concert (Nigel Perrin)
www.runbysingers.org/virtual-vienna
- Sat 14 MEMF Sing the Score Extra with Robert Hollingworth
10am *<http://memf.org.uk/event/singthescore-extra-with-robert-hollingworth-3/>*
- Sat 14 SWEMF John Hancorn and Richard Wigmore
4pm Christmas Oratorio sing and play at 415
<https://www.swemf.org.uk/event/5583/>
- Wed 18 The Sixteen: A Choral Odyssey: Sheppard & Davy
7:30pm *<https://thesixteen.com/events/a-choral-odyssey-sheppard-davy/>*
- Thu 19 NEEMF John Bryan. Where do you want me to sit?
<https://www.neemf.org.uk/neemf-workshop-diary.html> (scroll down)
- Fri 20 MEMF Patrick Craig. Bach and Handel
7:30pm *<http://memf.org.uk/event/bach-and-handel-with-patrick-craig/>*
- Sat 21 Vasari Singers: Come and Sing Spem in Alium (Tallis)
2:30pm *<http://www.vasarisingers.org/event/comesing-spem/>*
- Sat 21 Lisete da Silva masterclass on Handel flute & recorder sonatas
3pm *https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_koSs9NHrQVCazkQFSdUbGA*
- Sat 21 - Mon 23 Lute songs: Benslow Music online
<https://benslowmusic.org/>
- Tue 24 BMEMF David Allinson. Workshop for singers
7:30pm *<http://www.bmemf.org.uk/>*
- Wed 25 The Sixteen: A Choral Odyssey: Guerrero
7:30pm *<https://thesixteen.com/events/a-choral-odyssey-guerrero/>*
- Thu 26 SEMF Alison Kinder. How to sing or play from late 16th C facsimile - 1st of 2
7pm sessions. *<https://www.semf.org.uk/>*
- Sat 28 NWEMF David Allinson. Illustrated talk on William Byrd's music for Advent in
10am the Gradualia I (1605)
<https://nwemf.org/>
- Sat 28 MEMF Sing the Score Extra with Robert Hollingworth
11am *<http://memf.org.uk/events/list/>*

Events, workshops and other treats for your diary

Online cont'd

DECEMBER 2020

- Thu 3
7pm SEMF Alison Kinder. How to sing and play from late 16th C facsimile 2nd of 2 sessions.
<https://www.semf.org.uk/event/>
- Sat 12 MEMF Sing the Score Extra with Robert Hollingworth
<http://memf.org.uk/events/>
- Mon 14 TVEMF Andrew Griffiths
<https://www.tvemf.org/forthcoming-events>
- Wed 16 NEEMF David Allinson Mouton and Verdelot
<https://www.neemf.org.uk/neemf-workshop-diary.html> (Scroll down)
- Sun 20
11am MEMF Sing the Score Extra with Robert Hollingworth
<http://memf.org.uk/events/>
- Sun 20
7:30pm MEMF Music of Epiphany with Patrick Craig
<http://memf.org.uk/events/>
- Mon 21
7pm TVEMF Renaissance Singers. David Allinson live online Christmas event
Details to be announced
<https://www.tvemf.org>

JANUARY 2021

- Tue 5
7:30pm SEMF David Allinson. On the theme of Epiphany. Details to be announced.
<https://www.semf.org.uk/event>
- Wed 6 NWEMF workshop (Andrew Griffiths). Details to be announced.
<https://nwemf.org/>
- Thu 14
8pm TVEMF ON ZOOM Patrick Craig: Epiphany (joint event with EEMF)
www.tvemf.org
- Thu 21
7:30 BMEMF David Allinson. Details to be announced.
<http://www.bmemf.org.uk/future-workshops.html>
- Sat 23
4pm John Hancorn and Richard Wigmore. Handel Messiah sing and play 415
<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/events/landing?eid=13869&>

FEBRUARY 2021

- Tue 9
7:30pm TVEMF John Bryan
www.tvemf.org
- Thu 18
7:30pm SEMF Patrick Craig presents Music for Ash Wednesday
<https://www.semf.org.uk/event/patrick-craig-music-for-ash-wednesday>
- Sat 27
4pm John Hancorn and Richard Wigmore: Bach St Matthew Passion sing and play 415
<https://www.trybooking.com/uk/events/landing?eid=13870&>

MARCH 2021

- Fri 19 - Sun 21 Medieval Music in the Dales 2nd Online Festival
<https://www.medievalmusicinthedales.co.uk/>

Concerts

DECEMBER 2020

- Thu 3
7pm
London Handel Festival: Handel Messiah live stream
www.london-handel-festival.com
- Mon 14
7:30pm
Wigmore Hall live & on line - Iestyn Davies countertenor
www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
- Tue 15
7:30pm
Wigmore Hall live & on line. Tenebrae in the Wigmore Hall
www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
- Mon 21
1pm
Wigmore Hall live & on line. Stile Antico. A Spanish Nativity
www.wigmore-hall.org.uk
- Mon 21
7:30pm
Wigmore Hall live & on line The Cardinal's Musick
www.wigmore-hall.org.uk

MAY 2021

- Fri 7 - Sun 9
Bristol Early Music Festival (sponsored by SWEMF)
<http://bristolearlymusicfestival.uk/>
- Wed 19 - Fri 21
Medieval Music in the Dales 2nd Online Festival
<https://www.medievalmusicinthedales.co.uk/>

Events, workshops and other treats for your diary Outside Scotland

For details of events in the north of England which may be of interest and within reasonable reach:

North East Early Music Forum (<http://www.neemf.org.uk/>;
and <https://www.neemf.org.uk/other-events.html>) for a long list of Early Music events in north east England.

North West Early Music Forum (<https://nwemf.org/>)

The National Early Music Centre in York presents a wonderful programme of concerts and events.
<http://www.ncem.co.uk/>

Benslow Music runs several Early Music courses in Hitchin, Hertfordshire:
(<https://www.benslowmusic.org/>)

Some of their courses are listed below.

The Rondo Viol academy runs courses throughout the year for players of different standards.
For details of all courses please see (<http://www.rondoviolaacademy.co.uk/>)

Venues are The Hayes in Swanwick, Derbyshire
(<https://www.cct.org.uk/the-hayes/the-hayes-conference-centre>).

High Leigh in Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire
(<https://www.cct.org.uk/high-leigh/high-leigh-conference-centre>).

Hothorpe Hall in Theddingworth, Leicestershire
(<https://www.hothorpe.co.uk/>).

The Beeches in Bournville, Birmingham
(<https://chartridgevenues.com/the-beeches/>).

Early music CD reviews

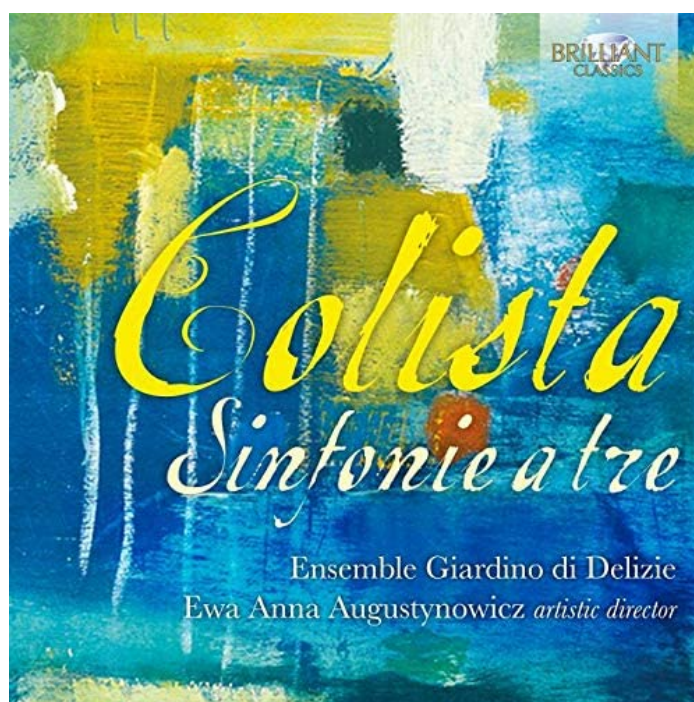
D James Ross

As part of a team of leading reviewers, D James Ross reviews early music CDs for Early Music Review, ‘the home of hip opinion’, which may be viewed online at www.earlymusicreview.com. The website is regularly updated and boasts a unique archive of past reviews.

Colista: Sinfonie a tre

Ensemble Giardino di Delizie (74:53)

Lelio Colista seems the classic example of a prolific and admired composer, who (having failed to publish his music) has slipped into obscurity, with many of his compositions having been lost. He moved in the culturally rich ambience of late 17th-century Rome, rubbing shoulders with the likes of Cesti, Stradella and even Corelli, and as the ‘go-to’ continuo lutanist played in all the groundbreaking performances of the day. These nine *Sinfonie a tre* and single *Ballo a tre* are all taken from the Giordano 15 manuscript at the Biblioteca Nazionale in Turin, and reveal an inventive and accomplished composer at the height of his powers. The Ensemble Giardino di Delizie playing in the pleasingly resonant acoustic of the Church of St Francis in Trevi, take an energetic and imaginative

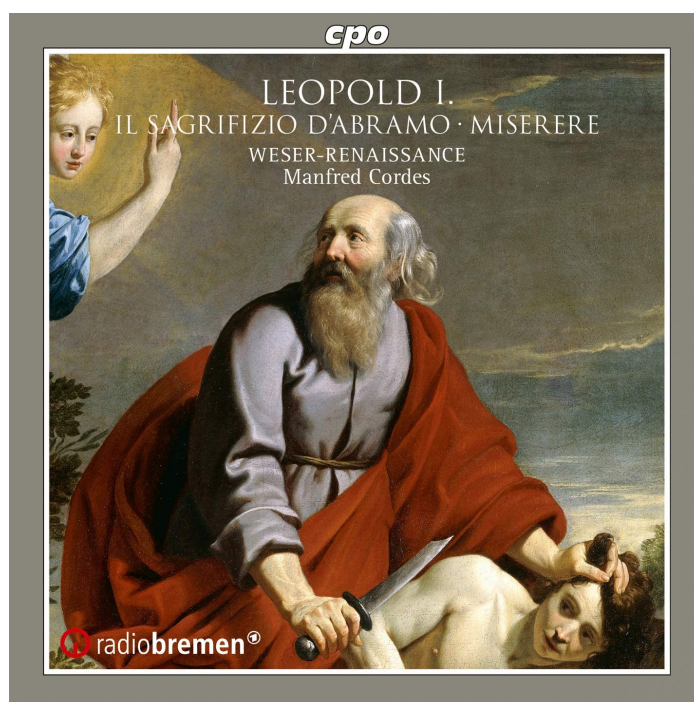


approach to this fine music, alternating organ and harpsichord, and archlute and guitar in their continuo group and playing with sensitivity and considerable musicality. Undoubtedly reminiscent of the music of Corelli, there is a busy freshness about Colista’s writing which makes the loss of much of his larger-scale music disappointing, but certainly makes these world premiere recordings a very welcome addition to the catalogue. These days, a strikingly high percentage of my review CDs feature performances by Italian ensembles of Italian music of the late 17th and 18th centuries, and both the quality of the music and the standard of the performances is generally very high indeed. Notwithstanding the ubiquity of Corelli and Vivaldi, it is good to see these musicians delving further into their very rich and still largely unexplored Baroque heritage.

Leopold I: Il sacrificio d'Abramo, Miserere

Weser-Renaissance, Manfred Cordes (76:00)

Leopold I inherited the imperial crown unexpectedly in 1654 on the death of his brother, having been groomed as the second son for a career in the church. He never fully adjusted to his imperial role, relying on a team of advisers and politicians to run the empire, intervening only occasionally when necessary. This had the advantage that while his contemporary Louis XIV (unfortunately labelled Louis IV in the English translation of the notes) engaged in a series of expensive and largely disastrous military adventures, Leopold consistently managed to stay out of these. Instead, Vienna flourished culturally, and Leopold engaged fully in its burgeoning musical life. His surviving compositions suggest a man with more than dilettante musical skills, and this is borne out by his oratorio *Il Sacrificio d'Abramo*, remarkably his first attempt at the genre and generally pretty persuasive. In his own lifetime, as here, Leopold's compositions would have benefited from being performed by the very finest singers and instrumentalists, and Weser-Renaissance give their customary very polished account of this music. His setting of the *Miserere* for four voices and strings is strikingly impassioned and extremely effective, all the more powerful for its pared-down textures. Weser-Renaissance recorded this CD at the end of their 2015/6 season exploring music composed by and associated with Leopold I, and there is an impressive authority about these performances which reflects the understanding they gained from this approach.



Amor, Fortuna et Mort

Profeti della Quinta (64:21)

This collection of madrigals has been compiled for the excellent reason that the singers of the Profeti della Quinta love singing them. Interestingly the composers they choose span the 16th and the first half of the 17th centuries – Cipriano de Rore was born in 1515/6 and died in 1565, while Monteverdi was born in 1567 and died in 1643. While there is considerable variety here, various musical and thematic threads run all the way through the programme. The five male voices, joined in the later works by lute, achieve a remarkable blend and purity of intonation, and sing these madrigals with intense expression and musical intelligence. In addition to some very familiar material, we have an extraordinary madrigal by Scipione

Lacortia, who manages to outdo his model Gesualdo in harmonic eccentricity and melodic waywardness! The recording of Monteverdi's "Lamento della Ninfa" (13) is a hair-raising aberration, as one of the group's male altos hideously droops and swoops around Monteverdi's melodic line in a style verging on caricature. Famously, Monteverdi asks the soloist to sing 'at the beat of the emotions' – however, this clearly means singing with a degree of mensural freedom rather than approximating the actual notes in a sort of anachronistic *Sprechgesang*. This was not at all to my taste, and surely not what the composer meant, but it was mercifully unique on the CD. Interspersed among the madrigals, we also have a number of pieces for solo lute, some of them very effective arrangements of madrigals. Founded in Galilee by the eminent singer/harpsichordist/director/composer Elam Rotem, Profeti della Quinta is now based in Basel.



The Gargoyles of Gargunnoch

Helen Rowell

Like most of our early music friends, we won't have made any appearances for the whole of 2020, but we will have had our photos taken and turned into Old Master style portraits to adorn the walls of Bannockburn House, be in a guide book and made into post cards and prints! Mark Leslie, a semi-professional photographer specializing in Fine Arts, has been commissioned to create photographic portraits of all the volunteers and those who have helped to raise funds for the preservation of Bannockburn House (<https://www.bannockburnhouse.scot/#>)

As we've sung at their Christmas Fayre for the last 3 years, we've been included. Due to Covid restrictions, Mark had to do the photographs outside and we were extremely glad that the chosen day was dry and sunny, but also breezy and cold. We had to go one at a time, in our Renaissance outfits, which are more in keeping with the early history of the House. Mark allowed two hours for each of us and had a scene ready for us to sit at which was like a castle window. He took hundreds of photos of us, in a variety of positions, which a contortionist would have found difficult, but the results are remarkable and well worth the cold and aching hips and necks. He really is a genius with a camera. The photographs below show examples of his earlier work. You can find him on Facebook if you want to see more (<https://www.facebook.com/markleslie1963>).



I asked when we would be able to see the finished portraits and Mark just said “how long did it take you to make that outfit?” Well, that was a few weeks for each outfit, so I guess it takes a while. This time next year, they plan a Cheese and Wine evening to launch the book (at which we will be singing). This will begin a month of events at the House to celebrate the project.

So, it’s been a dreary year but at least we’ve had one opportunity to don the kirtle.

Here we are in happier times, Bannockburn House Christmas Fayre 2018, a very relaxed and lovely event (and cold!).



Early music collaboration sought

Steven McCann

Since the early 70s I have been involved in music (recorder playing in my early teens), which was accelerated once I got to know about David Munrow and Frans Bruggen. Due to some personal issues, my playing has reduced dramatically and I am now more into writing. I started this about two years ago and am happy with what I have done.

My initial ambition was to write for voices and instruments but I had to learn how to walk before wanting to run. Now the walking pace has increased a bit, I'm looking at developing musical structures in order to move on to a new project which could be either vocal or vocal with instruments.

I have recently completed a project – Genesis – which was 12 main compositions for 13 instruments (recorders ranging from the sopranino to contrabass) and the first 16 bars of each piece can be heard on my website (www.stevenmccann.com) under “Beachcomber Musicke”. Some of the compositions are based on the “neo-Renaissance” idiom and some are not. The main aim of the project was to gauge where I was after an eighteen month period of activity. Now that is complete, I want to move on to a new project.

If anyone is willing to give me tips or ideas on where or how to start writing for voices, I'd be more than happy to respond. I have a good resource of CDs etc, and I have been listening over the years to various different styles of music from middle ages to early Baroque, particularly the period spanning middle ages to the early renaissance. I'm also interested in the relationship between folk music and early music although my research into this has only just started. I don't have formal music training, everything I have learned is through going to concerts, playing (medieval banquets and with the Society of Recorder Players Glasgow Branch, off and on since the early 70s etc), reading and listening to performances.

I have my own music publishing company – Beachcomber Musicke – and have the software to experiment with different sounds and settings. All I now need to do is find some suitable “lyrics” and another adventure may soon take place. I would be happy to collaborate with someone who has a similar goal and interests. My day job is Self-employed Transport Manager and I can generally have spare time to pursue the new venture. If anyone wishes to contact me my email address is [*Bmusicke@btinternet.com*](mailto:Bmusicke@btinternet.com)

Serendipity, “the occurrence and development of events by chance in a beneficial way”

Review of a recent online Benslow Music course, courtesy of TVEMF

Barabara Moir

2020 has been the strangest of years. Amongst the many serious happenings globally, the March cancellation of my twice weekly wind band rehearsals on the modern flute was tiny, but still a bit of a blow, even though I could, and still do, play harpsichord on my own. So when I saw that one of Benslow’s rapidly developed online courses was taking place in early September, and it was on Handel sonatas for which I could use my modern flute, I didn’t hesitate to sign up. Serendipity indeed.

The course can’t really be reviewed without consideration of the technology, Zoom in this case. My Zoom/Skype conference call experience was extremely limited before last March, and experience since then in various settings has shown me how vital it is to have good leadership of the session to make it work. When it works well it can be extremely good, and so this 5 day course proved.

The extremely knowledgeable, and lovely, flautist Elizabeth Walker, who performs on a variety of historical and modern flutes, was the course leader, supported very ably by her equally lovely colleague Sarah Murphy. There were 11 participants, 7 on modern flutes and 4 baroque, 10 in the UK and 1 in the USA. There, immediately, was one advantage. We couldn’t have all played together in the same room, but in the first hour of warm-ups and exercises, we could do the same thing and see each other, just muting for the actual playing. During the day we each had a half hour individual lesson, and had no shortage of material to work on outside the lesson time. At the end of the day we came together for an hour’s study led by Elizabeth, looking not just at Handel’s flute sonatas but also at aspects of Handel’s vocal music, and more technically at 18th century flutes led by a flute-maker guest. On the final day we played to each other, some unaccompanied and some choosing to use a recorded accompaniment.

Liz and Sarah were so encouraging and supportive throughout the whole week, and very practical in their coaching. Having chosen a fairly quick movement to perform to the group, I started off unable to see where I could add much decoration, but then after being challenged to do much more, and applying some of my harpsichord experience of Handel, I amazed myself by how much I could add.

How did this compare with a residential course? I was pleasantly surprised by how easy it was to chat, literally and by messaging, to the other participants, though inevitably the chat-in-the-dining-room aspect of Benslow courses was missing. It felt less intensive than a residential course, and in fact I couldn’t have coped with any more daily screen time than we had. I had chance to digest the material, do some practice, do a bit of personal research, and generally keep up with things during the day, and being at home at night I slept well. Liz and Sarah had prepared quite a bit of material for us which was emailed each morning, which we could print ourselves or read directly from a screen.

For flautists, I can’t recommend these courses highly enough. Liz is running a series around a number of composers/themes, and I hope they continue. For Benslow, I think the online format really has the scope to enlarge and enhance their offering. Many of us have probably been forced to use this technology rather more suddenly than we would have liked, but this course is a brilliant example of just how powerful a format it can be.

Magnificat: Sacred music by Charpentier

Benslow September 21st - 24th 2020

Review of a recent real life Benslow Music course, courtesy of TVEMF

Kate Gordon

This was my second trip to Benslow to sing and play Charpentier, the first being TVEMF's Te Deum workshop in 2018 which I recall enjoying very much. Leaving aside the possibility that the course might not be able to run at all, I was somewhat apprehensive beforehand about how it would be run if it did go ahead, since Benslow would be introducing strict measures to comply with Covid rules. This meant separating course participants into two groups, one comprising just instrumentalists, the other singers and players, whereas under normal circumstances everyone would sing and play together.

I was placed in the larger group of choir and orchestra - around 18 of us in total (including our conductor, Bill Carslake). We took up the entire Morrison hall (Benslow's largest space) leaving a 2 metre gap between each participant.

The set up worked surprisingly well. At least from where I sat, I could hear everyone clearly, and this is probably down to the superb acoustic of Morrison hall.

In our choir, all voice parts were well covered with two to three singers on each line. Our orchestra included upper and lower strings, theorbo and harpsichord. Some of Charpentier's music has beautiful scoring for recorder so I was very pleased to find that included within our course repertoire were the Beatus Vir and Magnificat, both of which contain recorder parts. This meant that I and a fellow course participant were given the opportunity to play as well as sing. Among the most memorable recorder passages were the prelude to the Beatus Vir and the Suscepit Israel from the Magnificat scored for recorder duet and tenor. When not playing I sang in the choir. Solos were ably performed by choir members with assistance and encouragement from Bill as needed.

Under Bill's expert guidance we navigated our way through Charpentier's Magnificat (H79), Beatus Vir (H208), Laudate pueri Dominum (H203), Confitebor tibi (H220), Regina Caeli (H46) and Salve Regina (H47). With the exception of the vocal solos, some of which undoubtedly called for an element of virtuosity, most difficulties encountered were of a minor rhythmic nature, with the choir lagging behind the orchestra or vice versa at times. However, there was a noticeable improvement as the course went on which meant towards the end we were singing and playing together as a group and the subtleties, expressiveness and riches of Charpentier's music began to shine through. This is to be expected, but by no means guaranteed. For me, all the music we looked at was musically rewarding and well worth revisiting.

I felt Bill, our conductor, struck exactly the right balance between talking, playing and singing, interspersing conducting with brief commentary on the background in which Charpentier composed, worked and lived, elucidating text where needed (as much for the benefit of the players as for the singers), and mentioning points of style such as *inégaie*. We started each session with a brief warm up, which I personally found beneficial, particularly in the mornings.

It was wonderful to be singing and playing once more in the company of like-minded folk after being starved of opportunities for such a long period of time. Thanks to Theresa and Bill for organising and running this unique, much appreciated course and for the good choice of repertoire. and to Benslow Music Trust for their usual high standards, convivial atmosphere and hospitality.

Miscellany from TVEMF

Resources, online articles and blogs

A most useful resource is Elam Rotem's "Early Music Resources". The name speaks for itself, but there are also links to some excellent YouTube videos.

It can be found here: <https://www.earlymusicsources.com/home> and it's worth spending some time exploring this.

Ian Pittaway's "Early Music Muse" has a very interesting series of articles. The index is can be found here: <https://earlymusicmuse.com/emm-blog-index/>.

The City Musick Corona Consort

We all miss playing ensemble music, so The City Musick have spent several weeks remotely recording and preparing some of our favourite pieces for various combinations of wind, brass and reed instruments — so you can play along with them!

The new CCK (Corona Consort Karaoke) Music Store contains a selection of music they have recorded in a "music- minus-a-part" style, which they will continue to augment with new play-along pieces on a regular basis. The instrumentation is deliberately varied, including mixed consorts of cornetts, shawms, dulcians and sackbuts, whole consorts of recorders, shawms and crumhorns and other combinations. You don't have to have one of the specified instruments in order to play along, as the parts can be played on any instrument of your choice. The aim is for you to enjoy, albeit virtually, playing music with others - in this case some of the finest performers of historic music around. All information and products can be found here: <https://www.tcmusick.com/cck-music-store>.

SWEMF Medieval Cantiga Workshop – a Virtual Workshop for Everyone!

Clare Griffel writes:

I'm sure that you, like me, are missing our SWEMF workshops. So we have a treat for you: Alison Kinder, whose sessions for us in the past have delighted those who attended, has recorded a 'virtual workshop' for us. The music for the session, a Cantiga from the Red Book of Montserrat, can be printed off *by clicking here*, and the video can be accessed *by clicking here*. You can join in as a singer or with any instrument at 440 pitch - no-one will know if you are in fact using your historically informed saxophone! I hope you enjoy the session!

Alison Kinder's YouTube viol tutorials can be found *by clicking here*.

SWEMF links to online events <https://www.swemf.org.uk/events/online-events/>.

SWEMF resources including online choral singing and courses <https://www.swemf.org.uk/links/resources/>

Miscellany from TVEMF cont'd

From NEEMF

Link to downloadable items <https://www.neemf.org.uk/onlinedownloadable.html>

Link to playable web content <https://www.neemf.org.uk/playable.html>

Link to websites relating to instruments <https://www.neemf.org.uk/instrument-pages.html>

Link to other miscellaneous websites of interest <https://www.neemf.org.uk/misc.html>

The Telling

I wrote last month about The Telling's series of free online singing workshops via Zoom, some on Friday mornings and some just before their Wednesday evening concerts. The concerts are on Facebook and YouTube. Visit <https://www.thetelling.co.uk/in-retreat> for the links to future sessions and videos of past ones. Frustratingly, they only have one performance on YouTube at a time, so if you don't catch one the week it's released it has disappeared (I hope not forever).

John Eliot Gardiner podcast series on Monteverdi and his Constellation

John Eliot Gardiner presents a new podcast series exploring Monteverdi's role at the centre of seismic shifts and tumultuous advances in all the arts and sciences during the early 1600s, spearheaded by his contemporaries - Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Shakespeare, Caravaggio and Rubens. <https://monteverdi.co.uk/monteverdi-constellation-podcast-series>

London International Festival of Early Music - Free!

This year, they have decided to offer the complete programme for the 2020 festival for free, although they would be extremely grateful for any ticket donations. There will also be a Friends scheme. You can find out all about the festival here: www.lifem.org

Sunday Evenings with Stile Antico

Stile Antico is launching a series of lecture recitals to be broadcast online this Autumn, and will be available for viewing for 3 months. From 25th October, 4 weekly episodes examining the music of the Renaissance will shed light on the lives and techniques of composers such as Josquin and Tallis, and the very different world they inhabited.

Episodes will focus on the English Reformation and the music of Thomas Tallis, female monastic composers in sixteenth-century Italy, how Renaissance composers constructed their incredible polyphony, and why Josquin was the most influential composer of his time. Members of the group will guide you through the music and history in each 45-minute recital, comprising all newly-recorded performances.

Filmed in 4K, high definition video at the Voces8 centre in London, these 4 films will be available through Vimeo On Demand, for £10 per episode, or £30 for the whole series. They will be available to watch for 3 months after the broadcast date once you have bought access. To watch a trailer, pre-order and to find out more, go to www.vimeo.com/ondemand/sundayswithstile.

Voces8 “LiveFromLondon” Christmas series

Robert Hollingworth

There are 15 concerts: 9 individual concerts then 6 Bach Christmas Oratorio concerts by the Gabrieli Consort. Peruse the full programme here: <https://voces8.foundation/livefromlondon-christmas>, clicking on the individual concert titles in the left-hand menu to find out more.

You can buy a season ticket to:

- 1) all 15 concerts - called ‘**Christmas Extra**’ £120
- 2) 10 concerts (the first 9 individual concerts and the *first* of the six Bach), called ‘**Christmas**’ £80
- 3) The 6 Bach Concerts only, called ‘**Bach for Christmas**’ £50

We are also selling individual tickets for the I Fagiolini concert only, for £12.50.

If you want to buy individual tickets for other concerts - or if you want the student discount - go to <https://voces8.foundation/livefromlondon-christmas>

I Fagiolini’s concert is on 24th December at 7pm: 12 voices plus period instruments in Charpentier’s tuneful Messe de Minuit, and then four Howells carols, Bo Holten’s wonderful ‘First Snow’ and Robert reading Dylan Thomas’ ‘A Child’s Christmas in Wales’.

All concerts will be available to watch at your own convenience later.

To buy a ticket:

- 1) Transfer the amount to these details:
 I Fagiolini Projects Ltd Acct: 14874868 Sort Code: 30-96-86
 Payment reference: your own surname
Please be careful to input all details correctly.

If you can’t do bank transfers in this way, email us for other options but this is preferred.

- 2) Email Lucy Hollingworth at christmas@ifagiolini.com to tell us what ticket you have bought. She will respond to confirm receipt of your funds. (This is not an office but one person at a laptop - she will normally respond within a few hours though.)

The actual codes and all instructions will be sent out two weeks before the series begins.

Wonderful series - not all early music. A wonderful Christmas present for someone!

Poetry

Mandy Macdonald

Mandy Macdonald joined EMFS around 1994 and was immediately recruited as newsletter editor. She's still here (not as newsletter editor!), singing in the EMFS choirs and hoping to do so again some time. Her harpsichord (Trevor Beckerleg, 1974) has been one of the things that's kept her going through 2020. Although she is the world's worst harpsichordist, her husband is very tolerant of her struggles with the easy bits of the Goldbergs, some Byrd and some Couperin. She also writes poetry which is quite widely published. Her debut pamphlet, *The temperature of blue*, is available from Blue Salt Collective (<http://www.bluesalt.co.uk/the-temperature-of-blue/index.aspx>)

Contrapuntal

When my heart squats inside my chest
heavy and sick, dull as a cold lump
of clay left over on the potter's slab;

when my eyes ache with not weeping, my
throat
burns with swallowing acid fury,
that's when I play Bach, play him for my life.

It must be Bach; nothing else will do.
It must be difficult, must be contrapuntal.
Not enough to listen: I must play,

must fill up hands and eyes and brain with
effort.
The house is empty: no-one there to hear me
stumble and struggle, start the same passage

over and over, advance by slow semiquavers
to reach his godlike calm. Then tears come
fast,
uncontrollable, the score blurs, turns watery,

notes seen through a window scoured with
rain,
as I wade through hesitations and false starts
swim towards the continent-plaiting

currents of his fugues, until I'm lost
in the keys' recycled ivory and yew,
am myself reclaimed.

Harpsichord

The keyboard is yew,
the black keys rosewood, once,
till we replaced them with old ivory
salvaged from an abandoned piano;
for time and practice had faded the rosewood
and turned the yew's sunset colours to
chocolate,
making all the keys one brown.

Yes, do play something.
The instrument responds to the most subtle
pressure.
Listen, almost, to the moment of quill
plucking string,
the birthing of sound from touch,
releasing a bright bronze drop of music into
the world.

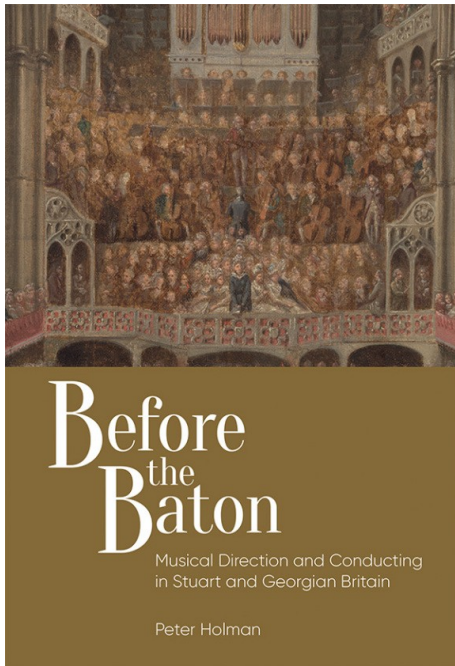
Book reviews

Michael Graham

Before the Baton: Musical Direction and Conducting in Stuart and Georgian Britain

Peter Holman

Boydell Press; February 2020. ISBN 978-1-78327-456-7



The scholarship of modern conducting is frequently concerned with maestros' personalities, exploring the subtle use of gesture and insightful interpretations of great music. First codified in nineteenth-century treaties by Berlioz and Wagner, descriptions of musical leadership in earlier periods are shrouded in false accounts that sometimes border on fantasy. Peter Holman seeks to demystify how sacred choral music and opera in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were led from instruments such as the organ, harpsichord or violin. It also looks at many aspects around choir and ensemble management, including evolutions of ensemble layout. Overall, it stresses how ensemble playing was more collaborative, with democratic responsibility for interpretation shared between players. With the advent of the baton, orchestral playing became an autocracy, reflecting an appointed individual's personal interpretation.

Holman begins with developments in musical centers of Italy, Germany and France from the sixteenth century onwards.

While discussing the lowly position in most courts of the *batteur de mesure*, he questions the widely-held belief that ensembles used an intrusive, audible beat to keep time. He also forensically investigates the notorious death of composer Jean-Baptiste Lully whose self-impaling is largely the basis for this false truth.

Delving into the murky world of cathedral politics and hierarchy of theatre management, evident is the lasting influence of Handel on sacred and secular conventions. Much of this discussion is based upon his preference to lead oratorios from the keyboard, resulting in experiments with claviorgans (harpsichord-organ hybrids) or from consoles fitted with long movement. Seemingly the methods that Handel developed became common practice well into the nineteenth century.

It was some time before British musicians adopted continental baton conducting, as introduced by visiting German musicians such as Weber, Spohr and Mendelssohn. Many curiosities and characters of the British music scene are included, from Ripon Cathedral's lever-operated wooden hand – still a feature of the organ case today – to the florid recitative accompaniment of bassist and cellist, Dragonetti and Lindley.

While nearly all of these developments were focused in London and the South, of Scottish interest would be violinist Nicolo Pasquali and bassoonist John Frederick Lampe. Both were European musicians who were contemporaries of Handel and led theatre orchestras in London. Both relocated to Edinburgh, worked at the Canongate Theatre and are buried in Canongate Kirkyard – only Lampe’s grave is marked. Scottish violinist, Robert Bremner, is credited with one of the first descriptions of subdivided time; beating in three or four, outside of the simple down-up vertical tactus. Many methods described in this book may appear cumbersome to modern conductors, but does not diminish the interpretive skill or musicianship of eighteenth-century musicians.

Research into early conducting methods always proves difficult as it was an activity that was rarely documented before the nineteenth century. Throughout, Holman draws upon a wealth of pictorial evidence and written sources, with occasionally humorous observations. Although the depth of scholarship can be fairly dense, each chapter is helpfully concluded with a concise summary. Holman’s postlude is a personal reflection on his own preferences as a director of early music. While the main body of the book is concerned with historical exploration rather than a practical manual, this final chapter presents valuable advice based on performance experience and study. Overall, this book would not only be of interest to conductors of authentic performances, but harpsichordists, organists and anyone interested in the history of choral music and theatre practice in Britain.

The Flageolet in England, 1660 – 1914

Douglas MacMillan

Boydell Press, August 2020. ISBN 978-1-78327-548-9

Traditionally the flageolet is depicted as a quaintly rustic instrument, either a shepherd’s pipe or bargeman’s fancy. Seemingly now resigned to display cabinets, the instrument shares much history with the recorder. Both “fipple flutes” were introduced to England along with other aspects of French culture under Charles II and the 1660 Restoration. Largely the flageolet was an instrument of the amateur musician and one of its more notable players was the diarist Samuel Pepys. An illuminating chapter on the flageolet within society describes its public reception and occasional appearance in dance bands, the music hall and as a domestic pastime.

Primarily, this book’s focus is organological – a study of the design, acoustical properties and manufacturers of the flageolet. He describes French and English variations and the curious development of double or triple flageolets. These adapted instruments allowed for more than one melody line, and even basic three-part accompaniments to be played by the same person. This was described in 1819 as “giving the effect of a sweet toned organ”. MacMillan’s research draws upon many examples in British and European museums along with his own personal collection.

The principal repertoire of the instrument were mainly tutor books or collections of traditional folk melodies. These largely taught in tablature notation. More advanced study was probably not seen as necessary, due to the traditional music convention of “playing by ear”, and the likelihood of players already being multi-instrumentalists. Due to the instrument’s high pitch, similar to the sopranino and garklein recorders, it was principally used to imitate birdsong.

A curiosity from 1717, *The Bird Fanciers Delight* listed popular operatic songs and snatches that could be taught to caged birds. Beyond similarly pleasant tweeting in arias by Handel, Pepusch and their minor contemporaries, with a lack of substantial repertoire, it is unsurprising that the instrument fell into decline. Largely, the flageolet’s demise was hastened by preference for recorders in solo, chamber and orchestral music in Europe – how rarely we hear that phrase!



Sadly, this book sings a mournful air for a forgotten instrument that never achieved its full potential or wider appreciation. Neither does it seem hopeful for a grassroots revival. Some tin whistles manufactured today are misleadingly referred to as flageolets, but the original instrument as described here are now only museum exhibits. Nonetheless MacMillan gives us a valuable overview of a voice possibly forever lost from the British soundscape. Let us hope the recorder never sings the same swan song!

Douglas MacMillan is an organologist and music historian living in Guildford, UK. He holds doctoral degrees from the University of Oxford and the Royal College of Music. More information from macmillanrecorders.com

NEEMF events

Jo Green

Following the excellent example set by some other EMFs, NEEMF is setting up a series of online events. Our first, on Thursday 19th November, is an illustrated talk by John Bryan. The second will be a workshop (Mouton and Verdelot) with David Allinson on Wednesday 16th December - further details will follow.

“Where do you want me to sit?”

Spaces for music and how early musicians used them

An illustrated talk for NEEMF, Thursday 19 November 2020, 7.30pm

by NEEMF’s founder, Professor John Bryan

Since March 2020 most of us have been frustrated, unable to meet and perform music together in our usual ways, and with few ‘live’ concerts to attend. The need to keep a safe distance from each other during the pandemic has made us rethink many of our usual customs: now we sing in online choirs, sit in ‘bubbles’ in one third-full concert halls, play consort music outdoors, and so on.

This presentation investigates what we can tell about the spaces in which music was heard in the middle ages, renaissance and later periods, and how musicians used them, by seeking out a variety of types of ‘evidence’, from the way music was written down to iconography and written descriptions. Perhaps it is time to realise that the way we now usually hear the music we love is possibly some way removed from how its first performers heard it. The talk will last approx. 50 minutes, with time afterwards for questions and discussion.

This will be an online event, via Zoom (see below). Prior booking is essential. You will need a credit or debit card to pay, but no online banking is necessary. The system is secure and NEEMF will not know your card details. Please click *here* to book. If it is not possible for you to book this way, then please print out the form and post it with a cheque to Jo Green, 73 Huntington Rd, YORK YO31 8RL.

There is a minimum charge of £5 to attend this event, however, if you would like to contribute more, to show your support for John and other musicians, this would be much appreciated. Surplus monies above John's agreed fee will be split equally between John and the charity Help Musicians Coronavirus Hardship Fund. NEEMF members will have priority booking until 9th November. Non-NEEMF members' applications will be kept on a waiting list until after that date and will then be accepted in order of receipt as long as spaces remain.

Tips regarding Zoom: for attendance at this event, please read even if you're familiar with Zoom

1. Download the Zoom app: <https://zoom.us/>. It will work on PCs, laptops, tablets or smart phones but the larger the screen size the better the experience.
2. Click on the link in the Zoom link email to join the meeting and if required, enter the ID and password information for the meeting. You can't join the meeting until the host has opened it.
3. Microphone and Camera. Turn on your Microphone when prompted. Turn on your Camera when prompted (white video camera icon) or if you do not wish to be seen you can turn your camera off. N.B You don't need a microphone or camera to take part, just speakers or headphones. But make sure these are on!
4. Gallery/Speaker View: Once you've joined the meeting choose between Gallery View (which shows small screens of all participants – good for seeing your friends and who else is present) or Speaker View (best once the presentation starts).
5. Mute/Unmute (the small microphone symbol) Your microphone will be muted by the Host once the presentation begins but you can unmute yourself at any point eg, to applaud or ask a question at the end.
6. Chat (the white speech bubble symbol usually at the bottom of the black Zoom screen, or under 3 dots on iPads). This allows you to type a question to everyone or to just one participant. Or it can be used to send a message during the presentation.
7. Questions: These will be taken at the end of the presentation from messages written into "Chat", or if you are invited to speak.



EMFS Christmas Early Music Ceilidh

via Zoom

Saturday 12th December 2:30pm

We've been hearing about many wonderful online early music events over the last few months. In fact, there has been so much to choose from that EMFS hasn't offered any more. However, in December, EMFS members will dip their toes tentatively into the Zoom waters.

We propose to run an experimental Zoom ceilidh of early music, where participants take turns to perform their early music party piece with everyone else muted. We could have a glass of something festive to hand, perhaps with a Christmas decoration in view.

It will be necessary to make a few easy adjustments to your Zoom settings to optimise your sound quality, but instructions will be provided. Of course, it could end in virtual tears, but we very much hope that the opposite will be the case. It's worth a try!

Please email me sue@emfscotland.org.uk *as soon as possible* to register interest, and **by 30th November at the latest**. We need enough participants to make it successful.

'bye for now!

Once more, it was wonderful to hear from all contributors - many thanks. I'm also indebted to Thomas Green for proof-reading. Any remaining errors are mine. Please keep in touch, and if you come across any news that might interest EMFS members, please send it to me. I hope that you keep safe and well in body, mind and spirit. It's a bit early for festive greetings, but I'm sending them anyway. Please put them away and take them out at the appropriate time!

Sue Owen
sue@emfscotland.org.uk

Appendix

Posters for events and music