



Thiman in the late 1950s

The Eric Thiman Collection

Newsletter No 5

This is the fifth Newsletter detailing the progress of the Eric Thiman Collection. If you know anyone else who would like to be included in emailing/ mailing list please send their details to Guy Turner (contact details at the end of the newsletter). Thank you.

THE ERIC THIMAN COLLECTION

Patrons

*Professor Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, CBE, Principal, The Royal Academy of Music
The Very Revd Dr John Moses, Dean Emeritus of St Paul's Cathedral
The Revd Ian Howarth, Chair of the Methodist Church, Birmingham District*

*Frances Thimann, Eric Thiman's Niece
Paul Hale, Rector Chori Emeritus, Southwell Minster
Guy Turner, Archivist*

PROGRESS WITH THE COLLECTION

Since the previous newsletter, more progress has been made in building towards a complete collection of Dr Thiman's work. A number of people have been particularly helpful in researching the whereabouts of missing pieces, or providing copies. Thanks are especially due to John Henderson of the RSCM, Joe Marsh, John Sheppard, Roy Stanley of Trinity College Dublin and Margaret Jones of Cambridge University Library. The current number of pieces in the collection is 1,246. The list of pieces we know of that are not yet in the collection numbers is 111.

One recent acquisition shed some light on a few pieces which until then only appeared in Thiman's own hand-written list, with no date or publisher. We now know that several piano pieces by Thiman are in the Associated Board books called *Pleasure in Progress*. The AB no longer has a copy of these. We have the Grade 2 book, but if anyone can locate the Grade 1, 3 or 4 books, all of them contain missing Thiman pieces and we would be very glad to receive them.

Newsletter No 4 carried the full list of missing pieces.

WEBSITE

There is now a small but growing website for the Thiman Collection, which you can find at <https://thimancollection.org/>

On the site can be found basic information about the collection, our Newsletters, and the leaflet about the collection. In due course the catalogue of works held in the collection will be there (including choral sets available for borrowing), plus lists of pieces still in print, and pieces in each medium that are particularly recommended. Links to recordings will also be developed. Please let us know of anything you think would be good to include on the website.

THIMAN TALKS

Guy Turner has now given his talk about Thiman to a number of different organists' associations, most recently in Cambridge, where he had the pleasure of meeting sisters Jean and Ann Phillips, both friends of Thiman, who each wrote words for a number of

his partsongs (including some recorded on the recent CD). If anyone else would like to book Guy's talk, please get in touch.

RACHEL BARNES

Many of Thiman's friends and associates will know that much of the collection passed down to us from Thiman through his close musical collaborator, Gerald Barnes. It was with great sadness that we heard of the sudden death last August of Gerald's wife Rachel. She was eighty-four. Her funeral was on 24th August. She was an extremely energetic and positive lady, greatly supportive of our efforts to archive and promote Thiman's work. She is much missed.

PAULATIM

On the last occasion when Gerald Barnes passed on some Thiman scores, there was included a manuscript of a setting of Psalm 23 for Soprano, SATB Choir and Piano. This was unusual for a number of reasons: (a) Thiman did not, as a rule, appear to have kept his manuscripts; (b) this piece appears to be unpublished; (c) Thiman nearly always wrote sacred music with organ and secular music with piano; (d) the copy, though very clearly in Thiman's hand, does not carry his name; (e) the piece is stylistically rather different from much of Thiman's music.

The most curious thing though is that where Thiman's name would normally appear there is the word 'Paulatim'. On investigation it turns out that 'paulatim' means 'little by little' in Latin, and Thiman's niece Frances has made the possible connection with 'Eric, or Little by Little' the title of a popular Victorian children's book by FW Farrar. Knowing how much Thiman and his brother loved humorous word-play, Frances wonders whether Paulatim was used as a code-name for Thiman.

A possible explanation for the existence of this unpublished piece, and the use of 'Paulatim', is that it might have been intended as an entry for a composing competition, and that Thiman was disguising both his name and his style in order to throw the judges off the scent. The manuscript is date 27-7-62, when Thiman was very well-known, so entering a composing competition would seem odd, though, if he did do so (possibly for amusement, or maybe to fox the judges who might have been friends of his?), disguising himself would seem less so.

If anyone can shed any light in this minor mystery, please get in touch.

What is certain, however is that it is a very attractive piece.

It is almost certain that it would never have been performed – there would most likely have been a set of copies amongst Thiman's effects if so. So when Bingham and District Choral Society perform it next year (May 11th 2019 in St Mary's Church Radcliffe-on-Trent), it is likely to be a world premiere!

MUSIC OF ERIC THIMAN CD

The CD of Thiman's Anthems and Partsongs recorded in 2016 has sold well and been well received. There are still some copies left in stock. They cost £12.50 each, plus £1.50 post and packing.

Email your order to Guy Turner at guyscottturner@gmail.com and pay by bank transfer to Southwell Minster Choirs Association 60-20-15 68034652

Or post your order, and a cheque made out to 'Southwell Minster Choir Association', with 'Eric Thiman Collection' written on the back, to Guy Turner – contact details at the end of the newsletter.

MEMORIES OF DR THIMAN

Former friends and colleagues of Thiman are welcome to share their memories of him through this newsletter. Here is one amusing reminiscence:

As a chorister at Harmondsworth, Middlesex in 1964, I recall that the very first anthem I sang was Thiman's Christ hath a garden.

In June, 1968, Eric Thiman was examiner when I sat Grade 7 piano. All exams were taken in my piano teacher's front room – I suppose she had enough pupils to become a 'centre' for an exam day. Eric Thiman was decidedly grumpy, and, I recall, distinctively 'yellow' of complexion. He was dissatisfied with my fourth piece, Ibert's Petite âne Blanc and made me play it again, at the end of the exam. Somewhere, in my archive, I have the examiner's reports, and, if I lay my hands on them, will send you a copy of this one. But I recall that ET had inserted, in scrawled handwriting – 'this exam only just balances, due to the gain made in sight-reading'. I scraped through with 101...!!

Thiman might have been amused to know that he was being critical of the future Dean of Hereford Cathedral, the Very Revd Michael Tavinor!

FUNDS

The future development of the Collection depends as always on raising more funds – the Thiman royalties all go to the Royal Academy of Music, where they support prizes and awards for deserving students, which is a fitting memorial to Dr Thimasn who taught there for many years. Meanwhile the running costs of developing the collection are entirely down to our supporters – if you are able to make a small donation, or to buy further copies of the CD that will help greatly. Many thanks.

CONTACT

Guy Turner, 11 The Old Silk Mill, Maythorne, Southwell, Notts, NG25 0RS

01636 816393

guyscottturner@gmail.com