

ERIC HARDING THIMAN

Dr Thiman
in the late 1920s

Eric Thiman (1900-1975) was a prolific composer, and a significant figure in British musical life in the mid-twentieth century.

Though largely self-taught, he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists at twenty-one, and a Doctor of Music of London University at twenty-seven – at the time the youngest person to achieve that qualification.

From 1931 he was Professor of Harmony at the Royal Academy of Music and was appointed Dean of the Music Faculty at London University in 1956. He was warmly respected and a gifted and patient teacher.

He was organist of The Park Chapel in Crouch End, North London for thirty years and then for twenty years at The City Temple, Holborn Viaduct (known as the Cathedral of the Free Churches) where his outstanding gifts, especially for improvisation on hymn tunes, were much admired. Both churches had thriving choirs and the City Temple Choir made recordings. For over forty years he was the organist, and occasional conductor, of the annual festivals of the Free Church Choir Union, mostly at Alexandra Palace.

He was also active as a conductor, working with his own string orchestra, with the Elysian Concert Society and with Purley Choral Society.

He was an examiner for the Royal College of Organists and the Associated Board, and a frequent adjudicator at music festivals. He produced over twelve hundred compositions, and was particularly known as the foremost composer of his time for the non-conformist churches.

There are many anthems, organ pieces, piano pieces, solo songs, works for choir and orchestra – both sacred and secular - hymns, canticles and educational music. Very few of his contemporaries published as many pieces. Under the name of Eric Harding he published a number of lighter songs in both patriotic and 'Ivor-Novello-esque' styles.

When Thiman died in 1975 he was still working as teacher, organist, composer and conductor.

He was married to Madeline, a musician and singer, for forty-seven years. They had no children.

ERIC THIMAN AND THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

From 1931 until his death, Thiman was Professor of Harmony at the Royal Academy of Music. In view of this long relationship, his widow, Madeline, stipulated in her will (drawn up in 1981) that the royalties from his publications should benefit the Academy. A fund was set up to help talented students in need of financial support. An organ prize had also been established by Madeline in 1978 to be awarded annually in Thiman's name. (Both awards are at the Academy's discretion).

THE COLLECTION

Thiman's brother, Cedric, was for many years Head of Modern Languages at Nottingham High School. Cedric's daughter, Frances (known to some as Celia) still lives in Nottingham, and she and Paul Hale, then Rector Chori of Southwell Minster, formed the idea that a collection of Thiman's work might be housed in the new Paul Hale Choir Library in the Archbishop's Palace at the Minster. The Palace re-opened following refurbishment in the autumn of 2014, and the launch of the Thiman Collection, with a related exhibition, was one of the first events to be held in the new facilities.

Guy Turner is the archivist of the Collection. He is a Lay Clerk in the Minster Choir and when he was a student in the early seventies, knew and sang for Dr Thiman in the Elysian Concert Society.



Dr Thiman at the organ
of the City Temple

The first aim of the Collection is to acquire a copy of each of the pieces that Dr Thiman wrote. Anything of historical interest connected with him – recordings, photos, concert programmes, letters, press cuttings etc - is also being collected. In addition, a number of choral (and a few orchestral) sets of his music are held in the collection.

Many of Thiman's friends and collaborators have contributed to the Collection, in particular Gerald Barnes, who worked closely with Dr Thiman in his latter years. The Royal Academy of Music Library has also provided a great deal of material. As the Collection works towards completion, the archives of many music publishers, and the British Library, are increasingly involved.

Apart from establishing the definitive archive of Thiman's music, the Collection aims to support anyone involved in academic study of his music; to encourage and facilitate performances and recordings of his work; and to keep those interested in his music in touch with developments by means of newsletters.

Anyone with an interest in Thiman's music, who would like to receive the Newsletters, or who can supply material for the collection should contact:

E: info@thimancollection.org

T: 01636 816393

Past editions of the Newsletter are available by visiting www.thimancollection.org



Southwell Minster and the Archbishop's Palace are on the A612, eight miles from Newark and twelve miles from Nottingham.

The nearest main line railway station is Newark Northgate, with fast services to and from London and Leeds.

If using 'SatNav,' or Google Maps, the postcode is NG25 0HD.

Southwell is the home of the prestigious Southwell Music Festival (Director: Marcus Farnsworth) which takes place every year in late August

For more details about Southwell Minster, the Archbishop's Palace or the Festival, please visit:



southwellminster.org



archbishopspalacesouthwell.org.uk



southwellmusicfestival.com

THE ERIC THIMAN COLLECTION

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Professor Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

Principal, The Royal Academy of Music

The Very Revd Dr John Moses

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The Revd Ian Howarth

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*The Eric Thiman Collection is administered by **Guy Turner** in liaison with **The Rector Chori** of Southwell Minster and **Frances Thiman**, Eric Thiman's niece under the auspices of **Southwell Minster Choir Association** (Registered Charity Number 1000584).*

CONTACT

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THE HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND

An extensive refurbishment of the Archbishop's Palace at Southwell was carried out in 2014, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. This included the creation of the Paul Hale Choir Library and study station where the Eric Thiman archive is housed (open by appointment with The Archivist, contact details above).

The project additionally included a refurbishment of the Song School, a soundscape of the choir rehearsing and the provision of appropriate facilities for the choristers and visiting school parties. The vaulted State Chamber, accessible by a new lift as required, is now multi-functional and makes a superb concert venue. Outside, a new public open space - The Education Garden - has been created under the ruined fifteenth-century gable of the Palace. The Palace and Education Garden are open to the public every day, though please check the Minster website in case there is a special event:
archbishopspalacesouthwell.org.uk



THE ERIC THIMAN COLLECTION

Established in 2014
at the Archbishop's Palace,
Southwell Minster, Nottinghamshire

