



The Royal Academy of Music, where Thiman was professor of Harmony from 1931 (see below)

The Eric Thiman Collection

Newsletter No 7

This is the seventh 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

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

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

PROGRESS WITH THE COLLECTION

We continue acquiring missing items for the Thiman archive, and the current total in the collection is 1264 different pieces. A recent (and laborious!) trawl through the catalogues of the UK, US and Canadian copyright libraries has given us the location of a dozen or so more pieces, which we will be able to get hold of once the relevant people are back at work after lock down. And, as detailed below, a major, but early and unpublished work has come to light.

WEBSITE

You are reminded that our website can be found at
<https://www.southwellminster.org/eric-thiman-collection/>

THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC CONNECTION

Eric Thiman was associated with the Royal Academy of Music for most of his professional life, and was Professor of Harmony there from 1931. Since the death of Mrs Thiman, all royalties from performances and recordings of his work have gone to the Academy. Since the founding of the Collection, the Principal of the Academy, Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, has been one of our patrons, and many items from the collection were sourced via the RAM library, with the help of the RAM librarian Kathy Adamson.

The Thiman royalties are now used by the RAM for prizes and awards in Thiman's name. Appropriately enough there is an organ prize, which is yet to be awarded this academic year. Meanwhile the Eric Thiman Memorial Fund Award for 2020 – 21 has been awarded to flautist Alexia Pasquariello.

Alexia writes:

I am from Romania and this is my first time living away from home. My family has always encouraged me to follow my dreams and have supported me in my artistic journey, but given the enormous differences between the living standards in Romania and the UK, they are not able to cope with my tuition fees or my living costs in London.

The award means everything to me! The Royal Academy of Music has always been my dream conservatoire and getting the chance to study in such a professional environment, with the best teachers and with so many musical opportunities is an honour for me.

Thanks to the award, I can grow professionally and start an international career as a flute player. Studying in this prestigious institution and benefiting from all the wonderful artistic opportunities is a real privilege, I am forever grateful for the chance I've been given and promise to always bring joy to the people's hearts whenever I perform.

Thiman would be proud to think that, 46 years after his death and 90 years after he became professor there, young people at the RAM are still benefiting from his work.

You can see Alexia performing on the following youtube clips, from her time in Romania:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G8a29hXigek>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fq0uC50tDBw>

PIANO SONATA DISCOVERED

The Newsletter has previously mentioned how the manuscript of a Thiman setting of Psalm 23, appeared amongst some papers that had passed from Thiman to Gerald Barnes. It was quite a surprise to find a manuscript that was not listed in any list, including Thiman's own. It was even more of a surprise when, in December, we were contacted by John Mitchell with news of a 29 page manuscript of a Piano Sonata. John is a pianist, composer and arranger, with a keen interest in early 20th century English music. He is treasurer of the Peter Warlock Society. Here is a link to information about his composing and arranging: <https://www.fandmusic.com/?composer=6>

The Sonata is in a single movement, and is written for a pianist of considerable ability. It is dated 1922, which predates all but one of his published compositions. (The first was published in 1916 under the name Eric Harding.) The manuscript carries the name Thimann, with the original second N: by his 1923 publications he was spelling his name with just the one N. There is no dedication and this no clue as to why or for whom it might have been written. John Mitchell bought it from a dealer who thinks he acquired it when he bought up the stock of Macdonald's Music Services in Steyning, West Sussex. This is only a few miles from where Thiman's mother lived in retirement (Goring on Sea) and this suggests the possibility that the manuscript lay forgotten in her 'bottom drawer', and was then acquired by MacDonald's on her death in the early 50s.

John Mitchell has now type-set the Sonata – for which many thanks – and, once life returns to normal, post-Covid, we hope to find someone to take on a performance and perhaps a recording on youtube. This may well be the premiere of the piece, though it is unlikely we will ever know for certain. It will be quite a project to take on, as it is quite a virtuosic piece. The only other instance of Thiman writing for concert pianists is the Suite in E (1947) for four hands, two pianos, written for Harry Isaacs and Yorke Bowen – both well-known concert pianists at the time and colleagues of his at the Academy.

If anyone knows of a pianist who might take on such a performance, please put them in touch. It would be fitting if this can be organised for next year – the centenary of the Sonata's composition.

So many thanks to John Mitchell for this discovery, and for the type-setting

TEXT BOOKS

Thiman published a number of text books, related to his work in teaching and church music. We now believe that we have all of these in the Collection, except for one which we expect to receive from the National Library of Scotland, as soon as lock down ends and their normal service is resumed.

These are

Congregational Hymn Singing (with W Whitley, 1933)
Improvisation on Hymn Tunes (1937)
Pianoforte Tests in Initiative and Intelligence (1939)
A Guide to Elementary Harmony (1941)
Practical Free Counterpoint (1947)
Musical Form for Exam Students (1951)
The Varied Harmonisation of Hymn Tunes (1955)
The Beginning Organist (1962)
A Concise Harmony (1970)

FROM THE MUSICAL TIMES 1933

Eric Thiman was organist for the Massed Choirs of the Free Church Union at their annual Festival from 1930 to 1972, and from 1936 these took place at Alexandra Palace, where there was a large and highly regarded organ. But his first encounter with this organ was not without its stresses, as you can see from his letter in the Musical Times of April 1933:

SIR, - with regard to 'A.F.'s' very fair criticism of my organ recital at the Alexandra Palace, which appears in your March issue, I should like to say that he is correct in his assumption that this recital was more or less an impromptu affair; for I was only asked to play on the Wednesday previous, and a very busy week made it quite impossible to do more than get about a couple of hours' practice on this most elaborate instrument, the console of which was totally strange to me. Under these circumstances, no-one could have been more conscious of my shortcomings than myself.

By the way, 'A.F.' says that 'on the whole Dr Thiman's intentions were not realised; moreover he improved steadily as the afternoon wore on.' For the sake of my own peace of mind, I should like to think that something is the matter with the negative in the first part of this sentence. - Yours &c.,

Wembley

ERIC H. THIMAN

There is the reply:

The interesting thing in Dr Thiman's recital, granted the difficult conditions, was to see what results he would obtain in spite of them; and if, generally speaking, it promised more than it gave, there is surely no need for discontent on either his side or ours. Of course only Dr Thiman could tell us what his conceptions were; but in the half of the programme that I heard, it seemed safe to assume that these were not realised. Would he have us think that what we heard, good as it was, satisfied him?

I would be interesting to know who 'A.F.' was, and why he was writing reviews under the cover of initials. The fact that he only attended half the recital when he was reviewing it, and that he thought it worth replying to Thiman's letter in this rather combative way is, at the least, odd.

FUNDS

The continued work of the Collection is of course reliant on funding from our supporters. Obtaining the missing pieces often involves copying fees from libraries, or just straightforward publisher charges (often more expensive if a one-off print of an out of print work). Some pieces turn up in the US or Canada (where Thiman was and is very popular), so there can be postage costs. In addition we are keen to support performances of Thiman's music where possible by providing access to copies etc. (though not by substantial sponsorship, unfortunately). All this costs money – though we are VERY economical! If you are able to make a donation please see the details of how to pay at the end of the Newsletter. Many thanks for your continued support.

THIMAN ANTHEMS AND PARTSONGS CD

The CD of Thiman's Anthems and Partsongs recorded in 2016 has sold well and been well received. There still a few 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 as below.

PAYMENTS

For payment of donations, or for CDs:

Either by bank transfer to Southwell Minster Choirs Association
60-20-15 68034652
Reference: Thiman Collection (and either 'donation' or 'CD')

Or post a CD order, and a cheque made out to 'Southwell Minster Choir Association', with 'Eric Thiman Collection' written on the back, to Guy Turner.

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