



Thiman copy in Whittle and Wolf shop window – see page 2

The Eric Thiman Collection

Newsletter No 9

This is the ninth 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

WEBSITE

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

PROGRESS WITH THE COLLECTION

We continue acquiring missing items for the Thiman archive, and the current total in the collection is 1270 different pieces. Unfortunately, the search for missing pieces has been very much hampered by Covid. We have identified various libraries where copies exist, but our requests got buried in lockdown and fresh approaches need to be made to the libraries, now that the librarians back in action.

COINCIDENCE IN A SHOP WINDOW

In relation to the picture heading this Newsletter, Frances Thimann writes:

'I was wandering lonely as a cloud down Mansfield Rd. when all at once... I saw the shop window of Whittle and Wolf, 'Vintage Interiors Emporium' – and in the window was the music of Eric's Daffodils song. Strangely enough, this shop, which is very attractive, and comparatively new, is only about 20 yards away from Burlington Road in Sherwood, where my family lived for almost 50 years.' <https://www.whittleandwolf.co.uk/>

NEWLY DISCOVERED RECORDING OF THIMAN PLAYING THIMAN

We are delighted to announce a previously unreleased recording of Eric Thiman playing his own music on the Organ of the City Temple will shortly be available. This was recorded in 1967 by David Woodford of Cathedral Recordings, for the Organ Masterworks series, but was never released. David has now kindly made the original recordings available to us and CD copies are being made. The pieces included are:

1. Postlude on Hanover
(from Four Chorale Improvisations 1961)
2. A Phrygian Berceuse
(from Four Offertories Founded on the Modes 1965)
3. Meditation on the Irish Tune Slane
(from Three Pieces for Organ 1935)
4. A Dorian Pastoral
(from Four Offertories Founded on the Modes 1965)
5. Slow Air and Variation
(from Three Quiet Voluntaries 1960)
6. Finale
(from Preludes and Voluntaries Book 3 1947)
7. An Aeolian Pavane
(from Four Offertories Founded on the Modes 1965)
8. A Norseland Meditation
(unpublished)
9. Berceuse
(from Preludes and Voluntaries Book 1943)
10. Ave Maria
(from Preludes and Voluntaries Book 3 1947)
11. Postlude on Harwood's Thornbury
(1966)

Track 8, *A Norseland Meditation*, is an unpublished work, which may well have been simply an improvisation, or a piece Thiman never got round to writing down. Bramwell Bourne has now transcribed it (see below for his contact if you would like a copy).

The CDs will be a high-quality recording, presented in a CD envelop with some simple notes, rather than a fully produced CD box. These will be available shortly for £10 plus £1.50 post and packing. Please contact Guy Turner to order a copy. Contact and payment details at the end of the letter.

THE PARK CHAPEL REMEMBERED

The last newsletter featured a picture and some information about the Park Chapel, where Thiman was organist for over 30 years until 1958. This prompted the following reminiscence from Paul Hale:

'I was born in Crouch End in 1952; we lived just round the corner from Park Chapel (a Congregational church) and equally close to Christ Church (an Anglican church). Though I was baptised in Christ Church, my parents decided that the Sunday School at Park Chapel was more vigorous, so it was off to Park Chapel that we went on a Sunday. Seeing the photograph of the Park Chapel in Newsletter 8 - the first photograph of its interior I have ever seen - immediately brings back my very earliest memory of being in a church and seeing / hearing the organ. We sat in the gallery on the left, close to the sanctuary, and I clearly recall looking left and down towards the organ. Until now I had no idea whether or not this was a false memory (for we did leave the area for Solihull before my 8th birthday), but clearly not. It's a delight to see that image after all these years!'

THE 'NEW' PIANO SONATA – PERFORMANCE AND PUBLICATION

The recently rediscovered Piano Sonata has now been performed in a recital by Zibo Li in a recital at Frost School of Music, University of Miami.

You can watch the performance on youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ANQXmft9Rc>

The Thiman Sonata starts at 23 minutes 52 seconds.

As you will see, this is a very exciting and committed performance, all from memory, and the piece is far from what we associate with Thiman's later established style – he was 22 when he wrote it and had only had one previous piece published. Zibo is to be congratulated for bringing this long-neglected piece to life. He is planning to record the piece, along with some other Thiman works, including the 'Suite in E for Two Pianos', which was written for York Bowen and Harry Isaacs (both well-known concert pianists) in 1924.

Through the good offices of John Mitchell (he who discovered the manuscript) we are now looking at the Sonata being published by Fand Music, to mark the centenary of its composition in 2022. Fand is a publisher specialising in English Music: <https://www.fandmusic.com/>

We will need to raise a little money to support Fand in the cost of this endeavour. If anyone would like to sponsor this publication, we are hoping for £150. Please get in touch if you think you could help, either with the whole £150, or part thereof. Anyone donating £25 or more will receive a copy of the sonata once it is published. Details re donations are at the end of the newsletter.

There are still some copies of the Anthems and Part Songs CD recorded in 2016 remaining. They cost £12.50 each, plus £1.50 post and packing.

Further news expected soon about the recording of Thiman and Michael Head songs which is production, sung by Emily Gray.

THE COMPLETE ORGAN WORKS

Bramwell Bourne has now finished recording the complete Thiman organ works – congratulations to him on such a mammoth achievement! There are 143 pieces on 6 CDs. Full details, and how to acquire copies of the CDs are here:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Organ-Music-of-Eric-Thiman-101812721686630/>

Bramwell writes about this project:

'In 1961 my Mother suffered a personal trauma and a friend suggested Leslie Weatherhead's sermons might be helpful. It was thus that we started attending The City Temple. About the same time, an Aunt had found an organ teacher and offered to pay for lessons, as I had previously expressed an interest in the organ.

I was deeply moved by the congregational singing and Eric Thiman's hymn playing, especially his introductions, using various solo combinations, the pure drive and leadership conveyed by his playing and of course the immense varied harmonies for unison verses. I had always sung since being a very young child and to be part of this capacity congregation was a life changing experience. I frequently found myself moved to tears and unable to sing, such was the spiritual impact.

He always played very quietly before a service and the prayerful atmosphere was intense. I started purchasing his organ compositions and soon realized he often played his own pieces. The piece or pieces seamlessly merged into improvisation culminating in the procession of the choir and Introit.

But the best was still to come in his Improvised Postludes founded on the final Hymn. One occasion in particular I can recall clearly to this day. I had plucked up courage on one occasion to approach him after a service and he kindly suggested I write to him and he would allow me, on an agreed day, to go up to the console during the Postlude. The final hymn, sung to the tune SAMSON, derived from G. F. Handel, was *Awake our souls; away, our fears; Let every trembling thought be gone; Awake and run the heavenly race, And put a cheerful courage on.* His improvisation was monumental, totally reflecting the joy and hope of the hymn with glorious key changes, imitative and fugal counterpoint using the passing note figures from the third line of the tune leading to a gradual rise up the keyboard and a massive enharmonic and chromatic climax on full organ.

These experiences have stayed with me throughout my life, have greatly influenced my own style of liturgical playing and inspired me to work tirelessly to become a proficient organist.

With the pandemic and my 75th birthday in the same year, I reflected much on Eric Thiman's influence on me, without which I may never have applied myself as I did. These recordings are an expression of my appreciation and gratitude for the life and work of Eric Thiman and, in a way, going full circle, a culmination of 60 years at the organ'.

THIMAN ROYALTIES SUPPORTING YOUNG FLAUTIST

All Thiman royalties have gone to the Royal Academy of Music, since the death of Mrs Thiman. Each year the Eric Thiman Fund Award is created from the royalties, and goes to support a student chosen by the RAM. Flautist Alexia Pasquariello has been the recipient of the ETFA for both 20/21 and 21/22.

You can see Alexia playing here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJcHaPVAn7c5wdIKIwDwhFg>

Alexia wrote to Frances Thimann:

'I believe that music takes the form of a unique language that brings people together all around the world! This is the main reason that inspires me to work hard every day in order to exceed my limits and be the best version of myself. Throughout my music, I am able to convey my feelings, thoughts and emotions to the public and set my creativity free.

'Thanks to your generosity, I am able to follow my dreams and perform at an international level. My goals for this year are gaining as much experience as possible by performing in numerous events and competitions, both solo and in chamber music ensembles, and working with professionals in the music field. Soon I will perform a 45-minute recital in the Student Create Festival in January 2022, and I am very excited and grateful for the chance I've been given.

'Thank you for giving me the opportunity of a lifetime!'

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.

PAYMENTS

For payment of donations, sponsorship of the Sonata publication, or for CDs:

Either by bank transfer to Southwell Minster Choirs Association

60-20-15 68034652

Reference: Thiman Collection (and either 'donation', 'Sonata' or 'CD')

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

CONTACT

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<https://www.southwellminster.org/eric-thiman-collection/>