



The Eric Thiman Singers of Caterham School in Concert

The Eric Thiman Collection Newsletter No 14

This is the fourteenth 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, Retired 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

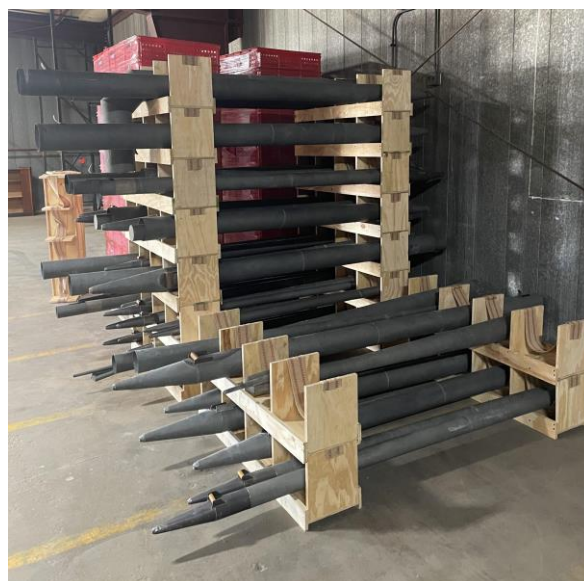
Guy Turner, Archivist

THE CITY TEMPLE ORGAN – A FRESH FUTURE

As was noted in the last Newsletter, the Organ of the City Temple, designed by Eric Thiman and William McKie in 1958, and regarded as one of the great post-war English organs, is in the process of being relocated to St James Cathedral, Chicago. It is said to be the first heritage English Cathedral-style instrument to be exported to the United States. Stephen Buzard, Director of Music at St James has kindly given us the following update:

The Walker & Sons organ from the City Temple has safely arrived in America and currently resides in the workshop of the Buzard Organ Company in Champaign, Illinois. Beginning in 2025, the organ will receive a full restoration, renewing its mechanical systems to like-new condition in preparation for installation at St. James Cathedral, Chicago in the summer of 2026. The organ builders will endeavour to retain as many of the original materials as possible, sourcing authentic woods and leather for as faithful a restoration of the organ as possible. The organ will be fitted with a new console, equipped with modern player controls, and the builders are exploring the feasibility of restoring the original console and switching system as an additional, historical way to play the instrument. Fundraising is ongoing with an ultimate goal of \$2.75 million to include the restoration of St. James' 1875 Johnson organ case and the establishment of a maintenance fund. In acknowledgment of a leading gift from the Miriam U. and H. Earl Hoover Foundation, the organ will be named the Hoover Memorial Organ at its inauguration in late 2026 or early 2027. For more information, please visit www.cathedralorgan.org

Here are some pictures of the organ move in process:





THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY RECITAL

The Eric Thiman Collection was launched at a lunchtime concert in Southwell Minster on 3rd October 2014, which means it will be ten years old this Autumn. The anniversary will be celebrated by another lunchtime recital at the Minster, given by The Eric Thiman Singers of Caterham School. Caterham as where Eric Thiman himself went to school. In 2016 the choir performed eight Thiman part-songs, on the CD of his music produced by the Collection – of which there are still a few copies left – see below. The anniversary recital is on Friday 11th October, 1.30 – 2.15, admission free, retiring collection.

Caterham's Director of Music, Adam Assen gives us the following update about the choir:

The Eric Thiman Singers (ETS) is an auditioned chapel choir set up in 2010 as a tribute to Old Caterhamian Eric Thiman, composer and organist. They have toured in Europe to Paris, Brussels, Prague and Cologne and they have performed at some impressive venues. The choir played a major role in the School's bicentenary celebrations and sang as part of the service at Westminster Abbey and at a celebration concert at St John's Smiths Square. They also sang for the Duke of Kent when he visited the School. The choir is made up of singers from both the Prep and First to Third Year pupils in the Senior school. Alongside the Chamber Choir, ETS performed at St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican in Rome- a highlight of their impressive achievements. Their most recent tour abroad was to Normandy, France where they performed at the stunning Lisieux Basilica. The training choir for ETS is Junior ETS (JETS)- a fantastic ensemble from Caterham Prep School with pupils from Year 3 to Year 6.

An interesting aside related to the recording mentioned above related to the downloads of one of the songs. One of the Thiman Songs, 'The Path to the Moon' has been downloaded 18,000 times! The clue to its extreme popularity is that it is on the Grade 3 Associated Board Singing syllabus.

RESEARCH UPDATE FROM DAVID DEWAR

You may remember from previous newsletters that Wiltshire-based organist and conductor, David Dewar, has been doing research into Thiman. He writes:

Two years after embarking on my thesis relating to Eric Thiman, the required university process for proceeding to full PhD status determined that there was insufficient material relating to Eric to form a full doctoral degree. Accordingly, my then Head of Department and my supervisor suggested an expansion to add the idea of musicians' responses to change in English music being considered in relation to the external (e.g. societal, pressing issues of the two world wars, education, etc.) which impinged on musicians in England, between 1900 and 1939. The scope also encompassed musicians of professional and amateur status (in particular, how individuals might cross the notional divide between them), and solely practitioners in serious, art music. This, of course, meant that EHT could be featured in the whole thesis within those bounds. In those two initial years, the bulk of the EHT material I needed had been amassed as well as much relating to the extra topics above. This has involved archival research in the BBC's holdings, alongside the material in the Collection. Individuals with memories of EHT have been interviewed, and more peripheral material in the Bodleian Library, and other holdings shedding light on the period 1900 to 1975. In fact, the entire thesis has neared completion. In the event, however, I have found that the burden of the deadline (a matter of weeks away) has coincided with a number of medical issues over the past three or four years, together with increasing age! I have relinquished my PhD place with the university, and therefore have entered the ranks of independent scholars. My task now is to revisit the latter period of EHT's life and activities, that is, 1940 to 1975, much of which is already in my research archive. Together with this I must also revisit the early tranche of work, and integrate it with the later period. I am working on the idea that this will finish around or just after the end of this year. Copies then can be provided principally to the Collection, and other interested parties. In the BBC holdings there are quite a few references to EHT, which are of great interest – especially in relation to his submissions to them.

Thanks to David for the update, and we look forward to the fruits of his labours.

POSTERS AND PROGRAMMES

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, thanks to the kind efforts of Mark Dodgson, executor for Thiman's close associate and friend Gerald Barnes, the Collection has greatly increased its stock of posters and programmes relating to Thiman's recitals and concerts.

This have now been entered onto a separate spreadsheet, which is attached for those receiving this by email, and, pending a couple of extra details, will soon be posted on the website. Those receiving the letter by post will have a hard copy. People who performed with Thiman may be interested to browse through this list and find concerts at which they were present or performing.

THE EARLY PIANO SONTATA

The early Thiman Piano Sonata, rediscovered in 2020 and published and receiving its (probable) premiere in 2022, has received a further performance – this time by Andrei Baumann, in Providence, Rhode Island USA, at the home of Karen Romer, Thiman's niece.

<https://www.andreibaumann.com/>

<https://www.fandmusic.com/?product=FM245>

RECORDINGS AVAILABLE FROM THE COLLECTION

Anthems and Partsongs by Eric Thiman (2016)

Thiman playing his own music on the City Temple Organ in 1967

The Silver Swan – song by Thiman and Head (Emily Gray/Nicole Johnson (2022))

All the above available for £10 plus £1.50 post and packing (payment details 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 cheque made out to 'Southwell Minster Choir Association', with 'Eric Thiman Collection' written on the back, to Guy Turner.

CONTACT

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

01636 816393

guyscottturner@gmail.com

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