



A recording session at the City Temple in the 60s – Thiman with his back to the camera

## **The Eric Thiman Collection Newsletter No 16**

This is the sixteenth 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 Revd. Ian Howarth, Retired Chair of the Methodist Church, Birmingham District*

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

### **IMPORTANT APPEAL FOR FUNDS**

The work of the Thiman Collection is not yet done – there are still about 65 pieces we know about but of which we do not have a copy (though we do have 1289 of them!) – and we always hope to support people putting on performances of Thiman's music. Yet our funds are all but run dry. Please consider making a donation - or purchasing our CDs as Christmas presents! – so that we can keep building the collection. Details of how to donate are at the end of this newsletter.

Thank you!

## THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THIMAN'S DEATH

Since the last newsletter we have passed the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thiman's death.

He died from cancer on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1975, at the age of 74, and was still teaching, composing, playing the organ and conducting until shortly before his death.

Gerald Barnes, his long term friend and protegee, had been the accompanist for Thiman's choir The Elysian Singers, and stepped in to take over the conductorship. The concert that the choir was preparing for, and which would have been conducted by Thiman, now became his Memorial Concert. This took place on 26<sup>th</sup> April and the programme was The Mozart Requiem, Thiman's *Ring Out Ye Crystal Spheres* (a rousing setting of Milton) and Handel's' Coronation anthem *My Heart is Inditing*.

## TEA-TIME WITH THIMAN

Peter Dyke and Jake Buckton, organists at Hereford Cathedral, marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an afternoon organ recital called *Tea-time with Thiman*. The pieces played were:

Trumpet Tune on 'Moscow'  
Melody in F  
Romance in B flat  
Air and Variation in the Old English Style  
Gavotte in the style of Samuel Wesley  
Postlude on 'Gwalchmai'

## THE ERIC THIMAN FUND AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY OF MUSIC

As you will remember, Thiman's widow Madeline left the ongoing Thiman royalties to the Royal Academy of Music. From these they make awards to support students.

Masters Piano Accompaniment student, Jiayi Huang has benefitted from the Thiman Fund support over the last year.

Jiayi writes:

*I was fascinated with the fine and subtle emotions that only piano pieces could deliver and loved expressing my feelings through the melody. Thus, I decided to study piano. During my undergraduate studies, I truly enjoyed playing and getting inspired by different musicians.*

*This academic year, I'm looking forward to expanding my performance repertoire and exploring different styles of music through ensemble work. I also would like to hone my performance skills through a variety of concerts and collaborations with fellow students.*

*Additionally, I am eager to refine my skills through the Academy's opportunities, including masterclasses and workshops with leading industry professionals.*

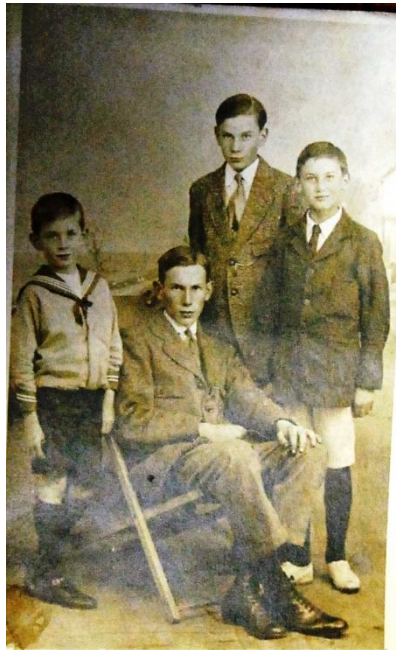
*Receiving financial support and this award means a great deal to me as it not only relieves the financial burden of pursuing my studies but also motivates me to continue striving for excellence. It's a recognition of my hard work, and it provides me with the opportunity to focus fully on my musical development. This support enables me to make the most of the resources and opportunities at the Academy, helping me to achieve my professional goals.*

*I am deeply grateful for your generous support, which has allowed me to continue pursuing my passion for music at the Academy. This opportunity means a lot to me, and I am committed to making the most of it. Thank you for believing in my potential and helping me to follow my dreams of becoming a professional musician.*

### **DAVID DEWAR RESEARCH**

You will remember that David has written in previous newsletters about his research into 20<sup>th</sup> Century English Music and into Thiman's Music in particular. The fruit of this research is a very substantial article about Thiman. David is currently working on the final edit, and the article will soon be available on the website and distributed to the Newsletter readers.

### **THE THIMAN BROTHERS**



The above photo shows the four Thiman brothers, pictured just before the First World War. Seated is **Ralph**, who died in 1917, while a member of the Royal Flying Corps, and is buried in Dozinghem Military Cemetery, a few miles west of Ypres in Belgium. **Eric** is stood at the rear. **Kenneth**, on the right, a well-known microbiologist, who lived in the USA from 1930. **Cedric**, on the left, a linguist and Head of Modern Languages at Nottingham High School (father of Frances Thimann, the principal supporter of our Collection).

## FREE CHURCH CHOIR UNION FESTIVAL

The Free Church Choir Union was founded in 1888. It has continued to organise Church Music Festivals since that date, the latest being at Coventry Cathedral on October 11<sup>th</sup> 2025.

<https://www.freechurchchoirs.org.uk/about-us.html>

Thiman had a very long association with these Festivals. His music appeared in most Festivals from 1927 onwards, and by 1930 he had become the Festival Organist, accompanying the massive massed choirs in such venues as the Crystal Palace, Alexandra Palace and the Royal Albert Hall. He continued in this role until the 70s. Many of the Festival were conducted by the famous conductor, educationalist and founder of summer schools, Ernest Read.

In the 2000 Festival all the music programmed was by Thiman, in celebration of his centenary.

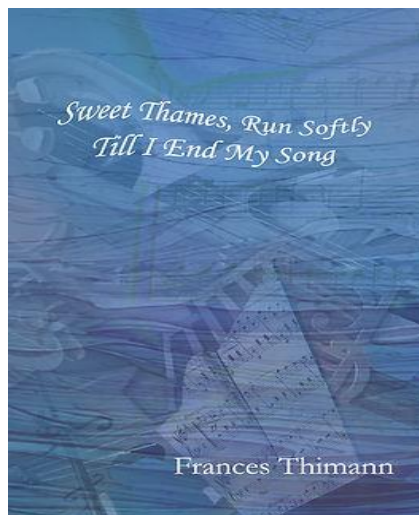
Thanks mainly to the help of friend of the Collection, Andrew Winton, we now have copies of 32 of the Festival Books featuring Thiman. It would be good to find copies of the missing ones, if anyone has access to the choir libraries of any free church choirs who might have kept them. The missing years are: 1937, 1953 and 1966, plus 1928, 1929 (which may have been before Thiman's involvement) and 1973 and 1974 (which may have been after).

Do contact Guy Turner (email below) if you find one of the missing Festival books.

## FRANCES THIMANN BOOK OF SHORT STORIES

Eric Thiman's niece, Frances, has been the prime mover and supporter of the Collection since she first suggested the idea to Paul Hale about 14 years ago.

Frances is a writer, and has recently published a book of excellent short stories, all linked in some way to music.



The book is available from Southwell Cathedral Shop or from the publisher on

<https://www.bigwhiteshed.co.uk/sweetthames>

There is an interview with Frances about the book here:

<https://leftlion.co.uk/features/2025/07/alife-composed-in-stories-author-frances-thimann-on-how-classical-music-shaped-her-latest-collection/>

The stories come strongly recommended...and it is time for Christmas shopping...

### **RECORDINGS AVAILABLE FROM THE COLLECTION**

Anthems and Part-songs by Eric Thiman (2016) The Tudor Singers / Eric Thiman Singers

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.

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