

THE WAYFARER

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DARREN NIMAN — A COMMITTEE MEMBER OF THE GMS UK NORTH AND MIDLANDS — REPORTS ON PROFESSOR MICHAEL TRIMBLE'S PRESENTATION 'MAHLER, AFFAIRS OF THE HEART'

For this event at Lancaster Hall Hotel (27 February) we had visitors from far and wide, including myself from Manchester and Dave Miller from Norfolk who supports GMS UK events in London and further afield. Also present was Gina Walek, the co-founder of the GMS UK along with Jim Pritchard. I personally would like to thank them both for everything they did in 2001 - and subsequently - to make the Society possible. We were thrilled to welcome eight people who had heard about the Society from Facebook, providing proof — if any were needed — of the power of social media to inform the wider world of our existence.

A warm welcome was extended by Catherine Dobson, GMS UK committee member, to Professor Michael Trimble and the composer and pianist Iain Farrington (photo above). Iain played examples of Mahler's music, giving a polished performance of extracts from his own brilliant and sympathetic piano transcriptions, including several symphonies and the song cycle *Das Lied von der Erde*.

Professor Trimble's main interests are at the interface of neurology and psychiatry and his work explores the behavioural

consequences of neurological disorders and their treatment; a very interesting man to have around when trying to assess our hero in his best and worst moments! It



was fascinating that, as with Tchaikovsky, Mahler's mental state in extremis sought to create these wonderful works of art, to express publicly his emotional agony and ecstasy, rather than to retreat

from the public, or even worse from the world, permanently ... and prematurely.

Together Iain and Michael discussed and explored Mahler's state of mind based upon the early experiences of his formative years which led to his obsession with death; they explained that in Mahler's music sadness is almost a Leitmotif. Indeed, Mahler wrote of his first two symphonies: 'my whole life is contained in them. I have set in them my experience and suffering at the door which leads to the "other world" — the world in which things are no longer separated by space and time.' (The quotation is sourced from Deryck Cooke.)

The closing idea of *Das Lied von der Erde* also represents this theme in Mahler's thinking, that of being in another place and transcending from this world to the next: 'My heart is weary. My little lamp

has burnt out. It puts me in mind to sleep. I come to you beloved resting place ... My heart is still and awaits its hour.' In Mahler's life, the composing huts where he isolated himself for long hours each day - like most of us have ourselves been doing in these difficult times - offered the solace and refuge that would allow his creative genius to pour out more than simple notes on a page.

Alma, after the death of their elder daughter from diphtheria, began an affair with Walter Gropius; but who could blame her? Mahler did not want her talents and musical abilities to outshine his and you could say he was controlling ... and insecure.

The personal blows Mahler suffered are entrenched as hammer strokes in the Sixth Symphony. Then, in the Eighth Symphony came 'Creation through Eros' – the depiction of an ideal of redemption through eternal womanhood (*Das Ewig-Weibliche*). What space was there for Alma as a person in this idealised image? Later in Mahler's life, in the Tenth Symphony the music looks to the harmonic future. There is a dissonance in the orchestra underneath a shrieking A played on solo trumpet ... 'A' representing Alma.

We saw a clip from Ken Russell's film about Mahler, showing a scene based upon one of Mahler's reported dreams of being buried alive in a coffin with a glass window that he could see through, scared out of his mind. Mahler had been so terrified of being buried alive that he had insisted that his heart should be pierced with a dagger to ensure that he was dead. The deed was duly carried out by a loyal Doctor in the Vienna Sanatorium.

Following a fascinating presentation that covered so much material, GMS UK member Stephen Priddle gave a well-deserved 'Vote of Thanks' to Michael and Iain. It was a presentation that we shall remember for a very long time!

The GMS UK would like to express our sincere appreciation to all of the audience for turning out in high numbers on a cold, wet, winter night, and to the Lancaster Hall Hotel management and staff who were our hosts. It has to be stressed that not only was this a thoroughly satisfying evening in terms of academic interest, but the social aspect was equally important; we are a group of like-minded individuals - albeit of very different backgrounds and home towns - but at these events our friendships and

acquaintances are reviewed or established and networking is carried out. The Society is all about people and togetherness. It was good to put faces to names and to welcome people who had heard about us through the Facebook pages. Long may this continue as soon as life returns to normal.

Catherine Dobson adds:

The combination of the talk 'Mahler's Affairs of the Heart' with live music had attracted an encouragingly large audience of GMS members, friends and some Facebook guests to the Lancaster Hall Hotel. The presentation by Michael Trimble (Emeritus Professor in Behavioural Neurology and Neuropsychiatry) and Iain Farrington (concert pianist, arranger and composer) invited us to review significant events in the life of Gustav Mahler and how these might have influenced his music.

Michael's research focussed particularly on the emotional fallout from tragic elements in Mahler's life. His childhood was overshadowed by the death of many of his siblings and an abusive, alcoholic father. In 1907 the death of his eldest daughter aged 4, discovery of the infidelity of his wife Alma, and the violent anti-Semitic opposition to his opera directorship in Vienna caused him to resign his post. In the same year, he was diagnosed with the critical heart condition that was to kill him. Michael revealed the effect of the heart ailment on his lifestyle - Mahler was advised to avoid exertion, the long mountain walks and swimming which he had always loved. He was constantly aware of his heartbeat, whether rapid or calm. These devastating events found a place in his compositions.

Throughout Michael's talk, Iain played relevant sections of Mahler's symphonies where certain phrases, modulations and keys produced subtle and sometimes disturbing changes in mood. Iain produced a great crash on the piano, to illustrate the familiar hammer blows in the last movement of the Sixth Symphony, thought to be the unwelcome sound of fate. Iain's sensitive rendering of parts of *Das Lied von der Erde*, inspired by Mahler's love of nature, showed deep yearning and awareness of mortality as the ethereal 'Ewig ... ewig' faded away.

This stimulating evening was received by an appreciative audience with great enthusiasm. Our thanks go to Michael and Iain whose preparation led to a seamless presentation which will be a very hard double-act to follow

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MAHLER'S LADIES BY JOHN SEARIGHT (CONCLUSION)

Having returned to Europe, Mahler again began to dwell on his own health and what the future might hold for him. Alma too was under strain. She felt exhausted, was suffering from depression following the miscarriage and feeling increasing sexual frustration; not yet thirty, she was still young and attractive, her husband ailing and aging beyond his years. As always, Mahler's main focus was on composing. He had warned her of this before they were married, but that was when she was in the full flush of youth and with stars in her eyes! With her mind in turmoil, Alma was persuaded to go for a rest cure in Levico, a spa in Italy some 120 kilometers southwest of Toblach. Alma, Gucki and Miss Turner, the nurse, set off, leaving Gustav alone to concentrate on his music and business matters concerning the forthcoming season in New York.

Mahler worked on a new symphony, his Ninth. When Alma returned she was as depressed as she had been before, yet Gustav's love for her remained as strong as ever. With Anna Moll coming to stay and to help her daughter back onto an even keel, Gustav managed to complete the short score of the new symphony in just ten weeks. Many regard his Ninth to be his greatest symphony, and the first movement the finest symphonic movement he ever composed. Questions may be asked about the wonderful *Adagio*: is it a farewell to this world? Is it a farewell to Romanticism and tonality? Is it a requiem for his lost daughter? Is it a plea to Alma to stay with him and return his love during whatever time he had left? Perhaps it is a combination of all of these, but of one thing there is no doubt, the *Adagio* is a miracle of music. To quote Leonard Bernstein, 'No person of sensibility can come away from the Ninth Symphony without being exhausted and purified.'

Uppermost in his mind the following year was the première of his Eighth Symphony, due to take place in Munich in September 1910, but he and Alma were then devastated by bad news. Their friend of so many years, Emil Zuckerkandl, had died of cancer. Mahler's friend Siegfried Lipiner had also been diagnosed with the disease, and news reached Alma that Max Burckhard, family friend and former director of the Burgtheater, who had been the first to encourage her to compose, was also seriously ill.

They were both under enormous stress,

and Alma, also suffering a recurrence of sexual and creative frustration, was almost at breaking point. Once again it was agreed that she should take a rest cure. This summer it would be at Tobelbad, a spa near Graz, where she could relax and take the waters. As with the previous summer, Gucki, now turned six, and nurse Turner would accompany her.

It was not long before Alma found a cure, but it was not the result of any medicine or from taking the waters. She met a young, handsome and very gifted architect, Walter Gropius, who later became famous as a co-founder of the innovative school of architecture and design known as the Bauhaus. A guilty conscience began to plague her. She still felt an irresistible desire to support her husband in his work, especially now that he was not in the best of health, and he was, after all, Gucki's father.

Meanwhile, Gustav attended numerous choral and orchestral rehearsals for his Eighth, not all up to a standard that satisfied him. His mounting concern over Alma's condition was not helped by the infrequency of her letters, and in those he did receive he began to notice a worrying change both in content and style. Having sensed that all was not as it should be, he decided to go to Tobelbad. To his great relief she appeared to be in much better health than he had feared, and he wrote to Anna Moll saying that the treatment was clearly doing her good! When 'little mamma' arrived at the spa on the 4th of July, the eve of the third anniversary of Putzi's tragic death, she found out about her daughter's affair with Gropius. To Alma's surprise and relief she showed sympathy rather than anger, clearly feeling that her daughter's extra-marital affair was the best treatment for her problems!

Alma's blossoming affair did not lessen her sense of duty towards Gustav, her admiration for him remaining intact, for intellectually they had so much in common, both in their love of music and also literature. She was torn in two directions: the intellectual side of her wanted Gustav, the physical Walter Gropius, and this divide inevitably brought about its own stress.

Gustav began to compose his Tenth Symphony. The 7th of July marked his fiftieth birthday, but his mind was on music rather than any celebrations. Among the cards he received, was one from Anna Moll, but nothing from Alma. A few days later he

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met her and Gucki at the station in Toblach. What he did not know was that his wife, having left Tobelbad, had gone to Vienna for a secret assignation with Gropius, a meeting arranged with the help of her mother.

Alma wanted the affair to be kept under wraps, but Gropius broke his promise to her by sending a letter to the Villa Trenker addressed to 'Herr Director Mahler'. In it he expressed his undying love for Alma, saying that he could not live without her! Gustav, sitting at his piano, read the letter and was understandably devastated; Alma, livid with Gropius, was embarrassed beyond words. The tension



arising from this incident resulted in a virtual exchange of roles; Gustav becoming more submissive and Alma — her confidence renewed by Tobelbad, Gropius, and her mother's support — becoming the more dominant partner. Yet Gustav's feelings for Alma actually deepened into a potent mixture of undying love and despair at the thought of losing her.

They both went down with a throat infection; Gustav also in a state of deep depression, Alma (photo with Gustav above) finding him slumped on the floor of his *Häuschen* in floods of tears. Anna Moll was asked to make haste to Toblach to calm the waters. Then the inevitable happened; Gropius arrived. Gustav told Alma to choose between them then and there, but for her there really was no choice. She had to stay with Gustav, for without her support she feared he would die. For the time being at least Gropius would have to remain in the background. He wrote an apology, and Alma replied saying how her husband had changed, how, in spite of everything, his expressions of love had become almost overwhelming and that he had become 'like a sick, wonderful child'.

Returning from a walk with Gucki, she heard Gustav playing the piano — he was

playing her songs. She froze with shock at hearing her 'forbidden' music of so long ago. It ceased, and Gustav came rushing out, smiling and at the same time reprimanding himself for having prevented her from composing. He declared that the songs were excellent, that they must work on them and get them published, and that she must resume composing immediately. Likewise, Mahler put in a final burst on what would be his unfinished Tenth Symphony. At the end of the manuscript he wrote, 'Für dich leben! Für dich sterben! ... Almschi' (To live for you! To die for you!). And so came his lengthy train journey to Leiden, in Holland, to meet Freud.

Alma was relieved to find him in a more composed frame of mind and

excited about the forthcoming première of his mighty Eighth Symphony on the 12th of September. His return to Toblach was brief for he had to travel to Munich for the final rehearsals. In a letter to Alma he said that he had gone down with a fever and severe septic throat. A very alarmed Emil Gutmann (the Austrian impresario in whose hands were the arrangements for the concert, and who also named the Eighth the 'Symphony of a Thousand' for publicity purposes) dashed to the Grand Hotel Continental to mop the maestro's brow! Now physically as well as mentally upset, Mahler once more filled his letters to Alma with purple prose and words of obsessive love.

Alma and 'little mamma' arrived at the Hotel Continental on the 9th of September, just three days before the concert, and met Gropius discreetly at the Hotel Regina. Anna found on the table in her room the piano score of the Eighth Symphony with a dedication to her. The full score, of course, he had dedicated to Alma. It goes without saying that this much-anticipated concert was to be Europe's cultural event of the year with friends and the famous flocking to Munich. It was a magnificent success. At the end the audience, moved beyond words, applauded for nearly thirty minutes.

If you have a personal story, or a review, or any contribution to make that you feel members of the GMS UK may be interested in please email: info@mahlersociety.org. This includes any feedback or letters that you think may interest members. Everything submitted is always considered for inclusion in *The Wayfarer* and will usually appear.

Mahler nevertheless remained determined as ever to tackle the challenges that lay ahead. It was not long before shabby politics and backstabbing entered the fray, and with stress mounting upon stress, and with his already weakened constitution providing little resistance to disease, his throat problem suddenly worsened.

Gustav and Alma arrived in New York on the 25th of October. Sick as he was with his throat problem still plaguing him, and exhausted before the season had even begun, Mahler nevertheless remained determined as ever to tackle the challenges that lay ahead. It was not long before shabby politics and backstabbing entered the fray, and with stress mounting upon stress, and with his already weakened constitution providing little resistance to disease, his throat problem suddenly worsened. Dr Joseph Fraenkel, who had begun to fear that Mahler was suffering from bacterial endocarditis, arranged for a blood test. The diagnosis was *streptococcus viridans*. Antibiotics had yet to be discovered so there was no medical cure.

Despite her genuine concern for Gustav, Alma's longing for Gropius remained as ardent as ever. Even at this time of crisis she began a letter to him with the words 'my love' and ending 'your bride!' She told him that she had become nurse, mother and housewife to Gustav, and exclaimed 'I want you. Do you want me?'

A brief glimmer of light in the gathering gloom was a performance of one of Alma's songs, 'Laue Sommernacht' ('Mild Summer's Night') as part of a recital given by soprano Alda Casazza. With Gustav too sick to attend, Dr Fraenkel accompanied Alma. When she told Gustav that it had been a success and was encored, he said repeatedly, 'Thank God'. With Gustav's condition continuing to worsen, Alma had to administer to his every need, including having to spoon-feed him. She slept in his room, frequently not undressing so that she could take immediate action should a crisis occur during the night.

On the 8th of April, Gustav, Alma, seven-year-old Gucki and Anna Moll, together with Miss Turner, prepared to leave New York. Following an uneventful voyage, during which Mahler's condition showed

further deterioration, they travelled to Paris where further tests were carried out, but there was nothing to be done. Carl Moll hurried to the station to book sleeping compartments on the Orient Express. Alma described the journey to Vienna as being 'like that of a dying king', with crowds of well-wishers and journalists gathered at every German and Austrian station, all eager to get the latest news. He was taken to the Löw Sanatorium, north west of the city centre. His mind began to drift. He muttered repeatedly 'My Almschi'. When Justi visited him he failed to recognize her, and she left in tears. Alma described how, at one point, his finger appeared to be conducting, and then, with a half-smile, he uttered his last words: 'Mozart! ... Mozart!' ('Little Mozart ... Little Mozart'). Four days later, on 22 May 1911, the funeral took place in the little chapel at the Grinzing cemetery.

On the 5th of October 1916, Alma gave birth to a little girl, Manon Gropius. During



her tragically short life, (Manon died from poliomyelitis at the tender age of eighteen), she was loved by all who met her. Bruno Walter described her as an angel, and Alban Berg would later dedicate his wonderful Violin Concerto 'To the memory of an angel'.

I am sure that if Mahler had known her, he too would have come under her spell.

When I visited the Grinzing cemetery in 2000, I was very moved to discover that the shared grave of Gustav and Putzi (photo above) is virtually back-to-back with that of Alma and Manon.

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**CRAIG BROWN REFLECTS ON MAHLER SIX WITH THE BERLIN PHILHARMONIC
AND ABOUT THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY**

It had all the makings of a memorable evening: a stroll by the River Thames; a leisurely supper with a long-time friend; then a slow shuffle to the Southbank auditorium to hear and see the splendid San Francisco Symphony Orchestra under Michael Tilson Thomas leave us awestruck with a definitive Mahler Sixth Symphony. Some things, however, are not to be. You cannot reclaim the memory of something that didn't happen; and, owing to the worldwide curse of coronavirus, the SFSO's spring tour was understandably cancelled. Well, really, it was nobody's fault.

By the Saturday evening of the concert date, it had occurred to me that I could still experience a Mahler Sixth and, even better, I could choose the performers. All I had to do was connect an ingenious Chromecast device to my wide-screen TV, access the internet and trawl through any number of complete YouTube concerts to find one that appealed.

For a while I had wondered about the Andrés Orozco-Estrada Sixth with the Frankfurt Radio Symphony Orchestra, for the Frankfurt ensemble are, in my opinion, quite superb, and their videos are first-rate. Then Ken Ward, who was to have been my Royal Festival Hall companion, told me that for a limited time the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra were offering free access to their excellent digital concert hall programme, which seemed to warrant exploration. There I found my ultimate choice, Sir Simon Rattle's farewell to the BPO – as principal conductor – and his Mahler Six at the Philharmonie, some thirty years after he first conducted that symphony in Berlin. Decision made.

Which meant, of course, that I had the luxury of reclining on the sofa with my music-loving dog beside me (they don't allow dogs in the Festival Hall, lest, una-

ble to read a score, they bark in the wrong places) and a glass of Merlot to soothe my nerves as the maelstrom unfolded. It wasn't as good as being there, no, but I had set my heart on an evening of Mahler and that was what was delivered. I felt content.

Somehow, although I have written concert reviews for *The Wayfarer* before, I feel uneasy about reviewing a 2018 concert I did not actually attend. This one, in any case, must have been reviewed a hundred times before. So, did I enjoy the performance?

Hmm. The trouble is, I always feel that if I went along to a Mahler Sixth and enjoyed it, something must have gone wrong, either with me or with the performers. This particular symphony, surely, is not meant to be enjoyed, so much as experienced and accommodated. It is supposed to send us home reflecting sombly upon

our fortunes, good and bad, and where we stand in the great scheme of things. After 80 or more minutes of semi-darkness and uncertainty, I can understand why David Matthews, writing in *The Mahler Companion*, expressed his bafflement that, once those final drumbeats had died away, the audience could somehow bring themselves to applaud, when silence would seem to be the only suitable response.

I did applaud, however. Daisy, my dog, squeaked her approval. We waited first for Sir Simon (photo above) to savour the frisson and slowly lower his baton, and I was grateful to the Berlin audience for doing the same. Beware – 'hobby horse' coming up – all too often nowadays concertgoers completely ignore the fact, as I believe it to be, that once the music has finished, the conductor is conducting the audience. If he (or she) is standing motionless with both hands in the air, the performance is not over. On too many

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occasions there sits in the shadows an idiot who thinks it clever to yell 'Bravo!' a split-second after the last note has sounded or who thinks it both wise and self-serving to be the first to clap. This is like stuffing the last potato in your mouth, throwing down your fork and leaping up from the restaurant table to the consternation of more discerning diners. It is simply bad manners – and lately, to my dismay, I note that even some BBC Proms audiences are adopting the habit.

Very well, I should at least make a few observations in regard to the BPO's Mahler Six under the redoubtable Rattle. For me, he generally 'does' Mahler as I like to hear it; my point being, I suppose, that in my book a good conductor is one who gets the orchestra to play the music as I like to hear it played. Rattle's *tempi* I find agreeable and he exudes enthusiasm and commitment on stage without appearing flamboyant. In this particular performance, he did not disappoint. As for the Berliners, who in fact do not have as long a tradition in Mahler as one might suppose, they were exemplary, and I thought the woodwind section were utterly wonderful. Mindful of Mahler's peerless writing for woodwind, this made for a glorious performance. Those there are, I know, who have sometimes accused the Berlin orchestra of sounding overly polished, and I accept that, contrary to the natural expectation, this can diminish some composers' works. I rather doubt that Mahler intended his Sixth – or, for that matter, many of his symphonies – to sound glossy, but given the extraordinary complexity of the Mahler Sixth's orchestration, it seems churlish in the extreme to challenge the BPO's overall approach when their skill and flawless ensemble were so impressive.

Rattle conducted the symphony without the score, which is a great feat of memory, although I tend to view this habit with some disaffection. Conductors are human; it can all go wrong. Conduct it balancing on one leg, why don't you? He used the format of *Andante* second and *Scherzo* third, which appears to be the most favoured sequence these days – though the arguments as to which arrangement, by the end of his days, Mahler really wanted can only remain unresolved. The third and final hammer blow, inevitably, was not included – does anyone play it now? – and while the composer was convinced that the deletion should stand, I personally rather like the effect of the final crash. Interestingly, on my shelf I have, among other Sixths, Benjamin Zander's recording with the Philharmonia, in which he offers us two versions of the immense *Finale*, one with two hammer blows and another with three. Democracy in music, perhaps?

There you have it. No-one would have expected the San Francisco orchestra to visit in such perilous circumstances as were presented by the coronavirus pandemic. They were missed, but the music was, in a sense, inescapable. I asked Ken Ward if he had done the same as me that night, and he replied that the gloom surrounding the pandemic had deterred him from tackling a Mahler Sixth just then. Fair enough, when you think about it. This symphony is a thing of wonder in many ways, but it is pessimistic, harrowing and unrelenting in its clamorous darkness. It tells us much of Mahler the man as well as Mahler the musician, and I think perhaps, if we take it to heart as surely we should, it tells us also about the darker mechanisms inside ourselves.

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The winner of the Mahler Quiz in the December 2019 *The Wayfarer* was Robert Duncan with 19 out of 20 answers correct (congratulations!).

The answers were: 1. Brahms, Wolf, Webern / 2. Shakespeare, Beethoven, Wagner / 3. Liszt / 4. Third Symphony / 5. Premiere of Mahler's Second Symphony in Berlin in December 1895 / 6. Beethoven / 7. Mahler's parents / 8. Migraines / 9. Hamburg Opera / 10. Johann Strauss's waltzes / 11. Composing / 12. *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* / 13. Hans Rott / 14. Schubert / 15. JS Bach / 16. Third movement of Mahler Four / 17. Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony / 18. Birds / 19. Albert Lortzing / 20. Brahms

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The eighth annual Dinner Recital of the Alkan, Liszt, Mahler, Schubert, Richard Strauss, and Wagner Societies was held at the Lancaster Hall Hotel, London on 28 January 2020. There was a warm welcome at the venue for a full house of eighty guests. The event was hosted by the Wagner Society who arranged the recital programme. Each participating Society selected a soloist to perform works by its eponymous composer, resulting in a memorable choice of well-loved and some lesser-known songs and piano solos.

The Gustav Mahler Society was delighted to be represented by Simon Wallfisch, baritone (photo below). Accompanied at the piano by Iain Farrington, Simon selected three of Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder* for his performance, 'Um Mitternacht', 'Liebst du um Schönheit' and 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen', sung with tenderness and conviction and accompanied with great sensitivity by Iain. Simon won prestigious prizes from the Royal College of Music and subsequently in Berlin and Leipzig. He has sung many operatic roles and is passionate about the lieder repertoire, with

a steady output of recordings. Iain is not only in demand as concert pianist but as soloist, accompanist, composer and chamber musician all over the world. He played piano at the opening ceremony of the London Olympics in 2012 and gave a brilliant concert series of his own solo piano arrangements of all Mahler's symphonies at the London 1901 Arts Club in 2018.

Christian Adolph, baritone, representing the Wagner Society sang the aria 'O du, mein holder Abendstern' from Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, a Richard Strauss lied and 'Rheinlegendchen' from Mahler's *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*. Christian holds a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from the Royal College of Music and a Bachelor of Music in Opera Performance from Karlsruhe, Germany. He is equally at home on the concert and opera stage.

The Andrews Massey Duo was an innovation at this year's Dinner Recital, with Emily Andrews playing flute and David Massey guitar. Emily and David met at the Royal Academy of Music and have played together ever since, as well as having solo careers. They represented the Schubert Society on this occasion with arrangements of 'Ständchen', 'Gute Nacht' and 'Die Taubenpost', an opportunity to hear these wonderful lieder in a new guise.

Mark Viner is recognised as one of today's most exciting young British concert pianists. He studied at the Purcell School of Music and the Royal College of Music and has gained worldwide acclaim for his virtuosic performances of Alkan's works. As Chair of the Alkan Society and an enthusiastic advocate of Alkan's music, Mark's playing of three of Alkan's *Préludes dans tous les tons majeurs et mineurs* was a rare treat.



The Richard Strauss Society chose Alicia Cadwgan, soprano, the winner of the 2019 Joyce and Michael Kennedy Award, to sing four Strauss lieder and she extended her

repertoire to include songs by Schubert and Liszt. Currently studying at the Royal Northern College of Music, she holds a Bachelor of Music and Postgraduate Diploma from the New Zealand School of Music. She is presently rehearsing roles in operas by Poulenc and Jonathan Dove.

Our final star performer was Leslie Howard, concert pianist of worldwide renown, who had accompanied Alicia and was now representing the Liszt Society. To celebrate his 70th Birthday, Leslie prepared a programme of Liszt's operatically inspired piano music to add to his extensive discography. To conclude the recital, Leslie and Jad Grainger as duettists played Liszt's 'Weimar's Volklied', his *Pastorale* of 1861 and the amazing and exciting *Grand Galop chromatique*, bringing the evening to a dazzling conclusion.

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