

The Previously Unexplored Correspondence

of

Robin Milford (1903-1959)

1931

No. 1; Date: July, 1931; Addressee: Kirstie; Sent From: Marlborough

Pertinent Musical/Social/Personal Aspects	Reflections
I expect you will want to hear all about yesterday first, so here goes as the vulgar say – I got to Gloucester punctually & arrived at the Shire Hall before 4.00, where I found Holst was rehearsing 'The Hymn of Jesus'. After this he took his new Fantasia, which I must say, just hearing it in bits as I did, sounded rather arid & dreary with every now & then a fine movement. However with that large body of voices & only a piano to represent the orchestra it was very difficult to judge of it. After that I descended from the balcony & went off to tea with Holst and Sumsion. All the chorus & us had tea together – at least in the same place, at long tables, rather like a Sunday School treat. I sat next to Holst who was very nice, but I somehow never feel really at ease with him, & I'm sure he doesn't with me. His sense of humour is so odd! And his heartiness with people never strikes me as ringing quite true. However he is jolly mystic; he had walked to Gloucester (nearly all the way anyhow) on Tuesday & Wednesday in all that rain. After tea we spent most of the time at my thing, which went quite extraordinarily well. Sumsion seems to	This is in relation to a performance of Milford's oratorio <i>A Prophet in the Land</i> at the Gloucester 1931 'Three Choirs Musical Festival'. Milford was invited to attend the 'Full Chorus Rehearsal' in the Shire Hall on Thursday, July 16th, 1931, by the Gloucester Organist and Festival Conductor Herbert Sumsion. The invitation is signed "Best wishes, H. W. S. (Herbert W. Sumsion)". Other works for rehearsal that year were the Brahms 'Requiem', Holst's 'Choral Fantasia' and 'Hymn of Jesus', Bach's 'Sleeper Wake' Cantata, Stanford's 'The Lord is my Shepherd' and Bach's 'Mass in B minor'.

think the choirs have enjoyed doing it & they certainly sang as if they did. I thought it was very jolly that the men broke into applause after the Female Chorus ('The God of Love'). The tone is simply magnificent, & they got a really fine round tone on top Bb – quite difficult from the usual ? one is accustomed to up there. The addition of boys' voices is obviously a great improvement from this point of view. The Shire Hall is not very big & the amount of time in there was at times quite staggering. (I do wish you could have heard it all, Darling.) Moreover, they knew the work awfully well & one never had a moment's anxiety about entries etc. The difficulties Sumsion spoke of seem to have been chiefly awkward jumps in the parts, specially in the tenor part (tenors of course being as a rule the slowest at getting into things). I do not think they are the kind of things that could prevent the work being taken up by choirs mas mostly they use the kind of things which really don't matter either wat much, & in fact, if the work got into a second edition(!), it might be quite worthwhile smoothing out many of the anomalies / irregularities(?), which are not necessary to the music but merely the result of my own inexperience & carelessness.

Tell the old birds I wish they had been there, & I really think Daddy would (or might) have felt quite pleased we had published it, for the big choruses were really thrilling.

After my stuff they rehearsed the BMin Mass & as they started at 2.30, & with half an hour for tea, went on till 7.00, & as my thing had plenty of Bs & Bach's

plenty of As and Bs I should think they weren't sorry when 7.00 came. Sumsion is admirable & does what one wants, & yet manages to get through the work in hand extraordinarily quickly. I am thankful I let him conduct, though he asked me again yesterday if I wouldn't.

After the rehearsal we had dinner with Mrs Sumsion & Corbett Sumsion (his brother), an odd bird but quite nice. The Sumsion children are great fun ... I think you will like Mr & Mrs, they are both awfully nice. They have asked us to lunch on the day of my thing. Old Vaughan Williams & R O Morris will be there! Also, I think they want some of us to go over & see them earlier in the holidays, & I said that he must come & play golf (she doesn't play). Sumsion has a great scheme for having some golf those days that we are in London, as he wants to get out of town in the evenings, so I suggested his coming to the R.A. C., & he seemed keen to & said he would bring Keith Faulkner! Shouldn't we be a comic trio one golf course?! Sumsion is rather good – 8, I think.

Few know of Milford's enthusiasm for golf (amateur).

Sir Keith Faulkner was Director of the Royal College of Music from 1960 to 1974.

Thus, Milford and Sumsion became good friends and most compatible music colleagues.

Marion arranged for the present writer to meet Sumsion and it became obvious just how highly Sumsion thought of Milford as a man and musician.

Please see below.

The Three Choirs Musical Festival,

GLOUCESTER, 1931.

September 6th, 8th, 9th, 10th and 11th.

FULL CHORUS REHEARSAL

IN THE SHIRE HALL,

ON THURSDAY, JULY 16th, 1931,

AT 2.30 P.M.

2.30	Requiem ...	...	...	...	<i>Brahms.</i>
	Choral Fantasia	...	...	...	<i>Holst.</i>
	Hymn of Jesus	...	...	...	<i>Holst.</i>
	Sleepers Wake	...	...	...	<i>Bach.</i>

4.30 INTERVAL FOR TEA.

<u>5.0.</u>	A Prophet in the Land	...	...	...	<i>Milford.</i>
	The Lord is my Shepherd	...	...	...	<i>Stanford.</i>
	Mass in B minor	...	...	...	<i>Bach.</i>

Will the members of the Chorus please remember to be
in their places, ready to start rehearsal, promptly, at 2.30 p.m.

HERBERT W. SUMSION,
Conductor.

Bartrich, H. W. S.