

MUSIC IN THE CITY

The title of my paper was to be "The Cultural City". As I began to assemble my thoughts it became clear that this was too wide a brief to be handled in this meeting except in a superficial gloss, which was unacceptable. Even an expanded series of Gresham lectures could scarcely do justice to the theme. So you will not, I hope, be displeased if I focus on a narrow section of the total picture. Regard it, if you like, as an instalment - and invite me back in another 46 years. Provided Miss Betty Masters is still here to advise and assist me again!

So my sub-title - which will surprise no-one who knows my interests - is "Music in the City". For my purpose today the subject falls quite readily into two main sections, that is music, the pattern of which is formalised to a degree by the Corporation and music that continues independently of our patronage and I shall concentrate on Corporation patronage under two headings, musical education and musical entertainment.

Within Corporation history the most significant early commitment to music was probably the City Waits and in his admirable paper on that subject Historian Alan Lamboll traces the change in their role from that of watchman to that of entertainer to an Order of the Common Council on 1st February 1454. In our day the Corporation has a proud reputation in the field of musical education but is, to put it mildly, less enchanted by its commitments in the field of musical entertainment. Fortunately, the private sector have shown themselves responsive to this situation and I shall come back to this theme later.

It is interesting to speculate how much of the Corporation involvement was and is due to outside pressures and how much to a genuine belief in the magic of music. Certainly the next event I shall record began as outside pressure - in fact as a Royal nudge.

On the 18th November 1873 His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh laid the foundation stone of a National Training School for Music near the Royal Albert Hall and on 3rd June 1875 the first Royal nudge was delivered by no less a person than the Prince of Wales, inviting the Lord Mayor to appoint a deputation to confer as to the best means of creating 'a free musical school worthy of the country'. As a by-line, one of the Aldermen

appointed to this Deputation was Sir Francis Truscott and the family retained its connection with City music through to the present generation, when Sir Dennis Truscott, himself a former student of the Guildhall School of Music, was elected a Fellow of the School.

Nudge, nudge again. This time in February 1876 when the Duke of Edinburgh invited the Corporation to provide scholarships at the National Training School for Music. Ten were duly approved at a cost of £40 each for 5 years and a member of the Common Council, John Bath, was appointed to the Council of Management. Candidates for the Corporation scholarships were to be nominated by members of the Common Council and 186 were so proposed, of whom 139 paid the registration fee of 5 shillings and submitted themselves for examination. 10 were chosen but sadly none of them seem to have made the grade to eternal stardom. Nor did the school, for it fell into decline and was re-structured in 1882 as the Royal College of Music.

The Corporation Deputation to the National Training School for Music began to consider in 1876 whether a school of music could be established in the premises of Gresham College and resolved that 'The Deputation would probably adopt a scheme for musical education'. There the matter seems to rest and the Deputation appear to have gone into hibernation for eighteen months. According to the Committee Minutes, or more accurately the absence of Minutes, it is only in March 1878 that they met to receive a letter from the Gresham Committee dated 5th December 1876 regretting that the College premises were already fully occupied. Would that our Committees today could recess so peacefully!

For a number of years from 1878 the Corporation funded an annual concert at Mansion House and Guildhall given by students of the National Training School for Music and subsequently the Royal Academy of Music. In May 1878, 788 tickets were offered to members of the Common Council. There is no record of the number of acceptances but Ring & Brymer provided refreshments at a cost of £11.14.6d, so we may reasonably assume that even in those days it was a minority of the Common Council that interested itself in music.

Inspired, perhaps somehow by the far from lavish Corporation contributions to the arts, one Charles Smith founded an Amateur Orchestral Society and

invited the Corporation in 1878 to accept the Governorship. This they did, and with a grant of £350 the Guildhall Orchestral Society was born. The first director was Mr. Weist Hill, said by contemporary critics to be the greatest living English conductor. Charles Smith became Secretary.

The Corporation involvement deepened in late 1879 when the Deputation to the National Training School for Music met 'to consider whether there be any demand for Musical Education in the City of London such as is supplied by the West End of London'. By March 1880 it had been agreed that there was and in May of that same year the title Guildhall School of Music was adopted, with our old friend Charles Smith re-appearing as Secretary at a salary of £50 per annum and Mr. Weist Hill as Director at £150 per annum. The City Architect was instructed in May 1880 to find premises within the precincts of Guildhall and this he did with such expedition that the Deputation met at the new school at 16 Aldermanbury on 27th September that same year (The Barbican School took a little longer!).

The premises allocated by the City Lands Committee were part of 14,15,16 Aldermanbury which had been purchased in the previous year for £20,000 and the Architect's assessment of a fair rent to the music school was £1,000 per annum. Let us swiftly compare that with current debt charges on the Barbican School of £722,620 per annum and just as swiftly retreat again to the comparative safety of 1880.

Not unlike the denizens of our present day press, the Printer's Devil mauled the notice of the formal opening which appeared variously as Monday 20th September, Monday 26th September and Monday 27th September. Despite this, 216 pupils presented themselves for admission to the Guildhall School of Music. Fees were one guinea per term. The Committee Minutes are terse beyond belief, almost as though opening a new school were an everyday event. Be that as it may the Corporation was now committed to the support of formal classical education and from this modest beginning arose in 1886 the purpose-built school in John Carpenter Street - hailed in its day as a model of design - and now the Barbican School, once again setting a standard for others to follow.

My fellow historians may recall that, as the then Chairman of the Music Committee, I was deeply involved in the move of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama to Barbican. An official history of the school is to be

published later this year to mark the centenary, so I do not propose to speak of it here in detail, but to make one point. The Corporation's commitment to formal musical education began with ten scholarships of £40 per annum and has now topped one and a quarter million pounds. No other Local Authority in the country approaches this field without dipping heavily into the public purse and the Corporation's achievement from its own private purse deserves more recognition than is generally accorded.

Although 1876 marks the beginning of the Corporation's regular expenditure on musical education, the teaching of music has gone on without the intervention of the Corporation since, I suppose one would say, time immemorial. And for several hundred years the Corporation itself had been involved with musical education but, happily, without spending its own money. Sir Thomas Gresham, as my fellow historians will recall from the report to the Common Council on 24th July, had founded his college in 1596 and of his seven professors the City Corporation were to nominate four, namely Geometry, Astrology, Divinity and Music. The present Professor of Music is Allen Percival, the former Principal of the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and I count myself privileged to be on the Council of Gresham College co-operating with the Mercers' Company and City University to give a new lease of life to Gresham's ideal.

Within the concept of "The City", the Gresham lectures represent the only programme of formal education which is independent of Corporation subvention. Thanks to Sir Thomas Gresham, we are in fact in the position of filling the role of partner without concurrent financial obligations.

However, just outside our boundaries but bearing our name lies the City University where formal musical education has been a major feature of the expansion into the arts of the former Northampton Polytechnic. The Corporation is not a direct patron of this course of study but is closely concerned not only through its representatives on the Court and the Council of the City University, but also through the tuition carried on at the Guildhall School of Music on behalf of the University, culminating for successful graduates in the only Bachelor of Science degree in Music in the country.

This now brings me to the second section of my theme, that is live musical entertainment and here I have to say bluntly that without patronage there would be none. Even the traditional monkey on a string held out a begging

bowl for his organ grinder and the system still seems to make monkeys out of some of us.

Corporation patronage of music for entertainment is both direct and indirect and although I am conditioned to believe that almost all money spent on music is "A Good Thing", I venture the opinion that the indirect Corporation subvention is more cost-effective. This total contribution on entertainment is a charge on the Rates Fund, unlike expenditure on musical education, which remains City's Cash. During the financial year 1979/80 the Corporation allocated £6,000 to public entertainment, which produced 86 hours of open air band concerts, this being the direct and visible expenditure of the Corporation. As entertainment the concerts are a great success but as a 'public relations' exercise, I doubt if one person in a hundred knows the source of the funds.

By contrast, the Corporation is known to many thousands as a prime patron of music and the arts through its grants to outside bodies. In the financial year 1979/80 these were £2,250 to the City Music Society, £3,000 to the Mermaid Theatre and £12,000 to the City Arts Trust. This priming of the pump to the tune of £17,250 encouraged business houses and City institutions to come forward as patrons of the City Festival 1980 with contributions of over £86,000 and induced an Arts Council grant of £16,500 - and all this for the expenditure of the equivalent of a rate of only 0.0073 pence in the pound. Not only a cost-effective operation, but also a rare and precious opportunity for the City corporate and the City financial to work literally "in harmony" in a success story that can and I believe must go forward, certainly never as a potential competitor to Barbican but as an invaluable side-by-side activity in the largest patronage commitment ever undertaken by any Local Authority in this country, perhaps even in the world. I hope I may have shown that we are not entirely without experience.

W.D
30.09.80