

## *A Brief History of Soundpost Publications*

During my tenure as *Director Artístico* between 1978 and 2008 of the Deià International Chamber Music Festival in Mallorca, I had several guidelines for choosing the artists – there were always more offers than it was possible to accept, even though the fees were not so great. One such guideline was to insist that the artist should always include at least one composer from his native land. That's easy for a German or an Austrian, or even a French musician; but a Bulgarian, Pole, Mallorcan, Dutchman; even a Briton had to make a real effort to come up with something from a compatriot. In this way our programs were already significantly different from other music festivals.

A second system was to look for combinations of instruments not so often found in established festivals: piano quintets, wind quintets, septets, octets, nonets, string quintets, for instance. Of course, you would find the Beethoven Septet from time to time in other venues, or the Spohr Nonet, as well as the ubiquitous Schumann and Brahms piano quintets, and the numerous piano trios by the usual suspects: Mozart, Mendelssohn, Brahms, et al.

In fact, if you left it to the visiting artists, you would hear *only* these composers, with maybe the occasional Shostakovich or Dvorak. And if as the organizer you must attend every concert, 15 or 20 each year, for 30 years, you might, as we did, begin searching for other pieces to mix into the repertoire, and try to convince the players to be a little more adventurous.

This search was intensified in 1992 when I mentioned to an American friend that I would like to include some Romantic composers from the United States, and she sent me an article about the first concert in my native country consisting entirely of American composers. That concert took place in Cleveland, Ohio in 1884, according to the article. I wrote to the Chamber of Commerce in that city, who sent my letter on to Case Hall, the venue of that concert, and they in turn passed the letter on to a librarian who miraculously found a copy of the original program. She sent me a photocopy, and the chase was on. Only one of the pieces had ever been published, and here began the next and, for me, most thrilling episode of the Festival. Tracking down the manuscripts of the Gilchrist Piano Trio in G Minor and the J. H. Beck String Quartet, the principal pieces on that day in 1884, required much persistence, but in 1984, one hundred years after that significant concert, we heard those in Son Marroig here in our little village.

In the process, I learned there were hundreds of unpublished manuscripts held in the Philadelphia Logan Free Library, and made a pilgrimage to have a look for myself. The greatest find was the chamber music and a remarkable cello concerto by Arthur Foote, which I have since published, but more than that, it made me aware that there could be other treasure troves in other libraries, and other countries. Since then we have heard works by Alexis de Castillon, from Paris, Carlos Gomes from Brazil, and – wonder of wonders – a piece for 2 pianos by Franz Liszt, first played by Chopin and Liszt in Paris in 1834. I have since published the Liszt and the Gomes, always for the same reason – to hear them in Deià.

Somewhere around the year 2000, looking for other groupings for winds and strings – everybody was playing the Spohr Nonet and the Beethoven Septet, I ran across mention of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's Nonet. The manuscript was in the Royal College of Music in London, where he'd studied (and eventually taught), and I received a photocopy of the manuscript. In order to hear it, I made an edition, and in 2002 a

local group of players performed the work in Son Marroig. I put sample pages on my website, and one of the musicians who bought my edition informed me of several errors. Thus began a long collaboration with Lionel Harrison, a pianist and composer living in London; he's probably the person who knows more about Coleridge-Taylor than anyone else, or at least one of this composer's greatest fans. He owns every recording ever made of Coleridge-Taylor's music, or so I believe, and after we published the Piano Quintet in G Minor, Lionel was influential in getting it recorded by the Nash Ensemble.

Soon we published the A minor Symphony from this Afro-English composer, and the Haytian Dances for string orchestra, a five movement version his well-known *Noveletten*.

Lionel and I both had read Geoffrey Self's *The Hiawatha Man*, a biography of Coleridge-Taylor, and lamented the lost string quartet and the Grand Opera *Thelma, or the Amulet*, finished in 1909 but never performed, declared lost in Self's book and elsewhere. The composer died in 1912, thirty-seven years old, never having heard this major work.

Then the grand surprise: Lionel, looking in the British Library for another work by Coleridge-Taylor, discovered the manuscript of *Thelma*!! It had apparently been there all the time, if I understand correctly what Lionel told me. We got copies and settled down to a couple of years' labor of love.

Thus what began as a drive to hear unusual pieces has led me into a niche market with a seemingly endless list of scores worthy of revival. [My catalog](#) is a record of my quest for neglected works, and not only mine – conductor Christopher Fifield (Frederic Cliffe, Max Bruch), Bo Hytner (Scharwenka, Paul Dukas), clarinetist Walter Seyfarth of the Berlin Philharmonic (Julio Medaglia), among others, who suggested works to transcribe.

At this moment spring of 2011, the upcoming celebration of Coleridge Taylor's hundredth anniversary is promising to bring his name to the fore. Whereas in the past he was known principally for his early success, *Hiawatha's Wedding Feast*, we will get to know his songs, his symphony, his remarkable chamber music, and finally in 2012 his opera, to be performed in London by the Pegasus Opera. The composer only heard *Thelma* in his head, and I have heard it in the computerized playback, but soon a much larger public will be able to enjoy the opera, one of his greatest endeavors. Already the tunes live again in my head, and in Lionel's; now others will come to know them. I'm sure Coley, as Lionel tells me he was known to his friends, would be very happy indeed.