

MAISIE LEWIS RECITALS

25 YEARS – A SPECIAL CELEBRATION

THE MASTER HAS REQUESTED that all Liverymen should support the **CELEBRATION CONCERT on Wednesday 31 May at St. John's, Smith Square. Partners and guests will be particularly welcome. The Livery Club is also organising a supper in the Footstool Restaurant in the Crypt for which the Clerk is negotiating an all in price.**

For the first time, the Walter Willson Cobbett Medal will be presented in public to Levon Chilingirian for his outstanding contribution to chamber music. His ensemble was the first to be granted a recital in 1970. We are delighted that the Quartet has offered to return for this special concert.

There will be two other artists appearing who have benefitted in the past and have since become established performers. Ann Mackay, soprano, participated in 1980. She is also the current holder of the Company's John Clementi Collard Fellowship. John Harle is both a saxophonist and composer. He appeared in 1981.

This Celebration is a rare opportunity for Liverymen to hear musicians whom the Company has assisted in the early days of their careers.

It is special in another way. With the agreement of the Lewis family, the Court decided, on a trial basis for one year, that concerts and recitals might accept outside support. In the event of a sponsor being found, it would be the first time that the Company has been involved in this type of activity.

A Tribute

Pastmaster David Loeb, an Honorary Assistant, as father of the Court is responsible for giving the speech of appreciation in respect of the outgoing Master at the Installation Court in November. However, to many in the Company, he is better known for his work, from its inception, with the Maisie Lewis Young Artists Fund and recitals. For many years he was Chairman of its Committee. The Company, as well as many young musicians are indebted to him for his skills, guidance and hard work. What else would one expect from the grandson of Hans Richter? It is a great pleasure, therefore, for your editors to be able to pay a tribute to someone who, so often, has discharged that duty himself!

...In the beginning from Pastmaster David Loeb

The fund came into existence in 1969 through the generosity of the late Sir Edward Lewis and has recently been generously augmented by his son Richard. Jack Iles, who was Master at the time, had been a personal friend of Maisie Lewis who had died in 1968. She had been a professional pianist and was the wife of Sir Edward, then Chairman of Decca and Senior Partner of E.R. Lewis & Co. Stockbrokers.

The object of the fund as stated in the Trust Deed 'is to assist young musicians at advanced student level by sponsoring concerts at recognised concert halls or other suitable places away from academic musical institutions.'

When the idea was first conceived, Jack Iles, as Master, I, as Senior Warden and Frank Wright, Junior Warden, were the basis of the first committee. Frank Wright was invaluable because he organised the music for the Greater London Council and therefore had useful connections. He was able to book the Purcell Room for our concerts, the first being on 2 June 1970. He had heard of an excellent young quartet and rang me up to ask if I could go and hear them. So it was that the then newly formed Chilingirian String Quartet gave the inaugural concert.

The programme included notes from the following:

Sir Arthur Bliss, Master of the Queen's Musick:

"The Maisie Lewis Young Artists Fund will provide the opportunity (an essential one!) for the young player to cross the bridge from an amateur to a professional status; for, until

he or she can, by public appearance, overcome the nervous tension attendant on such ordeals, they will suffer a handicap early in their career, however talented they may be. This fund will surely prove to be of the greatest benefit to young musicians."

Sir Adrian Boult:

"It is a wonderful thing that the Maisie Lewis Young Artists Fund is setting out to help young people at the most difficult moment of their careers. May I send every good wish not only to those who are taking part in the first Concert, but to all those who are to benefit from this splendid Fund in times to come."

Benjamin Britten:

"I send my best wishes for the success of the Maisie Lewis Young Artists Fund concerts. The scheme is sure to discover and encourage much unknown talent, and I hope the musical public will support with enthusiasm Sir Edward Lewis's great generosity."

After the first, the problem was to find artists for future concerts. The idea was to have three events per year in either the Purcell Room or Wigmore Hall. The late Sir Robert Mayer, a Liveryman, came to our help. He auditioned young artists to give concerts in his Youth and Music series and asked us to attend to give us ideas. To invite applications, we then published details of the fund in an Arts Council's publication which listed all musical charities. As a result, we received about eighty replies, from which we chose twelve to audition.

It was our intention to include instrumentalists, singers and ensembles, not only to help the artists, but to provide varied and interesting concerts. Dr. Eric Arnold, then Assistant Clerk, organised the applicants. Auditions were held at the GSMD where the then Principal, Allen Percival, was very helpful by letting us use one of his lecture rooms. We spent the whole day choosing our six artists for the three concerts of the year.

As can be seen from the quotes above, when the Fund was created it was innovative, but in the last 25 years more opportunities have become available for young musicians to play on the South Bank under the auspices of other organisations. Even so, it remains difficult for musicians to find performance opportunities and to establish themselves in the profession.

Looking down the list of those who have given some of our concerts, I am encouraged to see that many have gone on to established careers.



Three of Richter's grandchildren and two great granddaughters, including Pastmaster David Loeb and Liveryman Caroline Loeb (left).