

## The Light Music Society & Library of Light-Orchestral Music

**Chairman: Ernest Tomlinson**  
**Treasurer: David del Strother**  
**Secretary: Hilary Ashton**

*From Eric Coates and Robert Farnon to Gilbert & Sullivan and Offenbach to the lighter moments of Schubert, Elgar, Walton or Mozart – plus show music, popular song, film music and radio & TV themes...the list is seemingly endless.*

*Light Music repertoire from these disparate genres is united by an immediate appeal. Music with melody - music to entertain - music to enjoy!*

### The Light Music Society



Eric Coates

The *Light Music Society* was founded in 1957 with the composer **Eric Coates** as its president. **Sir Arthur Bliss** was later president, and when the first newsletters were introduced **Billy Mayerl** edited them. This was the hey-day of light orchestras broadcasting throughout the day, week in week out. So why was a society thought necessary?

In Billy Mayerl's words –

“The sober fact is that light music is in danger, not from direct assault, but from the fact that the lover of light music has no one to speak for him. There are many societies for ‘serious’ music and many for jazz, but until now, none for light music. The *Light Music Society's* declared objectives are to foster the interest of light music throughout the world, and to obtain increased facilities for those interested in this form of culture by means of broadcasting, recording and general performances.”

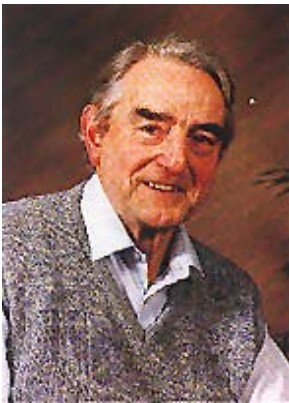
For twenty years the society was very active, with regular meetings, concerts, competitions, bulletins and social events. In 1966 the composer **Ernest Tomlinson** became its chairman. He and other members of the society helped to keep light music ‘on the air’ at the time through the influence they had with the BBC. Interest in light music was at its lowest ebb in 1978 – the year Ernest found dozens of light music scores thrown out in a BBC rubbish skip. In response to fears of further losses of source material, in 1984 *The Library of Light-Orchestral Music* was founded, and remained under the sole patronage of the *Light Music Society* until 1996.



The 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in light music – whether on CD, with more works available through re-issue and new recordings, or as part of an increase in live performances. As the printed music was unavailable from any other source, the library was approached to supply much orchestral material needed for several CDs in the Marco Polo *British Light Music* series, and also for some Naxos and ASV releases. At a meeting at the Royal College of Music, London, in July 1996 the society was fully reactivated.

### **The Library of Light-Orchestral Music**

The motivation for founding the *Library of Light-Orchestral Music* came from Ernest Tomlinson. He was dismayed that thousands of orchestral works, once owned by music publishers, conductors, disbanded orchestras, concert halls, theatres, broadcasters and others were being destroyed, either as policy or through indifference. Without a repository, such as he could provide at his home, even more would disappear. So, with the backing of the *Light Music Society*, he established a library to provide a service to orchestras and performers, who now have difficulty finding such music.



Ernest Tomlinson

### **The Collection**

Music originally commissioned by the BBC has been one source of acquisitions. These include the 50 small combination arrangements of standard items rescued from the BBC rubbish skip by Ernest, and 442 sets from the erstwhile BBC Scottish Variety Orchestra library, thrown out, but fortunately rescued by the orchestra's pianist. To his credit, Geoffrey Lester of the BBC Music Library responsibly stored over 3000 unwanted Dance Band sets until they could be passed over to us here at the library.

Of particular value is our large collection of popular songs. Its comprehensiveness is largely due to a collection of 8000 or so items donated to us by Thames Television in 2000, when they were taken over by Pearson Television.

The library houses more than 30,000 bags of orchestral sets, each containing 20 to 30 parts for individual instruments. We believe the library is unique in its range and quantity, with many pieces unobtainable elsewhere. All the music is listed and accessible, with over 11,000 works entered in our database so far. The value of our collection is increasingly demonstrated, reflecting the resurgence of interest in this type of music by recording companies, orchestras in the concert hall and ensembles in numerous social functions.



“You did say Malcolm Arnold?”

### **A Significant Archive of National Heritage**

From the heritage point of view this collection offers unique insight into the music actually played in the concert venues and ballrooms from the early 1800s to the present time. Orchestral selections, often formed into dances like lancers and quadrilles, give a practical record of the popular songs and stage shows over this whole period.

### **Administration**

Initial administration costs (enabling, for example, the purchase of a computer and printer) were met from accumulated royalties from the HMV LP *Britain's Choice*, which had originally been sponsored by The Light Music Society in 1968. The album, which features music played by the Light Music Society Orchestra conducted by Sir Vivian Dunn, has recently been reissued on CD by Vocalion (CDLK4182).

The biggest financial support for the work of the library comes from Light Music Society members' subscriptions at £15 per annum. To use the library one must be a member of the Light Music Society. Hire charges, which compare very favourably with publishers' fees, are set by the vote of LMS members at the annual AGM.

### **The Future**

It is hoped that the *Library of Light-Orchestral Music*, which currently relies so much on the personal supervision of Ernest Tomlinson, may eventually become a separate, self-supporting body with charitable status. Any such advances will depend on the continuing rise in membership of the *Light Music Society* and the outside support we are able to generate, both financial and practical.

The present accommodation is adequate, but any substantial input of new material would call for more fundamental constructive work. Now that the *Light Music Society* membership is flourishing

once again it is hoped that there will be more active promotion, an ongoing cataloguing service, means of hearing items of choice, better facilities for visitors and the active encouragement of contemporary light-orchestral music.

The light-orchestras and ensembles who perform the repertoire stored in this library give joy to thousands of people of all ages. These performances, and subsequent published recordings, provide the best possible introduction to the world of classical orchestral music.

The *Library of Light-Orchestral Music* and the *Light Music Society* offer a focal point for the ever-growing number of music lovers dedicated to continuing this great tradition.

## **Meetings**

Many members of the society arrange informal get-togethers in their own areas during the year, or use concerts as meeting places. Every August, after the AGM at Lancaster Farm, there is an 'ad hoc' orchestral get-together to play through items from the library. This is followed by a buffet meal, and the whole event is enjoyed by playing and non-playing members alike.

## **Membership**

£15 per year (UK), £18 or 35Euros (Europe), £20 or \$36 (USA), £20 or \$50 (Canada). As well as receiving newsletters all members are invited to attend the AGM and Matinee Musicale at Lancaster Farm, Longridge. Members of the LMS can hire music from the *Library of Light-Orchestral Music* and visits can be arranged by appointment.

For membership enquiries and information on any aspect of the LMS, the library, or light music in general, please contact

**The Secretary, Mrs. Hilary Ashton, 19a Eshton Terrace, Clitheroe, Lancs, BB7 1BQ**

**Email: [hilary.ashton@talk21.com](mailto:hilary.ashton@talk21.com)**

For Library enquiries only please contact

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Preston, PR3 2NB Phone: 01772 783646**