

Dennis Brain Recordings Discovered at Stanford University

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Introduction

Since the late 1970's, the location of the Western Sound Archives (WSA), whose vast library was alleged to include a significant collection of Dennis Brain BBC radio broadcasts, had remained a mystery. Professional and amateur hornists and researchers dating back to that period had known of its location situated somewhere near San Luis Obispo in Southern California. However, in the mid 1980s, it mysteriously ceased to exist. A breakthrough occurred in 2005 when the author managed to contact Nathan Brown, the former Archivist for the WSA. With his assistance, a plethora of Dennis Brain solo, orchestral, chamber works, and European festival recordings on studio recording tapes have been uncovered, untouched for nearly one-quarter of a century.

As best can be determined, the WSA later emerged as the Classical Recordings Archive of America (CRAA) in the early 1980's and was located to El Cerrito, California. CRAA specialized in classical orchestral and instrumental recorded music. In 1993, it relocated to Cottonwood, Arizona, maintaining its name. Prior to its move, CRAA donated a large portion of its original classical archives to the Stanford Archive of Recorded Sound, Braun Music Center, Stanford University, California, with the stipulation that the donation be open for access by researchers.

The fragile state of the studio tape media comprising the WSA collection combined with the need for a state-of-the-art transcription service to enable the transfer of archives onto digital media in order to facilitate research efforts and safe listening makes it difficult to progress further in exploring and uncovering the full extent of the collection. The planning process for this activity continues and includes the identification of potential funding sources.

The WSA master catalog index consists of five sections as shown below. It should be noted that not all conductors listed in the index worked with Dennis Brain, either as a soloist or in orchestral music. Those conductors listed whose name appears bolded worked with Brain. Others (Rodzinski, Stokowski, Barbirolli, etc.) worked with Alfred Brain (1885-1966), first horn of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra; Koussevitsky, Toscanini, Walter, Boult, Mengelberg, and others with Aubrey Brain (1893-1955), first horn of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Sir Thomas Beecham conducted performances and recordings with all three of the Brain horn players (Aubrey, Alfred and Dennis) over a period spanning half a century as did Boult with both Aubrey and Dennis Brain.

- Section I **Conductors**
- a. **Sir Thomas Beecham**
 - b. **Wilhelm Furtwangler**
 - c. Serge Koussevitsky
 - d. Pierre Monteux
 - e. Fritz Reiner
 - f. Arthur Rodzinski
 - g. **Leopold Stokowski**
 - h. **Arturo Toscanini & Guido Cantelli**
 - i. Bruno Walter
 - j. Other Orchestral Conductors – Ansermet, **Barbirolli**, Boulez, **Boult**, **Britten**, **Busch**, **Cameron**, Dorati, **Haas**, Hornstein, Katimus, Kleiber, **Klemperer**, **Kubelik**, **Markevitch**, Mengelberg, Mitropoulos, Paray, **Rosbaud**, **Sargent**, **Scherchen**, **Schuricht**, **Strauss**, Stravinsky, Van Beinum, **Walton**
- Section II **Instrumental Artists**
- a. Dennis Brain
 - b. Rostropovich
 - c. Strings & Piano – Goldberg, Szigeti, Casals, Schnabel, Michelangeli, Landowska, Hess, Giesecking, Moisevitch, Haskil, Petri
 - d. Concerto and Solo Performances
 - e. Chamber Music
- Section III **Orchestras (American)**
- a. Boston Symphony
 - b. New York Philharmonic
 - c. Other American Orchestras
- Section IV **British and European Festivals**
- a. Aldeburgh Festival
 - b. Edinburgh Festival
 - c. European Festivals – Salzburg, Vienna, Holland, Florence, Sibelius, Bergen, Prague, Budapest
- Section V **BBC and European Radio Station Programs**
- a. BBC Programs
 - b. European Radio Station Programs

It does not end here. Supplemental sections appear throughout the catalog citing further references to works, such as the PROMS, featuring Dennis Brain. One references a tape recording of Dennis Brain in performance with Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in the film music accompaniment to *The Red Shoes*, released in 1948 and recorded in July of that year. This was commercially issued on Sirius 5022. The inventory further includes works by The London Baroque Ensemble (directed by Karl Haas) and The London Mozart Players/The London Wind Players (conductor, Harry

Blech) some of which more than likely include Brain performing. Further, references are made to tapes of works performed by Aubrey Brain (father) with the BBC Symphony Orchestra and Alfred Brain (uncle) in performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Hollywood Bowl Orchestra nearly seventy-five years ago.

Dennis Brain's solo works appearing in the master catalog for which the author has been able to cross reference to tapes are as follows:

Strauss, Richard, Horn Concerto No.2: (1942), BBC Welsh Orchestra, conducted by Rae Jenkins. BBC Light Program live, 5 February 1951, Britain Premiere, (WSA Tape Ref. No. 1192)

Janáček, Leos, Mládi Suite for Wind Sextet: Dennis Brain Wind Ensemble (Quintet), BBC Studio Concert, BBC Transcription Services with commentary by Felix Aprahamian. Undated broadcast. (WSA Tape Ref. No. 1363)

Seiber, Mátyás, Notturmo for Horn & Strings: The London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Basil Cameron. BBC Third Program live, 29 July 1955 (WSA Tape Ref. No. 1231)

Hindemith, Paul, Sonata for 4 Horns: with Neill Sanders, Edmund Chapman, and Alfred Cursue. BBC Third Program live, 5 January 1956 (WSA Ref. No. 1231)

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, Horn Concerto in E flat No.3 (K.447): With the Sudwest Rundfunkorchester (SWR) conducted by Hans Rosbaud. South West German Radio archives live, 6 May 1953 (WSA Ref. No. 1386)

Beethoven, Ludwig van, Horn Sonata in F, Op.17 for horn and piano: with Conrad Hansen. Berlin Radio archives live, 20 April 1950. (WSA Ref. No. 1631)

Cooke, Arnold, Arioso & Scherzo: Carter String Trio with Eileen Grainger, viola (5 March 1957), or Marjorie Lempfert, viola, BBC Broadcast Third Program, 3 November 1956 or Home Service, 5 March 1957. (WSA Ref. No. 233 1150)

Jacob, Gordon, Sextet for Winds and Pianoforte: Malcolm, Dennis Brain Wind Ensemble, BBC broadcast 5 September 1957; pre-recorded 22 July 1957. (WSA Ref. No. 235)

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, arr. Baines. Divertimento No.14 (K.270) in B-flat major for flute, oboe, clarinet, horn and bassoon: Dennis Brain Wind Ensemble, Aldeburgh Festival. BBC Third Program broadcast, 22 June 1955 (WSA Ref. No. 695D – 16 inch BBC Transcription Services)

Britten, Benjamin, Canticle No.3, Still Falls The Rain for Tenor, Horn and Piano: Aldeburgh Festival, Peter Pears (tenor), Benjamin Britten (piano). BBC Third Program broadcast, 22 June 1955 (WSA Ref. No. 695D – 16 inch BBC Transcription Services)

Milhaud, Darius, Suite: La Cheminée du Roi Renée for Wind: Dennis Brain Wind Ensemble, Aldeburgh Festival, BBC Third Program broadcast, 22 June 1955 (WSA Ref. No. 695D – 16 inch BBC Transcription Services)

Beethoven, Ludwig van, Quintet for Piano and Winds, Op.16: Benjamin Britten (piano), Dennis Brain Wind Ensemble, Aldeburgh Festival, BBC Third Program broadcast, 22 June 1955 (WSA Ref. No. 695D – 16 inch BBC Transcription Services)

Beethoven, Ludwig van, Sextet in E-flat major for String Quartet and 2 Horns Op.81b: with Dennis Brain and Alan Civil (2nd horn), English String Quartet, BBC Third Program live, 18 February 1957 (WSA Ref. No. 1089)

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, Quintet in E-flat for Horn and Strings, K.407: English String Quartet, BBC Third Program live, 18 February 1957 (WSA Ref. No. 1089)

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus, Quintet in E-flat for Horn and Strings, K.407: Carter String Trio, Eileen Grainger (viola), BBC Third Program, 3 November 1956, pre-recorded 30 October 1956 (WSA Ref. No. 1089)

Brahms, Johannes, Horn Trio, Op.40: with Cyril Preedy (piano) and Max Salpeter (violin). BBC Home Service Live, 15 February 1957. (WSA Ref. No. 1089)

Malipiero, Gian F, Dialog No.4 for Wind Quintet: Dennis Brain Wind Ensemble, Edinburgh Festival 1957, BBC Home Service live, 24 August 1957 (WSA Ref. No. 1089)

Dukas, Paul, Le Villanelle: with Wilfrid Parry (piano), Edinburgh Festival 1957, BBC Home Service live 24 August 1957 (WSA Ref. No. 1089)

Marais Marins, Le Basque: with Wilfrid Parry (piano), Edinburgh Festival 1957, BBC Home Service live, 24 August 1957 (WSA Ref. No. 1089)

The Early Horn and Its Music: A lecture recital. BBC Broadcast, pre-recorded 6 & 11 July 1955, broadcast Third Program, 23 July 1955 (WSA Ref. No. 1150)

Haydn, Concert Trio Pieta di me: First broadcast performance in modern times. With Joan Sutherland, April Cantelo (sopranos), Raymond Nilssen (tenor), Peter Graeme (cor anglais), John Alexandra (bassoon), Goldsborough Orchestra conducted by Charles Mackerras. BBC live recording made 16 December 1956, broadcast Third Program, 17 December 1956 (WSA Ref. No. 1150)

Hoffnung Festival Concert Excerpts: Morley String Orchestra conducted by Norman Del Mar (Leopold Mozart, Concerto), and Malcolm Arnold (Arnold, Grand Grand Overture). Royal Festival Hall, 13 November 1956. Issued by EMI on Columbia CX1591. (WSA Ref. No. 1156)

Friml, Rudolph, Sympathy Waltz: Robert Sharples Orchestra conducted by Sharples, recorded 6 December 1956, issued by Decca on LP LK 4213. NB the recording date 1 February 1957 is incorrect. (WSA Ref. No. 1150)

Romberg, Sigmund, Waltz – Will You Remember: Robert Sharples Orchestra conducted by Sharples, recorded 6 December 1956, issued by Decca on LP LK 4213. NB. The recording date listed as 1 February 1957 is incorrect. (WSA Ref. No. 1150)

Schubert, Franz, Auf dem Strom for tenor, horn and piano Op. post 119, D943: with Peter Pears (tenor), Noel Mewton-Wood (piano). BBC Third Program broadcast, 28 January 1953 (WSA Ref. No. 1150)

Hindemith, Paul, Sonata for horn and piano: with Noel Mewton-Wood. BBC Third Program broadcast, 28 January 1953 (WSA Ref. No. 1150)

The Strauss Horn Concerto No.2, performed by Dennis Brain with the BBC Welsh Orchestra conducted by Rae Jenkins, 5 February 1951 (Light Program Live), was most likely performed on his Raoux Millereau narrow bore horn judging by its sound. (See *A letter from Dennis Brain*, The Horn Call, Volume XXX, No.4, August 2000, p.77). He abandoned the Raoux later in 1951 in favor of the larger bore German Alexander model 90 (modified) he had been experimenting with as it provided him additional orchestral and recording versatility.

The Inaugural Performance of the Strauss work was given by the German horn player Gottfried von Freiburg, 11 August 1943, at the Salzburg Festival with the Vienna Philharmonic under Boehm. The WSA index card incorrectly lists the 1951 recording of this work as the Britain Premiere performance. The actual Britain Premiere performance however was given by Brain in May 1949 at Chelsea Town Hall in Central London with the Chelsea Symphony Orchestra conducted by Norman del Mar (Pettitt, *Dennis Brain*, 1989, p.101). Although Brain performed this work numerous times from memory since his youth, the listener is able to detect the missed last note in measure 79 of the Allegro movement, and the break in the tie between measures 69 and 70 of the *Andante con moto* movement. His performance in this work, as always, is testimony to his unmatched artistry which, when combined with an acute accuracy of execution and a most articulate and gracious sense of style, instill into the listener at once, a sense of full confidence in his absolute command of his instrument.

The taped recording of Janáček's *Mládí (Youth) Suite for Wind Sextet* with the Dennis Brain Wind Ensemble is an interesting but perplexing find. It was a favorite work of Brain's. There is no documented recording by Brain of the *Mládí* listed by Professor Robert Marshall in his comprehensive discography, *Dennis Brain on Record*, Margun

Music USA, 1996 and it is not cited by Stephen Pettitt in his compilation of recorded works by Dennis Brain in Appendix III of his excellent publication, *Dennis Brain A Biography* (London England, Robert Hale, 1989).

Brain performed the *Mládí* no fewer than two times and likely more: February 18, 1948, European Service Broadcast, Dennis Brain Wind Quintet (augmented with a bass clarinet); January 28, 1952, Wigmore Hall, Dennis Brain Wind Ensemble which also included a bass clarinet. Regrettably, the performance date of the *Mládí* listed in the WSA collection is not provided. It is possible that the WSA recording is a re-broadcast of the February 18, 1948 European Service Broadcast of the *Mládí* by the BBC Transcription Services to an authorized broadcaster in the United States which was subsequently recorded in the US by the WSA. Although the BBC destroyed most broadcast recordings it produced for its various sites, the BBC Transcription Services often retained their copies.

It is possible that the WSA *Mládí* tape is that of a newly discovered, undocumented performance of this work. However the author had opportunity to listen to the WSA taped *Mládí* broadcast and it is the author's opinion that the horn player is unlikely Dennis Brain. Brain's unmistakable tone, phrasing and technique are not apparent in this recording. Following his death, Neal Sanders assumed Brain's position with the Dennis Brain Wind Quintet/Wind Ensemble. Other horn performers that appeared with the Wind Ensemble during the 1960's period include Barry Tuckwell and James Brown suggesting the possibility that the WSA recording of the *Mládí* may have been performed following Brain's death.

Notes:

1. A first unrevised publication of this paper, *Dennis Brain Recordings Discovered at Stanford University*, appeared in *The Horn Call*, Journal of the International Horn Society, Volume XXXV, No.3, May 2005, pp.42-44, William C. Lynch
2. William C. Lynch and Dr. Stephen Gamble are co-authors of *DENNIS BRAIN A LIFE IN MUSIC*, University of North Texas Press, Denton, Texas, ISBN 978-1-57441-307-6, 2011.