

Musicians of Note

**the recollections of John Edward Searle, born 1922 -
a resident of East Molesey, Surrey for 75 years**

During the pre-war period in the 1930s, I spent my schooldays living with my parents in Broadstairs and Cliftonville, but when the Battle of Britain began in July 1940 and it became rather dangerous on the Kent coast, we moved permanently to the relative safety of 38 Manor Road in East Molesey.

A year later, having survived the Blitz, I made an interesting musical acquaintance.

One summer Sunday afternoon, as I sat practising at my turn-of-the-century, eight-foot Erard grand piano in our drawing room, a tall, imposing, elderly gentleman, wearing a panama and flannels rang the doorbell. He introduced himself as Percy Godfrey, a composer of whom I had vaguely heard, who had also recently left the Kent coast and was now living with his sister, Ethel Weir, at *Sunningdale*, No. 25 Spencer Road. He said he had heard me playing when passing the house on his way to watch the cricket at Molesey Cricket Club - William Graburn, the cricketer, was a neighbour of his in Spencer Road and Secretary of the Club. My mother invited Mr. Godfrey in for a cup of tea and a chat with me and with my father, who had been a professional violinist and played with the Plymouth Symphony Orchestra in his youth and from then on, it became a regular arrangement that he would call in on Sunday afternoons for an hour or so in order to discuss music, comment upon my pianistic progress (or lack of) and show me his latest compositions, which I was expected to sight read, without preparation, from his handwritten manuscript! These visits continued for a number of years, during which I had the benefit of his expertise and learned about his life in general.

Percy Godfrey had been Master of Music at King's School, Canterbury for many years before retirement and had won a prize in a competition to write a March for the Coronation of Edward VII. The music was actually used during the ceremony itself and some forty years later he played me his piano arrangement of the work and gave me a copy. Percy composed prolifically and wrote for the piano, voice, choral and instrumental groups, as well as for full orchestra and he once did me the honour of copying, by hand, two piano compositions for me to play, the signed manuscripts of which I still have.

Apparently, during the 1920s, Percy Godfrey was often confused with the, then, conductor of the Bournemouth Concert Orchestra, Sir Dan Godfrey, of the prominent musical family, who would sometimes include Percy's compositions in his concerts with Percy himself conducting them. Percy didn't seem to mind being associated with the better-known Dan, although they were not related in any way and it seems he was almost absorbed into the family!

After a few years of very rewarding meetings and musical advice from Percy Godfrey and as WW11 entered its final year, I had a telephone call from his sister, in February 1945, telling me that he had passed away suddenly in the house in Spencer Road. She asked me to call in to collect some items that he had wanted me to have, including some unpublished, signed and dated, manuscripts, which I still have in my possession. She also handed me a letter, in Percy's own handwriting, detailing that he had bequeathed me, in a codicil to his will, his Virgil Practice Clavier, an instrument I have to this day. It has proved very useful for silent practice purposes when sorting out demanding passages in preparation for the concerto and solo performances I gave in the locale during the 1940s and '50s. In fact, just a few months after Mr. Godfrey's death, I played Beethoven's *Emperor* Piano Concerto No. 5 (with organ accompaniment) at St. Saviour's Church in Sunbury-on-Thames, where his brother had been vicar for many years.

Shortly after Percy Godfrey's death, another unexpected visitor to my home brought me a gift of more items of musical interest. It transpired that this visitor was his sister-in-law, Rafella Talbot Godfrey, who lived at *Glenlyn* in Molesey Park Road, which was then a residence accommodating a dozen, or so, ladies. She told me that one of the residents, a Miss Amina Goodwin, had passed away a few years earlier and that this lady had been a well-known pianist and a former pupil of the 19th century composer/pianists Franz Liszt and Clara Schumann. The items which had belonged to Miss Goodwin included a framed memento - a photograph commemorating her visit to Johannes Brahms' House in Vienna, with some of his last matches and tobacco; a small biography of Miss Goodwin written by "Ajax", a music critic of the day; a manuscript book from the time of her studies with Clara Schumann in Frankfurt and also a book written by Miss Goodwin herself on Piano Technique.

Amina Goodwin had lived at *Glenlyn* for a few years, but understandably could not be persuaded to play the rather inferior upright piano in that establishment!

I feel proud to have been the last 'student' of Percy Godfrey, but still feel disappointed that I didn't actually meet Amina Goodwin, as she had been one of the last links to the composer, Franz Liszt.

John Searle
East Molesey - October 2015

WILLIAM PERCY GODFREY (1859 - 1945)

The composer, Percy Godfrey, was born on 16th August 1859, in Walton-on-Trent, Derbyshire, the eldest of nine children of William Godfrey and Elizabeth Lucy. His younger brother, Rev. John Talbot Godfrey, a Church of England vicar, married Rafella Boothby of the titled Derbyshire family and one of his sisters, Ethel Frances, married John Weir, a College Principal, in India.

Godfrey gained a B. Mus. from Durham University and an ARCM and studied composition with, amongst others, Ebenezer Prout and during the 1880s and '90s, he taught at various establishments, including Banisters Court School in Millbrook, Hants.

Interestingly, a second cousin of Rafella Talbot Godfrey, the Diplomat, Brooke Boothby (10th Baronet), was, at the time of the 1881 census, living at Bridge House in Bridge Road, East Molesey, with his widowed mother, Martha. His late father, Rev. Brooke William Robert Boothby (9th Baronet), had been Rector of Elmley, Worcestershire, and of Welwyn, Hertfordshire. Ashbourne Hall in Derbyshire, which had been the family seat for two hundred years, had been sold according to instructions in his will. Why the Boothby family came to East Molesey is unclear, but it was possibly a contributory factor in the Godfrey family choosing to live here during the war years and after.

In 1900, Percy Godfrey won the Lesley Alexander Prize for Piano Quintette, awarded by the Royal College of Music and by the time of the 1901 census he was Master of Music at King's School, Canterbury, a position he was to retain for some thirty years, until his retirement. He was unmarried at this time and living alone at 27 Palace Street, Canterbury.

In 1902, Percy Godfrey won the competition to write a *Coronation Prize March* to be played at the Coronation of Edward VII. The prize was awarded by the Worshipful Company of Musicians and judged by Sir Walter Parratt, Sir Hubert Parry and Sir Frederick Bridge. This

piece of music was subsequently arranged many times for various instruments and instrumental groups. One arrangement of the work was made for wind band by Charles Godfrey, the bandmaster, one of the well-known Godfrey musical dynasty (not related to Percy Godfrey) and a CD recording of this was released in 2014, along with other pieces, under the title, *The Crown Imperial*, played by the London Symphonic Concert Band, directed by Tom Higgins.

In 1907, Percy Godfrey married Elizabeth Sally Howell (née Clowes), known as Sally, the widow of the cricketer, Leonard Sidgwick Howell (1848 - 1895). She had a son, George Frederick, from her first marriage. The couple lived at *Brentwood*, South Canterbury whilst Percy was still teaching at King's School, but after retirement they moved to Folkestone, where Sally Godfrey died in 1935 at the age of 80.

In, *A History of the King's School, Canterbury* by C. E. Woodruff, MA, published in 1908, the following paragraph is of note:-

"Mr. Percy Godfrey, Mus. Bac., who has now for so many years been responsible for this branch of the work of the School, possesses in a most marked degree the power of inspiring an enthusiasm for music and a genuine love of it. The remarkably high standard to which the School music has now attained is due to the whole-souled enthusiasm which he has devoted to it. To him we are indebted for the account which we here print, but we feel that we cannot print it without a brief note as to the debt which the King's School owes to Mr Godfrey."

In 1927, during a BBC radio broadcast relayed from the Winter Gardens in Bournemouth, the Bournemouth Municipal Orchestra, conducted by Sir Dan Godfrey, gave the first performance of one of Percy Godfrey's symphonies and in 1936 the BBC Orchestra played his *Hornpipe* from the suite, *Scenes of Old England*.

Percy Godfrey died on 30th January 1945, aged 85 and in his will he left various small bequests to family members and the Performing Rights of his music to his stepson, George, then living in South Africa. His published manuscripts numbered more than eighty. In

a codicil to his will, he bequeathed his Virgil Practice Clavier to John Searle of 38 Manor Road, East Molesey, Surrey.

AMINA BEATRICE GOODWIN (1863 - 1942)

The pianist, Amina Goodwin, was born on 5th December 1863 in Manchester, the third of four daughters of John Lawrence Goodwin, who was a violinist with the Hallé Orchestra, founded by Sir Charles Hallé in 1858.

A parish register entry of St. Paul's Church, Stretford Road, Hulme shows that Amina was aged 3 when she was baptised in 1867, along with her younger sister Maude, which often leads to her year of birth being erroneously quoted as 1867. At the time of the 1871 census the family was living in Stretford, Lancs. and Amina's age is given as 8, thus confirming her year of birth.

Amina Goodwin made her debut with the Hallé at the age of nine, playing Dussek's Piano Concerto in E flat major and followed this by making appearances in London at the Drury Lane Opera House. A few years later it was thought desirable by Sir Charles Hallé that she should be sent abroad to further her musical education and she spent some time studying at the Leipzig Conservatoire. Then, at about the age of thirteen, she won a scholarship to the Paris Conservatoire to study with Delaborde, son of the composer Alkan and later, with Camille Saint-Saëns.

On 13th March 1883, she returned to Manchester to perform with the Hallé, but her father was too unwell to attend the concert and died, aged 54, that same night, at his home in Chorlton Road.

Later in 1883, a letter of recommendation from Saint-Saëns, to Franz Liszt, took her to Weimar to study with Liszt himself. Bettina Walker, another student pianist of the day, wrote about her experiences at Liszt's renowned 'reunions' in her memoir, *"My Musical Experiences"*, published in 1892.

“ ... Miss Amina Goodwin came to Liszt with an introduction from Saint-Saëns and several other Parisian musicians of note. The afternoon when she played for the first time among the young pianists, she seated herself at the pianoforte with all the ease of one who was quite at home on the keyboard, and played Saint-Saëns’ Minuet and Valse. She impressed me as having quite a style of her own – a most delicious staccato in octave-playing; a very marked, but not too strongly insistent, accentuation in her phrasing. The whole left the impression of great elegance, refinement and charm. Liszt, who stood behind her, smiled several times during her performance and took her hand as she rose from the piano, bestowing on her some words of approval, which I cannot exactly recall.....”.

On 12th April 1884, Amina Goodwin returned to England to make her debut at the Crystal Palace Saturday Concerts with Mendelssohn’s Piano Concerto No. 2 in D minor.

On hearing that Liszt was nearing the end of his life, Amina travelled to Bayreuth on 31st July 1886 to see him. He died later that day at the home of his daughter, Cosima, the wife of Richard Wagner.

Then followed two years of concert tours by Miss Goodwin, of England, the Netherlands and Germany, culminating in a period of study with Clara Schumann at the Hoch Conservatoire in Frankfurt, during which time she lived at Stern Strasse 26. (*See manuscript book*).

When she returned to England in about 1892, following four years of study with Clara Schumann, Amina Goodwin began to expand her interests in piano pedagogy and composition and in 1892 Augener published her book entitled, *Practical Hints on Technique and Touch in Pianoforte Playing*.

On 5th September 1894, Amina Goodwin married William Ingram Adams, who was some twenty seven years her senior, in All Saints Church, Margaret Street and details of the ceremony were reported in the New York Times under the title, “American Wedding in London”. W. Ingram Adams was the son of the late Judge Thomas

Adams of Pennsylvania and descended from the second US president, John Adams. There were many American guests present, including staff of the American Embassy in London.

Shortly afterwards, the couple collaborated in the writing of *USA Anthem*, a song for chorus for which he wrote the words and she wrote the music. It was published in 1894 and in that same year she published her *Toccata pour Piano*. It was also at about this time that she founded her music school for young ladies.

Clara Schumann died in Frankfurt on 20th May 1896 and the following year her devoted friend, Johannes Brahms, died in Vienna on 3rd April 1897. Amina Goodwin made a pilgrimage to Brahms' house, Karlgasse 4, just after his death (*see framed photo etc*).

In 1897, the music critic "Ajax" published, *Amina Goodwin: A Biographical Sketch*, a review of which appeared in the London Musical Courier on Thursday, 28th January 1897, as follows:-

" - We are indebted to the Secretary of the Goodwin Imperial Pianoforte College for an advance copy of this little book, which tells, in an interesting manner, the musical career of the talented principal of that Institution. We can cordially recommend all pianists, whether professional or amateur, to obtain a copy of this work. The contents may be briefly summed up as follows:-

Chapter 1 is introductory; Chapter 11 deals with the childhood and the first public appearances of the young pianist; Chapter 111 is perhaps the most interesting, as it gives a series of word portraits of such noted teachers as Reineck, Judassohn, Wiedenbach and Delaborde; Chapter 1V introduces the reader to Weimar and describes in a pleasant manner Mme. Goodwin's reception by the Abbé Liszt and her impressions of his playing; the last chapter gives the reader an account of the influence of Mme. Schumann, whilst the book concludes with reference to the compositions of Mme. Goodwin. It is unnecessary for us to comment on the style of the author, as "Ajax" is a frequent contributor to the London Musical Courier and his manner of writing is, therefore, well known to our readers. We can

thoroughly endorse what he says in the opening chapter, that "the long period of preparation nowadays necessary for the gradual development of the finished pianist has been well exemplified in the career of Amina Goodwin." We would add, moreover, that every musician may derive profit from the perusal of this brochure, as the subject of the sketch has had experiences second only in interest to those, perhaps, of Miss Amy Fay."

As the 19th century drew to a close, Amina Goodwin entered into a new project, with her formation of the chamber group, *The London Trio*, with the violinist, Theodor Werner, the 'cellist, William Whitehouse and herself as pianist. Werner was replaced by Achille Simonetti in 1901 and in 1912, Louis Pecsikai replaced Simonetti. The Trio toured extensively and the collaboration continued for about twenty years. A 1905 recording of the Trio playing Beethoven's Piano Trio in C min. Op. 1 No. 3 is held in the archives of the British Library and can be heard online at <https://soundcloud.com/the-british-library>.

At the time of the 1901 census, William and Amina Ingram Adams were living at 17 Park Village West, Gloucester Gate, St. Pancras, attended by two servants and this same address is given for Amina in the 1909 edition of *The Musical Directory*.

In 1910, the couple moved to Kensington, but William Ingram Adams died there later that year, aged 59. Amina Goodwin then entered into what was to be more than thirty years of widowhood, much of it living at 69 Drayton Gardens, South Kensington. However, before WW11 began, she moved to Sunbury-on-Thames, under the care of Rafella Talbot Godfrey, who was known for her compassionate activities in the area in the provision of personal assistance for those who needed it. She offered accommodation in property near the Vicarage at St. Saviour's, the Church where her husband was vicar until his death in June 1939.

After war broke out in 1939, Mrs. Talbot Godfrey and her daughter Penelope, who was married to Percy Duncan Weir, a Captain in the Royal Artillery, moved their charges to *Glenhlyn* in East Molesey. The

house was acquired from Arthur John Powys Pumfrett, whose father had also been an officer in the Royal Artillery.

Amina Goodwin died at *Glenlyn* on 10th March 1942, aged 78 years and in her will she appointed Rafella Talbot Godfrey as her executrix. Her residual estate was bequeathed to the Musicians' Benevolent Fund.

Mrs. Talbot Godfrey, the link between the two *Musicians of Note* in this story, continued to live in East Molesey until 1950, but died in 1951 in Brighton. She is buried in Sunbury Municipal Cemetery with her husband.

Rosemary Searle
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