



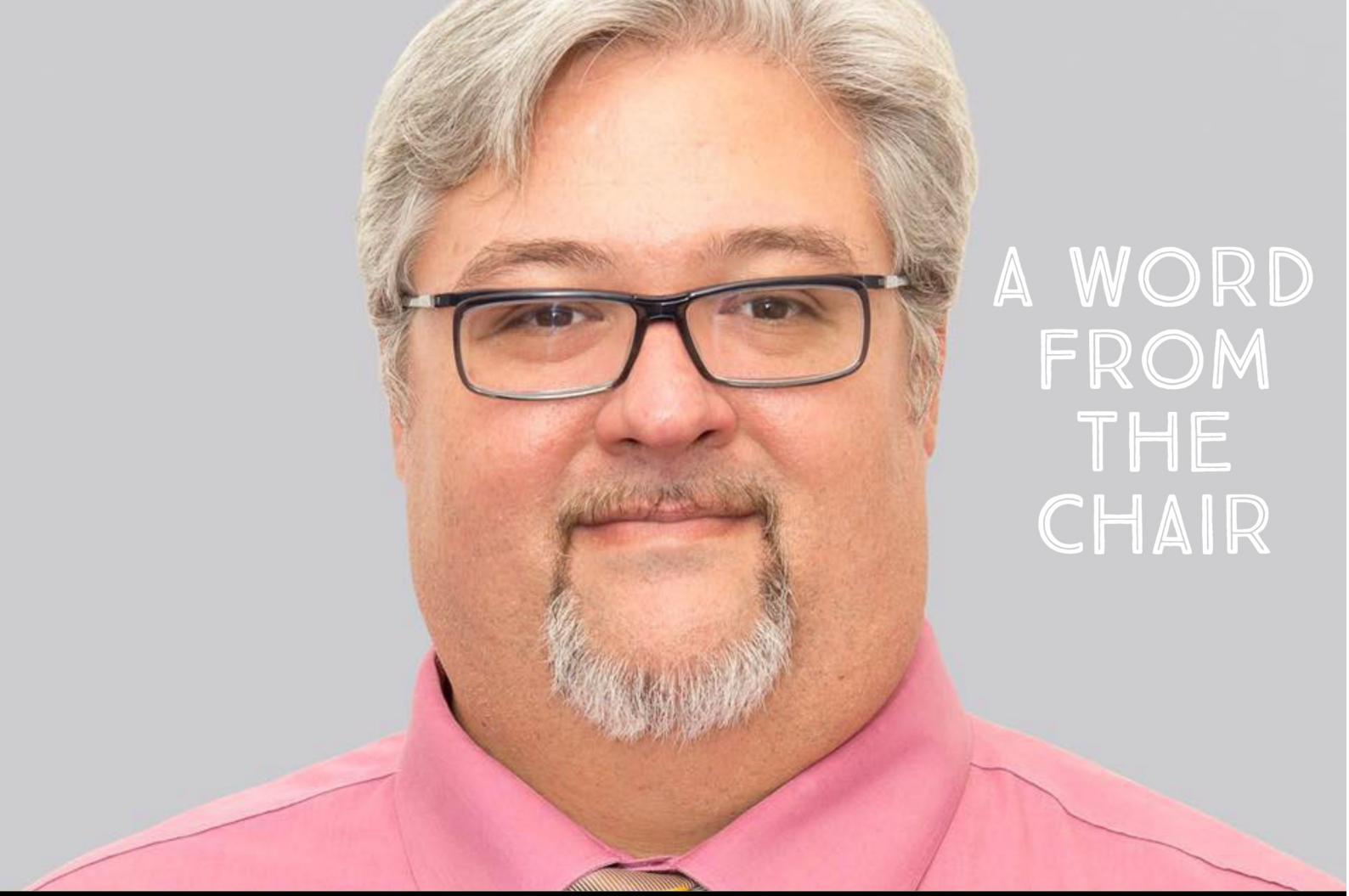
OCTOBER 2020



UPCOMING EVENTS

AN UPDATE
FROM JOHN
GIBBONS

OCTOBER
CROSS
WORD



A WORD FROM THE CHAIR

Welcome to our second newsletter. In it you will find an update from our musical director, John Gibbons, about the activities of the orchestra so far during our hiatus, a listing of upcoming events (including our free NSO online quiz open to everyone), and a spooky NSO crossword.

The NSO is a vital part of the cultural life of Northampton, and an important advocate of live orchestral music for our members, Friends, and audience. We are also a community, and much of the activity of the orchestra over the hiatus has been focussed on strengthening that sense of community through virtual get togethers, online quizzes, updates through this newsletter, and through our social media accounts. We hope you will be able to join us in these activities where possible.

The committee is engaged with reviewing guidance for community music making regarding venues, rehearsals, and concerts with a view to resuming some of these activities as soon as we can. Please keep an eye on our website and social media for any updates.

When I started this newsletter, I envisioned a quarterly update. Given the changeable times we find ourselves in, we will now be distributing a monthly newsletter by the second week of each month. If anyone would like to contribute a short article or has suggestions, please contact me by e-mail at chair@nso.org.uk .

In the meantime, I hope you find this update enjoyable and informative.

In friendship and music,

Frank Jordan – Chair, Northampton Symphony Orchestra



What's On



Wednesday Evenings 7:30 pm

**NSO Virtual Playing (7:30) and Zoom Social (9:00)
for Members of the NSO**

Orchestra Members contact Robin Simpson

Virtual Orchestra

A project to produce a video of a performance of a famous orchestral piece while we are in hiatus.

Orchestra members contact Alan Garriock

October 24th 2020—7:30 pm

NSO October Quiz

Free to members of the Orchestra, Friends, and anyone who would like to participate.

Contact chair@nso.org.uk for details or register interest on our Facebook event

Do you have an idea or wish to host a virtual event for the orchestra during this time? Please contact Frank Jordan at chair@nso.org.uk

The most current information can
be found on our website
www.nso.org.uk

We look forward to seeing you
again and sharing music with you,
whatever form it may take.



AN UPDATE FROM JOHN GIBBONS

Our Musical Director on rehearsing online, his experience of the last seven months, and some personal musical discoveries.

It is now seven months since NSO last met and the prospects of resuming rehearsals in the near future seem increasingly bleak. In the meantime our first horn, Robin Simpson, ably assisted by fellow horn player Callie Scully, has done a wonderful job creating a social media platform for the membership which has allowed us to socialise on Zoom and, more recently, play together on a programme called Jamulus. I am certain many of the participants were sceptical about joining this online rehearsal platform but I think all of us who have taken the plunge have found it an immensely rewarding experience.

I lead the sessions from my grand piano playing from piano duet arrangements of Beethoven's Eroica and 4th Symphonies, Cesar Franck's Symphonie in D minor and Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture. It cannot match the experience of a real orchestral rehearsal but it certainly makes for a hugely enjoyable evening with Zoom chat after the Jamulus session has ended. I would certainly encourage other members of NSO to join the Jamulus rehearsal and, you never know, you may find it a refreshing and enjoyable break from the rigours of Britain in 2020.

Two of my other musical organisations – St Albans Chamber Choir and Ealing Symphony Orchestra – have managed to enjoy almost a month of 'live' rehearsals. Both organisations were lucky in the availability of large churches prepared to allow covid-secure rehearsals to take place on their site. We have identified possible churches in Northampton and are actively working on making this a practical proposition in due course.

Lockdown personally allowed me the chance to breathe and reflect. I have been a professional self-employed musician for over 30 years and have always been 'viable'. It is a frenetic life so lockdown was, in essence, my first sabbatical. As we know, the country was blessed with great weather and I was able to spend large amounts of time reclaiming control of a large garden and finally sorting out my extensive collection of music and recordings: Conducting scores, Piano music, Organ music, Oboe music, Opera Scores, Choral scores, the list seems almost endless and includes guides on how to play the Hurdy-Gurdy



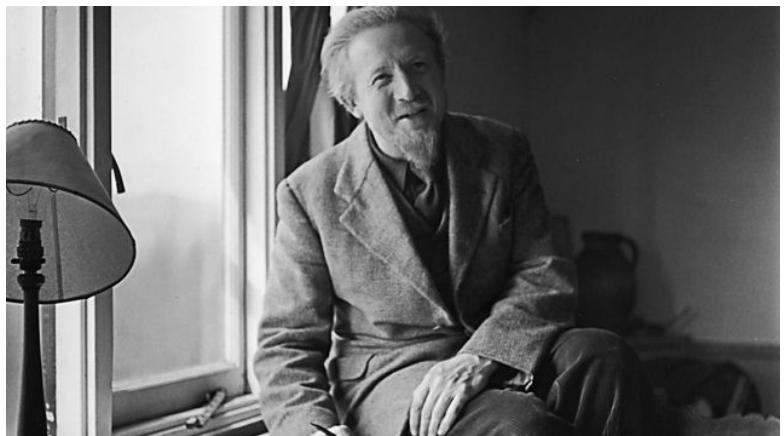
AN UPDATE FROM JOHN GIBBONS

and the Bouzouki! (the latter in Greek). The numerous LPs included my own collection as well as three collections which I either inherited or were given by friends and colleagues. I got to know many new works from across a wide variety of genres and styles thanks to their generosity.

I also had the chance to read books that had been sitting around my office for decades, one of which, “Cesar and Augusta” by the late Ronald Harwood, sparked my interest in Cesar Franck’s Piano Quintet - a work I had not properly listened to before. Its astonishing passion and drive blew me away and such was my enthusiasm, I quickly purchased a set of parts for the piece. The work shows a dramatic change in Franck’s style and the book suggests this was the result of the passion Franck felt for his young composition student Augusta Holmes (worth noting that his last major organ work – the Third Choral – is dedicated to her) who also was strongly linked with the composer Camille Saint-Saëns. Indeed Saint-Saëns sight-read the piano part at the premiere and, probably realising who was the muse behind its inspiration, stormed off the platform at the end of the premiere despite, or perhaps because, of the rapturous reception to this new work. Astonishingly Augusta Holmes was then the featured composer on BBC Radio 3’s “Composer of the Week” programme a couple of weeks later.

It has been fascinating to introduce the Cesar Franck Symphonie in D minor to the members of the orchestra joining the Jamulus sessions. On a recent Radio 3 programme, Tom Service, made a passionate plea for the work to be reinstated into concert programmes. A hugely popular work in the 1950s and 1960s, it became deeply unfashionable towards the end of the twentieth century. It is a great work full of rich harmonies, clear melodies and a catchy motif in the Finale that really sticks in the memory.

The other discovery that stands out was Edmund Rubbra’s Symphony No.9 ‘Sinfonia Sacra’ which I listened to on Easter Day as, for once, Clifton Cathedral Choir was unable to sing at the Cathedral for this highpoint of the Christian calendar. Edmund Rubbra, born in 21 Arnold Road, Semilong, Northampton in 1901. They moved in 1912 to 1 Balfour Road, Kingsthorpe and then in 1916 to a shop where his father could sell and repair clocks and watches. Edmund was a good pianist and would demonstrate, at home, upright pianos from his Uncle’s Piano and Music Shop by playing Mozart’s Sonata in C. If the sale went through, the Rubbra family was given commission and a new demonstration piano took the place of the sold one.



AN UPDATE FROM JOHN GIBBONS

At the age of 14, he left school and started work in the office of Crockett and Jones, boot and shoe manufacturer. He then became a correspondence clerk at a railway station, a job which allowed him time to continue studying music. At the age of 17, Rubbra organised a concert of music by Cyril Scott at the Carnegie Hall in Northampton Library. The minister from Rubbra's church attended the concert and secretly sent a copy of the programme to Cyril Scott. This led to Rubbra studying with Cyril Scott and later with Gustav Holst, both of whom shared Rubbra's fascination with eastern mysticism and religion.

The Ninth Symphony was regarded by Rubbra as his finest achievement and an affirmation of his faith (he had become a Roman Catholic in 1947), though the work strives to bridge the divide between Western Christian traditions. It harks back to the Passions of J.S. Bach in its use of chorales, hymns and a narrator, though in this instance the latter role is given to a female contralto, emphasizing the importance of women in this part of the Gospel narrative.

Rubbra's symphonies are rarely performed in concerts but I am sure their time will come. Friends may be intrigued to know that NSO usually rehearses in the Edmund Rubbra Hall, deep in NMPAT Headquarters on the Kettering road.

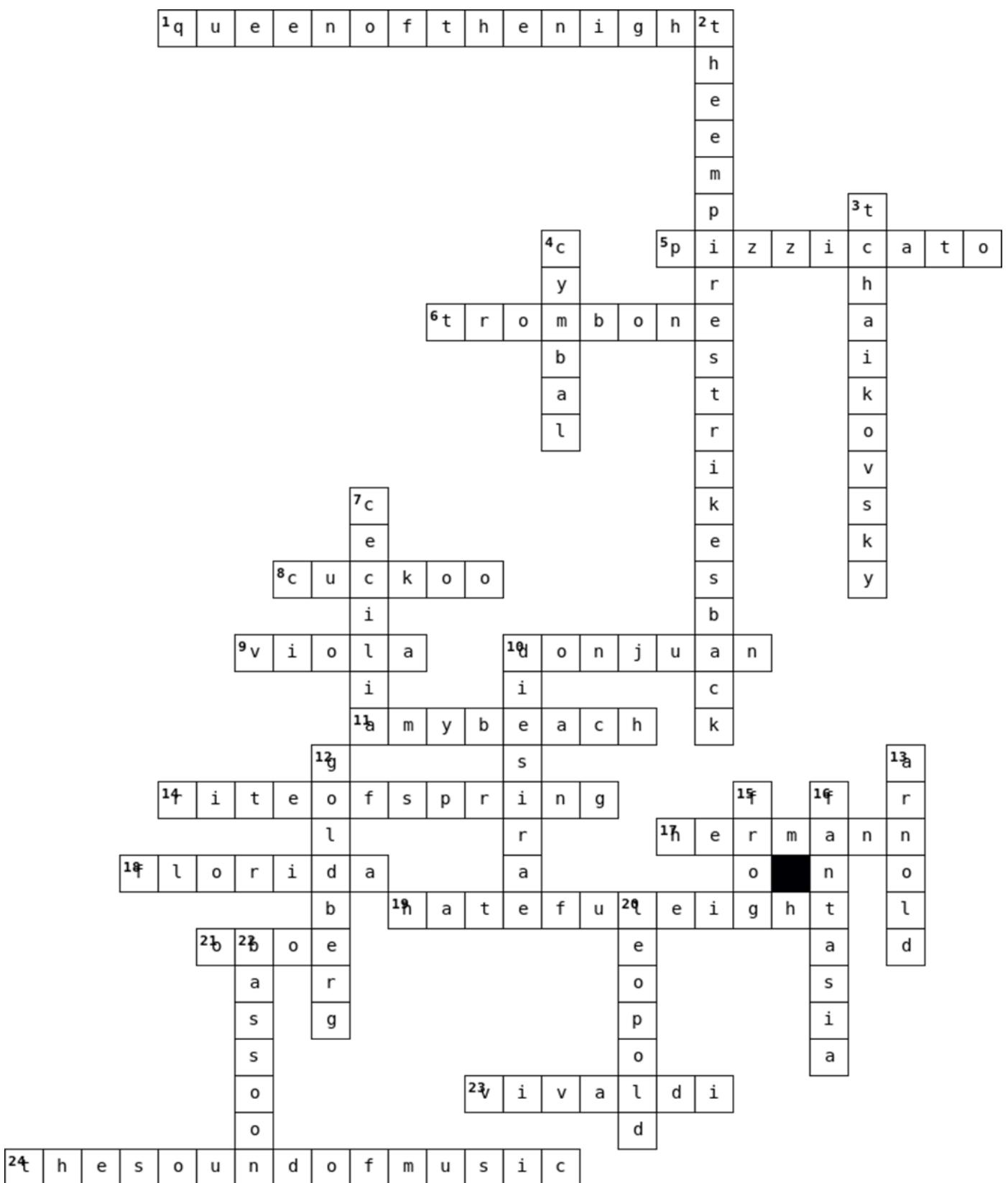
- John Gibbons, Musical Director, NSO



NSO CROSSWORD



ANSWER KEY FOR OUR LAST CROSSWORD



NSO CROSSWORD



1



4

3

5

6

10

7

8

9

11

12

13

14

15



NSO CROSSWORD



Across

- 4. Disney's Fantasia demon**
- 5. A tale of demonic possession by Prokofiev**
- 8. Britten's ghostly opera**
- 10. Famous Russian witch**
- 12. Opera with Verdi's Witches Chorus**
- 14. Offenbach's underworld dance**
- 15. Director of avian horror**

Down

- 1. Mickey's cleaning adventure**
- 2. Cher, Susan, and Michelle**
- 3. Liszt's dance of death**
- 6. Dvorak's vengeful aquatic creature**
- 7. Saint Saens with a devilish fiddle**
- 9. Silent vampiric "Symphony of Horror"**
- 11. Travel with this composer down the River Styx in 5/8 time**
- 13. The Phantom's favourite composer**



KEEPING IN TOUCH

Facebook — Northhamptonsymphonyorchestra

Twitter — @NtonSymphOrch

Instagram - Northhamptonsymphonyorchestra

Website - NSO.org.uk

**What would you like to see
in our newsletter?**

What else would you like to see? Please contact the Chair, Frank Jordan at chair@nso.org.uk with suggestions.

We are particularly keen to hear from members of the orchestra, our Friends, and members of our audience who would be interested in writing a short article for inclusion.

Until next time, stay safe, healthy and musical!

