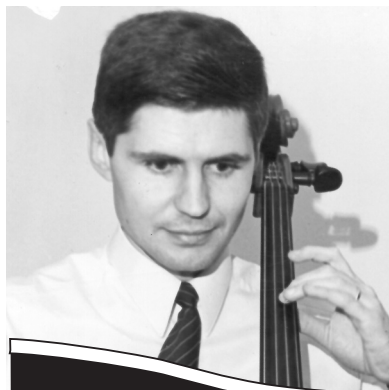


DRSO: A brief history

Part 2 - A Busy IMA and the new Auditorium

1968 opened with a soiree, the Fourth. Bill Buyers was then conducting both the IMA Orchestra and the Choral Group, and the program was made up from songs, humorous and contemporary European, and instrumental chamber music. The instrumentalists included Buyers himself in works by Glazunov and Cooke for french horn, Otto Haeusser by now established as the local cello virtuoso, a wind quartet from the Central Armed Forces Band, Brian Aiken a student oboist, and pianists Sally Winterbon, Paul Viidik and Dietrich Pelte. In April, the Junior Music Club staged a concert in the new Keys School auditorium, with choirs from St. Mary's and Keys School, several instrumentalists and the usual host of young pianists.

The 1967-68 season for the IMA had been supported by a generous grant from the Ontario Arts Council but from 1968, the Council declared that it would only match funds raised locally. Buyers realized that donations could be rewarded, and the donor scheme came into being. Donors of sufficient calibre were rewarded with reserved seats to the whole season's series of concerts. The series consisted of a November concert with Finn Ingebretsen in the Haydn Trumpet Concerto, Handel's Messiah in February and a concert in April featuring Paul Viidik, piano, in a Chopin Romanza, and Schubert's First Symphony. With the success of the fund-raising from the donor scheme the last concert was able to support thirteen visiting players beside the soloist.

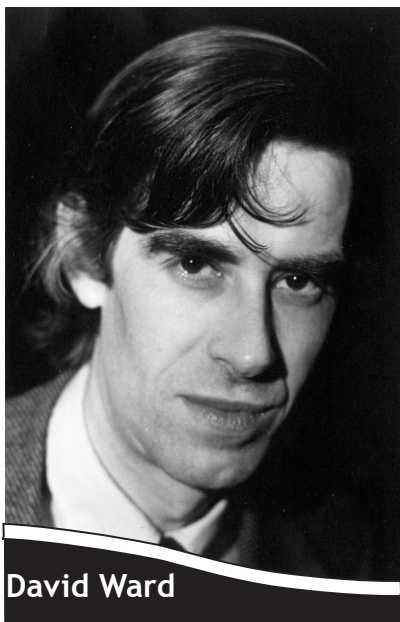


Otto Haeusser

It should be noted that Buyers was alert to the large amount of administrative work that the donor scheme would entail and organized a Business Committee from audience members to operate the scheme. As the years went by, new volunteers were pressed into service, and the IMA benefited greatly from their labour of love and devotion to the cause of music.

Pressure was now on to provide a

worthwhile series that ‘donors’ could not refuse. There were no fewer than five concerts in the 1969-70 series. The winter concert in December 1969 featured Otto Haeusser in the Schumann Cello Concerto and David Ward in Beethoven’s Piano Concerto in C minor. In January 1970, the IMA gave a Young Artists concert in which Pierre Gallant and the Orchestra combined



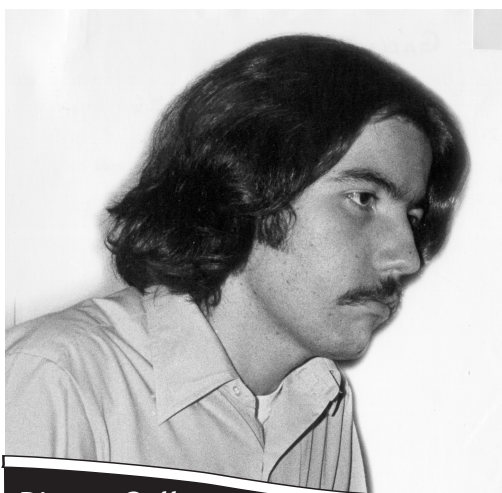
David Ward

to present Beethoven’s First Piano Concerto. Less than a month later, the National Arts Centre Orchestra, only four months old itself, gave the keystone concert of the series. In March came the Fifth Soiree, and to wind up the series, an April Symphony concert with the Choral Group and professional soloists in Puccini’s *Messa di Gloria*.

With all that going on, overshadowing the successful winter series was a behind-the-scenes battle over the conversion of the MHS Auditorium to a sloping floor theatre. Pushed by the Community Association, the Town agreed to support the project with tax money and negotiate with the school board, provided that enough money was raised from

the public to show a general will to proceed. Once the money was raised, to the surprise of many, an opposition arose, claiming among other things that taxes would increase to such an extent that seniors would be forced to move away to another community. Notwithstanding this and similar flights of fancy, approval was obtained from the Ontario Municipal Board, and construction was able to begin in early 1970. The new auditorium was opened, with ceremonial speeches, and a concert by the National Arts Centre Orchestra on January 11, 1971. The IMA and Choral Group were able to follow in April in their own celebration with Handel’s *Zadok the Priest* and Dvorak’s *Stabat Mater*.

After guiding this period of significant growth for the IMA, Bill Buyers announced that he would have to step down as Musical Director at the Annual General Meeting in May 1971 in order to take a sabbatical from his



Pierre Gallant

day-time duties at AECL. Once again the Choral Group was able to find a new conductor for the Orchestra in the person of David Ward.

Under David Ward's tenure as conductor the Orchestra expanded its repertoire to include more late 19th and 20th century composers – Debussy, Dvorak, Bizet, Menotti, Coates, Ravel, Dankworth, Sibelius, Gershwin, Britten, Jarnefelt – a continuing challenge

for the players, and a broadening interest for the audience. The IMA's association with the National Arts Centre Orchestra led to a regular annual concert by the NACO as part of the IMA winter series, and NACO players appeared as soloists in IMA concerts and in the Spring Soirees. NACO violinist Karoly Sziladi became a regular weekend visitor and house guest and taught string classes to enthusiasts of all ages and levels. Several students played in both the IMA and the MHS school band, often strings in the orchestra and wind in the band and the IMA did all it could with scholarships and organising group transport to get student members to the summer music camps in the



Karoly Sziladi

Parry Sound area.

The Orchestra, more than any other club in the town, became a family affair. Several families had as many as four players participating. The idea of a separate ensemble for students had become redundant. Many students showed that they could play with as much maturity and skill as their parents – and some a whole lot better.



Bernard Childs

December 1973 saw yet another production of Handel's Messiah with the help of the Choral Group. The IMA went on the road to give a performance in Shawville, in the heart of anglo Quebec, when the ensemble was conducted by Janet MacDonald, the Choral Group's director. The Deep River performance was the occasion of the dedication of the MHS Auditorium in memory of Bernard Childs, who as President of the Community Association had been a major driving force behind the Auditorium project.

After the Spring Concert in 1974, which featured four IMA members as soloists and closed with Beethoven's First Symphony, David Ward announced his imminent departure on sabbatical and once again the Orchestra was seeking a conductor.

These historical notes have been compiled with the help of the archives of the North Renfrew Times and from the DRSO Scrapbooks kept lovingly by successive DRSO members. The current scrapbook archivist is Arden Okazaki.

Photo credits:

p. 2 A.B.Cook

p. 3 NRT, N. Brown

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Further episodes of this story will appear in this season's coming concert programs