



Dr Mervyn Miller, now Trust President, with Barbara Woda at the Trust AGM.

Garden cities and suburbs - at home and abroad

Dr Miller is in a unique position to deliver this year's lecture. He is well known as a past member for 21 years on the HGS Trust Council, appointed by the Royal Town Planning Institute, and is now the first Honorary President of the Trust. He will draw on his recent research on Garden Cities. Dr Miller describes the basis of his lecture as follows.

In the run-up to the centenaries of Letchworth Garden City and Hampstead Garden Suburb, I am taking stock of key aspects of the Garden City movement, particularly the swift dissemination of the concept, not least through Unwin's book, *Town Planning in Practice*. The ideas proved highly popular, and readily adaptable to the local cultural and political context. The concepts of the neighbourhood unit, traffic-free housing areas, design of housing groupings and townscape evolved to form a language of community planning, which remains valid, as the basis for the 'New Urbanists' in the

United States, and in England at Poundbury, the village extension to Dorchester, promoted by HRH The Prince of Wales.

The lecture will focus on the first forty years of the twentieth century, up to the Second World War, at the end of the decade which saw the death of two of the founders of the movement, Henrietta Barnett and Raymond Unwin. Among the examples to be shown are Hull Garden Village (1907), Weckerle, Budapest (1909), Suresnes, Paris (1918), Yorkship Village, Camden, New Jersey (1918), Colonel Light Gardens, Adelaide (1918), Pessac, Bordeaux (1924), Radburn, New Jersey (1918), and Green Belt, Maryland (1935).

In conclusion, Dr Miller will discuss whether the ideas and ideals which underlay the Garden City remain valid today, as we enter the new millennium.

SIMON ABBOTT

The Dame Henrietta Barnett Memorial Lecture is to be given on 28 March at the HGS Institute

Alexander Stuart Grey Memorial award

Nominations are invited from householders, architects, designers or builders for this annual award designed to recognise and encourage building schemes or house improvements that are judged to enhance the Suburb. Awards will be made for both major projects and for quite

small ones such as replacing inappropriate doors or gates with designs that fit in with the style of the house. Awards will be made at the RA AGM in March. Please send plans and details in the first instance to The Editor Suburb News, 26 Hampstead Way, NW11 7JL.



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Howard Shelley and family play for the Suburb

The Residents Association's Millennium Music series continued on 28 October with a recital by the distinguished pianists Howard Shelley and his wife Hilary Macnamara, with their cellist son Alexander Shelley. In a carefully balanced and varied programme, we heard three masterworks of the two-piano repertoire, interspersed with contrasting pieces for cello and piano.

The Shelley-Macnamara duet partnership has now been going for over 24 years and has a number of recordings to its credit, including an award-winning recording of the complete works for two pianos by Rachmaninov. They are frequent performers at the Proms and at music festivals around the world; and during one of their tours to the former Soviet Union they were invited to extend it into Mongolia, where they were the first Western artists within living memory to visit the country. Alexander Shelley (born in 1979) has inherited his parents' musical talents and developed it in new directions. Besides his burgeoning career as a professional cellist, he also composes and plays jazz piano. Currently he is studying in Düsseldorf, and has attended master classes given by Rostropovitch and Janos Starker; he was a semi-finalist in the 1997 BBC Young Musician of the Year.

Brahms's 'St Anthony' Chorale Variations are so well known in the orchestral version that it is a refreshing experience to hear them in the composer's alternative version for two pianos. Brahms wrote both versions more or less concurrently, so in no way can the duet version be said to be an 'arrangement', although the movements correspond bar-for-bar with the orchestral version. Brahms had already shown himself to be a pianist-composer of considerable power, for example in his first piano concerto, and the orchestral effects which can be obtained from two pianos - quite different from the sound of the more common four hands at one keyboard duet - provided a vehicle for considerable athleticism and virtuosity on the part of the players.

The weighting game

Did you overindulge over the festive season? If so you may be feeling a little guilty. The good news is that while eating well is a vital part of keeping yourself healthy, occasional overindulgence shouldn't do you any harm. It's more important to eat a balanced diet on a regular basis to help maintain a healthy body weight for your height. And what better time to think about weight control than the New Year!

For most people, being over weight develops gradually over many years. It is therefore hardly surprising that 'peak weight' is usually only reached in middle age. Interestingly, only 32% of us avoid excess weight gain during this time. Carrying extra weight increases the risk of many medical conditions, such as heart disease and diabetes, while being severely overweight (obese) increases the risk of respiratory problems, osteoarthritis and some cancers.

Being overweight around your tummy (called 'central body fat') is associated with and even higher risk of disease than being overweight all over. As a result of this, many health professionals



Rev Alan Walker, Howard Shelley, Hilary Macnamara, Alexander Shelley and RA Events Committee's David Littaur.

The Brahms work was followed by a lively and deeply felt performance by Alexander Shelley of Schubert's 'Arpeggione' sonata. It is not, perhaps, one of Schubert's most profound works, but it contains a stream of delightful melodies, in contrasting moods, of which the slow movement - a pure song without words - is of an outstanding lyricism. Schubert wrote the sonata for a newly invented stringed instrument, the 'arpeggione', also known as the 'guitar violoncello'. The instrument had a body shaped like that of a bass viol; the neck had metal frets and its six strings were tuned to the same notes as the guitar (E-A-D-G-B-E). It was played with a bow, but the frets would have given every note an open-string quality and pizzicato notes, particularly in arpeggio chords, would have had a harp-like clarity (hence the name). It seems that the arpeggione never caught on, as few works for it survive, and nowadays Schubert's sonata is almost invariably played on the cello. (I say 'almost', because I am pretty certain that I did once hear on Radio 3 a performance of the work on a reconstructed instrument, but I have been unable to verify this.)

To round off the first half, the piano duo played Darius Milhaud's exuberant suite 'Scaramouche'. It is a work of complex rhythms and textures, which Shelley and Macnamara pulled off with impeccable clarity (despite the resonant acoustics of St Jude's) and sparkling technique. The work ends with the famous 'Brazileira', subtitled *mouvement de samba*, which memorably evokes the time Milhaud spent in Rio de Janeiro in 1917-18.

After the interval, Alexander Shelley played Variations on a Theme of Rossini for cello and piano by Bohuslav Martinů (1890-1959), an interesting and unfamiliar work written during the Czech composer's years of exile in the United States after fleeing occupied Paris in 1940. Martinů writes idiomatically for the cello, showing off the wide range of effects of which it is capable, including sonorous pizzicato and rapid passagework (at one point reminiscent of Rimsky-Korsakov's "Flight of the Bumblebee"). This was followed by Rachmaninov's ever-popular 'Vocalise' - a wordless song

which has been transcribed for just about every solo instrument one can think of. Rachmaninov left Russia at the end of 1917, never to return; the song's dedicatee, Antonina Nezhdanova, stayed on as the Diva of the Bolshoi. There is a certain irony that this piece, so evocative of the decadence and luxury of pre-revolutionary Russia, should be associated with one who was later to be honoured by Stalin as People's Artist of the USSR.

It was Rachmaninov again that rounded off the evening, with a brilliant performance of his Suite No 2 for two pianos, making one eager to acquire the Shelley-Macnamara CD. The suite is a product of the composer's golden years, the early 1900s, and is contemporary with his enormously successful Second ("Brief Encounter") Piano Concerto, with which it shares much of its musical language. Rachmaninov, like Liszt, was one of the greatest pianist-composers of all time and this work must surely represent the towering heights of the two-piano repertoire.

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