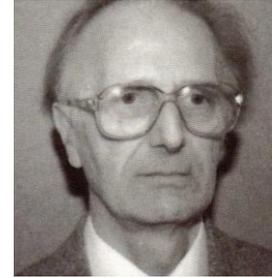


Geoffry & Mollie Russell-Smith



The brother and sister moved to Beckenham in 1935, aged 8 and 13 respectively. They lived in Cromwell Road and began their education here in Woodbrook School at the corner of Hayne Road and Blakeney Road.



On a visit to the school, Miss Neville an eminent child psychologist, unearthed Geoffry's musical talent. After a follow-up

visit by Miss Rose of the Royal College of Music to hear the 9 year old play the piano, he was made a Junior Exhibitioner at the college.

His talent was further encouraged at the Beckenham & Penge Grammar School for Boys by the music master Hubert Clifford and after taking his GSE he transferred to the RCM and was tutored by Sir Gordon Jacob.

As a teenager, Geoffry composed and played in youth clubs at Woodbrook School (where he wrote a ballet subsequently performed in the Grand Hall in Beckenham baths) and Elm Trees youth club in the church hall of St John's, Eden Park (where he played and improvised on the piano for the young Bob Monkhouse).

After demob from the RAF in 1947, his first professional job was as music director of and pianist for the Ballets Negres. He did this for six years during which he composed the music for three ballets for them and toured the UK, Holland, Switzerland and West Germany, using the air corridor to reach Berlin.

After a spell of school teaching, Geoffry became head of educational publishing for 18 years at Boosey & Hawkes where he introduced the Hungarian Kodaly Choral Method arranging an English language version supported by a series of lecture-workshops. He wrote new lyrics for six of the books and also lyrics for about 30 partsongs by Bartok and Kodaly.

While at B&H, Geoffry wrote music for musically-illiterate primary school teachers which he later expanded into the Russell-Smith Method (Let's Explore Music etc) which sold over 100,000 copies world wide. He saw the creation of a whole library of Kodaly Method books and at least two included illustrations of children playing musical learning games in the playground sketched by Mollie, who as Mrs Lungren, was working at Balgowan School.

Geoffry's adjudication work led him to co-found with Ivor Banyon and judge the National Festival of Music for Youth; winners were showcased at the Royal Albert Hall and televised by the BBC.

For some 18 years, he ran, composed and arranged music for the Cator Ladies Choir. One piece, The Wedding Ring, proved popular for 30 years and was often used by SSAA semi-finalists at the Sainsbury' Choir of the Year. Commissions followed from Hampshire County Youth Orchestra and a brass band suite for the Newham Centenary celebrations, opened by Queen Elizabeth in 1986.

After the Art School had been demolished, and not rebuilt, she wrote her poem *Cleared Site*.

Cleared Site

There is an arid gap in my landscape;
Chawed out by earthmovers:
Where sprawling shrubs are clawed by metal teeth.
A great tree remorselessly hacked down,
A tree which bloomed with cobalt violet flowers,
A tree hacked down and burnt away to ash.

This was the garden of the old Art School,
Which was itself mysteriously burned;
The black acrid scars
Softened with weeds and grass and budlia.

I mourned the poor old building,
Home from home to countless students:
Leaky, dilapidated, full of charm,
Smelling of linseed oil. Such happy days!

But while the garden stayed,
I could construct it in my mind again,
Walk through those doors and greet my vanished friends:
Old tunes, old laughter, canvases and paint.
There is an acrid gap in my lifescape
Chawed out by earth movers.