

ALL MASTERS OF OUR COMPANY, I venture to suggest, share a sense of gratitude and privilege in 'taking the chair' and representing our ancient Guild for a short time. We hope to maintain good traditions and make certain individual contributions without disturbing a basic, harmonious equilibrium. At any rate this was my optimistic goal.

In writing about the past year, beginning with the November installation and Livery Dinner, and giving you a personal assessment of what has been happening, I would like to divide our Company's activities between the external, the internal, the musical and the social.

Externally, your Master has attended all musical invitations whenever possible and tended to decline certain unmusical ones. When unable to attend I have been very fortunate to have a predecessor who has, at every request, deputised for me, thus further enhancing the remarkable ambassadorial role (84 engagements) which he undertook for the Company in 1989/90. My record is only just over the half century. I am most grateful to Malcolm Hubble for his continuing work, given so unselfishly, and hope that we may benefit from this for many years to come. I am delighted to tell you that he has succeeded Leonard Halcrow as Chairman of the W.T. Best Award Committee which does so much to help talented young organists and which has been so ably chaired by Leonard in past years.

Internally, and as a slight compensation for and in defence of my poor record externally, the Clerk has had to cope with an escalation of correspondence from Cheshire. Both his office and the Master and Wardens Committee have been asked to participate in several extra fact-finding meetings.

Musical contributions began in November at the Livery Dinner after which operatic entertainment was provided by Pamela Helen Stephen and Wyn Davies. In June, at the Midsummer Banquet, Rosalind Sutherland, accompanied by Stephen Reynolds, also entertained us operatically. Both artists are currently singing principal roles for Opera North and Welsh National Opera respectively. At both Court dinners, in April and October, the musical diet was provided by two young Jazz pianists, Julian Joseph and Wayne Marshall. Meanwhile the Maisie Lewis Concerts continued to provide an important platform at the Purcell Room for young artists embarking on careers.

Enriched

Spiritually we were launched and enriched by a beautiful Saint Cecilia Evensong at Saint Paul's. Having collaborated and exchanged for Mattins with the Musicians Benevolent Fund in 1991, we will return to our own Evensong in 1992. This collaboration with the M.B.F. was happily orchestrated by our Senior Warden, Dr.

Allen Percival, who contributes so much to this excellent charity. My wife Anita and I were their guests at the Royal Concert at the Albert Hall attended by the Queen to whom we were presented together with principals from English National Opera. An exciting excerpt from Simon Boccanegra provided a major portion of an operatic programme.

Close association

Our close and valued association with the Military Bands was highlighted by visits to Kneller Hall, The Albert Hall Mountbatten Concert and Horse Guards Parade for Prince Philip's Birthday celebrations. At all times the highest standards of drill and musical prowess were displayed. I feel that we should be well pleased with our support of this very important aspect of our musical traditions.

Visits to the Academies of Music and City University provided a more mixed diet of varying quality. Repertoire extended from the baroque to the synthetic/computerised. Operatic performances depended, largely, on the extent of sabotage by the stage direction. There was a great deal of exceptional talent amongst the student musicians which flourished under sensible and structured control. Music therapy and ethnic musical aid being used to finance trips to places like the Amazonian jungle. This did seem to me to be of questionable

value when, on one occasion, the recipient of a prize was unable to return to collect it, possibly having got lost in the jungle! Our Silver Medal Awards, presented at the Livery Dinner, continue to maintain our profile at these Academies of Music. I hope that we can keep in touch with the prizewinners, and some way might be found to publicise and promote them. In the North of England in particular, both the Manchester Mid-day Concerts and Clonter Opera Farm benefited from renewed support from the Percival Hart Fund, as did the National Opera Studio in London. I cannot be considered free from bias about the Manchester and Clonter operations, but I can say that both were favourably reviewed in the National Press. Both myself and our Clerk enjoyed being guests at the N.O.S. Showcase at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. It was particularly interesting for me as half the participating singers had sung previously for us in Cheshire.

Our total grant-giving potential (approximate annual income) now exceeds £100,000, thanks to the diligence of successive Treasurers, Clerks, Masters and Livery benefactors - not necessarily in order of importance. This may sound a handsome sum, although it is rather slight in comparison with some of our more wealthy brethren in the City. We also receive many more worthy appeals for

