

Flesch on the Bones

The Company's Prizewinner 1990

VIRGINIA HARDING as a new member of the Company writes that her association with the Worshipful Company of Musicians began in 1973 when she took over the administration of the biennial Carl Flesch International Violin Competition.

A prize giver since the 1972 Competition, the Company has never failed to support the Carl Flesch - long may this happy tradition continue! In 1983 she took over responsibility for the newly-created Walther Gruner International Lieder Competition, which runs in alternate years to the Carl Flesch, and also receives generous prize money from the Company.

Both Competitions come under the umbrella of the annual City of London Festival, which she also administers, and which opens up the Square Mile for two and a half weeks every summer to a wide variety of events for city workers, residents and visitors.

City Music Trail

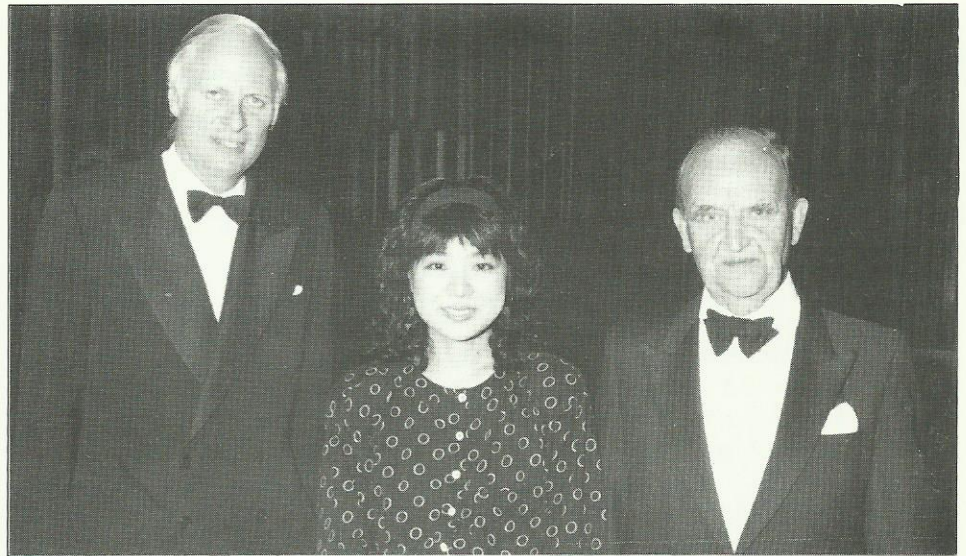
One of the most popular of these is the City Music Trail, always held on a Saturday, which started life in 1977 as one of the City's special events for the Queen's Silver Jubilee, with support from the Company.

The Trail was then absorbed into the Festival, and has been a firm favourite with audiences ever since.

How does one start life as an arts administrator and what does one get out of it? She is always being asked this by young hopefuls who think that no qualifications are needed except that they sang in the school choir and know how to put up a music stand! Her own experience began straight from school - and those were the days when there were no Polytechnic Courses or University Degrees in Arts Administration to help one along.

She decided the academic life was not for her - she wanted to work in music and be involved with artists and musicians at their own level, not as an adoring autograph-hunter in a dressing room. A basic office training was, and still is, an important way of starting off up the ladder.

Her first job was in the BBC Music Department working for the late lamented Deryck Cooke. She then moved to Decca Records during the heyday of their cel-



Left to right: The Rt. Hon. Richard Luce, M.P., Michi Sugiura, Albert Frost Esq; Chairman of the Carl Flesch Competition

ebrated Solti Ring Cycle, and on to her first Festival - Edinburgh - where three years in the early sixties as a member of Lord Harewood's team taught her a good deal about how to run a Festival and, more importantly, how to stand up for herself.

The next move was to the second City of London Festival, where the seeds of her fascination with the City and its buildings were sown, moving on to the Commonwealth Arts Festival in 1965. A further spell with Lord Harewood, this time at the 'New' Philharmonia Orchestra (as it was then) led to travel - two years in Australia and New Zealand, where she worked first in an art gallery in Sydney and then on the Pan-Pacific Arts Festival in Christchurch, a direct result of the contacts made through the Commonwealth Arts Festival.

Back home again, she spent three and a half years in the Planning Office at the Royal Festival Hall and was then offered a six-month job in Christchurch, New Zealand, on their next Arts Festival. She arrived there in September 1972 for the opening of Christchurch's splendid concert hall (built in four years, to budget, with no strikes) and thoroughly enjoyed the challenge of creating a Festival atmosphere in a receptive city - so different from London, where one is just a part of the rat-race.

She returned to England in 1973 to work at the Barbican Arts Centre, still a hole in the ground at that stage, and was imme-

diately involved with the City Arts Trust and Carl Flesch Competition. In 1979 her present job was created and her fruitful association with the Company continued.

The rewards for working in the field of the arts are of course intangible - the pleasure of helping young people through the Competitions and watching talented prizewinners establish their careers and achieve international recognition. Her two most fulfilling experiences have been concerned with the Walther Gruner Lieder Competition.

First winner

The first winner in 1983 was a totally unknown German baritone from the ranks of the chorus at the Dresden Opera. Olaf Baer has now become a world name and has a career spanning several continents with many fine recordings to his credit. Secondly, the 1987 jury included the distinguished German tenor, Peter Schreier.

He was invited to give a recital during the Festival while he was here and it was the first time for many years that he had performed in London. These experiences are what make it all worthwhile.

Members' attendance at Festival events is very important as is the financial support which the Company provides. The City Arts Trust is a charity which has to seek sponsorship for everything that is presented.

This year's Festival from 7-24 July is more of a challenge than ever as sponsorship is very difficult to come by. It is a battle to maintain high standards and not lose crucial events from the carefully planned programme. Everyone who reads "Preserve Harmony" will receive the brochure when it is published in April -- please come and support the City's own Festival.

The Peterborough Effect?

From the Peterborough Evening Telegraph: "8.00 Orchestra! Beethoven and Schubert gave a whole new meaning to the role of woodwind section, most notably the cello and the double bass"