

playback

PLAYBACK is the bulletin of the British Library National Sound Archive (NSA). It is published free of charge three times a year, with information on the NSA's current and future activities, and news from the world of sound archives and audio preservation. Comments are welcome and should be addressed to the editor at the NSA.

We have a special mailing list for PLAYBACK. Please write, phone, fax or email us, or complete and send in the tear-off slip at the end of this issue (if you have not done so already) if you wish to receive future issues through the post.

The National Sound Archive is one of the largest sound archives in the world and is based at the British Library's new building at St Pancras.

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Front cover photograph: Fritts & Co organ at the Arizona State University School of Music (photo courtesy of Arizona State University)

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NATIONAL SOUND ARCHIVE

what's happening

The NSA's catalogue CADENSA (www.cadensa.bl.uk) completed its first year on the web in January. During this period over 70,000 people accessed it, reaching a crescendo during the four days after Boxing Day 2001 with 3500 logins, including 972 on 28 December, the highest daily total in the period. This was partly due to a short piece 'Secret sound archive revealed' by Barry Fox that appeared in the post-Christmas issue of *New Scientist*. This mentioned our experimental content dissemination initiative that is revealed by typing in 'virtual nsa' to a CADENSA search. Fox urged readers to partake of some 'innocent fun'.



■ The NSA hosted the *Classic Record Collector* awards for the third time in the BL conference centre on 29 October 2001. Timothy Day, the western art music curator, gave a five-minute introduction to the NSA as a centre for research. Guests included ex-MP David Mellor, cellist Julian Lloyd Webber, violinist Emanuel Hurwitz and the heads of many record companies.

■ Long-awaited improvements to the NSA Technical Section's facilities in the BL building at Micawber Street, London N1, were completed towards the end of 2001. Most of the NSA's collection storage accommodation is also at Micawber Street, and some rearrangement of this enabled two rooms to be converted into technical studios. This is an interim measure

pending the construction of a purpose-built conservation block on the St Pancras site, which will house other Library conservation specialists.

■ In November 2001 Crispin Jewitt, NSA Director and currently president of IASA, and Chris Clark, head of NSA public services and database manager, who edits the IASA journal and bulletin, attended an international AV conference in Mexico City, the first to include all three international media archive associations, IASA (all AV), FIAT (TV) and FIAF (Film). The conference was attended by more than 300 delegates, including representatives from virtually every Latin American country. Chris gave a paper in Spanish about the expectations and realities of the work of a sound archivist during the last 10 years. He gave an extended version of the talk at a Spanish Librarians' meeting in Madrid in December.

■ The BP Conservation Awards programme donated £2,000 to the Wildlife Section to purchase new compact cassette recorders and microphones for loaning to overseas zoological expeditions. The curator Richard Ranft researched and provided sounds for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Dublin-based 'Medialab Europe' in a new cross-disciplinary project using robotics to model virtual soundscapes. The results were exhibited at Medialab's Dublin offices in January in 'Extreme Interfaces', an event showcasing future technologies. Recent requests for copies of Wildlife recordings included badger sounds for a Ministry of Agriculture Central Research Labs

research project to develop an automated underground 'badger detector' based on voice.

■ The Library has installed a multimedia PC in carrell 16 in the Humanities 2 reading room at St Pancras, where NSA multimedia holdings can be consulted. Much of the NSA component of the BL web site has been revised and enhanced recently, including sections on our publications, and various curatorial activities and projects.

■ Two more CDs have been released in the ongoing international music series from Topic Records in conjunction with the NSA's International Music section. *Before the revolution: a 1909 recording expedition in the Caucasus and Central Asia* by



the Gramophone Company has been compiled by Will Prentice, using digitally remastered versions of original cylinder recordings. *The Yemen Tihama: trance and dance music from the Red Sea coast of Arabia* features recordings made by Anderson Bakewell of Tibbal music from the Tihama, Red Sea coastal plain of the Yemen – an African-Arabian amalgam featuring lyres, reeds and virtuosic drumming, performed by members



of the Akhdam, an outcast group with a reputation for sorcery.

For further information and details of how to obtain copies of the CDs visit:

<http://www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/imc.html#topic>



timbre and tempo

the organ in recorded sound

by Timothy Day

In January, following the international success of his *A Century of Recorded Sound*, Timothy Day (B.Mus, FRCO), the western art music curator, gave the key-note address 'Who needs old recordings?', at a three-day conference at the State University of Arizona entitled 'The Organ in Recorded Sound: an exploration of timbre and tempo'; he also took part in a round-table discussion at the end of the proceedings. The conference provided further indication of the increasing academic and musicological interest in recordings, and included a panel forum of sound engineers explaining the peculiar technological problems of recording organs in the rich, muddling acoustics in which many of the most beautiful instruments are housed. The engineers and producers included Ben Taylor of KBAQ Arizona, who worked for Elektra/Nonesuch for six years, Christopher Greenleaf, whose work has appeared on the Albany, Gothic, Titanic and Lyrichord labels, and Roger Sherman, the Associate Organist of St Mark's Cathedral, Seattle, and President of Loft Recordings which publishes discs on the Loft, Gothic and ReZound labels.

There were papers at the conference on 'Cycles of Interpretation in Recordings of Bach's Organ Music', on the

styles of the pupils of Karl Straube, the great organ pedagogue who taught at the Leipzig Conservatory between 1907 and 1940, on 'The Authority of the Composer's Own Recordings', on 'Organists on a Roll: the Welte organ's mechanically-recorded performances', and on the database of organ music recordings at the Organ Art Centre at the University of Göteborg, which had been worked on for many months by Dr David Knight at the NSA in London. The organist and scholar, Robert Clark, formerly Professor of Organ at the University of Michigan, introduced his 2000 recording of the organ in the municipal church of St Wenceslaus in Naumburg, an instrument now fully restored and eliciting exactly the same sounds as it did when J.S. Bach first played on it in 1746.

The Conference had been organised by Professor Kimberly Marshall, an Associate Professor of Music at Arizona State University, formerly on the staff of the Royal Academy of Music in London. She is herself a notable scholar – she obtained her doctorate in musicology at Oxford University – and a brilliant performer – she won the St Albans International Organ Competition in 1985 – and there was evidence throughout the

conference of a growing conviction that music in performance represents a rich subject for scholarly investigation and analysis.

After this conference at Phoenix Tim travelled to San Francisco and gave two papers illustrated with NSA recordings at the Music Department of Stanford University. One was to the Opera Studies Group on 'Mozart and Glyndebourne', and one to the postgraduate forum on 'Listening to Musical History', which suggested that listening to music in performance may lead to the writing of very different kinds of history from those which have resulted from simply looking at musical notation. This second paper he repeated over the next week at the University of California at Davis, at Swarthmore College, and at the University of Pennsylvania. Everywhere there was considerable curiosity and enthusiasm about research being undertaken on recordings. A number of American musicologists were sure that England is leading the field in research with recordings with recognised specialists at a number of universities including Southampton, Sheffield, and King's College, London, and with the unrivalled collections at the NSA and the Archive's Seminars and visiting fellowships providing invaluable institutional support.

changing society

an oral history of Scope

by Chris Davies

In 1952, a group of three parents – Ian Dawson-Shepherd, Eric Hodgson and Alex Moira, met a social worker, Jean Garwood to discuss how they could improve opportunities for their disabled children. The parents had been told by the Ministry of Education that their children were ‘ineducable’ because they had cerebral palsy (cp), a physical condition that can make it difficult to walk or talk.

The four founders started the National Spastics Society with a pledge of £5.00 each. From such small beginnings, the charity, now known as Scope, has grown into a leading national disability organisation providing services to thousands of disabled people and their families every year.



Chris Davies



Selling the Society's 4,000,000th Christmas card



Claire Rayner at the launch of the CP Helpline in 1990

In 1996, Scope began to consider how to celebrate its 50th Anniversary. Bravely it decided against the conventional corporate history, gleaned from annual reviews and minute books, and opted for a more imaginative approach which put its service-users and members, disabled people, at the centre of an oral history project. This has now been turned into a book, printed with the support of *The Mirror*, and a CD, kindly produced for Scope by Wordwave. The CD features a voiceover by political commentator Jonathan Dimbleby.

Chris Davies, author of *Changing Society*, writes:

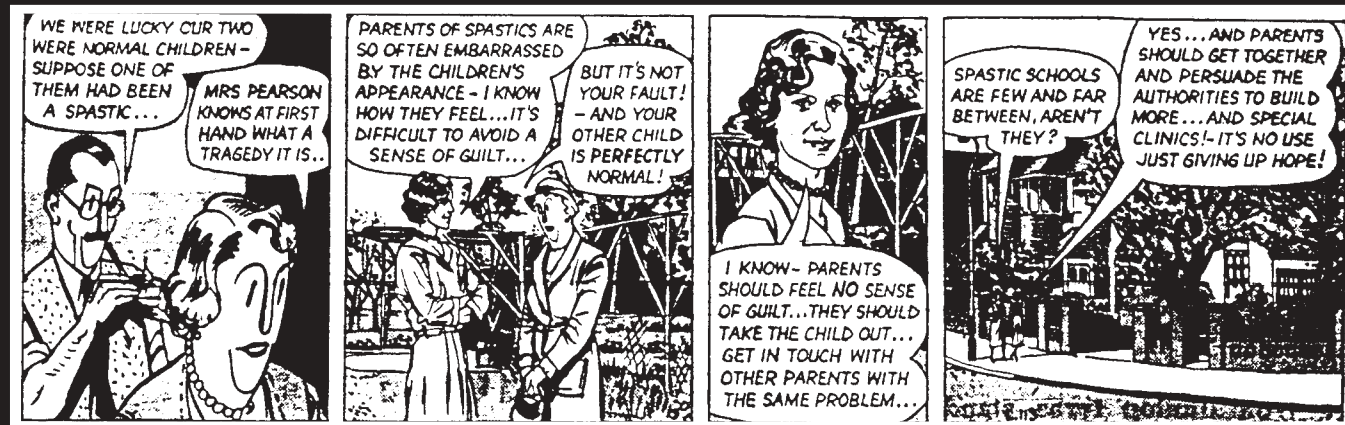
‘When I was seven, in 1952, my parents and I travelled down to London for a meeting that would

transform the lives of thousands of people. It was the first general meeting of the organisation now known as Scope and its purpose was and is to serve the best interests of people with cerebral palsy. People like me.

‘The Anniversary is being celebrated in many ways, including the publication of my book, *Changing Society*. This is a history of the organisation but not a formal, impersonal one. I have chosen to tell the story of Scope through the experiences, views and opinions of people who have had a close association with Scope. Most have cp and their lives have been connected, to a greater or lesser extent, with Scope. So the book is not just Scope’s story, it is theirs too.

‘I interviewed all the contributors in depth about Scope, past, present and future. Their interviews offer a range of perspectives. Many of them – like me – are critical (in a constructive way) about the organisation, both past and present. After all an organisation is the product of people, and people are fallible. The book reflects this fallibility and is, rightly, not a whitewash.

‘Fifty years later I am now a trustee of Scope and my involvement has come full circle. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to write *Changing Society*. It is not intended simply to be a retrospective view, but also a catalyst for future change. I hope you enjoy reading it and listening to the interviews.’



In 1952 the Daily Mirror's Ruggles cartoon strip brought the work of The National Spastics Society to 15 million readers

Can You Manage Stares?

Following his interview for the Scope history, Bill Hargreaves, the only disabled person on its first-ever Executive Committee, approached the charity with a collection of 47 taped interviews. These were made by his friend Gesine Gretscher, with him and others (including the Spastics Society founder Ian Dawson-Shepherd) over 20 years with a view to writing Bill's life story.

It was a fascinating story: when Bill Hargreaves was born in Australia in 1919, he weighed just two and a half pounds. His parents were told that, because he had cerebral palsy, he would 'never walk or work or wed'.

Bill's remarkable life defied the doctor's diagnosis – he learned to walk at eight, he found work as a soap maker and professional

ventriloquist (through which he met his future wife Mary), and was awarded the MBE for his work as a campaigner for disabled people's rights. Bill was to open up employment, recreation and travel to vast numbers of disabled people both in this country and many others around the world.

Alex White from Scope recognised Bill's natural gift for

storytelling and decided to edit his oral testimony into *Can You Manage Stares*, the story of Bill's life. Free copies of the book are available for Playback readers by writing to Can You Manage Stares Offer, Playback, British Library address. The full transcripts and recordings of the Scope and Bill Hargreaves interviews are lodged at the NSA (NSA Ref: C984).

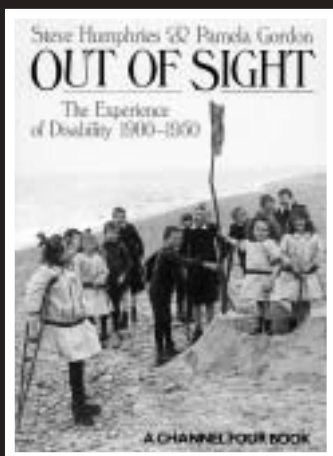


Bill Hargreaves receives a special award from the Duchess of Kent on his retirement



Copies of *Changing Society* are available from:
Scope
Library & Information Unit
6 Market Road
London N7 9PW
Price: £8.80
(including postage & packing).
Please make cheques payable to Scope.
For credit card orders, please call 020 7619 7341.

The NSA oral history section includes a number of other collections related to disability. 'Out of Sight: The Experience of Disability 1900-1950' (NSA Ref: C444/4) includes 50 video interviews with older blind, deaf and physically disabled people focusing on the years before the National Health Service and reflecting memories of exclusion, prejudice, institutionalisation, war, work and relationships. A Channel Four series based on the interviews was broadcast in 1992. 'A Fit Person to be Removed' oral history interviews (NSA Ref: C549) consists of 17 personal accounts of life in a mental deficiency institution (Meanwood Park Hospital, Leeds) from long-term residents, who speak about their ways of coping with the devastating effects of institutional life and,



for some, coming to terms with rejoining the wider community as a result of changing mental health and 'community care' practices. The Mental Health Testimony Archive (NSA Ref: C905) holds 50 life story video interviews with mental health survivors, a project initiated by Mental Health Media with funding from the Department of Health, supported by the NSA.

Other collections include the Multiple Sclerosis Interviews (NSA Ref: C949) and Andy Stevens' Psychiatric Nursing Interviews (NSA Ref: C823). The Oral History of Geriatrics as a Medical Speciality (NSA Ref: C512), comprises 73 interviews with geriatricians discussing the evolution of geriatric medicine as a medical speciality after the Second World War; Physiotherapist Interviews (NSA Ref: C601) undertaken by the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy between July 1992 and August 1993 as part of its centenary celebrations, comprising 16 interviews with members of the UK's third largest health care profession after doctors and nurses; and HIV/AIDS Testimonies (NSA Ref: C743), a rolling programme of life story interviews commissioned by the NSA with people living with the often disabling effects of the AIDS virus.

cross-channel recordings

a visit to the Bibliothèque nationale de France

by Nigel Bewley

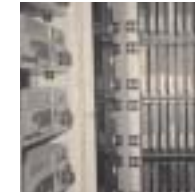
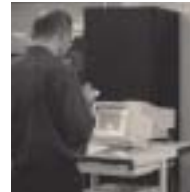
For two days in October 2001, four NSA staff travelled to Paris to visit the Audio Visual Department of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) as guests of Isabelle Giannattasio, Directeur du département de l'Audiovisuel, and her staff. Our party included Chris Mobbs (Listening and Viewing Service), and Nigel Bewley, Will Prentice and Lali Weerasinghe (Technical Section).

The Audio Visual Department of BnF has two sites: François Mitterrand – Tolbiac, on the Seine just south of the centre of Paris, and at Marne-la-Vallée, a forty minute train journey to the east of Paris. Access to the collections is at the Tolbiac site and the technical facilities are housed at Marne-la-Vallée.

On 14 July 1988 François Mitterrand unveiled plans for a new complex to be built at Tolbiac for the BnF. The new building, named in his honour, was to house the BnF and to provide improved access to its collections, including all audio-visual material. During construction the French media, excited at the development, referred to the project as 'TGB' – 'Tres Grande Bibliothèque'. Just six years later, in 1994, BnF curators moved into the new purpose-built complex; in 1996 access

was open to the general public; and in 1998 the reading rooms for researchers opened. In line with Mitterrand's vision, some items from the collections which were only previously accessible to 'serious' researchers were made available to all members of the public in reading rooms on the upper floor, the haut-de-jardin, whilst researchers would visit reading rooms on the lower floor, the rez-de-jardin. This reflects the British Library's admissions policy but provides access to a much wider range of collection material to non-specialist general readers than is available at the BL.

Access to audio-visual collections is a case in point: the facilities of the Listening and Viewing Service within the BnF are comprehensive and impressive. For general public access there are three robot delivery systems allowing the replay of 11,000 compact discs, 2,880 VHS video cassettes and 292 CD-ROMs. This material is accessed by the public on 70 dedicated work stations. Up to thirty different CDs can be accessed simultaneously, with a delay of less than sixty seconds between selection and delivery. Material is selected from the



workstations via an on-line catalogue. At the research level there are 62 workstations comprising 26 stations for audio, 21 for video, 12 for fixed images (photographs) and 3 for multi-tasking. Facilities are also available for group listening for up to six people. As in the NSA, researchers must request material in advance of appointments but it may be selected from the entire BnF collection. Although the reading rooms can accommodate 62 researchers, at the time of our visit the average daily usage was around a dozen appointments. Like the NSA's Listening and Viewing Service, material is delivered to researchers from a control room: not by an operator as in the NSA, but from a robot delivery system that is preloaded with playback copies by the night shift for the following day's listening appointments. An interesting refinement used by the BnF is a digital store for the reviewing of material. In the NSA, if researchers wish to play particular extracts over and over again, a few bars of music for example, we allow them to record the work on a locked-in cassette, which enables them to review the item themselves. At the BnF a similar

facility is offered but a PC-based digital store is used rather than a cassette.

BnF collections seem to comprise mostly published recordings: sound recordings have been subject to legal deposit in France since 1925, audio-visual recordings since 1975 and multi-media publications since 1992. It seemed that the BnF held a much lower percentage of unpublished recordings in their collections than the NSA.

Marne-la-Vallée houses the Technical Section of the BnF. The buildings are a group of large light industrial type units accommodating collection storage and management, collection processing and sorting, disc cleaning and CD analysis, laboratory facilities, a climate-controlled quarantine area for mouldy, contaminated and vulnerable items and the studios themselves. There are three audio studios and two audio-visual studios, though at the time of our visit not all were complete. The technical installation in the studios was well thought out and equipment used was mostly of a high professional standard. It was interesting to note that the workload in the operational studios seemed to be light compared to the NSA's facility, and

we didn't actually hear any audio at the time of our visit. This may in part be due to their smaller proportion of unpublished collections, which in our experience inevitably involve a much greater amount of technical work.

The conservation priorities of the BnF are similar to those of the NSA. We both prioritise vulnerable carriers such as acetate tape, cellulose nitrate ('acetate') discs and wax cylinders. The BnF commissioned a player for cylinder transfers, as did the NSA. The BnF also use Mitsui Gold CD-Rs for conservation transfers, as do the NSA, and like us they store archive and playback copies in different locations.

The BnF have in place a comprehensive CD testing programme using a high-end Audio Development CD Analyser, and a concern raised by them was that printing or marking the surface of the CD-R may have a deleterious effect on the data written on the CD-R. In the light of this, the NSA is seriously considering a cessation of CD-R printing and marking (we have our own black-and white label printers at present), and relying on the unique serial number placed by the

manufacturer near the central hole to identify individual items.

All items at the BnF are stored in acid-free closeable boxes on shelves, and, as at the NSA, acid-free sleeves for coarsegroove discs. Collection items are transported in heavy plastic and thermally insulated crates which ensure that items from the climate-controlled quarantine areas, for example, remain at their optimum storage condition. Deliveries between Tolbiac and Marne-la-Vallée are made by car, one trip every two days; by contrast the NSA is reliant on the 13 van deliveries made per day between our Technical Section in Micawber Street, and St Pancras.

In broad terms the facilities at the BnF are similar to those of the NSA, but have been better funded in recent years and so in some respects provide a model for us and others to aspire to. Levels of use are similar. We all enjoyed our visit and learned much that will be of practical value both in the Listening and Viewing Service and Technical Section. We hope to reciprocate soon.

For further information on the BnF visit their website: www.bnf.fr

new publications

events

If you are not already on the NSA's mailing list and would like to be, please fill in and return this slip to
PLAYBACK, The British Library National Sound Archive, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB
ADDRESS



The Royal Story
The story of the House of Windsor in words and music
Catalogue number: NSACD 11
Price: £9.95

To mark the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II the National Sound Archive has released *The Royal Story*, narrated by Dame Judi Dench. The recordings include the voices of each of the reigning monarchs of the House of Windsor: King George V, King Edward VIII, King George VI and Queen Elizabeth II. There are personal reminiscences of the royal family and live recordings that capture some of the great events of the 20th century, including the funeral of King George V and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

How to order

The Royal Story is available from the British Library Bookshop. The Bookshop accepts telephone orders with payment by Access, Visa and American Express. The telephone number for orders is: +44 (0)20 7412 7735. *The Royal Story* can also be purchased online at: <http://www.bl.uk/services/publications/onlineaudio.html>



Aural History
Essays on Recorded Sound
Editor: Andy Linehan
ISBN 0 7123 4741 0
Price: £40.00

This collection of essays presents a stimulating review of current professional issues for sound and audio-visual archivists and other custodians of time-based media. The book pays particular attention to the variety of institutional holdings and collections, as well as to the numerous and innovative ways in which sound recordings are being used in the academic and creative spheres. It includes an accompanying CD of sound examples.

How to order

Aural History is available from The British Library Bookshop. The Bookshop accepts telephone orders with payment by Access, Visa and American Express. The telephone number for orders is: +44 (0)20 7412 7735.

■ Oral History training courses

One-day courses in oral history techniques
At the British Library

July 15

At the Gas Hall, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

September 18

At the City Museum, Weston Park, Sheffield

October 24

At the College of St Mark and St John, Plymouth

October 31

Contact: Rob Perks, NSA

Tel: 020 7412 7405 Fax: 020 7412 7441

Email: rob.perks@bl.uk

Website: www.oralhistory.org.uk

■ WOMAD

World of Music Arts and Dance three-day festival
At Rivermead, Reading

Tickets available online

Website: www.womad.org

July 26-28

■ Friends of Wildlife Sound lectures

At The British Library

'Milestones in wildlife sound recording' by Patrick Sellar and John Fisher

September 28 (afternoon)

'Secrets of natural history broadcasting'

by Dilys Breese

November 30 (afternoon)

Contact: Richard Ranft, NSA

Tel: 020 7412 7402/7403

Email: nsa-wildsound@bl.uk

■ Hidden Treasures

A one-day conference on the impact of moving image and sound archives in the 21st century

At the British Library

October 7

Contact: NSA

Tel: 020 7412 7440 Fax 020 7412 7441

Email: nsa@bl.uk