



MEDIA RELEASE

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ABO ANNOUNCES A THIRD ROUND OF GRANTS FROM THE SIRENS FUND TO ORCHESTRAS PERFORMING MUSIC BY HISTORIC WOMEN COMPOSERS

Music by Avril Coleridge-Taylor, Dorothy Howell, Grace Williams, Vítězslava Kaprálová, and Lili Boulanger

The late-nineteenth and early twentieth century, alongside the first wave of feminism, was an exciting time for women composers and musicians. Dorothy Howell had large-scale works championed at the highest level; Lili Boulanger overcame huge misogyny to win the Prix de Rome; musicians of the calibre of Vítězslava Kaprálová and Avril Coleridge-Taylor conducted and wrote for symphony orchestras including the Czech Philharmonic and the London Symphony Orchestra. The arts were considered vital to feminism, and 'the muses' looked set to become fully accepted as 'the creators'. Yet their music is little-known and rarely performed today.

The sponsor of the Sirens scheme, Diana Ambache, said: "*A hundred years later, featuring these remarkable women and their music is still part of the process of moving forward, and I am delighted to see the enthusiasm with which UK orchestras have embraced the Sirens scheme.*"

The ABO can announce this year's awards to the following projects:

Chineke! Orchestra

Avril Coleridge-Taylor *Sussex Landscape Op 27*

Performance date: 22 April 2019

Avril Coleridge-Taylor (1903-1998) was the daughter of Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Jessie Walmisley who met as students at the RCM. Avril – who later wrote this work under the male pseudonym Peter Riley – won a scholarship to Trinity College of Music in 1915, where she studied composition with Gordon Jacob. She wrote several short orchestral works including *Sussex Landscape Op 27*, an expansive twelve-minute work for large orchestra. The score is prefaced by a poem by John Drinkwater, "Into your Sussex quietness I came...".

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

Dorothy Howell *Lamia* (1918)

Performances: 21 August 2019 & 22 August 2019

Birmingham-born Dorothy Howell (1898-1982) had her piece *Lamia* premiered at the 1919 Proms conducted by Sir Henry Wood, who championed her, but her music was subsequently lost from the repertoire. 2019 also marks the 150th anniversary of Wood's birth and the start of the CBSO's centenary period, and so in celebration of these anniversaries the CBSO will perform *Lamia* in Birmingham and at the **BBC Proms** under the baton of Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla. Howell's music was previously supported by the Sirens fund in a research project with Southbank Sinfonia.

English Symphony Orchestra

Vítězslava Kaprálová Partita for Piano and Strings (1939)

Performance: 28 April 2019

Vítězslava Kaprálová's produced a remarkable body of composition during her short life (1915-1940). Born in Brno, she was a highly accomplished musician, studying with Václav Talich and conducting the Czech Philharmonic at the age of just 22. Her Partita for Piano and Strings was written during wartime exile in France and was shaped, in part, by her studies with Bohuslav Martinů who fell madly in love with her. Virtuoso and highly contrapuntal outer movements driven by march and dance rhythms frame a slow movement of great lyricism.

Philharmonia Orchestra

Lili Boulanger *D'un soir triste* (1917-18)

Performances: November 2019 and March/April 2020

Lili Boulanger is another woman composer of the early twentieth century who died tragically young, what would she have gone on to write if she had lived? The first female winner of the Prix de Rome composition prize, her arrestingly mature, powerful work 'D'un soir triste' was completed at the end of WWI, and is an expression of how deeply affected Boulanger was by the tragedy of war.

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Grace Williams *Penillion* (1955)

Performance: Thursday 10 June 2021

Grace Williams (1906-1977) wrote her highly original symphonic poem *Penillion* for the National Youth Orchestra of Wales, and it was recorded in 1972 by the RPO with Sir Charles Groves. The music incorporates the metrical and melodic characteristics of traditional Welsh *penillion* singing - a vocal improvisation by a singer or small choir over a melody played by the harp, and shows the influence of Bartók, Kodály, and Vaughan Williams with whom she studied.

ABOUT SIRENS

The ABO Trust received a generous gift from Diana Ambache in 2016 to run a new fund, Sirens, which aims to raise awareness and appreciation of the music written by historical women from around the world. Annual grants will be allocated according to the range and value of each project. Each year over 10 years up to £19,000 will be shared between 4 to 5 projects for concerts, tours, recordings and education work deemed to be doing most to advance and promote the understanding of music by women. To date the scheme has supported performances of works by Germaine Tailleferre, Cécile Chaminade and Dorothy Howell and Maria Antonia Walpurgis.

Orchestras are encouraged to use [The Women of Note](#) website as a resource, which lists orchestral music by historical women composers. The awards panel for the current round comprised Diana Ambache, Helen Wallace, Kings Place, Edwina Wolstencroft, BBC Radio 3, Philip Cashian, composer, and Fiona Harvey, ABO.

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