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THE COUNTESS OF MUNSTER MUSICAL TRUST

Registered Charity no. 1031783

Wormley Hill, Godalming, Surrey GU8 5SG

Tel: 01428 685427

Email: admin@munstertrust.org.uk

Website: www.munstertrust.org.uk

The Countess of Munster

Born Hilary Wilson, her father inherited the prospering Wilson Shipping Line, whose business was originally founded on iron ore imports from Sweden in the days of the Industrial Revolution.

Hilary was a shy, retiring child with a passion for music and devotion to the piano. Although custom of the day precluded entry to music college, her talent was such that the great Solomon accepted her for private study. She gave many private recitals and, during the First World War, played to the wounded in hospitals. In 1928 she married Sir Geoffrey Fitz-clarence who in the same year inherited his uncle's title of 5th Earl of Munster.

Over the years, Lady Munster continued to perform in hospitals and at schools and her home at Bletchingley in Surrey was a hub of musical activity. She was a great patron of many professional musicians of the day. Perhaps due to the fact that her marriage was childless, she took a particular interest in young performers and, with the support of her close friend, Gerald Coke, a financier and supporter of music, the idea of putting her help onto an enduring and practical basis was conceived with the founding in 1958 of the Countess of Munster Musical Trust.

The Trust

The Trust's role was to support young musicians of professional potential to achieve their aims, by funding their fees and living expenses and also by underwriting concerts for promotional purposes. Now well-established in the classical music world, the help it provides has made and continues to make a real and significant contribution to the advancement of talented young musicians.

The Recital Scheme

In the 1960s, aware of the lack of performance opportunities for young musicians, the Trustees initiated concerts for the benefit of young soloists with the English Chamber Orchestra under Raymond Leppard, who was himself a Trustee at that time. From these beginnings, the idea of the Recital Scheme developed and its success was immediate and lasting.

The benefits of the Scheme are twofold, not only does it provide young musicians with experience of the professional platform and exposure to audiences throughout the country, but the music clubs themselves also benefit from introductions to talented young musicians and the sponsorship

the Trust provides. Over 200 music clubs and societies are registered with the Trust, which authorises them to engage selected young artists for one concert during their annual season. The Trust meets the fees of up to two young artists and the clubs pay a modest registration fee and provide help towards travelling expenses.

Future Prospects

The Trust is unique in the provision of independent resources and expertise in identifying and helping those with the greatest talent and need. Maintaining the support the Trust has provided for more than 50 years is critical to the future of the musical life of this country's own young talent. The spirit which Lady Munster inspired still survives and the strong sense of her original concept renews itself in all who become involved with the Trust.

For more than 50 years, the Trust has not had recourse to fundraising and, indeed, it has always maintained a modest profile. However, with increases in educational costs and low investment returns, its reserves are coming under pressure and, in order to maintain the efficacy of the Trust's work, the Trustees feel that they should tell people about the importance of its work.

If you would like to contribute towards the future of the Trust by making a donation to the Trust, you can do so by one of three methods:-

- Visit the website at www.munstertrust.org.uk, home page, which links to details about making donations and legacies
- Personal cheque, made payable to "The Countess of Munster Musical Trust" and sent to our address
- BACS transfer to the Trust's bank account at CAF Bank,
Sort code 40-52-40 Account no. 00006259

If you are a UK tax payer, you might like to complete a Gift Aid declaration form (www.munstertrust.org.uk/gift_aid_declaration_form.htm), which will enable the Trust to reclaim the basic rate tax from HM Revenue & Customs on its 'gross' equivalent. If you pay higher rate tax, you can claim the difference between the higher rate of tax and the basic rate of tax on the total (gross) value of your donation to the Trust.

If you would like to make a bequest to the Trust in your will, please contact us and we will be happy to provide wording and details or visit our website: www.munstertrust.org.uk/donation.htm