

Richard Adeney 1920–2010

Tributes to the great British player

Richard Adeney 25 January 1920–16 December 2010.

Richard Adeney was one of the finest flute players of the twentieth century. In a long and distinguished orchestral career he was first flute in the London Philharmonic Orchestra, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and the English Chamber Orchestra, and appeared as a freelancer with many others. As a chamber musician he was a founder member of the Melos Ensemble, and he was a popular soloist and recording artist.

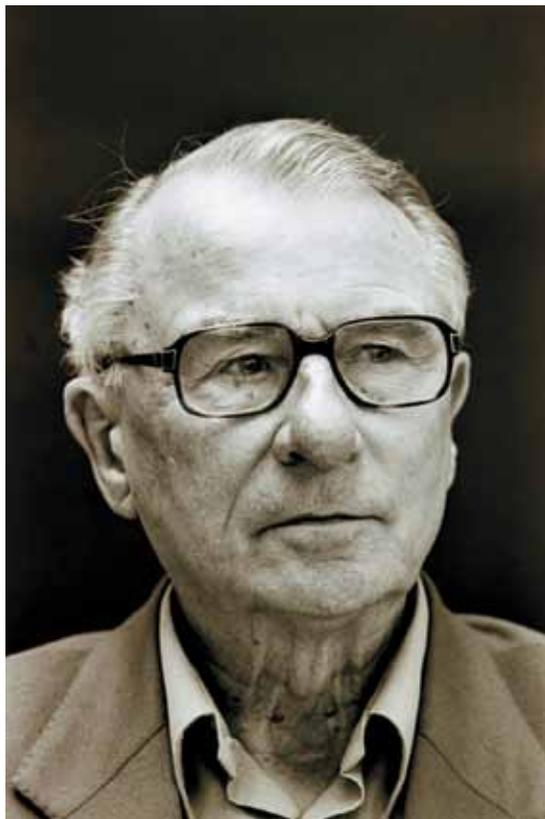
Richard Adeney was born into a family of artists. His father, Bernard Adeney, had a short-lived marriage with his fellow artist Thérèse Lessore. When this marriage ended he introduced her to his friend Walter Sickert, who married her. Richard's mother, Noël, was an artist and textile designer. 'I was named after that crackpot, the painter known early on as Walter Sickert, but later preferring to be called by his second name, Richard,' he wrote.

Adeney took up the flute at Bryanston School in Dorset and later studied at the Royal College of Music. When the Second World War broke out he applied for and, to his surprise, received conscientious objector status, which left him free to pursue a playing career.

His earliest recordings were made on 78 RPM discs, and he participated in countless recordings on LPs, as a member of orchestras and chamber ensembles and as a soloist. His recordings with the Melos Ensemble of Debussy's *Sonate* for flute, viola and harp and Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro* remain for many the favourite performance of these works. Adeney recorded the four Mozart flute quartets; the Mozart concertos (including the one for flute and harp); the *Brandenburg Concertos* (a number of times); and many other works, including the two flute concertos written for him by his good friend Malcolm Arnold. Adeney was hugely admired by his colleagues, many of whom said he could lift an entire orchestra's performance by the beauty of his playing. He was also a brilliant photographer whose pictures can be seen in André Previn's book *Orchestra*.

Richard Adeney described his career in an entertaining and occasionally scandalous autobiography, *Flute*, published in 2009.

Richard Adeney at the age of eighty in 2000.



John Amis:

In the early 1940s I worked as assistant to Felix Aprahamian who was concert manager of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Many of the best players had gone off to the war, leaving newcomers and a good many positions to fill. Two of the newcomers were the oboist Peter Graeme and the flautist Richard Adeney; both became great friends with the very young trumpeter, Malcolm Arnold.

At that time, performances by the orchestra were often routine and lacklustre. In particular, the middle and back desk string players needed a lot of gingering up, and they didn't get that from the conductors they had to work with: Sargent, Charles Hambourg, Anatole Fistoulari, Edric Cundell, Mosco Carner, Sidney Beer (Barbirolli and Beecham were in America). Programmes had to be popular, not even 'Your Hundred Best Tunes'—more like two dozen.

But occasionally the ginger came from within the ranks. Sometimes a solo from Richard or Malcolm would be so beautifully played that it would galvanise the boys, positively inspire them to play, even beyond their best. The sound these two made was entrancing and their musicianship superb.

Of course, it didn't happen every day, and sometimes things could go horribly

wrong, due to inexperience and lack of rehearsal time. I recall that the orchestra often played Ravel's *Bolero*, and somebody's solo would always go obviously and disastrously wrong. Richard told me of a frightful boob he committed when sightreading Brahms's second symphony in the Colston Hall, Bristol, conducted by Eduard van Beinum, which was being broadcast, to make things worse. Richard came in a bar early and stayed a bar early for quite a time.

Felix Aprahamian was a joy to work with, enthusiastic, helpful, with a way of making each person he met feel good and useful. He used to organise what he called 'symposiums' (after Plato, don't you know), which took place, usually in Chinese restaurants, at which a dozen or so girls and chaps would meet and enjoy themselves. This is how I got to know Richard. He wasn't easy to get to know, rather like a cat that walks by itself. At that time he was married to a nice, pretty girl called Sheila, and it can't have been easy for them as Richard veered towards homosexuality. But he was fun, quiet fun, a mixture of generous and selfish.

Richard also fell out of love with the LPO and went freelance, playing solo and chamber music, notably with the Melos Ensemble, with whom he made his best records. His Mozart quartets were wonderfully stylish, but my favourite Adeney CD has always been the Debussy trio for flute, viola and harp. Perfection made in conjunction with Cecil Aronowitz and Osian Ellis.

Richard Adeney dressed as a monk for a performance of Benjamin Britten's *Curlew River*.





At one point, Richard felt he wasn't getting enough concerto work. My suggestion that he ask his pal Malcolm Arnold for a work helped considerably, the composer even following the first concerto with a second.

The next phase in Richard's life was photography, and he proved again what an artist he was. It was somehow typical of Richard that he sold his flute and then, after some success and an exhibition, he shut up shop and sold his cameras.

For many years he was a star performer in the English Chamber Orchestra. Britten was an admirer and Richard was chosen to play in his church operas, suitably kitted out as a monk.

Richard was fortunate with property and finance; latterly he never had to worry about money. He still remained elusive, but he had many friends and was warmly liked by them all.

He was a good companion, fastidious in his likes and dislikes. His first go at memoirs was not successful, but he worked at it until it made a very entertaining book, giving as good as any I know in telling the reader what it was like to be a performing musician. He was revealing in his perception of the work and character of those he wrote about, a bit rough on Malcolm Sargent, and perhaps in his insistence of his own sexuality and sex life. It was the only time he was too loud.

Pencil sketch by Richard Adeney's father Bernard of Richard as a baby in the arms of his mother, Noë. Courtesy of Delia Ruhm.



Richard Adeney as a teenager by his mother, Noël Adeney.

William Bennett:

Richard Adeney was one of my greatest flute heroes when I was a student. He had a beautifully focused sound, and could produce more different tone colours than anyone else I had heard.

I used to have an acetate LP taken from a live broadcast of Richard playing some lollipops with the pianist Josephine Lee, including *The Flight of the Bumble Bee*, some of the *Suite* by Armstrong Gibbs, *Airs de Ballet* from *Ascanio* by Saint-Saëns, and the most fabulous performance ever of Briccialdi's *Carnival of Venice*. This record got played to death by myself, Jimmy Galway and Ewen McDougall, and sadly now is barely audible through the scratch of the surface noise.

Richard played in the LPO, the ECO and the Melos Ensemble, and a host of freelance groups, and it was my very good fortune to be able to step into his shoes as his deputy quite often. The parts he played from had strange instructions written on them, such as 'head in' or 'head out' (seemingly some instruction to himself about tone colour). Whether these meant to push or pull the head in the socket, or to roll the head outwards or inwards I never discovered.

He could really make the flute talk, and with his own voice he enjoyed speaking his mind utterly truthfully and directly, as on one occasion (when he was deputising for me for a change) on a chamber music course in Cornwall, where he was to spend a week by the seaside enjoying the Spohr *Nonet*, eating good food, and so on. At the first rehearsal everyone was present except for the famous violinist who was leading the group, who showed up some twenty minutes late, and, (according to Richard), obviously hadn't looked at his own part, but was nonetheless throwing his weight around telling others in the group what to do. After a few minutes of this, Richard put his flute into its case and quietly disappeared from the room, which of course caused some consternation. Some time later Richard was found walking by the seaside by the course director, who asked him why he had abandoned the rehearsal. Richard replied, 'I wasn't enjoying it, and I started to think about the biography which I wrote for you, and I realised that it was true. Perhaps you should read it!' He then got into his car and drove off. The biography included a paragraph saying 'Richard Adeney is not sure if he enjoys making music very much, but this has not prevented him from making a good living as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral player'.

Richard was a totally unique player who could play extremely expressively without fitting into the category of the British straight-toned flautists of the time, or

that of the 'loose lip' French style. He made his own most individual sounds for most of his career on a wooden Rudall Carte with a gold head with a barrel embouchure, which had a very small and shallow mouth hole. He can be heard on a large number of recordings, especially those with the superb Melos Ensemble.

Colin Chambers:

I worked with Richard Adeney in the LPO from 1962 to 1970, although he was away a great deal playing with the ECO or the Melos Ensemble with whom he made a superb recording of the Debussy trio.

Richard was quite a private person although one wouldn't think so from his autobiography, *Flute*, which is remarkably frank about his ambitions in life: one was to become the best flute player in the world, another to have a huge amount of sex!

Deirdre Dundas-Grant:

I first met Richard when he came to coach the wind section of the National Youth Orchestra in its first year, 1948. He was the distinguished principal flute of the LPO. He was inspirational to us students and we had great fun in his sessions.

After that we started playing in the Goldsbrough Orchestra which later became the English Chamber Orchestra, where he was first flute. Although I was not a regular player with them, being in the BBC Concert Orchestra, I went on several tours with them, to Europe, Australia, the Americas (especially South America), so was able to enjoy and appreciate his wonderful, poetic playing, especially in French music and in Mozart. His sound, with all its shading of tone and phrasing, was particularly beautiful. We all enjoyed it.

In South America, in Peru, when we were on tour, we are sitting around enjoying a break when he, quite off the cuff, stood up and started to dance, all by himself, quite quiet and slow. It was completely impromptu, very gentle and poetic, then he just sat down again, leaving us all quite stunned.

He took photographs, of a professional standard, of a lot of the places we went to—small details of buildings and little things while the rest of us just tended to snap views. He took a lot of portrait photographs of colleagues and friends. He could really have been a successful professional photographer.

Richard's work with the Samaritans was very important to him. He was a great light in the Camden University of the Third Age and gave them talks on Benjamin Britten as he knew Britten and Peter Pears well and was involved in a lot of Britten's music.

Richard threw some great street parties in Notting Hill in company with his fellow Northumberland Avenue residents which were always great fun—a delicious spread, too.

I loved Richard's sense of humour, which was dry and witty and pulled down any noticed pomposity. We will miss him.



Benjamin Britten.
Photograph by Richard
Adeney.



Left to right: Richard Adeney's father Bernard, the sculptor Henry Moore, Richard's sister Charlotte and Henry Moore's wife Irina Radetsky in a photograph taken in 1932 by Richard Adeney.

Peter Graeme:

When I heard that Richard had died the previous night, I began to examine my memories of our long friendship.

I first heard him play when he was nineteen and it was immediately obvious that he had a rare gift. His subsequent career proved it. However, flute-playing was not an obsession or sole interest. He had an inquiring mind and wide-ranging knowledge of many things: photography (reaching professional standard and taking many musicians' portraits), architecture, art, philosophy and travel. He made many friends at home and abroad with whom he was a welcome and entertaining guest. But if he got bored he would stand up abruptly and say, 'Thank you, goodbye!' Earlier than most players of his stature and reputation, he decided to sell his flute while still in first class playing form. I doubt if he ever regretted this as he could then devote more time to all his other interests, including writing an engaging memoir (*Flute*), shocking some people with its personal candour, and unflattering remarks about some famous musicians. I envied his ability to mix easily with the great and the ordinary on equal terms. In the early post-war days of the LPO another



The Melos Ensemble during a performance of Ravel's *Introduction and Allegro*.

mutual friend and colleague was the principal trumpet Malcolm Arnold. Malcolm later wrote two concertos for Richard which illustrate both the technical brilliance and emotional expressiveness of his playing, which could be warm and reflective or excitingly exuberant. Listen to his recording of both these concertos and you will hear the great quality of this remarkable flautist.

He was a close and generous friend of our family for the last fifty-eight years and a regular visitor to our Dorset home. He is very sadly missed.

Peter Graeme wrote these lines the day following Richard Adeney's death:

TO RICHARD

I've known you now for over seventy years as
friend and colleague, yet—not really known.

Last night you died.

When first I heard the magic of your flute
that's all I had to know to understand.
Now, dry eyed, I feel no need for tears
as death has brought you home at last.
To weep would be indulgent recognition
of my own unenviable condition.
In life and dying we are all alone.
Perhaps it would be better not to grieve
for those who no more really want to live?

Peter Graeme 17 December 2010



Richard Adeney's stunning photograph of the English Chamber Orchestra rehearsing in Baalbek, Lebanon, where he performed one of the concertos written for him by Malcolm Arnold.

Peter Lloyd:

I remember my very first concerto performance with the BBC Northern Orchestra in the late 1950s. I was terrified, but I received a lovely letter from Richard saying not only that he enjoyed my playing but also suggesting better breathing in a musical sense. I was very proud to have this letter because I admired his playing greatly.

I met him many times later on and always found him a lovely person and a wonderfully musical player. Only recently I was driving to Manchester when I switched on the radio to hear the Mozart G major concerto and couldn't pick up who was this wonderful player. It was Richard Adeney! Quite wonderful. I was lucky to have heard him as often as I did.

Roger Lord:

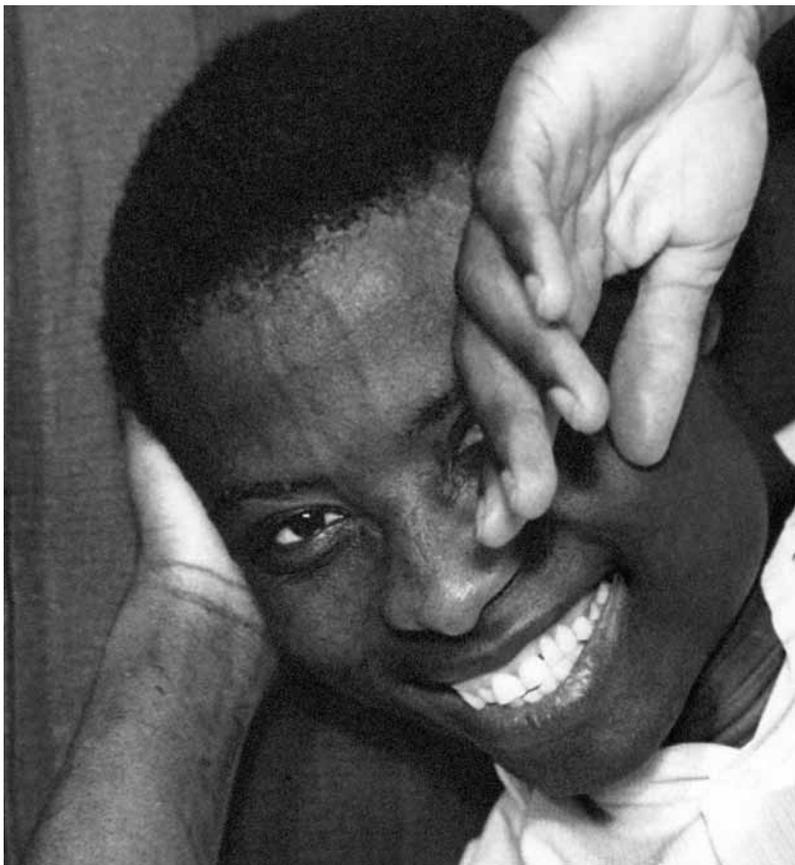
In 1949 I found myself sitting next to Richard Adeney in the LPO. He was the star of the woodwind section and I was a novice, starting to learn the symphonic repertoire. Richard must have been sad that his friend and colleague Sidney Sutcliffe had just vacated the first oboe seat, to join the Philharmonia Orchestra, but to me he was kindness itself, helping me with intonation (Oh! those chords at the beginning and end of Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream Overture*...), with warnings ('Count your bars rest like mad in Sibelius!'), and with praise if I came through unscathed. The best thing of all though was simply listening to his playing of his solos.

Edouard van Beinum was dividing his time between the Concertgebouw and the LPO in the early 1950s and he chose *L'après-midi* as a showpiece for the LPO, having heard Richard play it. Van Beinum was a great orchestral trainer; he took *L'après-midi*

to pieces and put it together again, in particular the horns and strings, but Richard's solo line was inviolable. For Richard, being in some ways a faun-like creature himself, that music came spontaneously. His flute at that time was made of wood, with a gold head and he was always a master of the limpid sound.

At that time Tchaikovsky was the composer who could fill concert halls (along with Beethoven) and the LPO flute part of one of the Tchaikovsky symphonies was held together with Sellotape, the result of Richard's tearing it almost in half, he was so fed-up with playing that piece yet again!

Richard was the most poetic of all the flute-players I have sat next to. When he played the calm solo towards the end of Mussorgsky's *Night on a Bare Mountain* I would feel as if I had been blessed, as, I suspect, did the rest of the orchestra.



'Jack'. One of Richard Adeney's best portraits.

Delia Ruhm:

Many people will want to write, talk, think about Richard Adeney as a brilliant flautist with an enchanting tone and an exceptional degree of understanding of the music he performed.

But I would like to write of him as a friend. I first met him when I was an impecunious flautist, a rather lonely refugee from Nazi Germany. I was very fortunate in that Richard quickly took me under his wing, introducing me to his friends and the musical life in London.

He was immensely helpful, patient and kind, and it was a privilege to play next to him. I am deeply indebted to him for that.

Our friendship was temporarily put on hold when I moved to Glasgow, but when my husband and I finally settled in Birmingham we resumed seamlessly, as if we had never stopped. He often came to visit us. We did not have to invite him—he just invited himself, which we much enjoyed. (I may add that my husband is a brilliant cook!)

We spent many happy times together, and on our frequent visits to London we usually managed to meet up.

We all know about Richard the man with the sharp, wicked sense of humour, his funny, bitchy stories, his enigmatic personality, but I also knew him as a kind, amusing, loyal and good friend.

Dear Richard, thank you for enriching our lives. We shall miss you very much.

Robert Taylor:

I knew Richard Adeney for a mere twenty-five years. Mere? The ostensibly sad task of spreading the news of his death amongst lots of his friends opened up some wonderful conversations with people who have known him for up to seventy years—and these were obviously real and lasting connections.

Across the great range of people I spoke to there was much love and respect expressed for Richard, together with some very funny stories related to his very particular ways of communicating and conducting himself.

We met after he'd more or less retired from professional flute playing. We'd occasionally attend concerts together, but he was too modest to talk about his musical achievements or dwell on the past. Photography was a stronger shared

interest. I was just starting out as a freelance portrait photographer and was a bit in awe of his photographic achievements (as well as his very impressive equipment). He'd taken advantage of some great opportunities to create fine portraits of his fellow musicians, many of which are featured in his fascinating and occasionally outrageous autobiography *Flute*. It is less well known that he was also a fine travel and social photographer.

In typically generous fashion, very early in our friendship he turned over his darkroom to me to use as my own. This was a fantastic break for me at a time when resources and opportunities were very limited. Eventually when he decided to close it down he generously gave me all the equipment in it, on the condition that he could come along once a year to use 'my' newly-built darkroom to print the image for his Christmas card.

Richard was a delightful, unique man. His charming modesty, warmth, directness and notably inventive generosity will be much missed.



Simon Rattle. Photograph
by Richard Adeney.

Richard Adeney: A select discography

By Christopher Steward

Like a number of his illustrious British contemporaries, Richard Adeney was very active in the fields of orchestral, chamber music and solo playing; unlike many of them, however, he left a legacy of commercial recordings that is quite extensive. At various times he was a member of the London Baroque Ensemble, the Melos Ensemble, the Pro Arte Orchestra, the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the English Chamber Orchestra, and many of his recordings are with those groups.

His first recordings were made on 78 RPM discs: together with the flute-player Jack Ellory, he accompanied the soprano Margaret Ritchie in the 'Qui Tollis' from

Bach's *Mass in A* (HMV B 10292); and he took part in a recording by the Basil Lam Ensemble of the *Triosonata in F, Op. 2 No. 5* by Handel, included in the series 'History of Music in Sound', first on a 78 (HMV HMS 66) and issued on LP a few years later (HLPs 16). Another LP in the series included the first and last of the *Conversations* by Bliss, played by members of the Melos Ensemble, recorded in the presence of the composer (HMV HLP 26).

The Melos Ensemble's recordings constitute a particularly valuable contribution to the record catalogues, and it is gratifying to see that several of them have been reissued on CD. The Melos performances of the *Debussy Sonata*, the *Introduction and Allegro* by Ravel and the *Roussel Sérénade* are still regarded by many as benchmark recordings of those pieces, and their companion, the *Prélude, Marine et Chansons* by Guy Ropartz may still be the only recording of this neglected piece (Eloquence 4802153). Recordings of the *Beethoven Serenade Op. 25* and the *Weber Trio in G minor*, originally forming one LP, have been reissued on separate CDs (Eloquence 4802155 and 4802156 respectively), and the *Hummel Septet in D minor* appears in the same Eloquence series (4762447). EMI have reissued the *Wind Quintet* by Nielsen more than once; it is currently available in a compilation of that composer's music (2068822). An LP of the four Mozart flute quartets originally appearing on the Enigma label has now been reissued on CD by ASV (QS 6099). The Melos Ensemble was also involved in the first recording, with the composer conducting, of the *War Requiem* by Britten (Decca SET 252/3).

As a member of the London Baroque Ensemble Adeney's first two recordings were made playing second flute to Gareth Morris: the six *Sonatas* for wind septet by C.P.E. Bach (Parlophone 1004) and Haydn's *Notturmo in C* for wind and strings (HMV XLP 30016). He made a recording of the *Boccherini Quintet in E \flat , Op. 17 No. 6* for flute and string quartet (Westminster), and was the soloist in Pergolesi's *Concerto in G* and the *Concertato in D* for flute, trumpet, strings and continuo by A. Scarlatti, conducted, as usual, by Karl Haas (Pye CCL 30131). A disc on which the celebrated horn-player Dennis Brain made his last appearance with the LBE featured twentieth-century repertoire: Arnell's *Serenade* for ten wind and double bass, the *Suite in B \flat* by Strauss and the *Miniature Quartet* by Norman Forber Kay (Pye CCL 30120). In Haas's recording of the complete *Brandenburg Concertos* with the London Baroque Orchestra (an augmentation of the Ensemble) Adeney took part in the fifth *Concerto* (Whitehall 20071).



Richard Adeney (centre) in rehearsal with (left to right) Nannie Jamieson, Yehudi Menuhin, Eugene Cruft, Quintin Ballardie and George Malcolm.



Daniel Barenboim.
Photograph by Richard
Adeney.

A lunchtime concert to celebrate the life of Richard Adeney will be held on Friday 6 May at 1 p.m. at Regent Hall, 275 Oxford Street, London W1C 2DJ. John Amis will speak about Richard's life and career, excerpts from recordings of Richard will be played and William Bennett will perform.

<http://richardadeney.wordpress.com>

Another set of *Brandenburg Concertos*, this time with Thurston Dart directing the Philomusica of London, featured Adeney in the fifth *Concerto* (L'Oiseau-Lyre OL 50160); the same performers recorded Bach's *Triple Concerto in A minor* (SOL 60007). Bach's *Suite in B minor* was performed by Adeney with the English Baroque Orchestra conducted by Hermann Scherchen (World Record Club WRC T 401), and a later recording of the work was made by Raymond Leppard conducting the ECO (Philips 6500 068). Benjamin Britten's set of *Brandenburg Concertos* with the English Chamber Orchestra used the flute in the second, fourth and fifth *Concertos*; Adeney was partnered by Norman Knight in No. 4 (Decca SET 410-1). Adeney's collaboration with Britten was further reflected in his participation in recordings of his operas, including *The Burning Fiery Furnace* (Decca SET 356) and *The Prodigal Son* (SET 438), as well as the *War Requiem* (Decca 4757511).

EMI issued a series of EPs of instruments of the orchestra; Adeney's disc, with Gerald Moore, featured the slow movement of the Bach *Sonata in B minor*; the *Allegro* from the first sonata in the set *Il Pastor Fido*, attributed at the time to Vivaldi (and now known to be by Chédeville); the Mozart *Andante in C*; and the *Gigue* from the Handel *Sonata in F*, well chosen to illustrate the piccolo. Another later recital disc gave us more Mozart, the early *Sonata in F*, together with Beethoven's *Sonata* and two sets of *Russian Airs with Variations*, and the *Introduction and Variations* by Schubert. In the Mozart *Flute and Harp Concerto*, Adeney, together with Osian Ellis, appeared with the London Mozart Players, conducted by Harry Blech (Saga XIX 5215); in performances of the two Mozart *Concertos* Raymond Leppard conducted the English Chamber Orchestra (CFP 40072).

More concerted works were recorded with the ECO: with Richard Bonyngé conducting, Adeney joined forces with Peter Graeme (oboe), Emmanuel Hurwitz (violin) and Keith Harvey (cello) in the *Sinfonia Concertante in C* by J.C. Bach, and with James Brown (oboe) in Salieri's *Concerto in C* (Decca SXL 6397). We are fortunate to have recordings of the two concertos by Malcolm Arnold, both written for Adeney, made with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Ronald Thomas, now reissued on CD (EMI 0946 3 7056325). Other twentieth century British music recorded includes the polytonal *Terzetto*, with oboe and viola, by Holst, and the two *Façade* entertainments by Walton (OUP 20).

As a member of the London Philharmonic Orchestra Adeney certainly took part in many of the orchestra's recordings; one that gives his name features the *Intermezzo* from *The Jewels of the Madonna* by Wolf-Ferrari in a somewhat uncharacteristic programme conducted by Sir Adrian Boult (WRC T 698).

All these recordings, and others, should ensure that the artistry of Richard Adeney lives on in performances of beauty and self-effacement which may serve as models and inspiration to players of the present and the future.

