

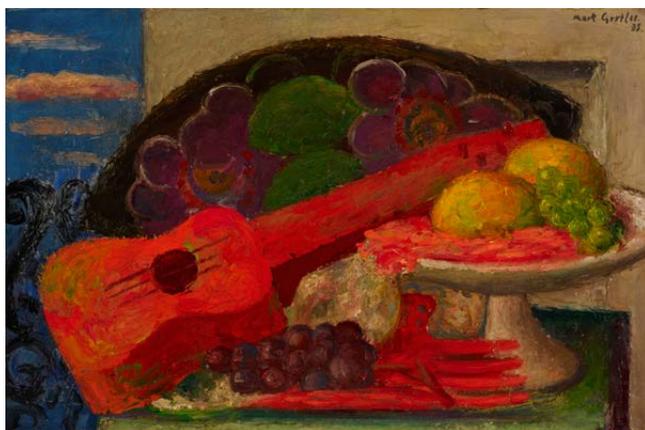


Arts in Harmony: An Art Gallery's Musical Heritage

Hidden Treasures of Ben Uri Gallery's Musical Heritage Exhibited for the First Time at the Royal College of Music Museum of Music

Exhibition open 28 April – 28 August 2015

Private view 28 April, 6 – 8pm



Images, left: Mark Gertler, *Still Life with Guitar*, 1935, oil on board, 34 x 51.5 cm. Ben Uri Collection; a typical still life composition from the 1930s, when Gertler often employed musical instruments and classical objects, executed with a characteristic vibrant palette.

Middle: Ben Uri Orchestra rehearsal 1950s, Ben Uri Archive © Ben Uri

Right: Mark Wayner, *Celebrities in Caricature Portfolio*, 2 of 37, *Sir Henry Wood*, 1931, stone lithograph on paper, 37.2 x 25.3 cm, Ben Uri Collection; from Wayner's *Celebrities in Caricature* published in 1931 and 1940. Caricature of conductor, Sir Henry Wood, best known for his association with London's annual series of promenade concerts held at the Albert Hall, opposite the RCM. Sir Henry Wood has an award named in his honour at the RCM.

Ben Uri Gallery & Museum and the Royal College of Music (RCM) unite for Ben Uri's centenary year with the exhibition 'Arts in Harmony: An Art Gallery's Musical Heritage'. This collaboration is inspired by the recent rediscovery of material from Ben Uri's extensive archives (1), together with the RCM's research and performance project 'Singing a Song in a Foreign Land'. Since their respective formations, both institutions have brought educational and cultural opportunities to a diverse range of individuals and, crucially, provided creative outlets for émigrés fleeing Nazi persecution during 1933-45.

The Exhibition

Including artworks, photographs, cuttings, correspondence and programmes, the exhibition will highlight Ben Uri's musical heritage whilst revealing powerful stories of émigrés and emerging second generation musicians, such as the Austrian pianist Ferdinand Rauter and polyglot Lieder singer Engel Lund (2), who stood up to anti-Semitism in Germany in the 1930s by refusing to stop performing Yiddish songs. Other émigré musicians featured in the display include Yehudi Menuhin, Thomas Rajna, Franz Reizenstein, Emanuel Hurwitz and Paul Hamburger.

Ben Uri not only organised regular recitals but had its own orchestra, chamber orchestra, choir and opera appreciation circle, which even today is unique within the context of an art gallery. Furthermore, Ben Uri brought art and music together: Alexander Goehr, who came to England as a small child, premiered a new composition in 1953, only a year after his photographer mother Laelia Goehr had exhibited her works at the Ben Uri Gallery.

Accompanying artworks have been selected from Ben Uri's unique collection of over 1300 works; usually kept in storage, these provide an expressive visual and narrative counterpoint to the archival items. Embracing both traditional and modernist responses, the artworks include a folk-art inspired design (1915) by Ben Uri founder, Lazar Berson; a glorious colourist *Still-Life with Guitar* (1935) by Mark Gertler, key 'Whitechapel Boy' and associated with the Bloomsbury set; Isaac Lichtenstein's angular *Blind Fiddler* (1924), showing

the influence of Cubism and the 'Ecole de Paris'; Josef Herman's poignant sketched recollection of a life destroyed by the Holocaust (c. 1940-43); and Mark Wayner's satirical jibe at celebrity of the day, *Sir Henry Wood* (1931, recipient of an Honorary Doctorate from the RCM).

The exhibition runs alongside 'Singing a Song in a Foreign Land', RCM's research and performance project led by Norbert Meyn, which investigates the impact of émigrés on British musical life (3). Video testimonies from eminent performers and composers including Dame Janet Baker, Anita Lasker-Wallfisch and Alexander Goehr will be shared in a free online resource available from 14 May 2015, and a Grove Seminar at the RCM Museum of Music on 31 May will focus on estates, archives and music restitution.

The collaboration takes place at a critical time for the RCM museum, which is about to embark upon a major redevelopment programme, and for Ben Uri, celebrating its centenary year in 2015 with a major exhibition at the Inigo Rooms, Somerset House East Wing, in association with the Cultural Institute at King's College London, from July to December 2015 (4).

Norbert Meyn, professor at the Royal College of Music:

"Ben Uri's musical history is almost as impressive as its legacy in the visual arts. Hundreds of concerts, performed by first-rate artists in major London venues, as well as among the paintings in the art gallery, give evidence of Ben Uri's importance for classical music, featuring world famous musicians, many of them émigrés from Nazi Europe, as well as emerging composers and performers through the 20th century.

The exhibition 'Arts in Harmony' is a major coup for the RCM Museum of Music, showing evidence of the importance of music within the Jewish Community with fascinating archival materials, as well as valuable original paintings with musical themes."

David Glasser, Chairman, Ben Uri Gallery & Museum:

"Nothing is accurately valued until it is needed and missed. This equation and conclusion reflects the universality of culture in general, and music and art in particular, especially in times of chaos, war and austerity, all of which Europe continues to experience.

Ben Uri before, during and after the Second World War, was a wide-ranging cultural centre a focal point for Jewish émigré artists, musicians and academics, fleeing for their lives from Nazi-controlled Europe. Without Ben Uri, so much talent would have been lost to London, across both music and the visual arts.

This exhibition at the RCM, highlighting Ben Uri's long, passionate and distinguished musical heritage, which accompanied its principal pre-occupation in the visual arts, is a perfect expression of partnership in a perfect setting, and we thank the RCM."

Gabriele Rossi Rognoni, Curator Museum of Music, Royal College of Music:

"I am particularly proud to host this exhibition at the RCM Museum of Music, a small treasure in the heart of London. Ben Uri's musical activity occupied a prominent role in London when it started one hundred years ago and thanks to the collaboration between Ben Uri and Royal College of Music professor Norbert Meyn this activity is now re-emerging".

For further information or pictures please contact:

Jordanna Greaves for Ben Uri
020 7604 3991 jordannag@benuri.org

Eva Mason (Albion Media) for RCM
020 3077 4941 eva@albion-media.com

Further information: www.rcm.ac.uk | www.benuri.org

 [facebook.com/BenUriGallery](https://www.facebook.com/BenUriGallery)

 [@BenUriGallery](https://twitter.com/BenUriGallery)

Listings information:

'Arts in Harmony: An Art Gallery's Musical Heritage'.
28 April – 28 August 2015

Museum of Music, Royal College of Music,
London SW7
Open Tuesday to Friday 11.30am to 4.30pm

Free Entry | #ArtsInHarmony



Ben Uri Gallery & Museum | 020 7604 3991 | www.benuri.org
Ben Uri, 108A Boundary Road, London NW8 0RH
Registered Charity 280389 | Registered Museum 973

References:

- (1) Ben Uri's own extensive archives have recently been professionally catalogued for the first time with the aid of a generous donation from a charitable trust.
- (2) Blog about Engel Lund at <http://bit.ly/1G51rnC>
- (3) Singing a Song in a Foreign Land <http://www.rcm.ac.uk/singingasong/>
- (4) Press release about Ben Uri's Centenary Exhibition <http://bit.ly/1OZMDJD>

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About **Ben Uri Gallery and Museum:**

Ben Uri Gallery and Museum is the only specialist art museum in Europe addressing universal and ever-more central issues of identity and migration through the visual arts. Emerging from and representing the Jewish community, its collection principally reflects the work, lives and contribution of British and European artists of Jewish descent, interpreted within the wider context of twentieth and twenty-first century art history, politics and society. From its inception as an art society in Whitechapel in 1915, to its current status as an accredited museum with an international reach, the collection has grown to more than 1300 works across 30 different mediums. Made up of both historical and contemporary works, the Ben Uri collection spans 120 years and includes 380 artists from 35 countries, of which 67% are émigrés and 27% women.

From its temporary exhibition space in St. John's Wood, at London NW8, Ben Uri presents an exciting and varied exhibition programme, exploring and incorporating works from its collection. The gallery hosts an extensive education programme for teachers, schools and families, including free visits, workshops, art classes and projects with local schools, as well as an art and wellbeing programme. Ben Uri currently has three community partners: SHAK (South Hampstead and Kilburn Community Association); Oxford House (Bethnal Green); and Paddington Arts (Westbourne Park).

'Arts in Harmony' is an accompaniment to 'Out of Chaos; Ben Uri: 100 Years in London', a major centenary exhibition to be held at the Inigo Rooms at Somerset House East Wing, King's College London, from 1 July – 13 December 2015, in association with the Cultural Institute at King's College London and supported by the HLF.

About the **Cultural Institute:**

The Cultural Institute at King's College London connects the university with practitioners, producers, policy makers and participants across arts and culture, creating space where conventions are challenged and original perspectives emerge. Through its programmes and activities, the Cultural Institute aims to put academic research to work in the cultural sector, enhance the student experience, inspire new approaches to teaching, research and learning and increase public engagement with the work of King's. The Cultural Institute is a flagship initiative for Culture at King's. [@CultInstKings](http://kcl.ac.uk/culturalinstitute)

About **Royal College of Music:**

Located in the heart of London's South Kensington the Royal College of Music is a world-leading music conservatoire with a prestigious history, contemporary outlook and inspiring location. Since the RCM was founded in 1882, students have been taught in a dynamic environment, leaving to become the outstanding performers, conductors and composers of the future. A centre for creativity, research and innovation the RCM trains the best musicians from all over the world and is proud that RCM scholarships enable gifted young people from diverse backgrounds to study here. RCM professors are leaders in their fields and, under their expert guidance, RCM students regularly achieve remarkable success around the globe. Further enhancing the inspiring offer to students, each year the RCM is proud to welcome renowned musicians such as Bernard Haitink, Sir Roger Norrington, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Andrew Litton, Brett Dean, Emmanuel Ax, Pinchas Zuckerman, Kiri te Kanawa and many others. The RCM has trained some of the most important figures in British and international music life, including: Gustav Holst, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Benjamin Britten, Leopold Stokowski, Sir Colin Davis, Sir Roger Norrington, Dame Joan Sutherland, Sir Thomas Allen, Sarah Walker, Alfie Boe, Liz Watts, Sarah Connolly, Sophie Bevan, James Galway, John Lill and Natalie Clein. With 800 students from more than 60 countries studying at undergraduate, masters or doctoral level, the RCM of the 21st century is a vibrant community of talented and open-minded musicians. The RCM's many performing groups – including five orchestras, two jazz bands and the RCM International Opera School – are celebrated for the excellence of their performances, and are regularly invited to perform at significant venues both in the UK and overseas. The RCM is situated directly opposite the Royal Albert Hall in the cultural heart of London, one of the world's great musical cities. The RCM's iconic building, concert hall, opera theatre, state-of-the-art studios, library and museum all provide inspiration for RCM students and visitors.

The RCM has been named as the London conservatoire with the highest percentage of world-leading research in the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF).