

## Two Descendants of Moses Samuel.

*Irene Scharrer*: Moses Samuels' son, Henry (1824-1896), married Rachel Schriener Wolfe (1829-1892) and had nine children of which the seventh was Ida Henrietta Samuel who married Tobias Scharrer. Irene Scharrer was Ida and Tobias' third and youngest child. Irene's daughter was the actress Rachel Guerney. Thus Irene was Moses' great grand daughter.

*Harriet Cohen*: Moses' son Walter (1829 – 1863) married Harriet Schriener Wolfe (sister of Rachel) (1836 – 1908). Walter and Harriet's eldest daughter Evelyn (1853 – 1930) married, in 1870, Benjam White (1846 –1908). Evelyn and Benjamin had three children Louise, Florence, and Harold. In 1894 Florence married Joseph Woolf Cohen and Harriet was their eldest child. Thus Harriet was Moses' great great granddaughter.

### ***Scharrer, Irene***

(*b* London, 2 Feb 1888; *d* London, 11 Jan 1971). English pianist. She studied at the RAM and with Tobias Matthay. She made her London debut at the age of 16 and thereafter appeared regularly before the public until 12 June 1958, when, at a concert at the RAM to commemorate the centenary of Matthay's birth, she played Mozart's two-piano sonata with her friend Myra Hess, also a pupil of Matthay. She toured Europe and the USA, and in the earlier part of her career played under such distinguished conductors as Richter and Nikisch. A sensitive rather than a powerful pianist, possessed of a beautifully even touch and capable of great refinement of phrasing, she was most happy when playing Romantic music of the 19th century, especially the smaller, more intimate compositions of Chopin. (From *The Grove Dictionary of Music*) Scharrer and Hess were great friends but were NOT related.

Occasionally one can find claims that Irene Scharrer and Myra Hess were cousins, but this is erroneous. This error is found in much written material about the two pianists, however the correct facts have been presented in Marion McKenna's biography of Myra Hess (Hamish Hamilton Ltd 1976).

### ***Cohen, Harriet***

(*b* London, 2 Dec 1895; *d* London, 13 Nov 1967). English pianist. She studied at the RAM (1912–17) and at the Matthay School, where she also taught. Small hands limited her repertory, but she quickly made a reputation as a Bach player and as a persuasive advocate for the English music of her time. She played at the Salzburg Contemporary Music Festival in 1924, at the Coolidge Festival, Chicago, in 1930 and gave the first performance of Vaughan Williams's *Concerto*, dedicated to her, in 1933. She injured her right hand in 1948 and played one-handed



until 1951; but her injury was never completely cured and in 1960 she reluctantly retired. She was made a CBE in 1938, a Freeman of the City of London in 1954, and received many honours from other countries. The Harriet Cohen International Music Prizes were founded by Bax and others in 1951.

Cohen was chosen by Elgar to record his Piano Quintet, and she made many first recordings of music by Bax, her intimate friend, most of whose piano works, including a left-hand Concertante, were composed for her. In 1932 twelve leading British composers published transcriptions in *A Bach Book for Harriet Cohen*. She herself published some Bach transcriptions and a small book on interpretation, *Music's Handmaid* (London, 1936, 2/1950), while her memoirs, *A Bundle of Time* (London, 1969), are valuable for letters from friends eminent in all walks of life. (From the Grove Dictionary of Music)



Harriet Cohen and Arnold Bax.

Cohen and Bax were life-long friends and occasional lovers. She championed his music until the end of her life.

**The Rhapsody in F sharp minor\*** for Piano and Orchestra is almost, but not quite, Moeran's Piano Concerto, written shortly before the Sinfonietta which wasn't quite his Second Symphony. It was written as a Proms commission (following an earlier suggestion from Arnold Bax that Moeran write something for piano and orchestra) for the pianist Harriet Cohen to play. It was first performed at the Royal Albert Hall on August 19th, 1943, a concert later reflected on by Lionel Hill:

“I waited impatiently until at last Miss Cohen entered to applause and sat down at the piano, adjusted her stool, looked to the conductor - and the Rhapsody sprang to life.”



**Harriet Cohen** (1895-1967) was the victim of a domestic kitchen accident. As she was pouring a glass of water, the glass shattered in her right hand. This inspired Arnold Bax (1883-1953), to create his *Concertante*, a Neo-Classical work.

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Arnold Bax and the Culture of Duplicity  
(1883 – 1953)  
Some notes from David Owen Norris

Arnold Bax (left) found his identity in a succession of double-lives. He must have delighted in duplicity. In his twenties he seemed to his friends in London to be a millionaire composer with a silver spoon in his mouth. And he was. At the same time his friends in Dublin knew him as a penniless Irish poet, whose Republican views were so extreme that some of his poetry was censored by the British Government. And he was. His name, in his Irish incarnation, was Dermot O'Byrne. For many years he kept these two lives entirely separate, and they only collapsed into one after the Easter Rising of 1917, when O'Byrne lost several friends in the reprisals. The Second Piano Sonata sublimates all these conflicts.

But by this time, Bax had found a new occasion of duplicity, making furtive bike-rides from Amersham to Cheshunt to dally the afternoons away in a hotel with a young - a very young - pianist called Harriet Cohen. On one of these bike-rides in 1917, sheltering from a storm, he conceived the orchestral piece November Woods, which encapsulates the struggle between his heart and his domestic duties. Many of Bax's shorter piano pieces were written in his enthusiasm for Harriet. She remained his mistress for the rest of his life, or so she thought.

Bax's wife was of Spanish parentage, and though they separated after a few years of Harriet, they did not divorce. It was generally assumed that this was because she was a Roman Catholic. She ceased to figure in Bax's life, though he did continue to visit his children - again furtively. A friend met him at Golders Green once, and Bax tried everything to avoid explaining his presence there. Eventually he confessed he'd been visiting his family, but swore the man to secrecy.

After the break-up of his marriage, Bax never owned a home. At the outbreak of War in 1939, he tried a variety of hotels and pubs in Sussex, eventually settling at the White Horse in Storrington for the rest of his life. In 1941, Bax, the former censored Irish Republican, a man who played no part in public musical life, a man who had



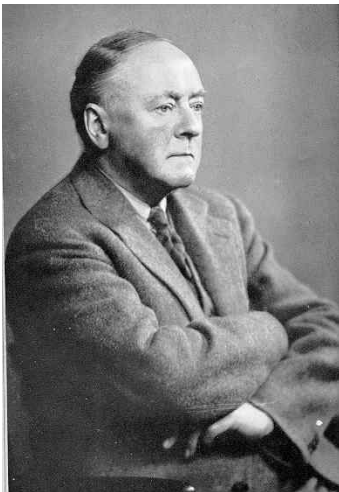
practically stopped composing, was appointed Master of the King's Music. Picture Post printed pictures of Bax at the White Horse. 'He went there for the weekend one fine day in 1940 - and has stayed there ever since', read the caption. 'Paradoxically, he rarely listens to



music. Once a month he attends concerts in a Sussex country house. His more frequent recreations are billiards, crossword puzzles, village cricket, and a drink and a gossip with the locals.' (above Harriet and Arnold Bax).

When Bax's wife died in 1948, Harriet Cohen discovered to her rage that she had not been a Catholic after all, and that there had been no bar to divorce. Expecting Bax to marry her even now, she was even more furious to discover that for the past 20 years he had been maintaining another friend, Mary Gleaves, who had been, of course, very young when they first met.

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### **Sir Arnold Edward Trevor Bax Life**

British composer and novelist, born in London. Literary influences, especially the poetry of W. B. Yeats, were important in establishing Arnold Bax as the leading musical exponent of the so-called Celtic revival. Although he was an excellent pianist, he never made any public appearances and devoted himself entirely to composition. At its best his music has a compelling charm and power. He occupied an important place in English music during his lifetime. He was knighted in 1937.

### **Arnold Bax Works**

Apart from his piano music, his orchestral tone-poems of Celtic implication, including *The Garden of Fand*, *November Woods* and *Tintagel*, are his best known works. He wrote seven symphonies and some fine chamber music. There are concertos for cello, for viola and for violin and *Symphonic Variations* for piano and orchestra in addition to a *Concertante* for piano left hand and

orchestra, written for Harriet Cohen, with whom he had a long relationship. Bax's choral works include settings of traditional carols, while his solo songs allow him to explore more Celtic ground in a variety of settings, ranging from A Celtic Song Cycle to settings of poems by James Joyce, J.M. Synge, and by the English writers A.E. Housman and his brother, the writer Clifford Bax.

Composer of the Week

ARNOLD BAX

by

Marshall Walker

Professor of English, University of Waikato, New Zealand

*Radio New Zealand, Concert FM, broadcast 26 and 27 August 2001*

In 1916 Arnold Bax is 33. Emotionally he has already lived a crammed, turbulent life. He has loved and lost women and the dream-lit golden age of his Ireland. Infatuated with the volatile pianist Harriet Cohen he has proclaimed his ardour in *Tintagel* (1917), the best known of his tone poems. He is cushioned by financial security, but looks back and pines for what is not, looks forward and fretfully wonders. The War ends; the death toll has included many friends. Even with Harriet as champion and vehicle of his music, his known world is, in Yeats's words, 'All changed, changed utterly'. So he must push beyond the pageantry and evocations of the tone poems described by brother Clifford as 'adolescent dreams of more than life can give'. It's time to face the complex, human condition of 'Time and Fate and Chance'. How should he begin? He is a commander of the orchestra and a devotee of form. (Below Bax and Moerean)



