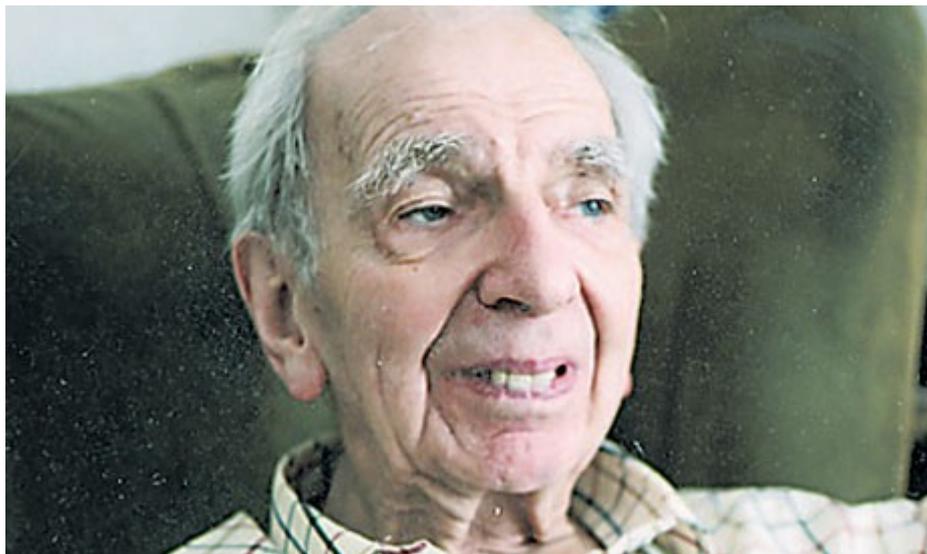


James Gaddarn obituaries

The Guardian



James Gaddarn had an untiring interest in the intangibles of composers' intentions

James Gaddarn, who has died aged 87, spent his working life in the service of classical music, particularly choral music. He was professor of vocal studies at Trinity College of Music in London (now the Trinity Laban conservatoire), where he taught for 35 years, launching numerous professional careers. Simultaneously, he was the music director of four amateur choral societies whose standards he raised to a level that enabled them to perform regularly with leading orchestras and international soloists. Several times he brought all four choirs together at the Royal Albert Hall or Fairfield Halls, Croydon – a massed choir of 500 trained by one conductor.

I sang under James's baton on many occasions over three decades and came to understand the qualities that made him one of the finest choral conductors in Britain. In rehearsals, ideas were cross-pollinated, musicality was nurtured, and enthusiasm and humour flourished. He had an untiring interest in the intangibles of composers' intentions, the received perceptions of religious texts and of genuine performance through personal passion. He might promote a spiritual idea by analogy with a secular incident he had witnessed in Marylebone, where he lived. But however ardent and persuasive his argument, his sensitivity to others invariably drew a caveat that "it's just my idea".

His progression into music was by no means preordained. James was born in Neyland, Pembrokeshire, the third child and only son of a farmer whose ancestors were shipbuilders. After Pembroke Dock grammar school, he was called up to the Royal Army Pay Corps in Leeds.

At home, fortunately as he recalled, his family would listen to Nellie Melba, Enrico Caruso and Clara Butt on a wind-up gramophone. In Leeds, he joined a male-voice choir, discovered a talent for accompaniment and was asked to play continuo in Bach's St Matthew Passion. There was no stopping his musical passion now. After the war his family expected him to be articled in law. Instead he went to Trinity, was taught by the influential Charles Kennedy Scott and never looked back.

In 1964, at Sir Malcolm Sargent's invitation, he became chorus master of the Royal Choral Society. His subsequent choirs were Ealing Choral Society (40 years), Croydon Philharmonic Society and Trinity College. His association with the London Orpheus Choir had begun in 1952 and ended in 2010 with Bach's Mass in B Minor, "the eighth wonder of the world" as he called it.

He is survived by Colin Evans, his partner for 50 years.

Ian Caddy

The Independent

James Gaddarn, who conducted the London Orpheus Choir for more than 50 years, died at the age of 87 on 14 February after a period of failing health.

Born in Pembrokeshire in March 1924, he studied at Trinity College of Music under the great musician and philosopher Charles Kennedy Scott, whose influence was profound and lasting. He became a senior member of the professorial staff, specialising in singing, a discipline which was to inform the rest of his long musical career. In his earlier years he had displayed talent as a pianist and accompanist.

Early in his career he was asked by the BBC to assist Leslie Woodgate, the Director of the BBC Singers and Chorus. He subsequently worked with Sir Malcolm Sargent, who invited him to become Chorus Master of the Royal Choral Society. He became conductor of the London Orpheus Choir in 1952 in succession to Kennedy Scott, who had founded the choir in 1945. He held this post until 2010, remaining as Conductor Emeritus until his death. He was variously conductor of the Trinity College Choir, Croydon Philharmonic Choir and Ealing Choral Society, for many years holding these posts concurrently. He also founded the London Orpheus Orchestra.

James Gaddarn's long career embraced a wide spectrum of music, from pre-Baroque to the present day, and included a number of first performances, notably Elizabeth Maconchy's *Eloise and Abelard*, the first London performance of Arthur Bliss's *Mary of Magdala* – at the request of the composer – and the premier of Antonin Tucapsky's *Stabat Mater*. In more recent years he gave the first performance in England of Donizetti's *Requiem Mass* and the first public performance in England of the same composer's *Messa di Gloria e Credo*.

During his career James Gaddarn conducted many of Britain's leading orchestras, including the Philharmonia, the London Philharmonic, the Royal Philharmonic, the English Chamber and the English Symphony Orchestra. However it is as a choral conductor that he will be especially remembered with gratitude by the hundreds of amateur singers who were fortunate enough to sing under Gaddarn's baton during his long and distinguished career, enriched by his painstaking preparation and great emphasis on the importance of words and phrasing – and, above all by his unstinting aim to "serve the composer".

Geoffrey Budd, Chairman, London Orpheus Choir

The Stage

As conductor of the London Orpheus Choir for 58 years, music director of the Ealing Choral Society for four decades, a professor at Trinity College of Music (now Trinity Laban) for 35 years, and a music director for three other amateur choral societies for much of that time, James Gaddarn was one of the most tireless, and quietly influential, figures in British music over the past half century and more.

Born a farmer's son in Neyland, Pembrokeshire, in 1924, he studied piano as a child and at Trinity College before wartime service in the Royal Army Pay Corps in Leeds. There he indulged his passion for music in the thriving amateur scene, joining a male-voice choir and playing continuo for choral performances.

He took over management of the London Orpheus Choir in 1952 and made his mark by extending its repertoire and raising standards. An invitation to join the BBC Singers as an assistant followed, bringing him to the attention of conductor Sir Malcolm Sargent, who appointed him chorus master of the Royal Choral Society.

He became conductor of the Ealing Choral Society in 1968, and the Croydon Philharmonic Choir in 1973 (staying at its helm until 1999).

He conducted the premieres of Elizabeth Maconchy's *Heloise and Abelard*, Antonin Tucapsky's *Stabat Mater*, and the first performances in England of Donizetti's *Requiem* and the *Mass, Gloria and Credo*. His last concert was in June 2010, conducting Bach's *B minor Mass* with the London Orpheus Choir.

Born on March 18, 1924, he died a month short of his 88th birthday, on February 14, 2012. He is survived by his partner of 50 years, Colin Evans.

Michael Quinn