



Reconstruction in the Academy's Entrance Hall of the original decorative wall paintings (1910/11) by Baron Arild Rosenkrantz

Janet Snowman

On 22nd June 1912 the Royal Academy of Music officially opened its doors to the new Marylebone Road premises, having moved from the cramped conditions of Tenterden Street, near Hanover Square, which it had occupied since its foundation in 1822. Teaching had already begun in the new building, designed by architects Sir Ernest George and Alfred Yeates, the year before.

The Danish-born artist, Baron Arild Rosenkrantz (1870-1964), was commissioned to provide a painted programme for the entrance hallway. These same paintings, one a reconstruction, have nearly a century later, been re-hung in the RAM on a long-term loan in 2007, with the kind permission of Baron Erik Rosenkrantz and the Rosenholm Foundation, Rosenholm Castle, Denmark, where the artist spent most of his latter years.

The true commission details are unknown, and it is also unclear as to why the paintings were removed, but a transcribed letter in the RAM Minutes of 30 October 1911 from the architects ... 'begs to acknowledge your letter telling us that the Directors desire the removal of the painted decoration in the vestibule. We are ordering this to be done. Messrs. Roberson of Long Acre were employed to fix these canvases and it was their opinion that they could not be taken off, but you have found otherwise. The provisional amount in the contract for painted decoration was £200, and Baron Rosenkrantz's agreed estimate for his work was for this amount. We thought at the last meeting we understood that it was the wish of the Committee that the artist should receive payment of the work to be carried out'.

A further note in the Minutes from F. W. Renaut Esq, Royal Academy of Music states that 'General members of the Committee agreeing in the recollection that no opinion as to the payment for the artist for the work done had been expressed at the meeting of the Buildings Committee, the Secretary was requested to write to Messrs George and Yeates to the effect that the pictures were of no use or value to the Committee but they hoped they might be of some use or value to the artist or architects, and that in such case a portion of their cost might be saved to the Royal Academy of Music'. No further documentation has been found, including within the artist's own papers, but the artist must have valued the paintings to have kept the panels for the rest of his life, in spite of what must have been a disappointment.



The Academy's former home in Tenterden Street, upper right, and the new purpose-built Academy in Marylebone Road, which opened for classes in 1911, and officially the following year.



An early photograph (1911) providing evidence of the decorative painted programme in the hallway. Inset, Baron Arild Rosenkrantz



Rosenholm Castle, near Aarhus, Denmark, a family home in which Baron Arild Rosenkrantz lived from 1940 until his death. His former home was in Hampstead, London.

Baron Arild Rosenkrantz was born in Denmark on 9 April, 1870. He lived and worked abroad most of his life, mainly in England. From his early years he was influenced by the French salon painters, the Pre-Raphaelites, in particular Edward Burne-Jones, William Blake and J.M.W. Turner - and later by Claude Monet. His father, the Danish diplomat Baron Iver Holger Rosenkrantz, died before he was three, so he became closely attached to his Scottish-born mother, Julia Louise Mackenzie, and often accompanied her on her travels to relatives in England, Scotland and Italy. At sixteen he went to Rome to study with Modesto Faustini, the fresco-painter, and after two years he continued his studies at L'Academie Julian in Paris. Here, he exhibited during 1892-5 at Perladan's Symbolist *Salon de la Rose + Croix* in Paris. Joséphin Péladan had set about bringing together all the young *Symbolistes* painters in Europe. At the first exhibition, held in March 1892, Erik Satie, briefly the official Rosicrucian composer, provided occasional music for performances of Péladan's play *Le Fils des étoiles*, a 'pastorale kaldéenne en trois actes'. The exhibition was presented as 'a sumptuous sanctuary of art, graced by the music of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina and Wagner' (*Grove Encyclopedia of Art*)



In 1894 and again in 1895 he travelled to New York where he started working with stained glass. After a year in the USA, where he had worked on the Gallatin window at The Decorative Stained Glass Company in New York and designed a window for Tiffany on the subject of *King Alfred the Great*, he moved to London and there established himself as a spiritual artist. Here he showed work in the final exhibitions of the New Gallery, the favoured gallery of Burne-Jones and his followers in the 1890s, which closed in 1909. He had many commissions, including twelve large panels for the ceiling in the dining room at Claridge's Hotel, London and for the dining room in Simpson's on the Strand,, and made stained glass windows and bronze sculptures for a number of English churches, houses and castles, including heraldic windows for the Gothic Halls in Berkeley Castle and Welbeck Abbey. He sculpted a bronze Christ figure for St George's, Camberwell, and also established himself as a portrait painter. His sitters included Dame Nellie Melba and his relative, the Duchess of Grafton. In 1912, his epic ballet, *The Gate of Life*, which he designed choreographed and lit, and which was enacted with a pianist playing selections from Beethoven's *Waldstein* and *Moonlight* Sonatas and *Eroica* Symphony, took place in London. He also illustrated the Danish edition of Edgar Allen Poe's *Tales of Mystery Adventure* and many other literary works, including for the publisher George Harrop, and illustrations for *The Tatler*.

An interview with the artist in the *International Studio* of 1907 records that he found his greatest pleasure '... in contemplating paintings which have been designed successfully for some special position in an architectural scheme such as those early Italian altarpieces, the secret of whose perfection lies in their absolute harmony with their surrounding architecture'.

Rosenkrantz married his Scottish cousin, Tessa Mackenzie, and joined the Anthroposophic Society in London. Having met Rudolf Steiner there in 1912, he and his wife were in 1914 asked to join the group of artists in Dornach, Switzerland, who were working with Steiner on decorating the two cupolas in the first Goetheanum. Steiner introduced him to Goethe's theory of colour, and this completely changed his whole outlook and way of using colours. On returning to London he worked as a teacher, decorated two anthroposophic theatres, designed costumes and stage decorations and exhibited annually. In 1939 he and his wife returned to Denmark in order to prepare for an exhibition for his 70th birthday in April 1940; on this day, Denmark was invaded. They were offered sanctuary in one of the family's homes, Rosenholm Castle, near Aarhus, where his wife died in 1944, and where he spent his latter years, painting and exhibiting.



Paintings tacked to the wall in an upper corridor in Rosenholm Castle (left), prior to their loan to the Academy and subsequent restoration. Although nearly a century old, they were, by and large, in good condition; the corners of the above panels were missing, and were reconstructed.

Conservation, restoration and reconstruction of the scheme

In 1989 the Danish journalist Bente Rosenkrantz Arendrup, great-niece of the artist, visited London to further document Rosenkrantz's work in the United Kingdom, in particular his stained glass and paintings. This was the first that Academy knew of the presence, or even absence, of the wall paintings, and on further investigation a paragraph in the *RAM Club Magazine* (November 1911) was found which referred to them in passing. In 1995, prior to the repainting of the entrance hall, arrangements were made for a conservator to try and locate traces of the paintings below one of the lunettes. Nothing was found, and it was concluded that they must have been done on canvas, rather than having been painted directly onto the surface of the wall.

With the intriguing idea of the presence of the paintings always there, and with a holiday planned in Denmark in summer 2004, contact was re-established with Bente Arendrup to inquire whether she had discovered anything further about the paintings,, and it transpired that some panels belonging to the scheme could in fact be in an upper corridor at Rosenholm Castle. Hastily, arrangements were made with Baron Erik Rosenkrantz for a visit to the castle and permission to access this area not open to the general public. Here, four of the six lunette paintings, the two spandrel paintings and two beautiful images painted for the area over the Academy's old wooden front door were identified and photographed. A few weeks later, the idea of borrowing the paintings and restoring them to the Academy - into the spaces for which they were painted and shaped - was put to Baron Rosenkrantz, who kindly consented, with permission of the Rosenholm Foundation, to an initial 30-year loan.

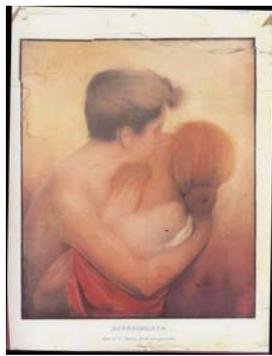


An initial search by a specialist wall-painting conservator, 1995

A further visit was then undertaken, this time to include the art restorers Alan Bush and Jonathan Berry, to assess the feasibility and cost of undertaking such a project. The Anthony Travis Charitable Trust kindly agreed to support the conservation and restoration of the paintings, which were collected and brought to the UK by Bush & Berry Conservation in January 2006.

As mentioned, two lunette panels were missing, and one such space has now been used for descriptive information and to record the Academy's acknowledgements. The second missing panel (*Liebeslied*) is the only painted reconstruction - the discovery of the actual original panel in a family farmhouse in Denmark in mid-2006 was a thrill; it had been given by the artist to a member of the family. While it was not possible for the much-loved actual painting to be incorporated into the scheme, this photograph provided a further model, and the

reconstructed panel was adapted to take better account of this image.



The original 'Liebeslied' panel (left) was located just prior to the rehang of the whole scheme at the Academy. In the absence of this painting, an illustration (centre) by the artist in the 1920s for 'The Tatler', which used a variation on this idea, was used as a model for recreating the final panel (right). It was not possible to repaint the whole image once the original had been found, so the reproduced panel was itself then adapted to take account of the differences, as best as possible.



*'God Save the King' - stair decoration, second floor, one of the ironwork panels by J. Starkie Gardiner.
Photo Suzie Maeder*

The small decorative panels representing musical instruments have been reconstructed by Bush & Berry from sources which include the one original photograph of the paintings *in situ*, two small watercolour drawings (*below*) of an earlier idea for the area by the artist which also came to light during the past year (*right*), that on the left perhaps reflecting his work in stained glass, and further examples of Arild Rosenkrantz's work at Rosenholm. These images, in particular the tambourine and ribbon decoration, also complement the instruments on the beautiful decorative ironwork of the staircase by J.Starkie Gardiner (a couple of panels of which, on the second floor, contain the first few bars of *God Save the King*).



The artist's earlier idea for the scheme can be seen in these small watercolour drawings found among his personal papers



It may have been that the scheme - text and image - echoed the text which was inscribed on the original mosaic floor (*right*, beneath the present black and white marble floor, which was installed in the 1960s) when visitors entered the building. This wording was *Sing Unto God*. The official opening ceremony for the new building was held on 22nd June 1912. The new Duke's Hall was named in honour of His Royal Highness Prince Arthur of Connaught (Duke of Connaught). The musical programme included Beethoven's Overture *The Inauguration of the House*, written in 1822 for the opening of the Josephstadt Theatre in Vienna, coincidentally the year of the founding of the Royal Academy of Music, and frequently used in ceremonies for similar occasions. Also presented was Frederick Corder's Fifty-part Motet for female voices, organ, harps, trumpets and drums, *Sing Unto God*. The words used by Corder, combining words from two psalms and again relating to the consecration of the house and the blessing of the Academy and its work, are as follows:

*Sing unto God our strength; make a joyful noise to the God of Jacob
Take a psalm and bring hither the timbrel with the pleasant harp and psaltery
Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day
Strengthen, O God, that which thou has wrought for us
For unless the Lord bless the house their labour is vain that build it
Sing praises unto God, Amen.*

Perhaps the hallway paintings, with their imagery about song, and their original (and now reproduced) trumpets, timbrels, psaltery, harps and lyres, as well as the instruments in ironwork running up the central stairwell, were a pictorial illustration of the above. Finally, a drawing of the proposed decorations by the architects for the new Duke's Hall (*right*), published in May 1911 in both the *Architects' and Builders' Journal* and *The Builder*, shows that a similar decorative scheme was suggested in this part of the new Academy, too. Around the lunettes is a further painted programme, and the names of popular composers also provide a decorative element. The cartouches in the finished Duke's Hall, around the ceiling, were left blank and remain so. Maybe money was a problem here, or a decision was taken to keep things 'plain and simple'.



Above: The original tesserae floor in the hallway, with the wording from a psalm, 'Sing Unto God'



Left: From the architect's illustration of the new Duke's Hall, May 1910

The Paintings

Overall then, the paintings comprise ten panels, two of which were missing, of which one has been reconstructed (*Liebeslied*). They represent musical moods and the nurturing of the young - an important poetic statement for the aims of an institution such as the Royal Academy of Music. Looking from the front door into the building, the lunettes are as follows:

Right wall

Pan, the shepherd boy, represents the *Aubade*, piping in the break of day.



The central panel, *Liebeslied*, represents a love song.

The third panel shows a mother and her young child with a bunch of grapes, representing the *Scherzo*, here depicted as a game or joke. The child has tugged his mother's clothing in an effort to obtain some grapes, dislodging her dress from her shoulder.

Left wall

A young mother cradles her infant in a panel representing the *Berceuse*, a cradle song.

Centre is the panel acknowledging the kind support given to the Royal Academy of Music for the reconstruction of the scheme. Neither the subject nor the title of this original missing panel is known.

Finally, the panel representing *Romance* is perhaps more literary, conveying a lyrical tenderness between a mother and child, of feeling and imagination, as she reads to him. Maybe here the idea of the ancient Greeks is presented, notably the complete integration of music and poetry?

Theatre archway

These quiet and peaceful panels dated 1911, called *Smorzando* (dying or fading away) and *Penseroso* (contemplation), were originally painted to be placed opposite the youthful, and perhaps noisy and exuberant, spandrel panels (*below right*), and over the former wooden front door. They have now been found a home in the archway near the Sir Jack Lyons Theatre.

Spandrels

The two spandrel (archway) paintings, below right, are titled *Allegro* and *Andante*. Here, the young girl (*right*) playing a stringed instrument (theorbo), represents the 'soft music' (strings) and Melody, while the young boy (*left*) with his tambourine represents the 'loud music' (percussion) and Rhythm. Together they convey the idea of Harmony, and also reflect the sculptural figures by Albert Hodge at the apex of the façade of the building (below), where the same idea is used, though with a more heavy, masculine approach to the stone figures. The lively movement and the sounds conveyed in the paintings perhaps also portray the idea of dance.

The paintings contrast with the sculpture on the facade of the building - with its images of Pan, Mercury, Apollo, perhaps Marsyas with his aulos (over the Duke's Hall doors), Comedy and Tragedy and further iconographic references.

Conservation and Restoration: Bush and Berry Conservation Studio, Bristol

Lighting Consultant: Dr Stephen Cannon-Brookes

**With grateful thanks to The Anthony Travis Charitable Trust,
to Baron Erik Rosenkrantz and the Rosenholm Foundation and to Bente Rosenkrantz Arendrup**

In summer 2009 the foyer gained a new floor, a replica of the original but without the central mosaic. The paintings called *Penseroso* and *Smorzando* were removed by Jonathan Berry and Alan Bush, to allow for new doors more in keeping with the building fabric. They were replaced in the same area two months later, when a revised panel denoting acknowledgements was likewise replaced, this time with the centring of the text.

Below: Sculpture by Albert Hodge, facade



Berceuse and Romance, with their reconstructed decorative musical instrument panels



Recording the Academy's grateful thanks for assistance with this project. This panel was repainted in summer 2009 to enable the text to be centred.



The installation of Smorzando & Penseroso by the restorers Alan Bush and Jonathan Berry

