

PROLOGUE

I was speaking to Alan Bennett, one of our greatest writers, and told him that I was writing my autobiography. He said, 'Whatever you do, don't start at the beginning. Start in the middle.' So I thought back to the day my musical journey really began.

I was standing at a bus stop in Leeds on a summer's day in 1953 waiting for a bus to take me to Harrogate for a shopping expedition. I was really looking forward to it, as women do. Shopping can be very therapeutic. I was a housewife, married to a busy Leeds GP, with a three-year-old son, and for the past eight years or so I had been working as a piano teacher in Leeds.

I needed a hat to wear with a suit for a friend's wedding, and I pondered long and hard as to whether instead of green I should consider cream, which would match more outfits in my wardrobe. While I was thinking about this crucial decision, a car pulled over, and a friend of ours opened the door. He said, 'Can I give you a lift? Where are you going?' I said that I was going to Harrogate to shop, and he said, 'Well, jump in my car, as I'm going there to Sir John Barbirolli's rehearsal with the Hallé Orchestra. He's a great friend of mine. Do you want to come?' The name Barbirolli meant much more to me than going shopping, so I decided then and there to defer the important decision about the hat in favour of going to the rehearsal and meeting Sir John. He had been told about my pupil Allan Schiller, who had just caused quite a stir in Leeds playing the Haydn D major Concerto. After the rehearsal, I was introduced to Sir John. He fixed me with his piercing eyes and said, 'Could you prepare this boy to play the Mozart G major



At home with my pianos
Receiving my DBE with Robert, Lara and Paul

JOINING THE FABER FAMILY

Around the same time as the Leeds International Piano Competition was conceived, Marion and I started working on a piano tutor. She had attended her son David's lessons with me, and enjoyed seeing me in action as a teacher. By a coincidence, a short time later I was invited to Harewood with Geoffrey for a dinner. Benjamin Britten and Peter Pears were giving a song recital in Harrogate – Schubert's *Winterreise* – and they were staying with Marion. That morning, I had received a letter from the editor of a music publisher asking if I would consider writing a piano tutor, and I asked Ben at dinner if he had ever heard the name. He said no, but why didn't we think of approaching Faber Music. He had just left Boosey & Hawkes to join a new music publishing company attached to Faber & Faber. Donald Mitchell, who was a distinguished writer on music and a close friend of Ben, had been the editor of music books at Faber & Faber, and was now head of the new music company. Ben told us that he would talk to Donald about the project, and of course any suggestions that came from Ben were treated very seriously. We had produced a dummy with a few pictures, and after a while Faber Music decided to take it on. So it was through Ben that Marion and I were introduced to Faber Music, with whom we've been best-selling authors ever since. And that was how the *Waterman–Harewood Piano Series* came into being.

I put my own ideas and methods from my teaching experience into the tutor. The books were devised to represent a complete and developing year's work for a beginner, organised into Lessons, to