

Alan Ray Hacker

Clarinetist and music teacher

ALAN Ray Hacker one of the most gifted musicians of his time, particularly one of the outstanding British clarinetists of the 20th century, with an international reputation as a performer and champion of new music, has died aged 73.

At 19 he was a clarinet professor at the Royal Academy of Music where, while still in the third year of his studies, he joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra (LPO).

When he was 26 he suffered a thrombosis on his spinal column which confined him to a wheelchair, but being the type of

person to just get on with life, he saw his disability as a nuisance rather than a handicap.

He eventually left the LPO, becoming a conductor, a teacher and a pioneer in the study of early music and restoration of classical instruments.

He mainly played the clarinet and one of his most important contributions was his restoration of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto and Quintet, which he saw from the original manuscript had been written for the basset clarinet, a forgotten instrument which had much lower notes. Eventually his restored work became widely

used. He also founded the Music Party in 1972, an organisation set up for the authentic performance of classical music. It gave the first modern performances in the York Early Music Festival and was later followed by the establishment of the Classical Orchestra, in York.

Alan Hacker was born in Dorking, Surrey, the elder of two sons of Kenneth and Sybil Hacker, and his father was a headmaster in Battersea, in London. He had strong Yorkshire links because his mother was born in Saltburn and his grandmother in Keighley.

He was educated at Dulwich College, having gained a scholarship there which encouraged his music, and then studied at the Royal Academy of Music, where he won the Dove Prize and the Boise Travelling Scholarship, which he used to

study in Paris, Bayreuth and Vienna. In 1960 he became a professor of the academy.

When he left the LPO – travelling with them became difficult after his thrombosis which left him a paraplegic, because he wanted to travel in his own car rather than by coach – he and Harrison Birtwistle put together The Pierrot Players, later followed by the Fires of London, with Peter Maxwell Davies, now the master of the Queen's Music, which were lead groups for contemporary music. After the Pierrot Players he had his own all music Group Matrix.

He was also appointed chairman of the Institute of Contemporary Arts Music section and of the British section of the International Society for Contemporary Music.

Mr Hacker received much

support from Benjamin Britten in his playing in the English Chamber Orchestra and at the Aldeburgh Festival, and he was also much sort after by film makers. In the Thames Television *World at War* series he was a virtual soloist playing in 25 of the 26 episodes.

In the 1972-1973 academic year he became the Sir Robert Mayer lecturer at Leeds University, and in 1976 he was appointed lecturer in music at York University and senior lecturer between 1984 and 1987.

From there he embarked on a conducting career where again his great talent meant he was in much demand all over Europe, to such an extent that his wife, Margaret, would often drive while he studied the score in the car, in one case just after they were married.

Immediately after their honeymoon in 1995 Mr Hacker was asked to conduct in Cologne, starting the following morning. As Mrs Hacker drove to the Channel Tunnel at 8pm he learnt Shostakovich's Symphony No 12 by torchlight. At 10am the following day he was on the platform for rehearsal, followed by the concert, for which he received much acclaim.

He loved travelling and despite his disability which meant he was in constant pain for 46 years, he had tremendous energy and was a very giving man, with a wonderful sense of humour.

He was an inspiration to young musicians, and very encouraging. Away from concert performances students from all over the world would stay at the Hackers' home near Malton, to study.

The Hackers also had a great

interest in Artlink, an organisation of which he was patron enabling people with learning difficulties to participate in the arts. The group had the first singing, signing choir – Cubemedia.

Until three years ago, they also held concerts during the summer months when professional and amateur musicians played. Everyone gave their services free and donations from the audience were given to a different charity each time.

In 1988 Mr Hacker was awarded the OBE for services to music.

He is survived by his wife Margaret, two daughters from his first marriage, and a step daughter. His younger brother, Richard predeceased him in 1989.

His funeral will be held on Friday May 4 at 2pm at East Riding Crematorium in Octon, near Malton.