



U3A MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP



10th NEWSLETTER – July 2009

Khachaturian

We were grateful to Mike Cary for offering to present part of a session on Aram Khachaturian (1903 - 1978). He was born in Tbilisi into a relatively comfortable middle-class family. Musically he was a late developer, and his first large scale pieces did not appear until the early 1930s. He completed his first symphony in 1934. We heard a short extract from the second movement of the *Piano Concerto* (1936), which illustrated the weird sound and design of the flexatone. We also heard the third movement of the *Violin Concerto*, which followed in 1940. Mike then introduced two pieces from the incidental music to the play *Masquerade*, including the familiar *Waltz*, and two more from the ballet *Gayaneh*, including the famous *Sabre Dance*.

Khachaturian was one of the few Soviet composers of the Stalin regime to overcome his public demotion in 1948. Even though he was removed from his job and his works disappeared from the theatres, Khachaturian moved to the world of film music and waited for the storm to blow over. Mike ended with three extracts, including the *Adagio* of TV and cinematic fame, from *Spartacus*, which was completed in 1954. Many thanks to Mike for announcing the bits that Keith was supposed to cover, thus giving Keith's larynx a much-needed rest!

Jazz

Brian then presented a review of jazz during the period 1920-1940, charting the progress of jazz across the USA to Chicago, New York and Kansas, and also to France. Brian focused on the gradual evolution of the jazz sound that resulted from the more diverse groups and bands that emerged. We heard examples from Jelly Roll Morton, Bix Beiderbecke, Eddie Condon, Benny Goodman, Fletcher Henderson, Duke Ellington, Jimmy Launceford, Stephane Grapelli and "Fats Waller". Brian ended the session with extracts from the famous 1938 concert at Carnegie Hall with the Benny Goodman Orchestra which included Gene Krupa and Lionel Hampton together with members of the Count Basie and Duke Ellington Bands.

A Postscript on Hummel

Almost on cue, an interview with Howard Shelley appeared in the June-July edition of *The Pianist*. Shelley describes Hummel as one of the "important bridge composers" between the Classical and Romantic periods. "Hummel is very popular – he seems to have a following. I've recorded the piano concertos, dance music and all sorts of stuff. He's like Clementi – ahead of his time with the lyrical writing and the dramatic writing, and was a very successful composer in his time. He was also vital in the whole business of copyright for composers, whose works once they were released on one country were then stolen and taken to other countries without the composer receiving anything. Hummel organised things so that the works would be published at the same time in different countries.

“I played a Chopin birthday concert a couple of years ago and I played a Hummel piano concerto in the first half. It’s amazing – you feel there are chunks of one of the Chopin concertos, yet those were not written until almost 20 years later. Chopin was very flattered when someone said to him: ‘oh, your music reminds me of Hummel’s work.’”

The End of an Era

Did you know that the last UK piano factory was in Bucks? Unfortunately Kemble & Co. will close its doors in Bletchley for the last time in October after nearly 100 years of manufacture. The name will not disappear though, as Yamaha will make Kemble pianos at their factories overseas.



Marlow Music Festival

The Syllabus for this year’s Festival is available on www.MarlowMusicFestival.co.uk. The Festival caters for all age groups and grades, giving budding musicians the opportunity to perform in front of the country's top specialist adjudicators who are there solely to give kindly and constructive advice on how to improve performance.

Future Sessions

Planning for our next few sessions depends on the feedback you provide via the questionnaire that we handed out. The questionnaire is included at the end of this Newsletter for those who did not receive one at the meeting.

We would like you all to bring along some of your favourite music on CD/MD/vinyl record or video/DVD. We will contact you individually to arrange this and put several sessions together under various headings. Even better, following Mike’s example, if you would like us to help you to put together a session on a particular composer, period or genre, please let us know. Please include your thoughts in your completed questionnaire and return it to Brian or Keith by 10 August to enable us to plan the next few sessions.

A provisional programme for next few months will be included in the next Newsletter.

Concerts

If you would like to attend the CLS concert at Wycombe Swan on 18th October (Britten/Mendelssohn/Elgar), please tick the relevant box in the questionnaire.

Theatre Group are arranging a trip to the Valentine’s Day concert by the Philharmonia at the Royal Festival Hall (Sun 14 Feb 09 at 3pm). This includes music by Tchaikovsky, Bruch, Khachaturian, Dvorak and Bizet. Contact Theatre Group if you would like to attend (see main Newsletter for contacts). In conjunction with this, we plan to have a session on Max Bruch in January.

If you have any suggestions for other orchestral, choral or chamber music concerts that we could attend as a group in the next 6 months, please let us know as soon as possible.

Happy listening!

Brian (484099) and Keith (891507)

<http://www.marlowu3a.org.uk/id12.html>

MARLOW U3A MAG QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____

1. Which periods of Classical music do you enjoy? Tick ✓ any boxes that are appropriate. Put a star ★ in any box to indicate your favourite(s).

Medieval (e.g. plainchant) Renaissance (e.g. Tallis, Byrd, Palestrina)
 Baroque (e.g. Handel, JS Bach, Vivaldi) Classical (e.g. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven)
 Early Romantic (e.g. Schumann, Chopin, Mendelssohn, Liszt, Wagner, Verdi)
 Late Romantic (e.g. Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Elgar, Sibelius, Mahler, R. Strauss)
 20th century post-Romantic (e.g. Stravinsky, Berg, Webern, Stockhausen)

2. Which genres do you enjoy? Tick ✓ any boxes that are appropriate. Put a star ★ in any box to indicate your favourite(s).

Piano solo Sonatas (e.g. violin + piano) Ensembles (e.g. trios, quartets)
 Orchestral (e.g. overtures, symphonies) Concertos Film scores
 Vocal (songs) Opera Operetta Choral (e.g. oratorios, masses)
 Early jazz (up to 1930s) 1940s-1960s jazz Modern jazz (from 1970)

3. I suggest that we should have session(s) on the following composer(s):

4. I would be interested in session(s) on the following instrument(s) (✓ any appropriate boxes):

Piano Violin Viola Cello Flute
 Oboe Clarinet Bassoon Trumpet Horn
 Other (please specify) _____

5. I suggest the following other topic(s) and/or guest speaker(s) for our sessions:

a) _____
 b) _____

6. I would like to present (or work with Brian or Keith to produce) a session on the following:

a) _____
 b) _____

7. I would like to bring along the following music as part of a session:

a) _____
 b) _____

8. I would like to attend the 18th October CLS concert at Wycombe Swan
 (Britten/Mendelssohn/Elgar - see Newsletter for details)

9. Which of the following start times do you prefer (tick one only)?

9.45 for 10.00 as at present 9.30 for 9.45 (i.e. 15 minutes earlier)

10. Do you use our Music Appreciation Group web site? Yes No

What else would you like to see on the web site? _____