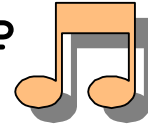




U3A MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP



5th NEWSLETTER

The first session of our fifth gathering on 19th February 2009 was devoted to Chinese music. Keith explained that China underwent revolution, civil war and invasion in the 20th century, followed by the so-called Cultural Revolution and Great Leap Forward. During the latter periods, musicians, writers, artists and other professionals were exposed to severe maltreatment as a result of Mao's anti-intellectual policies. Those who did not die of injuries or go mad were subjected to detention and menial labour. Some were treated as outcasts for more than 20 years!

China is recovering quite rapidly from these injustices, and it has been said that China is the future of classical music. Two major survivors have been Chinese folk song and Chinese opera. Modern Chinese composers have used themes from these extensively in their own works. Keith demonstrated the pentatonic scale that often features in Chinese music, giving it a distinctive oriental sound. We then had "The U3A Members' Guide to the Chinese Orchestra", and finished with two Chinese concertos that are becoming popular in the West: the *Butterfly Lovers Violin Concerto* and the *Yellow River Piano Concerto*.

I then presented the second session comprising two pieces of music by Brahms - his *Violin Concerto* and his *Academic Festival Overture*. I chose these two pieces to demonstrate, in the short time available, the serious side of Brahms and his lighter side. Before playing the *Violin Concerto*, I explained and demonstrated the "mechanics" of the violin and the various sounds that can be made by use of the bow and fingering. I asked everybody to listen carefully for these sounds during the performance. I also explained the difficulties a violinist is faced with when playing this particular Concerto.

The second piece, the *Academic Festival Overture* has been recognised by most audiences as a "musical parody of an **Academic** overture". It was dedicated to the University of Breslau who requested a suitable **serious** overture following their offer to Brahms of an Honorary Doctorate in music. He responded as he said with "a cheerful melody of student songs". As was to be expected the students loved it and sang along "lustily" with the drinking songs which he had incorporated within the Overture. The views of the professorial staff are not known!

Future Sessions

On 19th March, starting promptly at 10.00, Keith will present a session entitled Musical Families. (If you would like to bring along a piece by a member of a famous musical family, please let Keith know on 891507). Keith will feature some of the most famous musical dynasties (e.g. Bach, Strauss) as well as some that are less well-known. Along the way we will hear the world's first piano concerto and some music by two female composers. We will also have the chance to admire portraits by Gainsborough, Lawrence and others, and encounter tales of precocious talent, prejudice, madness and tragedy!

After the coffee/tea break I will feature the Orchestral music of Wagner. He is of course well known for his huge operatic opuses but I would like to explore his orchestral works. If you would like to bring along a CD/Minidisc/Vinyl record or video/DVD of a favourite orchestral piece by Wagner please let me know as soon as possible (484099).

A summary programme for next three sessions is provided below.

Month	Keith	Brian
19 March	Musical Families	Wagner: Orchestral Works
16 April	Animals, Birds and Insects: how do composers represent these in their music, and how well are these depicted? Includes optional quiz.	Easter music including <i>The Crucifixion</i> by Sir John Stainer, and works by JS Bach and Rimsky Korsakov.
21 May	Beethoven Piano Concerto No.4 ** and Mendelssohn Symphony No.5 **	Tchaikovsky

**preparation for City of London Sinfonia concert

Concerts

We received an enthusiastic response to the idea of attending concerts. Concert Option 1 (City of London Sinfonia) received more votes than Option 2 so far, so we will concentrate on this one for the time being. It is on Sunday 24th May 2009 at Wycombe Swan:

Haydn Symphony No 44 in E minor (*Trauer*)
Beethoven Piano Concerto No.4 *Soloist: John Lill*
Mendelssohn Symphony No. 5 (*Reformation*)

To date we have had 10 members wishing to participate in this visit but in order to ensure that we can get a block booking for all those members wishing to attend, we will have to book early. Therefore I am proposing to close the list on the 8th March and book for those interested members.

If you would like to have a copy of the digital score of the Beethoven and/or Mendelssohn, please contact Keith or bring along a computer memory stick to our next session.

We will reassess the demand for Concert Option 2 (Nielsen/Dvorak/Elgar, Saturday 11th July 2009) in due course.

Venue

As discussed at the February meeting, and in view of the huge response we had at the U3A open day, we are keeping venue options under review and would welcome any further suggestions on this.

Happy listening!

Brian Humphrey