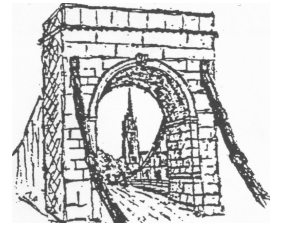




MARLOW U3A MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP

35th Newsletter: October/November 2011



Preamble

In introducing the 20th October session, Keith explained that Brian was unable to attend the October and November sessions for health reasons, but that he will be back in time for the December meeting. Keith also explained that the arrangements for refreshments will be different in November and December, as the Cornerstone Room will be employed to sell charity cards.

Keith welcomed two special guests: Bill Parkinson from Chinnor U3A, who gave an interesting presentation on the Development of the Organ (see pages 2 and 3), and Margaret Heald, whose son will be presenting and illustrating on Matters of the Harp in December (see page 6).

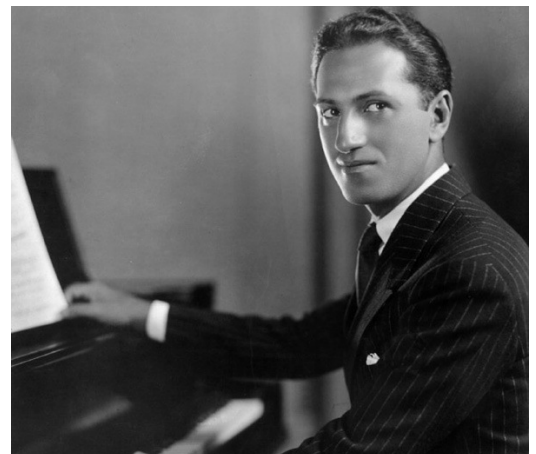
Waiting List

Whilst we are able to cater for a larger group at the new venue, the increased popularity of this group has resulted in us coming up against constraints relating to refreshments and toilet facilities. Consequently, we have once again had to set a limit on numbers and are managing a waiting list for potential new members. Potential new members should please contact Brian in the first instance. Could regular members please contact Brian in advance if you cannot attend a particular meeting, so that a chance can be given for others to come along.

George Gershwin

Chas opened the George Gershwin session by explaining that the opening bars of his *Rhapsody in Blue* played by the clarinet are now familiar world-wide and recognised as “the sound of America”.

Gershwin was a first generation American born to Russian Émigrés who, like the forefathers of many creative artists of Jewish origin, including Irvin Berlin, Richard Rogers, Aaron Copland and Leonard Bernstein, left Russia because they saw the future in a homeland where pogroms threatened their very lives.



When George was about 10 the family bought a piano and he took to it straight away by playing the popular songs of the day by ear. As he grew older he spent many hours listening to ragtime in cafés and bars. Eventually his mother decided to arrange lessons for him. At 14 he left school and at his family’s request studied accountancy, but very soon became bored with it.

A friend introduced him to the management of Jerome H Remick and Co, New York’s famous publisher of popular songs. So at 15 he became Tin Pan Alley’s youngest “song plunger”.

He had to work very hard supporting mediocre artists, and became very adept at playing songs in any key. At this time he was writing his own material and trying to get it published, and was asked to make some Piano Rolls of his compositions, three of which Chas played.

His ambition was to write his own musical shows, but because of his age he had to settle for contributing to other people’s shows (known as interpolation). He wrote the famous song “Swanee” for a show called *Capital Review* which was a failure, but at a show business party he

played it to Al Jolson, who immediately realised its potential and put it into his next review. In the next twelve months the song sold 2 million copies of sheet music and records.

He went on to write music for the George White's Scandal Shows of the 1920s with his brother Ira who wrote the lyrics. He became more and more influenced by jazz and when Paul Whiteman, who was instrumental in developing "Orchestrated Jazz", decided to present a concert of music incorporating jazz, he invited Gershwin amongst other important composers of the day to participate. Thus was born "*Rhapsody in Blue*". This was a great success and the orchestra and George took five curtain calls.

He went on to compose a Piano Concerto for the New York Symphony Orchestra which he finished in 6 months. It was premiered in December 1925 at a packed Carnegie Hall. The critics were unimpressed but the public liked it.

George continued writing musicals with brother Ira, producing a new show every year from 1924 to 1933. Most of these musicals have disappeared, but in 1992 a new musical appeared called "*Crazy for you*", based largely on the Gershwins' 1930 musical, *Girl Crazy*, but also using songs from several other productions. It was a great success.

In 1928 George travelled to Paris for the premiere of his Piano Concerto, and was inspired to compose *An American in Paris*. Whilst there, he approached several famous composers for advice. Ravel said "why be a second rate Ravel when you could be a first rate Gershwin?" Stravinsky asked George how much he earned in a year and when he was told it was \$100,000 he said "maybe I should take lessons from you!"

Gershwin had always aspired to write a full length musical drama but it was not until 1933 that he got together with the author DeBose Heyward and wrote the music to *Porgy and Bess*. The opening in New York was very well received and it went on to be one of the most successful American operas of the 20th Century. The most famous songs from the show are "Bess you is my Woman", "I got plenty of nothing", "I loves you Porgy", "I'm on my way" and "It ain't necessarily so".

Shortly after the completion of *Porgy and Bess* Gershwin started to have severe headaches and was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour. He died aged 38

The Development of the Organ

We were delighted to welcome Bill Parkinson (*right*), who gave us an informative and entertaining talk on the history and development of the organ, as well as his own experiences in playing various types of organ.

Mention the organ to most people and they immediately think of the instrument they hear in church. It may be that if you ask the same question to someone over the age of sixty they might just recall the heyday of the cinema organ or dancing to the sound of the Blackpool Tower or the Winter Gardens Wurlitzers. They are unlikely to associate the cinema organ with the church organ, although quite a number of ex-cinema organs were installed in churches in the 50s.

Gershwin Playlist

Rhapsody in Blue (opening)

Piano Rolls:

Sweet and Lowdown

Novelettes in Fourths

That Certain Feeling

Swanee (Al Jolson)

Piano Concerto in F, third movement

Overture: *Crazy for You*

An American in Paris



The church organ is a straightforward instrument having a keyboard - or several keyboards - and a pedal board. According to the needs of the building, it has a number of 'stops' which select the particular 'rank' of pipes having the 'voice' the organist wants, and a method of blowing enough wind to make the pipes sound correctly.

Many of the older church organs used a 'tracker' system, whereby each pipe would be connected to the appropriate key via the 'stop' by a wooden rod. When the key was depressed the rod situated on the end of the key opened a valve on the wind chest, thus allowing the appropriate pipe to sound. These 'tracker' system organs are self contained, in that the console (incorporating the keyboards, pedals and stops) is part of the organ case where the pipes are situated.

Pneumatic action organs differ from the 'tracker' system in that each key has a 'pallet' attached to it which opens an airway thus allowing air to pass through a small bore pipe to a 'bellows' at the base of the pipe's wind chest. When the key is depressed, wind is allowed to operate the bellows which, in turn, opens the orifice and allows wind to sound the pipe.

Robert Hope-Jones was a Lancastrian organist, organ builder and electrical engineer. It was through these skills and his ingenuity that his design and experimentation brought about the

electric action Theatre and Cinema organ sounds that we have known and loved. His organ company was eventually taken over by Christie (which company then applied the system to build cinema organs) and was subsequently taken over by Rushworth & Dreaper who built the organs in both the Anglican and Catholic Cathedrals in Liverpool. His first organ using his new ideas was built in 1896 to the organ in Canterbury Cathedral. Hope-Jones moved to the USA in 1903 and opened up an organ building business there using his electro-mechanical system. He eventually joined the Wurlitzer Organ Company.

F.R. Wurlitzer had an organ-building factory in the state of Buffalo from which he built and sold his organs to churches and skating rinks where the organ was accepted as the ideal instrument.

Organ Music Playlist

Purcell/Clarke: *trumpet tune played on a Cabinet Organ*

Purcell: *Trumpet Tune in C major, ZT 698, from The Indian Queen*

Samuel Wesley: *One of 12 pieces for organ*

Saint-Saens: *'Softly Awakes my Heart'*.

Jeremiah Clarke: *'Trumpet Voluntary'*

Alfred Hollins: *'Scherzo'*

Norman Crocker: *'Tuba Tune'*

David Lobban on the Blackpool Tower Wurlitzer

Donald McKenzie at the Odeon Compton organ

Clifford Harker: *'Postude'*

Mark Andersen at a venue in the USA.

Of the other organ builders that started to apply the concept of a 'unit' organ in order to sell them to cinemas the two best known are Kimball and Moller. In England the largest Cinema Organ builder was Compton whose works were in Willesden, London. This works was bombed during WW2 and by the time it had been re-built there was no demand for Cinema organs as recorded music was then used.

Finally, Bill reviewed the latest in organ sounds: the sound of digital sampling in organs.

Hatchlands Visit

The visit to Hatchlands on 28th September was very successful – a fine house filled with paintings, sculptures and musical history, and fine performances at the concert by tenor Greg Tassell and pianist Gary Branch.

All this and warm, sparkling late-summer weather too!



BBC FOUR Symphony

A new 4-part series commenced on BBC4 on 3rd November. Simon Russell Beale and Sir Mark Elder present a “radical reappraisal” of the place of the symphony in the modern world and explore the surprising way in which it has shaped our history and identity.

The first episode, entitled “Genesis and Genius”, began with the arrival in England of Joseph Haydn, dubbed the 'Father of the Symphony'. But it did also acknowledge the work of Johann Stamitz (1717-1757), who was among the most important early Classical symphonists, and his contemporaries in Mannheim. However, there was nothing particularly “radical” about the appraisal so far.

The remaining episodes will be: Beethoven and Beyond; New Nations and New Worlds; and Revolution and Rebirth. Throughout the series the lives of some of the greatest composers – Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Berlioz, Schubert, Brahms, Bruckner, Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Sibelius, Copland, Stravinsky and Shostakovich – are brought to life with readings from their letters and diaries, and through key moments and places linking to their symphonic journeys. A series of afternoon programmes on major symphonies is running in parallel on Radio 3.

The Musical Talents of Prince Albert

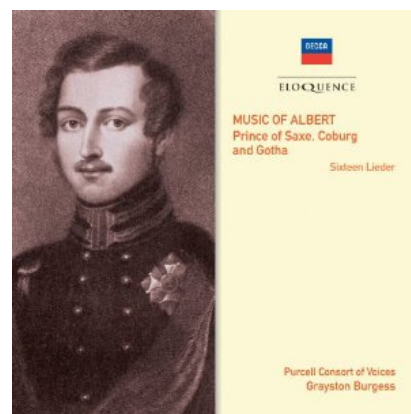
Alex (Alexandra) Stewart Jones provided an interesting newspaper cutting to us about the little-known talents of Prince Albert. This article was in response to a question from a reader.

QUESTION I once heard a piece of music on the radio announced as **Melody For Violin by Prince Albert.** Was this piece really written by Queen Victoria's consort, and is it available commercially?

In *Grove*, Prince Albert is described as “German musician, consort of Queen Victoria”. Music formed a regular part of his early education and appears prominently in the programme of study which he drew up for himself at the age of 13. He became proficient in singing, played the piano and organ (Mendelssohn admired his organ playing) and began

to compose before he was 18. In 1839 he sang the bass solo in a performance of Beethoven’s *Der Preis der Tonkunst* at Dresden.

After he married Queen Victoria in 1840 he expanded the royal private band into an orchestra capable of taking part in the first English performances of Schubert’s Symphony no.9, Bach’s St. Matthew Passion and Mendelssohn’s *Athalie* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, given either at Windsor Castle or Buckingham Palace under the prince’s direction. He also had an interest in earlier music and instruments, and was director of the Concert of Ancient Music for about a year. He became a friend of Robert Schumann and Felix Mendelssohn.



As a composer the prince showed a talent in smaller forms in the German Romantic style. Schubert and Mendelssohn were obvious influences. The prince left about 40 completed songs, with others in draft apparently dating from the late 1830s. For his wedding Albert wrote a duet, *Die Liebe hat uns nun vereint*. He also composed church music, such as his Te Deum in C, and the cantata *Invocazione all'armonia*. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert’s youngest daughter, Princess Beatrice (1857–1944), a talented songwriter, set poems by Disraeli.

Only one instrumental piece by Prince Albert survives, the *Melody for Violin and Piano* mentioned in the above Question. This is on the CD *Music All Powerful: Music to Entertain Queen Victoria*, which includes a dozen songs and some items for solo piano or violin and piano. There are several works by Mendelssohn. The solo and choral songs include Sullivan's *The Long Day Closes*, *O that we two were Maying* by Alice Mary Smith, and Barnby's *Sweet and Low*. In the opinion of the author of the sleeve notes “...when they could burst the shackles of their academic training, the Victorians could show a touching great-heartedness which is their most endearing feature.”

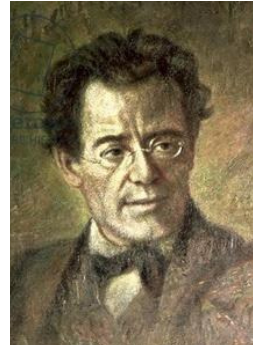


If you notice an item on music that you think would be of interest to our group members, please contact Keith



Future Programme

Date	Provisional Programme
17 Nov	William Boyce and the Last Flowering of the English Baroque <p>2011 is the tercentenary of the birth of William Boyce (1711-1779), one of England's greatest 18th century composers. Boyce's eight symphonies and some of his popular songs are well-known.</p> <p>Keith will present a variety of excerpts from a wide range of Boyce's works. He will highlight milestones in Boyce's career in the context of the rapidly changing world in which he lived.</p> <p>Gustav Mahler, the Bridge Builder</p> <p>2011 is the centenary of the death of Gustav Mahler. In many respects he was a post-Wagnerian Romantic. He completed nine symphonies, and made a start on a 10th. For Mahler the symphony had to be 'like the world – it must embrace everything'. Some had sung texts, and some of the others had programmes.</p> <p>Jenny has sung works by Mahler with the Philharmonia Chorus, and she will present some of the marvellous choral music to be found in Mahler's symphonies.</p>
15 Dec	Matters of The Harp Young harpist, Alastair Heald, will give an overview of the development of the harp and its repertoire from ancient times, contrasting the very distinct Celtic traditions of Britain with the development of the pedal harp in Europe. Alastair will play some of his own repertoire on both pedal harp and clarsach, and show some of their challenges. Anything Goes! Brian is compiling and coordinating this session. We are still looking for contributions from as many members of the group as possible. Your contribution can be any shortish item: perhaps something different or light-hearted, or a short performance. It does not have to be Christmas-related, but it can be. If you have an idea for this session, please contact Brian as soon as possible.
19 Jan	Elgar: The Early Years Sometimes we are given the impression that Edward Elgar suddenly burst onto the music scene in 1899 with his <i>Enigma Variations</i> , <i>Sea Pictures</i> and <i>The Dream of Gerontius</i> . Yet during his struggles for national recognition he had already composed many fine works. Keith will trace Elgar's musical development from the 1870s to 1898, including chamber works, songs, orchestral music and choral works, while explaining some of the obstacles that he encountered. Music inspired by Sir Walter Scott Like Shakespeare's plays and sonnets, the novels and poems of Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832) provided a great deal of inspiration for composers of Romantic music in Britain and in Europe. Such composers included Rossini, Marschner, Sullivan, MacCunn, Donizetti, Berlioz and Bizet. Guest speaker David Church will illustrate this with his own selection from this extensive repertoire.



Please note the above dates in your diary. We look forward to seeing you at (or soon after) 9.45am on 17th November at the URC.

Concerts/Events

Local events in the next few weeks include:

- ♪ Marlow Music Festival adjudication sessions, various times from 5th – 16th November at Shelley Theatre, Court Garden. The Choirs session is at All Saints' Marlow on Thursday 10th November. All are welcome to attend: it only costs £1 (50p concessions) for a morning, afternoon or evening session. Not only will you hear some talented young musicians, but you will also hear the technical advice given to them by nationally recognised experts. More details from Keith, or purchase a full Programme (£2) from the box office (next to the Court Garden cafe) during Festival hours.
- ♪ Four Opera Masterpieces (U3A Study Day). 15th November, Rewley House, Oxford. See page 5 for details.
- ♪ Marlow Music Festival closing concert, given by talented (mostly local) musicians. 7pm on Thursday 17th November at Shelley Theatre, Court Garden, Marlow.
- ♪ Mozart Festival Orchestra present *The Four Seasons by Candlelight* (also includes music by Purcell, Bach, Mozart, Charpentier and Handel). 7.30pm on 23rd November at Wycombe Swan.
- ♪ Pascal and Ami Roge. A Wedding Cake Recital. Saint-Saens, Faure, Ravel, Dukas, Debussy. 7.45pm on 26th November at Beaconsfield High School, Wattleton Road, Beaconsfield.
- ♪ Chiltern Camerata present Music from the New World (Gershwin, Barber, Adams, Ives, Copland, Piazzolla). 7.30pm on Saturday 26th November at Amersham Free Church.
- ♪ Marlow Choral Society and Princes Risborough Music Society present *The Big Messiah*. 7.30pm on 27th November at Wycombe Swan.
- ♪ Royal Philharmonic Orchestra present a "Tchaikovsky Spectacular". 7.30pm on 30th November at Waterside Theatre, Aylesbury.
- ♪ Marlow Budavar Town Twinning Association (MBTTA) present An Evening with Liszt: An illustrated talk by Roy Cadman. 7.30pm on Friday 2nd December at Marlow All Saints Church Hall.
- ♪ As announced by Derek, MBTTA are also publicising a celebrity recital by Gábor Farkas of works by Liszt. 7pm on Monday 5th December at the Hungarian Cultural Centre, London WC2. Contact Derek Done on 01628 485946.

★ If you would like to feature any events of interest herein, please email the details to Keith ★

Happy listening!

Brian (484099, brian.humphrey2@ntlworld.com) and Keith (891507, keithrachel@hotmail.com)

P.S. Don't forget that you can view what we have done at previous sessions at our web site:
<http://www.marlowu3a.org.uk/id12.html>