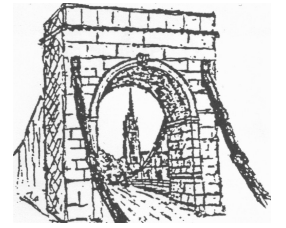




# MARLOW U3A MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP

31<sup>st</sup> Newsletter: May/June 2011



## ***Saint-Saëns and the Orchestral Chorale***

The idea for this session, which began our May meeting, stemmed from the realisation that orchestral chorales are key components of two of Camille Saint-Saëns's most successful major works.

Keith began by going back to the origins of the chorale as the congregational hymn of the Protestant church in Germany, characterised by simple, even-paced melodies. Its use peaked after the Reformation.

Martin Luther was much involved in the creation of the new hymns, writing some 36 himself, the most famous of which is "*A mighty fortress is our God*". JS Bach was perhaps the last great exponent of the chorale.

Keith then provided five examples of chorale themes in Romantic, German and English orchestral music. Felix Mendelssohn's *Symphony No.5 (Reformation)* of 1832 uses several chorale themes. The fourth movement opens with Martin Luther's chorale "*A Mighty Fortress is Our God*", and it returns powerfully at the end.

Sir Arthur Sullivan composed his *Overture in C (In Memoriam)* in honour of his father, who died suddenly just before composition began. This may be why Sullivan included a hymn-like tune at the beginning, which is grandly restated in the closing bars.

Robert Schumann included chorale themes in his fine symphonies. In the *Symphony No.2* (1846) the chorale theme introduced midway through the finale is integrated with the opening chorale theme of the first movement in the symphony's concluding passages.

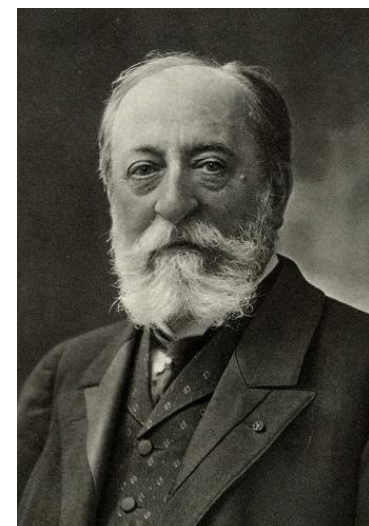
Perhaps the most famous example of a chorale theme in Romantic classical music is Johannes Brahms's *Variations on the St. Anthony Chorale*. Although the theme was attributed to Haydn in the work's alternative title, it is now thought that it may have been by Pleyel.

Keith's final example in this section was from the final movement from the *Symphony No.5 in C sharp minor* (1932) by Sir Arnold Bax. The composer called this symphony "One of my darkest and stormiest works", but it includes a popular finale and epilogue in which "a grandly reiterated chorale theme builds to a brilliant climax".

### **Playlist:**

- Martin Luther: *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*
- Mendelssohn: *Symphony No.5 (Reformation)*  
4<sup>th</sup> movement
- Sullivan: *Overture in C – In Memoriam*
- Schumann: *Symphony No.2 - conclusion*
- Brahms: *Variations on the St. Anthony Chorale* (excerpts)
- Bax: *Symphony No.5 - conclusion*
- Saint-Saëns: *Chorale theme from Symphony No.3*
- Saint-Saëns: *Piano Concerto No.4*

As a young man, Camille Saint-Saëns was keen on progressive works by composers such as Schumann, Liszt and Wagner. He became a traditionalist, steadfastly composing in the Romantic style. The radical musical developments of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (e.g. Debussy, Stravinsky) horrified him.



Some people think of his music as ‘lightweight’ – an unfortunate consequence of the success of *The Carnival of the Animals*. But in addition to his delightfully playful and humorous pieces, he composed serious, intellectual, romantic and brilliantly crafted major works. Many of his major and finest works were concertos (10), symphonies (3) and sonatas at a time when these genres were ignored by his French contemporaries.

Chorales feature in (at least) two of his major works. Keith played extended extracts from the Piano Concerto No.4 (1875), in which the celestial chorale theme is announced and varied during the first movement. We are then reminded of the chorale theme in the slow section of the second movement, before it is adapted to triple time to dominate the sparkling Finale.

Keith, Rachel, Brian, Liz, Wendy and Alan also gave us their rendition of the big chorale tune from Saint-Saëns’s Symphony No.3 (1886). We hope to plan another session next year to include a more detailed look at this impressive and popular symphony.

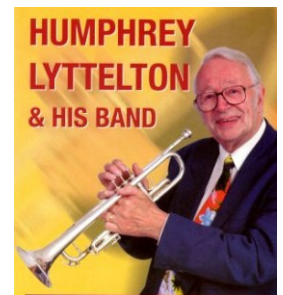


## Boogie-Woogie

Brian introduced Bob Thompson who is the Convenor for the U3A Jazz appreciation group for Chess Valley U3A and who also runs the Jazz Learning Band for Chess Valley. Bob had some success in the 60s with Blues Bands- TV/records /Radio. He introduced us to Boogie-Woogie and its development from early piano boogie to big band arrangements.



Bob started with Clarence Pinetops Smith who was a seminal figure in the development of Boogie Woogie and who recorded his signature tune “Pinetops Boogie Woogie” for Vocalion in 1920.

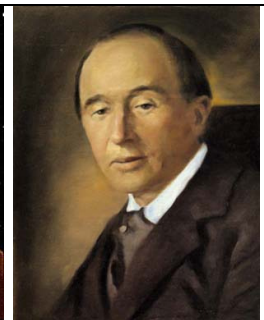


Bob went on to play excerpts from recordings made by Tommy Dorsey, Meade Lux Lewis, Pete Johnson, Benny Goodman, Slim Gaillard, Fats Domino, Amos Milburn, Humphrey Lyttelton and Jools Holland, explaining as he went along the interesting features of each piece and in some cases the performer’s life style.

**Many thanks once again to Roger for bringing along his big Wharfedale speakers for the May session**

## Future Sessions

| Date                                  | Provisional Programme for Forthcoming Meetings   |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| 16 June                               | <p><b>Sounds of Summer</b></p> <p><b>Baroque and Classical Concertos</b><br/> <b>Part 1: Italian Concertos</b> (presented by Keith). Keith will start and end this session with music by Arcangelo Corelli. In between he will feature familiar favourite movements by Albinoni and Vivaldi, as well as some less familiar works by Boccherini and lesser-known composers.</p> <p><b>Frederick Delius:</b> a composer with an international pedigree who produced very typical English music (presented by Brian)</p>  |
| 21 July                               | <p><b>Opera:</b> Chris and Nina will commence their look at the development of opera from Monteverdi through Handel and up to Mozart, Donizetti and Verdi.</p> <p><b>Gustav Holst: Not Only <i>The Planets</i></b> (presented by Jim). The vast majority of people associate Holst with <i>The Planets</i> and with very little else. However he was a prolific composer of a wide variety of wonderful music (including operas, ballets, choral hymns and songs). Jim would like to give you a taste of some of these works before ending with music from <i>The Planets</i>.</p> |
| <b>(no meeting planned in August)</b> |  |
| 15 Sept                               | <p><b>Sir Malcolm Sargent</b> (presented by Mike)</p> <p><b>Rimsky-Korsakov</b> (presented by Nadia Ellis from High Wycombe)</p>   |



Please note the above dates in your diary. We look forward to seeing you at (or soon after) 9.45am on 16<sup>th</sup> June.

## ***Our Waiting List***

**An important reminder to all regular members.** PLEASE let Brian know if you will be unable to attend any forthcoming meeting(s) so that he can invite someone from our waiting list.

## ***Concerts/Events***

Local events in the next few weeks include:

- ♪ St.John's Chamber Orchestra: Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Fauré, Mozart. 7.30pm on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> June at Norden Farm.
- ♪ Paul Lewis (piano) plays Schubert: 7.30pm on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June at The Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford.
- ♪ Endellion String Quartet: Haydn, Mendelssohn, Dvorak. 7.30pm on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> June at Norden Farm.
- ♪ Jordans Music Club: Skampa Quartet – Haydn, Shostakovich, Suk, Dvorak. 8pm on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June at Jubilee Hall, Seer Green.
- ♪ A Grainger Odyssey: celebrating the work of the Australian composer Percy Grainger. 7.30pm on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> June at Norden Farm.
- ♪ Philharmonia Orchestra, Natalie Clein (cello), Christian Vasquez (conductor) play works by Elgar (serenade for Strings and Cello concerto) and Tchaikovsky (4<sup>th</sup> Symphony). 7.30pm on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> June at The Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford.
- ♪ Jazz on a Summer's Night. 8pm on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July at Norden Farm.
- ♪ Marlow Recital Society's concert at Vine House, 9 Glade Road, Marlow on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July at 7.30pm. The pianist will be Naufal Mukumi. His programme includes works by Chopin, Mozart, Verdi and Liszt. Full details are on <http://www.pianorecital.co.uk>
- ♪ Jordans Music Club: Ensemble 360 (wind and string instruments): Mozart, Howells and Britten. 8pm on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July at Jubilee Hall, Seer Green.
- ♪ Helena Brown and Katharine May: Mozart, JS Bach, CPE Bach, Le Roux, Boccherini and Purcell. 11.45am on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July at Norden Farm.

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

Happy listening!

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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>