

Basingstoke Concert Club Newsletter – 2009

**Celebrating 55 years of bringing Great Live Music
to Basingstoke**

**Basingstoke Concert Club is delighted to launch its 2009-10
Concert Season, with six concerts from outstanding
musicians.**

Subscription tickets for all 6 concerts are only £68! A big saving
on the individual ticket prices (£14.50). See the enclosed leaflet for
full details.

You can buy your tickets from Bridget Tivey on 01256 328589 or
James Graydon on 01256 780785. Or on the door at concert nights.

Join us on Saturday 10 October for our first concert.

All concerts are at Trinity Methodist Church, Sarum Hill,
Basingstoke, and start at 7.30pm. Parking is available nearby from
7pm (£1 charge now applies in the Council car park).

You can find out more about our concerts at our website:
www.basingstokeconcertclub.org.uk.

We look forward to seeing you – enjoy great music with us!

“Music is a language by itself, just as perfect, in it's way,
as speech, as words, just as divine, just as blessed....”
Charles Kingsley 1819-75

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Chairman's Message from Sarah Denly Ball

It is with great delight that we launch our 55th Season this October. Recently I have heard recollections from some early Club members of how the Club generated ideas that led to the creation of the Newbury Spring Festival, and of the long list of musicians who came to the Club and went on to be great stars. Some of our current members were there at the start – what better endorsement can there be of the pleasure Basingstoke Concert Club has brought (and the message that enjoying great music is good for you!).

What you may not know is that most of the committee have been helping to run the Club for over twenty years and deserve our heart-felt thanks for taking it through thick and thin. David and I first joined when concerts were at the Anvil, and heard about the crisis of funding which was overcome by moving to our current venue. Since then, with so many entertainment options in the town, we have found an important niche and developed new activities to bring a fantastic range of musicians to you, and have encouraged more young people to come to chamber music events (with grateful thanks to the Cavatina Trust and others for their support).

For this season we have some fabulous treats for you, a sparkling range of world-class musicians! From our dear friend Bernard Roberts, who is repeating his master class for a few lucky pianists, through to the wonderful Wihan Quartet and new-comer Soojin Han, violinist. There is also the Canteloube Wind Trio, who will lead a workshop for young musicians, the award-winning Heath Quartet and enchanting 4Girls4Harps.

This is where I make a plea for your help – the Committee need reinforcements! I can tell you that for a little work you get great satisfaction and enjoyment from being part of the team who make these concerts happen. We really do need your help, even if you can just spread the word to your friends and other contacts, to bring more people to our concerts. If you can spare a few hours to help with other tasks as a committee member, even better. Please let me know.

Our AGM is on Monday, 2 November at 7.30pm, in Trinity Methodist Church lounge – I invite you to join us and find out more about what we have done this year. And most importantly, to help us plan the route to make sure we are still here for the 60th Season!

Sarah Denly Ball (Chairman)

Our President's Reflections on Schubert's Sonata in A Major

Scherzo: Allegro vivace Rondo: Allegretto

Our President, Bernard Roberts, sent us his notes on one of the pieces he will be playing for us in October...

This is the second of the three sonatas that Schubert wrote for piano in September 1828, the last year of his life. They were published posthumously ten years later, like many of the great works which poured through his pen in that incredible year of creative activity.

It is generally the sunniest in quality of the three, but there is a real sense of tragic resignation in the Andantino, which also has a middle section which can only be described as a whirlwind of desperation. Then there is a delightful Scherzo, which is followed by a Rondo finale, which would sing on for ever. Schubert finally finds a way to stop, and gives us a brief Presto coda which recalls the strong chords with which the whole work began.

Bernard Roberts

DIWALI IN BARODA a memory by Lynn ten Kate

How came I to be here? Here in the palace of Fateh Singh Rao P Gaekward, the Maharajah of Baroda, reclining on a cushioned divan while a prince entertains me by playing a gentle raga on his sitar.

It is a long story and an even longer drive overland from my home in Hampshire, across Europe, through Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan to India and the palace in Baroda. This fairy-tale episode is just that, an episode. My destination is the International Children's Trust (ICT), a charity I work with farther south at the tip of India, in dusty Tamil Nadu. I know how I will be greeted there, with garlands and singing and dancing and the joyful ululation of dozens of the poorest children on earth who, goodness knows, have little enough to be joyful about.

I have been making programmes for Radio 4 during this journey, many of them about the musical traditions of the countries I've passed through. The most memorable was in southern Iraq where instruments were excavated from the ancient city of Ur, thought to be the birthplace of Abraham. Instruments unearthed from the royal cemetery include lyres, harps and wind instruments made of gold, silver, mother of pearl, copper and lapis lazuli. Fragmentary Cuneiform tablets dated to 2000 BC give instructions for performing music. Later tablets dated about 1250 BC name the strings on a lyre and the tuning in thirds on a diatonic scale. They are considered to be the earliest musical instruments, though more recently a bone flute thought to be 9000 years old was discovered in China.

My husband, daughter and I have arrived at Baroda palace the day before Diwali, the festival of light which marks the victory of good over evil. Lamps and candles will be lit, new account books will be opened in every business to mark the start of the financial year and new clothes will be worn in celebration. The Maharajah is shocked to learn that we have nothing prepared for our ten year old daughter. He claps his hands, sends for a tailor with a tape measure and next morning the prettiest dress any little girl could desire was already awaiting her.

We have a suite of seven rooms with a servant sitting on the floor in the corridor outside each room. We are embarrassed to open a door as they all pop up like fallen dominoes in reverse. Jackie, as his friends call His Highness the Maharajah, explains there are now only 300 servants in the palace as opposed to the former 350 and this is of great concern to him as each servant is the bread winner for an extended family. The lawns are mown with a huge gang mower pulled and pushed by six men. It would be so easy to get a powered machine but that would mean another six impoverished families.

In the 750 acre palace grounds is a private zoo where Jackie, who is president of the Indian branch of the World Wildlife Fund For Nature, breeds endangered species of crocodiles and the Rann of Kutch wild ass. There is also a cricket ground. He is a keen cricketer and for some years manager of the Indian test team touring Britain. He broadcasts with John Arlott and Henry Blofeld who, after each six balls, turn to him and say "What did you think of that over Prince?"

Entertainment at Diwali is low key but generous. A troop of trained parrots are brought in to please the child. "Parrot trainer" is an hereditary post and the old man already has his young grandson as an assistant. And after dinner with the family, the Maharajah's younger brother has his sitar brought in and plays for us. The sitar is a beautiful, elegant instrument, a highly polished gourd with a long fretted neck and as many as 21 strings, though seventeen is more usual. Four to five of these are playing strings, four or five are drones and the rest are sympathetic strings which vibrate when the corresponding note is sounded. The strings are plucked with a finger plectrum and tuned to whichever raga is to be played. A raga can last for an hour or for an evening, progressing through ever-more complex rhythms. For me, the memory of that raga will last a lifetime.

String and wind instruments excavated at the royal cemetery in the ancient city of Ur, combined with cuneiform tablets relating to these instruments, provide valuable information on ancient Mesopotamian music. Instruments which have been unearthed include lyres, harps and other wind instruments made of gold, silver, mother of pearl, copper and lapis lazuli. Reconstruction of the instruments produced sounds similar to that of bass viol, cello and guitar, which when played together based on the cuneiform tablet music scales, sounded like modern Near Eastern music.

Lynn ten Kate

Music in an Economic Crisis

Luke Aldworth Davis, gives a perspective on boosting the viability of live music...

With all the current talk of economic doom and gloom, one wonders what impact it might have on live classical music. Certainly, amateur groups, choirs and orchestras who were already struggling for audiences will find it even harder, particularly when their tickets are almost as expensive as top-class professional ensembles. Whilst some disruption to the musical scene is surely inevitable, perhaps this is also a good opportunity to look at another issue which hampers live music: copyright.

In an era when some musicians are clamouring for extensions to copyright, I believe we ought to be looking at dramatically shortening it. Many complain about the slow adoption of new music, and bemoan endless repeating of the first Viennese school, but the fact is that it simply does not make economic sense for ensembles to perform modern music. Even professional orchestras will programme Beethoven symphonies every year, as they are relatively cheap, guarantee a packed audience and require little rehearsal time.

When I was fortunate enough to conduct university orchestras, we spent nearly our entire music budget for a year performing a Malcolm Arnold piece. Whilst this was worth every penny, it was fantastically expensive in comparison to out-of-copyright works. UK copyright has already been extended from 50 to 70 years after the death of the composer, meaning that Elgar's copyright has only recently expired. Whilst completely in favour of ensuring that composers and their families are looked after adequately, I fail to see the need for royalties to continue to be paid for 70 years after death, especially as this harms the adoption of new music. If we are to ensure that live music survives the tough economic times, and at the same time encourage new music, a bold re-visiting of copyright laws, and the original principles behind them, would be a very welcome step.

Luke Aldworth Davis

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Spring 2009

Despite 24/7 surveillance by Britain's talent scouts, one or two bright musicians manage to sneak under the radar unobserved. One such is Argentinian pianist Ingrid Flitter. The award of second prize and silver medal in the prestigious Warsaw Chopin Competition in the year 2000 gained her entrée into the world's most sought after venues, but it wasn't until comparatively recently that the likes of the BBC and the Wigmore Hall twigged as to what they were missing. Although Ingrid focusses mainly on Beethoven and Chopin, this gives more than ample range for her irrepressible spirit. Launching into Beethoven's youthful Op 10/3 piano sonata on a VAI CD, one is immediately conscious of a technique so fluent that it almost trips over itself - à la Schnabel - dare I suggest. And if that is a fault, it's a most enjoyable one - it keeps you on the edge of your seat from start to finish. Also included are Beethoven's Sonata Op 31/3, six Chopin waltzes, and the Andante Spianato & Grand Polonaise Op22. VAIA 1250. It's a tonic.

No sooner had I recommended pianist Steven Osborne's Debussy in our spring 2007 Newsletter, then up pops the personable Frenchman Jean-Efflam Bavouzet from out of the woodwork with a Chandos 4CD comprehensive survey of all Debussy's piano works. Make no mistake, this is a monumental achievement. One of the Gramophone's most seasoned critics has said, "This could well be the finest and most challenging of all Debussy piano cycles". Debussy encouraged his listeners to note the title of a piece *after* hearing, not *before*. I'm afraid I prefer the soft option. Never so beguiling without pre-knowledge, "The Maid with the Flaxen Hair", nor so haunting "La Cathédrale Engloutie"!

To all of these well known pieces, as with the less familiar, Jean-Efflam brings a characterisation that never ceases to delight and surprise. On a lighter note, not every reader may be acquainted with the weather conditions of war-torn Paris in the winter of 1916/17. It was very cold and fuel was scarce. Nevertheless Debussy's coal merchant, Monsieur Tronquin, managed to secure some supplies for the composer. In return he was given the manuscript of a short piece only recently discovered and aptly entitled "Les Soirs Illuminés par l'Ardeur du Charbon"! It is fittingly appended here to the second book of Preludes, and exemplifies Debussy's magic on the pedals.

The package of 4 CDs may seem expensive at full price, but aside from the delectable playing, when one comes to appreciate the love, care and fully documented research that has gone into this project, it is well worth it. Not only that: technically Chandos has opted for a 24-bit recording medium, which gives up to 256 times better resolution than the standard 16-bit set-up. The piano is a Steinway D, and the sound is crystal clear. CHAN 10421 10443 10467 10497.

Great excitement has been generated on Merseyside by the appointment of the youngest (and probably tallest) principal conductor in the history of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Vasily Petrenko. This dynamic Russian quickly initiated a collaboration with Liverpool's European Opera Centre in performing and recording two one-act operas: Shostakovich's "The Gamblers", and his pupil's 'Rothschild's Violin'. The courageous billing paid off - and Petrenko not only had his contract extended to 2012, but was also awarded Gramophone 'Young Artist of the Year' status in 2007.

In 2008 he and the RLPO recorded Tchaikovsky's Byron-inspired 'Manfred' Symphony, and also his dramatic Ballad, 'The Voyevoda'.

Byron seemed to exercise a particular fascination in the European arts world of the time. His 'Manfred' represented to Tchaikovsky, haunted by his own homosexuality, the figure of the outsider, the outcast from society. Under Petrenko's authoritative guidance, Manfred sets off from the gothic gloom of his Alpine castle to vent his heartache in some of the composer's most thrillingly orchestrated music, culminating in a finale where Manfred welcomes coming death as an end to his suffering. Its companion piece, The Voyevoda, is no mere makeweight, but a fiendishly dramatic epic in its own right, depicting infidelity, rejection and murder. Both pieces however are tempered with some heartmeltingly tender episodes.

Despite Voyevoda's favourable reception in Moscow in 1891, Tchaikovsky in a fit of self doubt, tried to destroy the original score, but thankfully for all of us, it was rescued by one of his pupils. NAXOS 8570568. Budget.

As I go to press, Naxos has just pulled off a further marketing coup by releasing yet another CD from Petrenko and the RLPO, of Shostakovich's 11th Symphony. This receives a glowing review in the Sunday Times, and a good review in the Gramophone - albeit with a few qualifications regarding the technical management of the recording. NAXOS 8572082.

For anyone who witnessed conductor Gustavo Dudamel and his Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra of Venezuela at the Proms in recent years, the event, even by Proms standards, must surely remain an abiding memory. The orchestra's latest CD is just out, and, yes, it's Tchaikovsky again, but, as Dudamel says, 'when you play Tchaikovsky, you can fall in love with it immediately, the phrases are often regular and easy to understand, and it is important for our own orchestra to be able to grasp the structure of a symphony immediately'. On this CD, they throw themselves into the drama of the 5th symphony for all they're worth. In the allegro vivace of the finale for example, they come off the starting-blocks at a pace almost defying belief! Yet there is inwardness, in, say, the way the great andante cantabile horn theme of the second movement emerges almost imperceptibly from the harmonies of the lower strings.

Tchaikovsky, asserts Dudamel, is already part of our culture - even though Venezuela is far from Russia. This fine recording won 'Editors Choice' status in the Gramophone of April 2009, and includes an every bit as fine recording of Tchaikovsky's Francesca da Rimini. DG4778022.

I'm sure several BCC members will have warm memories of Marin Alsop conducting the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra at the Anvil a year or two ago. Her career, if not quite as meteoric as those artists we've already touched on, is certainly very much in the ascendant, with the world's top orchestras vying to offer Guest conductorships. Her Brahms symphonies with the LPO on Naxos went down well with both public and critics. Brahms, of course, was a father figure to Dvorak, and it would be nice to think that such an atmosphere of kindred spirit has led to Marin's latest recording of Dvorak's 9th Symphony (New World) with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Of course this work has already been recorded by almost everyone who matters, but Marin makes it very much her own, the orchestra responding with an account full of warmth, moments of high drama, and finely paced with a flowing, spontaneous feel. The close of the Largo after its songful cor anglais melody for example is memorable, benefiting, as does the whole performance, from the natural sounding acoustic of Baltimore's Symphony Hall.

The CD, once again, is doubly recommendable, including as it does a superb account of Dvorak's Symphonic Variations. Documentation is comprehensive. NAXOS 8570714

Julian Woodward
May 2009

INTRODUCTION TO MUSIC THERAPY

When I was asked to write a brief note on Music Therapy, it was a completely new field for me. I had heard a talk on Classic FM late in May about it, by a physiologist who talked about the prefrontal lobe of the brain. That is where many important functions of the brain take place. Yet even if that area is damaged or ceases to function, she said there is a "music centre" somewhere else in the brain which always functions. As yet I have not had any contact with her at her department in Oxford.

In the Basingstoke Central Library a very efficient lady was able to track down the British Society for Music Therapy at 24-27 White Lion Street, London NI 9PD, tel. 020 7837 6100. The nearest Underground station is Angel, on the Northern Line City branch. That building displays no street number, and is a few minutes walk along the street (left hand side). The Society office is on the top floor, facing the street.

The office secretary was most helpful. She had put together the back numbers of the British Journal of Music Therapy which began in 1987, which I glanced through. Two issues a year cover a "broad spectrum of ideas and approaches to music therapy in this country, as well as in other countries worldwide." In the United States the American Music Therapy Association publishes the Journal of Music Therapy. She gave me a printout of their own three-page Web entry "What is Music Therapy?", plus other relevant Web pages. To track down a Music Therapy worker in a particular area, that office would be the obvious place to start.

Regarding local activity in Islington, the first impression I got was that younger people, perhaps somewhat at odds with their own family or the community, were being helped by making music themselves, on a variety of instruments, rather than by passive listening. It seems desirable to have rooms which are separated from outside noises and where players know they will not be overheard.

The Association of Professional Music Therapists has its Administrator and Finance Officer, Usha Velayuthan at 24 - 27 White Lion Street, as above. Its 3-page information sheet under the heading "How do I contact a Music Therapist?" mentions that the APMT has a monthly Employment Circular, sent out to all members. After the heading "What is Music Therapy?" the second paragraph is worth quoting:

"As a general rule, both client and therapist take an active part in the sessions by playing, singing and listening. The therapist does not teach the client to sing or play an instrument. Rather, clients are encouraged to use accessible percussion and other instruments and their own voices to explore the world of sound and to create a musical language of their own. By responding musically, the therapist is able to support and encourage this process."

Living Systems

Plants and animals have a fluid phase: sap in plants and trees, blood in animals and humans. Unlike plants, animals and people circulate their blood by a cyclic pump, the heart. They also breathe air by the lungs, another cyclic pump. They can walk and run with their legs, and write with their hands. Laughing, crying, screaming and singing involve pulse and rhythm. The rhythmic callisthenic exercises in Keep Fit classes, such as those run by Cardiac Rehabilitation in the Basingstoke Sports Centre, try to develop good coordination and balance. That should reduce the risk of older people falling and breaking a leg. We live with rhythm, and music is closely related.

On one web page from the USA about Parkinson's and Dementia, with the Alzheimer patients of one psychologist "their most successful sessions (audience was relaxed and peaceful) were with classical music and hymns." In 1994 a mini conference in the White House was told that "After three weeks, the patients with Parkinson's disease demonstrated longer stride length and improved gait velocity by an average of 25 per cent ... through the rhythmic coupling of auditory and motor systems." Certain types of music may cause agitation in dementia sufferers.

A page from the Aging Well magazine for March 2008 mentions that "Therapists have been using music therapy to promote memory and a sense of self in the treatment of older adults with dementia." A New York leader, John Carpenente, says "music making ... empowers clients to emerge from the isolation imposed by Alzheimer's disease and dementia." He lists other aspects -of physical and mental wellbeing. On the next page he says "The idea of music as a healing influence able to affect health and behavior is at least as old as the writings of Aristotle and Plato The 20th century discipline began when community musicians ... went to military hospitals around the country to play for ... veterans [with] physical and emotional trauma."

The need to express research results in very general terms, seemingly somewhat vague, makes it difficult for lay people to draw simple conclusions in definite form. Emerging therapies such as Music Therapy will need much more time before the misty scene becomes well-defined clouds. But there really is something there, and this brief note is an attempt to reveal some of the more definite features and conclusions which should encourage further enquiry. It seems even autism will yield to Music Therapy.

Conclusion

Keeping the balance between active music-making with a variety of instruments and passive listening to soothing/stimulating recorded music, whether with chamber music or organ music (formerly popular at seaside resorts), a local Music Therapy worker may have to deal with individuals or groups. Perhaps with younger clients active participation would be usual, but older people might prefer passive listening, to an accordion/guitar player or to recorded music of high quality. The Alzheimer's Society has discovered that people with a particular genetic variant are six times more likely to develop the disease than those without it. Until an effective treatment is found, Music Therapy will remain important for treating the sufferers.

Theodore Chaplin

From Page to Stage in 3 Hours 27 Minutes

Our connection with the Armonico Consort led to an exciting opportunity for a local school. The Consort had obtained funding from Hampshire County Council to run a "school's page to stage" day. So in February we linked the Consort up with Four Lanes School in Chineham and the stage was set for an exciting day. I took the day off work (any excuse) and got to the school on time (I won a prize at school for punctuality). The Consort arrived, 40 children from the school were assembled, we were off. I didn't know what to expect and I am sure the children didn't either.

There were three members from the Consort, a pianist, a drama teacher and a singer. The first stage was to set the ground rules - pay attention, concentrate, behave and have fun seemed to be the order of the day. The singer then taught the children a song followed by the drama teacher teaching them some drama actions. We had only just started and it was time for morning break. I really couldn't see this working.

After the break they were taught another song and some more drama actions and suddenly lunch time was looming, no one had any lines and I couldn't work out a plot. Five minutes to lunch and with a hasty bit of casting, the lines were handed out. They had to learn their lines over lunch.

I had lunch with the Consort members and they seemed rather relaxed given that we had less than an hour until curtain up. We returned to the school for a quick bit of stage setting before the children came back. Rather ingeniously they lined up the children with lines in the order they came in the script so they only had to remember who they were next to and not the preceding line. Easy for those with only one line to remember who they came after, not so easy for those with more lines to remember which line came after which. A quick run through the lines and we were ready for our first (and last) dress rehearsal.

With seven minutes to go, the dress rehearsal was over and the rest of the school were filing in. With everyone seated it was their one opportunity to show the school what they had achieved. They sung their hearts out, their lines were (in the main) in the right order, the drama was dramatic. They put everything they had into it and it was an outstanding success for all the children involved.

I drove home with my head still buzzing from the music, energy and enthusiasm I had witnessed. I was still humming the songs for weeks after and thinking "why wasn't I taught in a school like this?"

David Ball

The Club's first commissioned composer, Stephen Dodgson, has recently had his second volume of String Quartets released on the Dutton CD label. The players are once again the much esteemed Tippett Quartet, who gave us such a fine concert in February.

Stephen's work is not atonal. His third quartet, which opens this CD, itself opens with rather a sad, but beautiful melodic line, under-pinned by a five note rhythmic figure which continues to permeate the music. The third movement, which features muted and lightly tremolo or reiterated notes, is not so distant from the nocturnal music of Bartok. The highly inventive fourth movement brings the work to a cheerful and resounding conclusion.

The Tippetts are joined in the next work by Australian born guitarist Craig Ogden, which means that strictly speaking we now have a Quintet - but it sits very comfortably among its neighbours. Written in 1973 for Julian Bream, Stephen has insisted that the guitar is a "leader among equals". Nevertheless the piece sounds very much like a miniature concerto - and no less delightful for that. (It is possibly not widely known how highly respected a composer Stephen Dodgson is in the guitar world).

The final work on this CD is Quartet No.4. Launched with a stirring unison theme, this substantial five movement work has a distinct whiff of late Beethoven about it in the way that motifs, including silences, are tossed around from player to player. The boisterous "Play" movement is aptly described by critic John Warrack as being "filled with exuberant unpredictabilities". The central "Shadowplay" movement again evokes a feel for Bartokian "Night Music", though it's no mere clone. All the movements form a sort of musical Lego Kit, in that, as Stephen Dodgson suggests, they can be played together, or separately as stand-alone items.

The Tippetts perform with unquestioning conviction. The recording is technically and acoustically superb. Dutton CDLX 7214

Julian Woodward

LAST WORD.....

Don't forget to book your subscription ticket for membership of the Basingstoke Concert Club, giving you entry to our main concert series. Where else can you hear such wonderful music performed by inspiring musicians and learn more about chamber music?

Once again, we are holding a Piano Master Class and also a Wind Workshop. Members of the Club can come along for free.

This year's Family Concert will be on Sunday 22 November at 3pm in the Central Studio. Children can come along for free.

And don't forget to come along to our AGM on Monday 2 November 2009 at 7:30pm, in Trinity Methodist Church lounge.

Here is the full line up of dates for your diary

2009

- Saturday 10 October** 2:00pm - Piano Master Class
7.30pm - Bernard Roberts
- Monday 2 November** 7:30pm - AGM
- Saturday 14 November** 7.30pm - The Wihan Quartet
- Sunday 22 November** 3:00pm - **Family Concert** at Central Studio featuring the Brodowski Quartet
- Saturday 5 December** 7.30pm - 4Girls4Harps

2010

- Saturday 30 January** 2:00pm - Wind Workshop
7.30pm - Canteloube (wind trio)
- Saturday 27 February** 7.30pm - Soojin Han (Violin) and Mariangela Vacatello (Piano)
- Saturday 27 March** 7.30pm - The Heath Quartet

Meanwhile, enjoy what is left of the summer!