

'Music is the brandy of the damned': George Bernard Shaw

And I can't sing in tune!

The newly-appointed Chairman of the Music Club of London is our guest writer. He talks about his passion for opera and the pleasure derived from being involved in promoting musical events

I was raised in the years when Bing Crosby was merging into Elvis Presley – when my taste for anything on a higher musical plane was just about zero.

My parents had little musical interest and the only form of 'classical' music that interested my father was Lehar's *Merry Widow* but even I could admit to enjoying the 'I Love You So' waltz.

At the advanced age of 23 and in my final year at university, I decided that my cultural background needed some development, so I visited the Royal Opera House to see *Aida* – it was an overwhelming and magnificent experience.

Thereafter, I could not get enough opera but, living in South Africa for the next few years, there were limited opportunities – although there were a couple of fine singers in Joyce Barker and Ge Korsten in the 1960s who sang many of the big Puccini and Verdi roles.

Upon returning to England in the 1970s I became a regular visitor to Covent Garden and the Coliseum. I had one brief dalliance with Wagner – a performance of *Rheingold* in Glasgow in the early 70s – but this proved one step too far and was way above my head.

Thankfully, common sense prevailed and I realised the problem lay more with me than it did with Wagner and whilst in

Vienna in 1975 I chanced upon a performance of *Lohengrin* with Sir Donald McIntyre as Telramund. This was an even more shattering performance than the earlier *Aida* and suddenly I became a Wagner convert.

The Reginald Goodall *Ring* followed shortly after with magical performances by voices such as Rita Hunter, Alberto Remedios, Norman Bailey and Emile Belcourt.

More Wagner followed in due course and I ultimately attempted *Tristan* – a piece that left me stone cold. Once more I took the view that the problem was mine and not Wagner's, and went to see it again a couple of years later – sadly, with the same result.

Three years later, I decided I would make one last attempt. This time, following the great love duet in Act 2, my companion and I remained in our seats for the long interval – emotionally drained, quivering wrecks sobbing uncontrollably. This had been worth the long wait. Never had we experienced the emotional power of music in such a personal and intimate manner.

I have seen *Tristan* since and will continue to do so. But an experience such as I have described occurs only once in a lifetime, and if it is ever to be repeated, it will be another piece of music, in another context and by another composer.



Michael Bousfield

I had a similar experience in *Götterdämmerung* on one occasion when Waltraute's warnings to Brunnhilde closely paralleled events in my own life, when I could see disaster looming unless strong warnings were heeded. I still love that scene, but it will never quite be the same again. The context in my life no longer applies.

I am rather reminded of the words of the much-missed Bernard Levin who once wrote in his *Times* column that there were three artists who 'ruined' every opera in which he had heard them: Maria Callas, Jon Vickers, and Anja Silja.

He explained that he could never enjoy those operas again because the ultimate superlative had been achieved. No other artist could ever again reach that same pinnacle.

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In the next issue

The next issue of *Sources* (No 32) will be posted to those on
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For Issue 33 in March 2008, the focus will be on Gardening.

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If you have any comments on topics in this issue, please write
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Fifty years ago, I sat in a factory
 window overlooking a canal in
 Burnley. I was whistling the most
 emotive tune ever written: Ah,
 Sweet Mystery Of Life.

It came from Victor Herbert's
 operetta *Naughty Marietta* (his
 masterpiece), set in 18th century
 New Orleans. I'd just seen the film
 and the song stuck in my head.

I had no musical training yet
 this tune overpowered the pop
 tunes of the day and has
 remained with me ever since.

In the 1935 film, the song is
 sung by Jeanette MacDonald and
 Nelson Eddy (their first film

together). I urge you to watch it.

The song is hinted at early on
 by a snatch of the melody and this
 charges you with anticipation - like
 setting up a chessboard, opening
 a bottle of wine or watching a
 theatre curtain go up. When it
 comes, at the climax to the film,
 you will be gripped by the passion
 and intensity of the most
 endearing duet in cinema history.

I watched the film last week for
 the first time in 50 years and the
 song affected me just as deeply
 as it did by the canal.

It's interesting to note that
 Jeanette starts to sing in D major.

In my view *Tony Thornton*

Editor

Nelson, being a baritone, then
 sings two tones down in Bb major.
 They then sing together in Db
 major but Nelson sings the
 harmony lower down. These
 seamless key changes add magic
 to a tearful experience.

I have special reasons for
 recounting this story. The factory
 window was where I started work
 and across the room were two
 lads, Tom and Ron. The three of
 us became great friends and we

were reunited this year after 50
 years apart.

This year also marks the issue
 of *The Films of Jeanette
 MacDonald and Nelson Eddy* - a
 book by my dear friend Eleanor
 Knowles Dugan.

And so I dedicate this story to
 these three. After all, a great thing
 about having a column is that I
 can use it to honour my friends.
www.janettemacdonaldandnelsoneddy.com

Continued from page 1

I have had the pleasure of hearing all three – although not Callas in her heyday – and can understand Levin’s feelings. With the greatest respect to anyone, no matter how gifted, who attempts such a gargantuan role, I will never again experience the shattering effect of witnessing a ‘madman’ on stage (not a singer acting the role of a madman) as with Jon Vickers in the final scene of *Peter Grimes*.

In time I came to learn of some of the music societies and clubs in London, such as The Music Club of London and the Wagner Society – wonderful associations where people of like mind can get together for shared experiences.

These can include: opera study days; scholarly lectures on various musical issues; interviews with opera singers, conductors and directors; master classes with international artists coaching young singers; musical weekends; and overseas opera tours.

I can remember wonderful evenings where the Music Club, the Richard Strauss Society and the Wagner Society welcomed celebrities such as Placido Domingo, Jon Vickers, Siegfried Jerusalem, Dame Gwyneth Jones, Dame Anne Evans, Sir Donald McIntyre, Hildegard Behrens, Jane Eaglen, Deborah Polaski and Alberto Remedios, just to name a small number.

In time I joined the committee of the Wagner Society and later became heavily involved with the Mastersingers Opera Company. This was set up by Malcolm Rivers and Paul Crook – both principal artists of the English National Opera and the Royal Opera for many years.

Malcolm is the artistic director of the Mastersingers and he trains and develops young artists, staging excerpts from (and sometimes full length) Wagner operas where the aim is to blend seasoned and experienced artists with the younger generation of artists, and to assist the latter as much as possible.

The Mastersingers (where I am also a director) has been commissioned by the Wagner Society to arrange many musical events and functions for the International Wagner Congress planned for May 2010.

In conjunction with the Music Club, Malcolm arranged a marvellous musical weekend in Aldeburgh in May last year entitled *Wagner, Britten and the Sea* where, along with several other events, young artists performed excerpts from the *Flying Dutchman* and *Peter Grimes*.



Getting ready for the *Ring*: The Wagner Society

The weekend was hosted by Humphrey Burton who was the former Head of BBC Music. It was a special pleasure to be joined by Wagner’s granddaughter, as well as Dame Gwyneth Jones (the President of the Wagner Society) and Sir Donald McIntyre (the Brunnhilde and Wotan of the famous Bayreuth Centenary *Ring*).

The Music Club of London, formed about 40 years ago, organises events in London, elsewhere in the UK, and overseas. It has been a great pleasure during the years to make new friends whilst travelling to Budapest, Berlin, Tallinn, Helsinki and Paris, often for the *Ring*, but also for other musical delicacies.

There is a certain irony in this. Despite my best efforts to do so in my younger days, I cannot read a note of music and cannot sing a note in tune. Yet it has been my privilege and pleasure to act as MC in fronting many of the competitions run by the Wagner Society for the annual Bayreuth bursary award.

Here, leading young artists, many of them professionals, others still at music college, compete in front of a large audience with judges who are leading figures in the musical world. Despite my lack of musical talent, I find I can usually spot who the winners will be.

Do I have a message in this? Simply this: my greatest and most pleasurable musical experiences have been those with friends and acquaintances I have made by becoming more involved in some of the musical societies to which I have referred, and by becoming involved in the planning of musical events.

These clubs and societies are looking for new members and for eager volunteers who would like to be involved.

If you are interested, you can find out more at these excellent websites:

www.musicclublondon.com

www.wagnersociety.org

Feel free to contact me at:

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The Music Club of London promotes the cause of music in particular and the arts in general. It provides members with regular meetings of a cultural, educational and social nature, thereby creating a forum for discussion and free exchange of opinion.

Regular visits are arranged to concerts, recitals, operas, dinners and theatrical events in London. In addition, visits are arranged to places of historical and artistic interest. Further afield in the UK, the club has visited Cardiff, the Buxton Festival, Aldeburgh (for a weekend entitled *Wagner, Britten and the Sea* in which Dame Gwyneth Jones, Sir Donald McIntyre participated) and are planning a musical weekend in Wales.

Overseas visits have been a primary activity of the club and these have included, Copenhagen, Dresden, Paris, Budapest and Tallinn.



What is it we 'appreciate'?

Kusic appreciation is one of the most popular of U3A musical activities.

There are more than 1,000 music groups in the organisation with a huge diversity of approaches. Some run highly structured, integrated courses requiring great commitment from members. A few teach music theory. Some are run by qualified musicians but a few hundred are more informally coordinated with the members making contributions.

They all focus on the 'appreciation' of this most ephemeral of pastimes. For music is a strange animal, probably unique among the arts. You can't see it. You can't feel it.

Unlike a painting or a book, it doesn't stay still. It is transitory and it's gone before you can take it in. It comes from nowhere. It returns to nothing.

True, there are scores that can be assiduously studied, but they don't make any musical sounds. They are in black and white, with lots of dots and lines and signs, all printable and reproducible – in other words the obverse of what music means to most people.

How on earth do you begin to appreciate something which is invisible and transitory, where no sooner do you think you've grasped an idea than it is whisked away?

You can counter some of its vanishing act by listening to a CD, then pausing and replaying a passage. But – and here's a curious thing – the passage may sound different second time around. Your ideas may have moved on a bit, the kettle just boiled, somebody sneezed.

In any case, you are doing what Hans Keller described as the only exclusively artificial way of listening to music, i.e. to a representation which is repeatable.

To hear music, it needs interpretation, but this will be different every time the

music is performed – except on a recording. Even performers of an identical work will not reproduce the same performance exactly the next time around, and a recording may give you an impression of authenticity which is unreal.

(As an aside, don't let anybody tell you that a performance – any performance – is authentic)

Keller is fond of quoting the example of a music lover who had become familiar with the *G Major Concerto* of Beethoven through the recording made by Denis Matthews.

This LP had become his yardstick of perfection, by which he judged other recordings of the work. Learning that Matthews was performing the piece on tour at his local concert hall, he eagerly booked a ticket and took his seat full of anticipation of 'the perfect' performance.

Imagine his disappointment when his illusions were shattered by a live interpretation – complete with the occasional wrong notes – which nowhere near matched his ideal.

***Don't let anybody tell you that
a performance – any performance
is 'authentic'***

We do not know whether the listener returned home and stamped on his LP in disgust. But the story vividly shows the dangers of over-reliance on recorded music as a means of appreciation.

Yet this is what U3A music groups do. Away from the main musical centres, this is perhaps unavoidable. How else do you listen to music?

From personal experience, I know the difficulties of persuading members of

A personal view from
Don Moore

**Joint National
Music Appreciation
Network Coordinator**

groups I have led to get out there and listen to live music, and this in London, where there is something going on every day and within easy reach.

Recordings – however splendid their quality and sound – are not substitutes for the real thing. As a teaching tool they are indispensable (especially where we do not have access to a keyboard).

They can show you what to look for, how the piece is structured, aspects of the composer's style, comparisons with other pieces, even approaches to interpretation (by using different performances).

What they cannot be is an exclusive means of a genuine appreciation of music, because this goes much deeper than listening to recordings.

Even societies whose main activity is record listening (e.g. the recorded music societies) frequently use recordings as a partial learning tool and not as an end in themselves.

In U3A, I think we are in the business of developing our minds and our awareness of what is going on, to arouse interest and involvement among our members – to get them to engage in whatever interest they are pursuing.

cont...>

The social aspect of U3A should not be minimised, but music is not something to go to sleep by. You could do this at home.

Proust is penetrating about the nature of art. The aesthetic experience, he says, has two components, the art object and the observer of the object. Unless the two interrelate, the experience is at best imperfect.

Equally perceptively, Proust observes that it is far easier to analyse the object than to analyse your feelings about it.

Too often however, the musical 'object' floats by without the listener engaging with it, or trying to understand its effect on their aesthetic understanding.

If you have engaged with a piece of music, it is like being transported into another world. You become oblivious of your surroundings.

You are reluctant to come down to earth again to what can seem an unreal existence. Music becomes the only

'reality'. In my opinion recordings rarely produce this effect.

Much of my U3A music tutoring, whether of orchestral music, opera or string quartets, has been focused on analysis, of drawing attention to structure, form, sequence, contrast, development, integration, ways of score reading etc, using musical extracts or sometimes complete pieces.

This is regarded by students as useful, and I am urged to provide more of the same. But although this may furnish some of the tools of musical appreciation, such tools are non-aesthetic. We are not having an aesthetic experience, and analysis is not what appreciation is about.

In learned tomes about musical aesthetics, it is maintained that music and the emotions cannot be causally linked, some even averring that music cannot be understood unless you know the analytical tricks.



Hans Keller



Proust: penetrating about the nature of art

This is nonsense. Music certainly can and does arouse the emotions, sometimes of pure enjoyment, sometimes of sadness or happiness, sometimes of anger and intense irritation.

But these are to do with you – someone who has engaged with the music rather than relaxed to background sounds from Classic FM.

If analysis helps to show you the way into the music, it will have done its stuff. Recordings help to do this, but are not something to get emotional about.

Your emotions are yours. They alone build that essential bridge with the music to create a truly magical experience. And (at last my final word) they cannot be taught.

The Opera Group has been meeting for about nine years – almost since the beginning of Cranleigh U3A.

To start with, it was just listening to and talking about CDs or even LPs, but now, thanks to the assistance of the Cranleigh Arts Centre's projection room and theatre, we can show DVDs of operas.

One of the group presents an opera, says a few words as introduction and hands out a sheet showing the cast list and details of the performance plus a short synopsis.

We missed the Resource Centre and offer our thanks for the hard work that has been put into getting it back on track. We will be in the front of the queue for DVDs when our season starts up again in October.

The Jazz Group has been meeting for about eight years.

Cranleigh U3A supports four music groups

It started in someone's house but became so popular it now meets in the Cranleigh Art Centre Theatre.

At each meeting, two programmes lasting about an hour are devised and presented by different members of the group and in this way various types of Jazz are shown and discussed.

The group was presented with a collection of Jazz CDs and this has proved to be popular as a library for the members.

Music Appreciation (The Tingle Factor) is now in its seventh year. A range of music is enjoyed. Some items may be challenging, quite

4 in One

Dorothy Shearman
Cranleigh & District U3A

frequently off the beaten track and always with the accent on enjoyment.

Most sessions are devoted to a theme. The two-hour class is punctuated by a brief explanation of the music, embellished with anecdotes and supplemented by a PowerPoint presentation.

The Singing Group is made up of those with any ability who feel they would like to sing outside, not just in the bath.

Some members are singing for the first time since school days, others as a continuation

of more recent music interest.

We mix our style of songs: musicals, classical, part songs, rounds, etc. The main aim is to enjoy the singing – and have a good laugh.

There is another group of members that meet to watch musicals – DVDs of films or stage shows. This group started this year.

Cranleigh U3A is so reliant on the local Arts Centre. It is the only place where we can meet comfortably and the use of its theatre is a great asset.

But of course, we have to pay the rent!

The U3A Music Appreciation Network

Progress and Plans

A national network sounds grand, but can respond only to needs of individual U3A groups.

There are more than 1,000 U3A music groups across the country. Many have been going for years (some more than 20!), are well-established, and probably need no 'outside' assistance, although they welcome occasional newsletters.

It must be stressed that U3As are autonomous, and although members are infused with the U3A principle of learning from each other, many are content to do their own thing.

The majority of U3A music groups are small (between eight and 15 members) and 70% meet in members' homes. Other venues range from church halls to community centres and the occasional public hall, but costs are a consideration for these larger groups.

Courses vary – members bring ideas to groups that discuss them informally, and some are structured. There are exceptions. One group refuted the idea that they were a music appreciation group – they teach music theory.

There are several planned courses ranging from the history of the classical string quartet to the exploration of music of the Second Viennese School.

There are plenty of creative groups. Choirs and recorder groups are in touch with the relevant networks, and there are a few performing string quartets and small orchestras. There should be some scope for presenting their skills to selected music appreciation groups.

Although most meet informally, careful planning goes into programmes for the year. Several U3As have sent us details of their plans, and of their past programmes. Some of these are ambitious and exciting. We hope to make available summaries of some of them to provide ideas for future activities.

Many groups organise visits to musical events. One in Sheffield visits concerts within striking distance of the city. Others supplement meetings by outings to live music. This is regarded as a critical aspect of music appreciation.

The national music network has been revived and will concentrate on music appreciation. There are other national networks for jazz appreciation, music (singing and recording) and handbell tune ringing. The music appreciation network will focus on classical music including opera.



In the London area, outings have been organised to the ENO, Glyndebourne, the Proms, Philharmonia Concerts and LSO rehearsals, and to the exciting performances at the RCM and RAM.

Listening to your favourite records or DVDs is pleasant, especially when you can relax in comfortable chairs over a cup of tea. But recordings are artificial ways of reproducing a genuine musical experience. Every performance is unique, and interpretations will vary enormously, even by the same soloist playing the same work.

One of our roles will be to pinpoint live music, especially away from the main centres. You can benefit from musical holidays organised by commercial firms and by such bodies as The Music Club of London.

Whatever the activities, we have been enormously encouraged by the response from music groups.

The network started with a tabula rasa – we had no records and no contacts. So we devised a questionnaire to identify music groups and their activities, and to find out what we as a network could do.

These questionnaires were distributed to U3As in the UK, and so far we have received 240 replies from groups in 135. This represents a 20% response rate and we are hoping for more.

There is sufficient feedback to enable us to focus on needs. We are arranging to give talks to U3As; to provide information on aspects of music to specific enquiries; to help set up music groups; to put U3As in touch with others; to establish a register of speakers; and to represent music at conferences.

We have put some groups in touch with the Resource Centre that provides an invaluable service. Our next task is to analyse the replies carefully, and respond to those who have requested assistance.

Please get in touch for more details of the national music appreciation network.

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Singing & Music Making

Our group was formed in May 2001, after our Chairman asked for a Leader to meet the demand



Sheila Dorling: Broxbourne U3A

I had taught piano and run a church choir for many years, and sang with Hertford Choral Society. I thought: "Maybe I could do that." and my hand went up before I realised what was happening.

There were five members at that first meeting. The piano was falling to bits but there was no shortage of enthusiasm. Since that time the group has consistently grown, and we now have 28 members (14 Sopranos, 4 Altos, 5 Tenors and 5 Basses).

We have changed our venue so that we have a decent piano, and we have acquired a keyboard which was purchased for us by our parent Broxbourne U3A. We meet twice a month, increasing this by popular demand to weekly rehearsals from September, leading up to the busy period for concerts around Christmas.

Several of our members were not experienced singers and didn't read music, so we ran a short introductory course in our second year to remedy this to some extent. They also found it difficult at times to hold a line, but with practise and experience in part-singing, our expertise in this department improved so that we have included some unaccompanied songs in our recent programmes.

I have produced some tapes with the voice parts of a number of our songs, and these have proved useful too. The difficulty now is in obtaining sufficiently good sound reproduction in the copying process.

Our repertoire reflects the tastes of our members, so it includes songs from the musicals as well as classic part songs, spirituals, opera choruses, humorous songs, and of course Christmas carols.

It is not easy to find suitable music, but the County Library is a good source of supply. I have also been fortunate in finding material which lends itself to musical arrangement just for our group.

We have given a short concert of Christmas music every year at our U3A Christmas meeting, and in 2004 we composed an original carol of our own which was successful and well received.

We are now meeting a growing demand to give performances to various local organisations. We were involved in five concerts last year, two in collaboration with other choirs.

Although the group was not originally set up solely for singers, for a long time there was a lack of instrumentalists. However, we have recently acquired a clarinettist, and a harmonica has also been heard, so perhaps there is hope for some more instrumental expansion in the coming months.

What do our members get out of belonging to the group? Well, in addition to the satisfaction of corporate music making, individual comments range from a general uplifting of spirits on cold winter days, and the enjoyment and camaraderie that pervades the group, to the regaining of pleasure in music as experienced during schooldays.

They are a tremendously enthusiastic and supportive collection of people.

Music Workshop

Joan Waugh: Ferndown U3A

Ferndown Music Appreciation group meets every week in our Youth Club HQ and listens to CDs. We are in the middle of our fifth year. We started with 11 members then quickly grew until we now have 30 members and a short waiting list.

We have been following music of composers from the Baroque era such as Vivaldi, Handel and Bach, through the Classical era of Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven, to the Romantic composers Schubert, Schumann and Liszt.

We are working our way through the Nationalist composers and have reached the French composers for the second time. We do intersperse these with operetta and ballet music and cover Programme Music, the Strauss Dynasty and Gilbert & Sullivan.

We have yet to tackle opera but certainly intend to do so.

At the beginning we decided to visit Bournemouth Pavilion for Opera and Ballet and we have seen *Madame Butterfly*, *Carmen*, *Tosca*, *La Bohème* and *Rigoletto* as well as *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake* and by the time you read this *Coppelia* – all good productions organised by Ellen Kent.

We go to nearby Harry Ramsden's for a fish and chip supper first and share cars for transport. We have also been to nearby Poole for Gilbert & Sullivan productions and concerts by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra.

Our year ended in May so the members decided they would like to meet in their homes occasionally during holiday times – the host or hostess will choose the music.

During the years I have collected some wonderfully illustrated books called the *Great Composers and Their Music* – 64 magazine type books that can be passed round while we play the music. They are useful and comprehensive for research purposes.

Members enjoy a restful afternoon when they can relax and listen to lovely music. Classic FM may be responsible for making people realise what a heritage the composers have left for us to enjoy.

Philip Ashton

Luton U3A Chamber Music Group

I think that the name Chamber Music in these times *is* rather old fashioned. A better term may be: Music for Small Groups.

The Luton group was founded in 1999 by Rod Winfield after numerous requests. His musical interest lay in this genre, so he formed a group of six or seven like-minded members.

He had better-than-average reproducing equipment so that the detail from recordings could be reproduced accurately – in other words a high fidelity music system. The group has existed for eight years and is now under a new leader – the writer.

I have been interested in classical music ever since my parents took me to concerts at Wembley Town Hall in 1949.

I am a director/committee member of the Federation of Recorded Music Societies Ltd (FRMS). Also, I am the technical officer which means that I act as a consultant for the societies and members of such organisations. The FRMS is an umbrella organisation for 214 affiliated recorded music societies.

Chamber Music

Chamber Music groups in the U3A are rare. Why is this? Is it the perceived view that chamber music is highbrow or old fashioned, stuffy and hard to listen to?

Today we listen in convivial surroundings to music from, broadly speaking, the time of Vivaldi to the present day. Presentations are usually given by the members and a rota exists. They are asked not to play music already listened to, so this is becoming harder year by year.

They are asked that, if they give us some 'difficult' modern music to listen to, then they must try to balance it with something easier.

To date we have played nearly 900 compositions and are merely scratching the surface. Yes, there is a considerable amount of chamber music still written. Equipment is of the highest order with

transmission line loudspeakers to provide the sound output.

Most people who like classical music shy away from chamber music – the reasons are varied. But the inescapable fact is that you can hear with ease each instrument when forces are small. This is the attraction for me and those of us who appreciate the inner detail to be found in trios and quartets.

We may be a small group but we have a keen interest that should keep us going. Perhaps being members of the Luton Music Club helps. This club has chamber music concerts every Monday in the Library Theatre. These are small because the capacity is limited to 208 seats.

Musical Composition

Michael Redstone
Ryedale U3A

There are a number of software packages on the market. I used a score-writing package called Finale 2006, and a musical instrumental package called the Garritan Personal Orchestra 2nd Edition (GPO).

The GPO is an award-winning orchestral library that has become the industrial standard and includes the major string, brass, woodwind, percussion and keyboard instruments of the orchestra.

A list of the instruments, which includes 17th century Guarneri and Stradivari violins, can be found on the GPO website. The site also has musical recordings of well-known orchestral works, performed using their software.

The technology uses actual recorded instrumental notes to offer the most

Allegro A Musical Ensemble by Michael Redstone inspired by Mitzi Blennerhassett's Poem 'Credit Me'.

Computers can be used to write musical compositions

realistic sounds imaginable. For example: every note of a Steinway Grand piano has been loaded into the software.

The computer keyboard defines the length of the musical notes and an electronic piano keyboard is used to position them on the staves of the musical score displayed on the computer screen.

The software interprets the score's musical expression markings: tempo, softness, loudness, phrasing, slurs and staccato, as well as instrumental markings such as violin pizzicato, mute, short bow, and tremolo signs.

Such a level of sophistication enables the composer to create work that closely resembles that of a professional live musicians performance. The software also allows it to be physically conducted, so providing personal variation.

The score pictured above shows the first few bars of one composition. Only five instruments are shown but the piece also includes an oboe, a bassoon and a French horn.

Michael.redstone1@btinternet.com
www.garritan.com
Finale score writing software:
www.finalemusic.com

Lend me your ears

We know that performers of classical music need technique. It will be fairly obvious to the wise that composers need technique too. But what of listeners? Does or should listening involve technique?



Brian Newbould

Some might say that listeners cannot be considered in the same light as composers and performers. After all, composers and performers provide a professional service to the consumer, and the consumer duly expects professionalism (which self-evidently includes technique) as part of the deal. But the listener is the consumer, and has to consider only himself.

Yet are we fair to ourselves if we don't maximise the benefit we stand to derive from listening to classical music?

You occasionally hear the comment: "I just like to let music wash over me." Fine: even that suggests some pleasure is being derived – and benefit must begin with pleasure. In fact, I doubt if that listener can be totally passive. There must be some input for there to be output. And there must be some minimal technique in hearing and registering the sound.

My experience is that when listeners get together to explore – to some small extent at least – what goes into a piece of music and what makes it so pleasurable, they find the shared experience is, well, almost addictive.

Retirement offers an opportunity to look outside the necessarily limited range of activities that a busy working life permits.

It is heartening that 70 people in our (overgrown) village are signed up for my two-year-old U3A group, and it appears that there are a good number of classical music appreciation groups in other U3As across the country.

In planning my monthly, two-hour meetings, I do not follow any pre-ordained structure. There is no 'theme for the year', no attempt to survey music in an orderly chronology. Each programme is planned for what it alone offers, though there was from the start an intention to lead the listener from the 'easy' repertoire to the more challenging.

Any group of this kind is likely to comprise people new to classical music as well as experienced listeners. (One 85-year-old said, "I didn't know what I was missing!")

In my commentaries on the music to be heard (I aim for about 40% talk and 60% music), it is easy to assume that the anecdotal and biographical should be the main substance. I find this not to be the case. Members come genuinely to enjoy their music, and they find that some carefully-judged discussion of the music – with explanations at the piano – adds to their enjoyment. Special terms and concepts, introduced in moderation and with discretion, are apparently a treasured part of the mix.

Members of my group have their own enthusiasms, and at an imminent meeting they will have the opportunity to present items of their own choice.

For this first free-for-all, I invite bids complete with timings and devise a programme based upon them. We aim for friendly interaction at all times, and these sessions promise to advance that aim.

We began with shorter pieces, and soon 'graduated' to symphonies and

Brian Newbould is an international authority on the music of Schubert. His completions of several of that composer's unfinished symphonies have been performed worldwide by conductors including Charles Mackerras, Neville Marriner and Simon Rattle.

He is a seasoned pre-concert speaker (Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Wigmore Hall, provincial and overseas venues) and he has a mission in retirement to share his love of classical music and encourage an enquiring interest in what composers strive to achieve, and how. The U3A is one avenue for his endeavours.

concertos. We did not despise popular works, but tried to lead more experienced members of the group to a closer awareness of how the music works, while keeping the less seasoned on board.

We have worked mainly in the areas of orchestral music, piano music and song, but are now including chamber music – after an introductory session entitled *Quartet Magic*, in which it was proved that even some carefully-selected Bartok can thrill our audience.

Our format does not allow for a convenient treatment of opera, but we shall experiment with a précis of some less well-known and musically outstanding opera in due course. Plans beyond that will depend on how the dynamic of the group develops.

Resource Centre News

Manager Elizabeth Gibson is pleased to report that the Resource Centre is back in business and that she has acquired some exciting new DVDs

In the last issue of *Sources* (30) I wrote about the fire that damaged so much of the Resource Centre stock in December last year.

At that time I did not know how much material we had lost and when the loan service would reopen. I am happy to say that we have been able to offer a full service to U3A members since 6 March.

We now know exactly what was lost and are tracing and purchasing items to replace damaged stock.

We have printed lists available for every subject which indicate which items are still available from us and which are missing. If you are using older lists please contact us for a free replacement.

Please make sure we have your postal address. We cannot send these lists by e-mail.

We are also happy to book ahead for your meetings in the autumn. As soon as you start to plan your programme and have the dates, we can reserve the items you want for each session and will send them out to you approximately three weeks before you need them to allow time for preparation.

These days it is hard to obtain videos because so many companies have stopped producing them. However, it is often possible to find a replacement on DVD.

The Resource Centre was also fortunate recently to be awarded a grant from the John Lewis Foundation to increase our DVD stock in as many subject areas as possible, so as well as replacing old stock, I am adding new material.

Architecture

The National Trust has just released a series of ten DVDs entitled *National Trust Treasures*, made in conjunction with *Artsworld*.

Each episode features a property and covers the architecture, interior and garden as well as the history of each house. The running time for each DVD is approx 60 minutes.

The properties featured vary from huge stately homes such as Castle Drogo, to smaller more intimate houses such as 1-3 Willow Road, a modernist home designed by Erno Goldfinger.

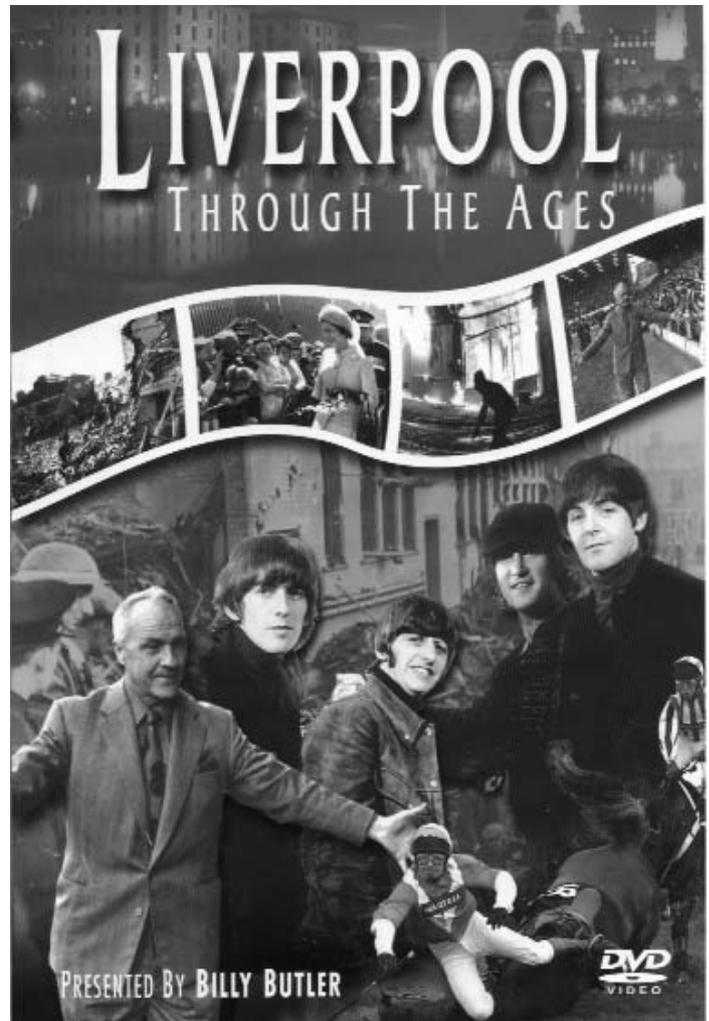
Transport

We have two new DVDs which might interest many of our members. The first is *Great Liners*, a 55-minute film on the ships, trips and passengers of the liner era. It includes sections on famous ships such as the *Queen Mary*, the *QE2* and the *Mauritania*.

The second DVD relates the story of the flying boat. It is a two-disc set which looks at the history and design of these beautiful aircraft. Today, Japan, Canada and Russia are building flying boats so the film also looks at the possible future for modern seaplanes.

Art

You might have seen the BBC series *The Power of Art* by Simon Schama – now released as a three-DVD set. It focuses on eight iconic works of art by Caravaggio, David, Bernini, Rembrandt, Turner, Van Gogh, Picasso and Rothko.



A new series that covers our major cities in detail

It moves from Baroque Rome to modern Manhattan, exploring the lives of the artists and society at the time when these great works of art were created.

History and Geography

We now have a series of ten DVDs on British cities. Each film explores the history of a city and the way it evolved to its present shape and form. Industry, transport, sport and shopping played their part and have affected the character and tradition of each area.

I am often asked for material

on specific parts of the country and this is the first time I have found a series that covers our major cities in such detail.

For a list of these items or any other material of interest mentioned in this article please contact the address below.

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Jennifer Anning

Shared Learning Projects Update



Shared Learning Projects continue to attract U3A members from Greater London and beyond.

Applications were received for the Second Oral History Project at the Royal Opera House from members as far away as Mayfield and Canterbury. This major project will be led by Keith Richards and will run until the end of this year.

Two more Second SLPs will start in the autumn. It is satisfying when we are asked back to an institution – the organisation becomes easier because we know each other and how we work.

The British Film Institute would like U3A Film Interest Groups to take part in a ‘cinema-going’ project, documenting reminiscences of cinema visits in their youth including recollections of the cinemas – many have been pulled down.

We will also be working at the Dulwich Picture Gallery on the Visitor Books. The team will work on two of the 49 books that span the period from the 1860s to 1905.

This will be a pilot project – the Gallery wants to establish the value of ‘opening up’ these books. It is thought that some famous visitors such as Van Gogh, WB Yeats and Samuel Palmer may be unearthed.

I am talking to the Museum of London and the Wallace Collection about setting up SLPs at these institutions in October. Our plan is to offer three projects starting in the autumn, one starting in January and one after Easter. Autumn is the most popular time for U3A members to sign up for a three-month period of hard but stimulating work.

In this edition is an article on the Hunterian Museum SLP. It describes the

project from three points of view – those of the leader, the museum facilitator and a team member. These projects work well only if everyone is dedicated, enthusiastic and pulls together. Of course, the roles of the U3A leader and the museum facilitator are critical.

In London we have access to so many museums and public institutions. We are privileged to work with their education staff in this shared learning context. U3A members have a memorable experience, and the satisfaction of knowing that their research enables the institutions to carry out work that they otherwise couldn’t do.

Jenny Clark will provide news on Regional SLPs in the next edition.

For project details:

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H Oscar Puls Caldicot and District U3A

The Caldicot U3A has had a Music Appreciation Group since its foundation some 12 years ago. It started as a group of 15 members who met once a month. Members took it in turns to provide a programme of their choice presented on records or tape (more recently on CDs, of course).

The programmes lasted for two hours with an interval of 15 minutes. Members were encouraged to give an introductory talk about the music, its composers, performers and background.

Just occasionally outside music connoisseurs were invited to talk to the group but it was essentially ‘self-help’.

With a new group convenor, alternative ideas have sometimes changed the format. Now, with 30 members, only half the session is presented as before. After a tea break, others bring a CD of their choice. Each meeting is devoted to items beginning with a letter of the alphabet in succession – we are now up to letter K.

Two years ago an opportunity occurred for the group to purchase a Bluthner Grand Piano from one of its members

Music Lovers Everywhere

who had ceased to play it. Several local organisations provided the necessary money. It was installed in the main hall of the local school. A special lockable enclosure was built in the hall to ensure that it would not be subject to vandals. It was agreed with the school that their senior pupils (A level music students) should be allowed to use it.

An inaugural piano recital was given by Mrs Ingrid Surgenor, the accompanist to the *Cardiff Singer of the Year* and répétiteur at Covent Garden and Bayreuth. She was so pleased with the piano that she returned to give a concert with Miss Guang Yang who had been one of the winners of the Cardiff Singers a few years ago.

Both occasions were so successful that another recital was arranged when the highly respected, internationally known pianist, Iain Farrington played a delightful programme entitled *Summer Serenade*.

To build on this success, another recital took place on 1 April, when Ivan Ilc (another internationally known pianist) played to 150 people.

His programme was entitled *A Prelude to Spring*.

We are fortunate that a number of local organisations are prepared to sponsor these programmes. The school’s pupils will also give concerts and the members of the music group have been invited.

Our U3A also has a choir. It was formed about 11 years ago by a group of men and women, nearly all senior citizens, together with the help of a musical director.

During the years the membership changed and a new choirmaster took over. We now have about 20 members who meet once a week. At Christmas time we sing carols for Christmas parties, WIs and other societies, as well as on the Caldicot Market Day and for our general meeting.

Several times during the year we go to the Newport Club for the Blind, to other local U3As as well as to occasional concerts for our own U3A. We are fortunate to have our own keyboard with an able accompanist, who helps to make the singing a most enjoyable event for the members.

The Hunterian Museum

A U3A Shared Learning Project

The Museum has enjoyed a good relationship with the U3A during the years and has welcomed members from across London and the South East for visits, guided tours and talks.

3 Perspectives

1 Jane Hughes Audience Development Officer



In 2002 the Museum closed for two years for a refurbishment with the intention of redisplaying and reinterpreting the collections for a wider public audience. Once the new museum was completed, we were keen to share the changes with our long-standing supporters and so undertook a direct marketing campaign to U3A groups around the region.

I had heard positive things about Shared Learning Projects from colleagues in other museums and galleries and so I had a preliminary meeting with Jenny Clark and Jennifer Anning to discuss what we might offer.

An important element in deciding whether or not to participate was that there was only one paid member of staff working on learning and access.

Given that in the year following the refurbishment project, more than 27,000 people visited the Museum – with an increase in the number of schools and families most evident amongst them – time to develop new ideas was a luxury. Whilst this might not seem a large number of visitors when compared to the British Museum or Tate Modern, for us it was nearly a 100% increase on the numbers we saw in 2002.

The prospect of working with a group of people interested in sharing their expertise and skills, as well as willing to gain new experiences and to learn new things, was appealing.

Our visitor feedback forms had given us a clear idea of what we could do to make a visit to the museum even better. It was just a question of finding the time to implement the many useful suggestions we received.



The Crystal Gallery

With the assistance of U3A Project Leader Barbara Webb, we recruited 14 interested participants, which settled down to around ten regular attendees.

With a project like this, I had to be mindful of the 'real lives' that participants have and the other commitments on their time.

The group met every Tuesday in our learning space: *MacRae Gallery – Room to Discover*, which was reserved for their use for the day. We are lucky to have a canteen on site, so cups of coffee and snacks were easy to find when sugar and caffeine were needed to provide inspiration.

With this number of people, I decided to divide the projects according to the needs of different kinds of museum visitors and to ask the participants to split into three working groups.

These were self-selecting and the dynamics came together in an easy way. Participants worked well as a team, and

made the best use of the knowledge, skills and talents of the group members to produce some impressive work in a short space of time.

The end products, although only in draft form, will enable the Museum to offer its visitors a range of resources that will: help them to find the highlights of the collections when they are in a hurry; allow them to explore the collections with their children and families to find interesting parts of the displays; and provide school students with a visual reference to help them revise for, and do well in, their GCSE exams.

The Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons is grateful to the U3A members who participated in the Shared Learning Project, and to Barbara Webb, Jennifer Anning and Jenny Clark from the U3A for their support and advice. Watch this space for details of the next Shared Learning Project at the Hunterian Museum.

2

Barbara Webb
Project Leader

In the spring of last year I was asked (because I had a background in biological sciences) to lead a U3A Shared Learning Project at the Hunterian Museum.

It is housed at the Royal College of Surgeons in Lincoln's Inn Fields and is based on the anatomical collections of John Hunter (1728-1793). It follows 400 years of the history of surgery up to the present day.

There were four conditions to be met before I would consider it. Firstly my journey had to be physically undemanding. Secondly I would need to get along with the Museum Education Officer. Thirdly I would need to be sure that the Museum staff knew what they were hoping to achieve and that it was realistic. Fourthly our working conditions needed to be satisfactory.

A preliminary visit was arranged, my four conditions were met and I agreed to take on the project.

The preliminary literature was drafted out, participants were recruited (on a first-come-first-served basis) and on the 3 October the project was underway.

I saw my role as making sure the project ran harmoniously, that the participants knew what they were working to achieve, and that the Museum was getting what it wanted. I was also aware we were visitors in other people's place of work and so we needed to be sensitive to this.

The project ended with a presentation for Museum staff and U3A organisers. Everyone was pleased and I heaved a sigh of relief.

Was the Hunterian Project a success? It depends what you mean by success. Participants got a lot from it and the Museum staff were pleased with the material produced.

However this material was only in draft form. The Museum will be shaping it into their house style and producing the final leaflets, worksheets, CD-ROM and audio guide.

Only then shall we know how successful the original aim of helping visitors to enjoy and benefit from their visits has been.

We will be kept in touch and it will be fascinating to see the final outcomes .

3

Jennifer Robinson
Project Team
Member

I was looking for something different from my usual art and history-based interests. To volunteer for this project at the Hunterian Museum seemed opportune. I had been to two excellent Royal Institution lectures there in the spring, which made me aware of huge gaps in my understanding.

This promised an 'easy' way to overcome my squeamishness. I would be faced with hundreds of anatomical specimens in jars – the remainder of John Hunter's collection.

We were asked to provide:

- A Top Ten or Highlights guide to the museum for visitors with a limited amount of time who wanted to get an insight into the key exhibits on display.
- Fun trails or quizzes for children aged 4-7 and 7-11 who needed an activity to keep them interested.
- A CD-ROM with images of the museum collections to help secondary school students revise for their GCSE course *Medicine through Time*.

I was a visitor with little prior knowledge so I opted for the group preparing the 10 Highlights Guide.

Although I knew much of the terminology and how to spell words: pathological, aneurysm, physio-logical, I had no idea of their meaning.

Fortunately, the scientists in the group held my hand and explained what it meant in layman's terms. The hardest part was choosing key objects to include in the guide, and I discovered as much about myself as about the collection.

I found it difficult at first to work as part of a group but it became satisfying as, during the ten-week project, we happily combined our different



Amputation instruments belonging to Robert Liston and a rare example of a clockwork saw

approaches and skills to produce some useful resources for the Museum.

I think the excellent lunches in the RCS cafeteria helped with this bonding process. We were made welcome and helped by the staff at every stage.

I am still squeamish, but I can now watch the videos of modern keyhole surgery and draw parallels from needlework and tailoring (all that clipping, folding and stitching layers).

I can examine specimens (animal and human parts) and admire their beauty and the skill of their preservation.

The human and social interest behind the collections fascinated me, from the Irish Giant's skeleton – incontrovertible proof of his height, to the Coachman's leg record of the cure for an 18th century industrial strain injury.

A visit to the Hunterian Museum helps us gain a better awareness of the amazing pieces inside us, and makes us thankful for the skills and dedication of medical practitioners.

I cannot emphasise enough how much I enjoyed and benefited from this Shared Learning experience, including the chance to work with members from other Greater London U3As.

The same song sheet

Our singing group was formed in Bangor, County Down in September 2001 with 12 members singing in unison from a word sheet. Now we have 40 members and sing four-part, Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass (SATB) from printed sheet music.

We rehearse twice a month from September to June, and produce two programmes a year, each made up of six to eight pieces and lasting 20-30 minutes. We perform our spring programme for the local U3A monthly meeting at the end of June.

The Christmas programme, which consists mainly of carols and popular Christmas songs, is performed for the meeting at the end of November.

After the formal performances for the U3A, we offer them to care homes and churches – where we are invited – and add solos, readings and singalongs to make the performances more fun.

We sing the sort of music that we and our audiences enjoy most: traditional and folk songs (particularly Irish), popular songs from yesteryear, and songs from the shows.

Our biggest problem is finding suitable arrangements that match the range and balance of the group. Our line-up has changed almost every year, and we have needed arrangements (with piano

accompaniment) for unison, ST, SST, SAT and finally SATB.

There is a shortage of published music to meet our requirements, and much of the available music demands too wide a vocal range.

Our solution has been to use our own arranger (me!). I use a PC and a software package to produce the music. I can produce fair quality sheet music which we then photocopy. In five years we have sung more than 100 songs in arrangements from unison to SATB.

There are advantages to producing music locally: arrangements can be tailored to the group's vocal range; songs can be grouped into medleys, which is a good way of packing lots of melodies into a short time (a la *Sing Something Simple*); and songs can be interlaced to produce unusual combinations, (try Still, still, still and Sleep Holy Babe, or Men of Harlech, Scotland the Brave and The Minstrel Boy).

Of course the biggest advantage is cost, because we pay only 10p per double

Peter Dale
North Down
and Ards U3A



sided sheet. The cost of buying sufficient published sheet music for a group of our size and tastes would be prohibitive.

However, now that we are singing full SATB, I can't produce arrangements fast enough, and we are looking for alternative sources of appropriate music.

Surely we are not the only group faced with this problem. There must be other music out there in the U3A, not subject to copyright, which we could photocopy.

We would be prepared to offer our arrangements in exchange for other groups' music. Maybe it would be possible to arrange a lending scheme between singing groups for commercially purchased music which is no longer required or temporarily available for loan.

These are just ideas at this stage, but we would like to talk to other singing groups, either directly or through the performing music coordinator Diane Ford (see back cover).

Please e-mail me at:
peterjoan.dale@btinternet.com

Listening to French song

Many years ago I first heard and was enchanted by the song-cycle by Berlioz, *Les Nuits d'été*. This led me on to listen to French song, and in particular, to *mélodies*.

The word *mélodie* has a specific meaning, akin to the 'lied', denoting concert song, and differs from 'chanson' which refers to popular, folk or night-club song. There is also a strong literary component, and listeners to *mélodies* are drawn into the world of French poetry.

A few years ago I joined the North London U3A and enjoyed the idea of sharing enthusiasms – learning more about a subject by studying it with like-minded people.

In the autumn of 2003, I started an interest group to see if there were any others who cared for this music. It would be a group for music appreciation rather

Lilian Rubin: North London U3A

than performance, to be called *Listening to French Song*. The group would listen to recordings, and explore the genre *mélodies*, the poems set by the composers, and the historical background.

There was a satisfactory response, and with an average of six we pursued this interest meeting fortnightly.

Sharing these beautiful songs, and exploring the interface between music and poetry, has been a great source of pleasure and a widening stimulus to understanding.

We listen to songs by Fauré, Debussy, Duparc, Hahn, Gounod, Chabrier, Ravel and Poulenc, and we have discovered the poems of Verlaine, Baudelaire, Hugo, Gautier, and Leconte de Lisle.

It became obvious that studying the historical context would enrich the meaning of the songs, and members of the group have produced valuable notes which shed light on the times.

We have read biographical material, and we have listened to and compared recordings of great singers, such as Pierre Bernac and Ninon Vallin and their successors. A particular source of interest has been comparing settings of the same poem by different composers.

Living in London has given us the opportunity to go to song recitals, and we are lucky that there are venues such as the Wigmore Hall where we can hear live performances and broadcasts such as the BBC lunchtime concerts.

Listening to *mélodies* sounds a narrow field of study, but it has proved an ever-widening interest – and it helps to polish up rusty French!

Exploring Music

Hilary Hobbs: Reigate and Redhill U3A

This U3A has about 500 members and 60 groups, so it is not surprising that it supports four music appreciation groups, one church music group, and the one that I lead.

This started as music theory but has re-invented itself as Exploring Music. Listening to music is the format for the other groups, whereas we look behind the music and use it in an illustrative way.

Our story started in 2003 when a new member told the group coordinator that he was interested in learning how music worked – meaning how it affects the listener. Together they thought this might be music theory.

A possible group was advertised and (on the strength of a rather well-passed Grade Five Theory around age 50), I volunteered to lead it. We started as a group of 12 with a waiting list.

From the start we had an active regime, exercises during our meetings and homework. For various reasons the group reduced within the first year to seven, including two from the waiting list, and until recently we remained the same well-knit group.

The aims that I set out were to study the rudiments of music theory so that music would become more meaningful – in that concert programme notes would be more accessible.

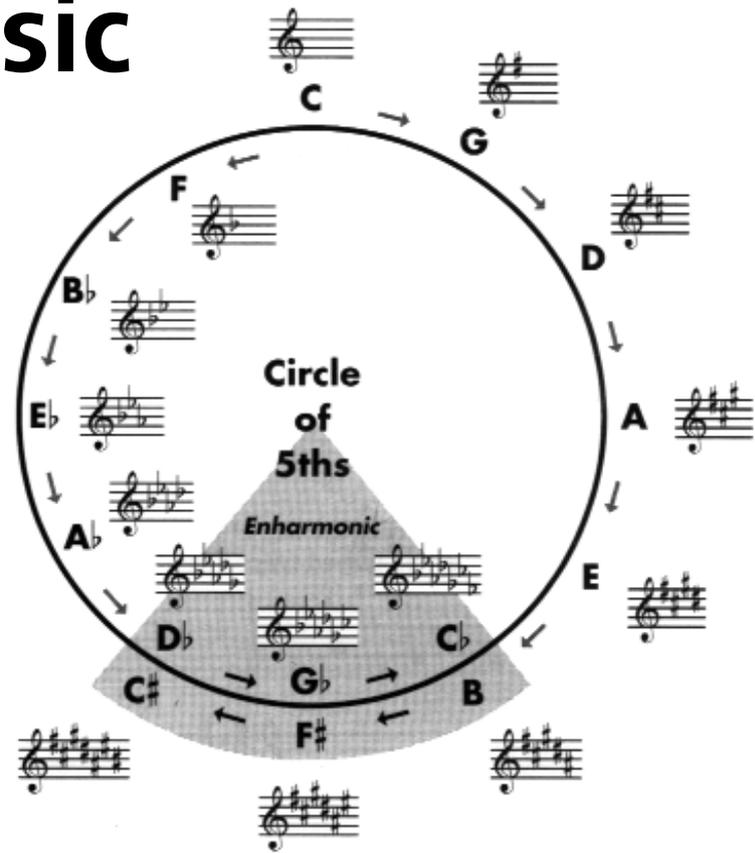
In addition, we might look at the physics of sound, relating it to various musical instruments and their history. After nearly four years it is interesting to see how much of this materialised and what just evolved.

On the serious side, we tackled the Associated Board's Music Theory syllabus up to grade four or five. (The illustration gives a flavour of our work). This was a challenge for several group members and they should be congratulated on their determination.

One group member challenged us further by leading a session entitled *The Sound of Music* when he traced the evolution of musical scales from Pythagoras to the well-tempered scale using principles of physics. This was set against a Christmas 'jolly' when we watched a recording of one of Howard Goodall's *Twentieth Century Greats* programmes, featuring the music of the Beatles.

At each meeting we start with music gossip, when we share musical experiences of the previous month and pass on news of coming events. Then any homework is returned and reviewed, followed by a recap of the last meetings work and then on to the new topic. After this I might slip in some light relief in the form of a quiz, before we finish with tea.

We have had three guest speakers: a clarinettist who brought her suite of



instruments, talked about them and played two pieces; a session on church bell ringing; and a fascinating talk by a part-time composer.

We had an outing to the Pilgrim Harps factory, where we learnt about the making of harps and had a short recital.

On a sunny June afternoon we went by invitation to a private home to see an early 19th century Broadwood Grand with an interesting soft pedal action plus a virginal, and compared these with a substantial modern Grand – all followed by lemonade in the garden.

But the demands of the theory syllabus began putting a strain on the group leader as well as the members – we were now on cadences, modulation and modal music.

Although the original quest to find out why some music has the effect it does – and on some listeners but not others – had not been successful, the group

wanted to continue its meetings but with different aims and objectives.

We used part of the latest Christmas jolly to brainstorm the way ahead. We might be looking at the life and times of composers, librettists and their role; music from other (i.e. non-Western) cultures; opera; music in society; musical structures (kicking off in March with Sonata Form); piano music; minimalism in music; atonal music; jazz and other popular music types.

From now on, group members take responsibility for one session a year, with resources including outside speakers, recordings from BBC sound or any suitable TV programme, or material gleaned from the Internet.

We are slightly short of members and will be looking out for interested folk who can join in and contribute to the enjoyment we get from our exploration of music.



The start of the piece on the CD – Op. 74, No.1 in C Major

What's the Score?

I remember my excitement when my father guided me through the score of Haydn's *The Clock Symphony* on the wireless before the last war.

I'd had a few piano lessons so I knew how music was written, but with a score it was now possible to pick out the different instruments more clearly – even if I was counting bars like mad and getting lost at the repeats.

Thirdagers who have never touched a piano (except to dust it) can share in the fun. Using a specially prepared DVD of the score of a Haydn quartet movement, the tutors at Merton (we have three music groups) have their members briefed in half an hour.

Once you realise that no-one tries to read all the notes – you just skim the patterns on the page – a quartet score is fairly easy to read, but a full orchestral score can be baffling at times.

The golden rule is: if in difficulty, count the bars, but otherwise be prepared to get lost, but spot clues (like clusters of rapid quavers) to find your place. Or you can just go to the start of the next movement and wait for the players to catch up.

Following an orchestral score like Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* helps enormously with picking out the instruments (bass clarinet, bassoon, viola, harp etc.) that are not so easy to identify on CDs. It is also easy to spot themes and motifs visually, and it is fascinating to compare how scores appear on the page.

When browsing in Foyles Bookshop I was seduced by the two books of score extracts that accompany the *Norton History of Western Classical Music*, especially as they come with

Martin Funnell
Merton U3A

accompanying CDs. The lot includes more than 200 substantial examples of varied lengths, and has given me material for two years of my classes at Merton.

The accompanying notes (and indeed the history) are designed for vocational students who are expected to understand the esoteric details of harmony and counterpoint – and I do quite a bit of skipping.

One snag with this course is that it covers many obscure (but significant) composers and gives only limited attention to the 'favourites' – there are only two Mozart examples for instance. So it doesn't always provide a U3A class with the more usual indulgence of 'the best bits' to enjoy or doze to.

Unfortunately my class is too big to read from one copy of the score, and I've not yet found an easy way to display one on a TV screen or digital projector (other than the laboriously prepared Haydn mentioned above).

Although many scores are out of copyright, copying is tedious and expensive. So the fun of reading the score is reserved for me and any students willing to pay for them. Can anyone suggest a solution?

If you haven't met them yet, the Dover scores are ideal, cheap, comprehensive and out of copyright.

My Haydn DVD (Op 74 No 1 first movement) lasts 8 minutes, and copies can be loaned from the Resource Centre. Or try:

www.doverpublications.com
Martin Funnell: 020 8946 7739
funnell@onetel.com

Listening

David Andrews:

When I joined the Sheffield U3A in the late summer of 2001 it was to take part in a Music Appreciation Group. These are called *Listening to Music* groups but I think the word 'appreciation' suggests an onward and upward striving to discover more about composers and their work.



There were three flourishing music groups in Sheffield, but with the keen interest in music in the city these were full. The coordinator suggested that I should start a new one.

I have spent many decades enjoying music and being curious about works and composers I did not know. In recent years I have collected a substantial number of CDs, often featuring the obscure, but I have never thought of establishing, let alone directing, a group of this kind.

I chatted with coordinator Ray Cottam of *Listening to Music II* who runs his group effectively. I said that I would like to run a group that was a mix of entertaining and educational – enjoyment of course, but also for people to feel a broadening of their awareness of composers, their times, their music, how it came to be written, and why it sounds as it does.

He said this was his view too. He also said that I could not be responsible for people liking everything I played: "Nobody can like everything equally."

He explained that he gave what he called 'artistic direction' by selecting – but still listening to suggestions – the music to be featured. My experience during the years showed that he was right.

I bore these points in mind. I also reflected that for a group to function well, the coordinator needs to have a genuine liking for people, to value them and derive an equally genuine pleasure from bringing music to listeners who are approaching music from different levels of knowledge, and even, dare one say, different levels of tolerance.

One lady who joined us told me she knew nothing about classical music and asked if this mattered.

to music

Sheffield U3A

I told her that an open mind and heart, and a healthy curiosity, were all that mattered. She is now one of our regular members and derives at least as much from our activities as any other member.

The group is six years old, the membership is three times what we began with, and there is a waiting list. We meet in members' homes, and their openness and hospitality is a vital ingredient in the working of the group. We are not so much group members as 'friends in music'.

We began in 2001 by listening to short pieces and movements – snippets – but I wanted to move on to the appreciation of complete works. Rachmaninov's 18th Variation in *Rhapsody on a theme of Paganini* is fine, but what about the rest of the work? The piece sounds so much better when appreciated in context, as part of the whole.

The opening of Beethoven's monumental *Fifth Symphony* is shattering, but what of its context, its relevance to the rest of the composition?

Only by asking ourselves these questions and seeing the work in this way is it possible to appreciate the music and its composer. For some years now it has been a rarity for us to have short extracts in our music afternoons.

The level of involvement of my friends in the group, the level of open-mindedness, and their willingness to listen with intelligent commitment to the music, are aspects of our times together that will live with me always.

We enjoy, from time to time, old favourites, and I try to shine light into the corners of some of these pieces to illuminate facets of the work that some, perhaps, had not noticed.

On the other hand we play less well-known composers or often, interestingly, some music by a well-known figure that is atypical of his or her work or simply neglected for no clearly definable reason.

Programmes often feature a mix of these elements. If, say, we are having a Russian afternoon, we might well have some Tchaikovsky, but also Taneyev, Arensky or Kalinnikov.

Education and entertainment. Or vice versa – take your pick!

Music from 1900

Tony King: Cheltenham U3A

Cheltenham U3A celebrated its 21st Birthday in 2006, and as befits a town with an internationally famous Music Festival, we have a healthy musical content among our interest groups. In the 2007 line-up of around 70, 14 are related to music.

I started my group *Music from 1900* in September 2006 because, apart from our performance groups, the other music groups gave little attention to the music of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The name of the group does not make any reference to type or genre. This was intentional, and at our first meeting we played a programme of selections ranging from late Rimsky-Korsakov *The Golden Cockerel* (1908) to Michael Nyman's *Musique Grande Vitesse* (1993) written for the opening of the French TGV North Extension to Lille.

We try to break down the arbitrary barriers between 20th century classical music and other styles: jazz, film scores and selected areas of popular music. As with some recent changes made by BBC Radio 3, to broaden the musical content in some programmes which had formerly been regarded as classical, some eyebrows were raised initially, but the group is now settling down into a regular mix of well-tryed and some more adventurous music.

Before I started, most of Cheltenham's music appreciation groups (with a couple of notable exceptions) seemed to be mainly leader-presented sessions for listening to music. Perfectly valid in their own way, but I felt that some of them lacked anything to endorse the mutual learning aims of U3A. This is beginning to change and at least in the groups that I participate in there is now more discussion among members.

At the inaugural meeting of my group I suggested that every meeting should contain a short period of time given over to joint discussion of a topic related to the programme of the day, and that members share the task of programme selection and presentation.

This is not intended to be a daunting task, and I appreciate that some people feel uneasy about even the most modest contribution. However, with encouragement, even the most diffident can usually

be persuaded to bring along a favourite CD or even a vinyl record.

This appears to be working well. As an example, one of our group prepared a programme devoted to Neo-classicism in 20th



century music. He started in the familiar territory of Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony*, and progressed rather like Mussorgsky with short explanatory 'promenades' via Schoenberg, Stravinsky, Satie, Poulenc, Busoni, Richard Strauss and Respighi to finish with another lollipop – Vila Lobos *Little train of the Caipira*.

It was a most enjoyable meeting and everybody present declared that they had discovered at least one gem of previously unknown music. As a newly-formed group, we have planned our first few meetings to give us a series of tasters of what we hope to build upon.

Listening to recorded music as a group is a rewarding experience. Bringing in different presenters from within the group and inviting member contributions further enhances the pleasure to listeners and challenges the presenters, encouraging them to research a little and to learn more.

But what should be the next step?

Cheltenham U3A music groups make regular visits to live music events. We are blessed to have a local concert hall, the famous Pittville Pumproom for chamber concerts, and a delightful Matcham Theatre which regularly presents opera and ballet. Cardiff and Birmingham are additional venues within easy reach.

My group is preparing a programme entitled *Paris in the 1920s and Les Six*. I mentioned this to a young composer who is teaching me to play the piano. He has kindly offered to give us a recital of Poulenc songs and piano pieces, plus some of his own.

We frequently involve our music-making groups at U3A social events such as Christmas parties and summer garden parties and we are looking at ways of introducing more home grown live music into our music appreciation groups.

Vintage Brass

Three years ago, retired police officer Jeff Bloom formed a brass band within Christchurch U3A. It began with a handful of players, either beginners or those who had returned to their instruments after several years.

Vintage Brass has grown to 22 members. There is also an intermediaries section for those with some previous knowledge or those who have developed well during their time of learning.

There is a beginners section teaching enthusiastic men and women who are learning to play an instrument for the first time. The band is conducted by Peter Guntrip, who has 50 years experience of conducting brass bands and ensembles.

Jeff Bloom takes the intermediaries: "The commitment is whatever you are

Betty Guntrip: Christchurch U3A

prepared to put into it. If you practise for half an hour a day, you will make better progress. You need good lung capacity but that will come in time."

Lydia Bloom is a member of this section: "Your appreciation of music grows as you progress."

Ray Pickett takes the learners. He has played in the Bedford Town Silver Band, a Royal Marines band and a Jazz Band.

George Watts loves it: "Once you start to play an instrument you realise just what you have been missing."

The groups want to expand, so anyone in the Christchurch area who has a trumpet, horn, baritone, euphonium, bass or trombone or even a set of drums, would be welcome.

Prospective members usually tell Jeff what instrument they would like to play, but if they want advice he



Christchurch U3A Brass Band

usually suggests the cornet, flugelhorn or tenor horn, these have a similar mouthpiece.

The band plays music ranging from the classics through numbers from the musicals to swing and blues.

Last year the band took part in a concert at St James Institute, Southbourne. They also featured at the tenth anniversary celebration of Christchurch U3A in December 2006.

The band held its first public concert in April which was a joint event with Bournemouth U3A's Olde Tyme Singers.

For many this was the first time they had taken part in a concert but they enjoyed the experience even though there were some nervous moments for them.

The audience of 200 responded well to the band and the singers, and the event encouraged the performers to aim for further concerts.

The future looks bright for this enthusiastic band and it is planned to have one concert each term.

They look forward to playing music for the enjoyment of others.

Eric Withams: Great Baddow and Galleywood U3A

After taking early retirement from teaching music in Essex schools, I took over a children's choir, and later formed a youth choir. Thirteen years later, when recruitment and sustained membership were becoming more difficult, I gave up the conductorships.

A chance meeting with a local U3A member prompted me to suggest the formation of a 'Singing for Pleasure' group.

I wanted to provide choral singing for those who would like to be involved in a choir, but felt they weren't experienced enough. Also I wanted to cater for those who had not sung for years (maybe not since school days), and would like to take it up again. I was not targeting experienced singers.

Feelers were put out at a monthly meeting with the idea of having some workshop sessions with ten or twelve interested members. Some of those who showed interest were concerned because they couldn't read music, but I assured them this would be no bar to membership.

The opening sessions were in February 2005 and ten or so brave souls submitted to activities including vocal warm-ups, breathing exercises, rounds, 'call and response' songs and easy-to-learn African chants. A good time seemed to be had by all, with a great deal of humour as they 'found their voices'.

Singing for Pleasure

Much of the material was what I had used with my young choirs, but I was careful to present it in a way that no one felt it was beneath them. Membership increased despite a few who put in one appearance and disappeared without trace. Two years later we have a membership of 27 and average about 22 for our meetings on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays of each month.

There has been noticeable progress, and we are now singing three and four-part songs, despite a dearth of men. Our repertoire is broad: madrigals, spirituals, folk songs, pop standards from the 50s, 60s & 70s, religious music and recently a chorus from Vivaldi's *Gloria*.

At first I provided word sheets and music copies, but all now seem to work happily from the notated copies.

I want the group to experience some of the wealth of choral work, and to stretch them by performing music above their expectations, but I am anxious not to lose sight of the original aims. I don't want any singers to feel they can't cope and give up. The enthusiasm, attendance and growth of the group would suggest that we must be doing something right.

If any readers run a singing group, I'd love to hear from you and share ideas and experiences.

ejwithams@tiscali.co.uk

**Can you pluck, scrape or blow?
If the answer is 'Yes' then you
are needed for the New Scratch
Orchestra starting shortly**

Oompah Pah!

By Clive Russell: Blandford U3A

The card above caught my eye as I joined the queue in the post office

A few weeks earlier, whilst on holiday abroad and browsing around a flea market, I purchased an article I had no use for.

'What on earth have you bought now?'

A thousand reasons flitted through my brain to justify the purchase of a silver musical horn but the best I could come up with was that it would look good on the wall of my lounge.

On the opening of the bell was engraved the maker's name and address that happened to be only a few kilometres away. A phone call confirmed that the factory was still in business so a visit was arranged where the manager identified the instrument as an Eb Tenor Horn of 1956 vintage. After a few toots, and a drop of oil, he deemed it playable and worth the money I had paid for it.

It hung in the lounge until one evening I blew into one end and a sound came out the other, thereby creating a new interest in my chequered retirement. After two lessons from a French horn player, learning nothing but definitely lighter in pocket, I decided on *A Tune A Day* book.

I had no previous musical knowledge. The music teacher during my school days was a sadist who ruled by fear and a split bamboo cane. But I persevered and managed to play two octaves, plus some simple tunes that included a pretty good rendering of *Abide With Me*. However my reading ability ended at FACE and EGBDF and I found it impossible to play unfamiliar tunes from the score.

I e-mailed the contact on the card, a lady with a hyphenated surname, indicating my interest while emphasising my lowly playing skills. A musical standard of Grade Five, or better, was required. I added that I *did* own a reasonable suit.

Her reply assured me that I could possibly hone my basic skills from other horn players in attendance and that the first rehearsal would take place the following Wednesday evening.

I replied and emphasised yet again my playing standard but was told that all would be well.

My neighbours were subjected to daily sessions and they must have been heartily sick of *Abide With Me*, plus the two octave scales, but they wished me luck on the day.

The community hall was ablaze with lights and busy with people so I parked in the corner to collect my thoughts and assess the situation.

It had the aura of a proper concert instead of a scratch orchestra rehearsal but I took a deep breath, picked up my horn, and headed for the entrance.

I put the instrument under a chair, hung my coat on the back, and approached a lady who was ticking off names from a list. She was obviously the one with the hyphenated surname and I emphasised my shortcomings yet again. This time she smiled bravely and suggested I go and join the trumpet players.

As I set up my music stand nearby they picked up their instruments and moved off leaving me on my own until a French horn player arrived and nodded a greeting. The conductor called for silence but, having left my hearing aid at home, I could only make out every other word he was saying.

Four clarinettists set themselves up in front of me, a sole bassoonist to one side then, adjacent to her, hyphenated sat down and started warming up her oboe.

A buttock-clenching feeling, which I had experienced before after losing my footing on the heaving deck in a storm force 10 gale, crept over me when the orchestral scores were handed out.

I could make neither head nor tail of it and felt like early man looking in the back of a transistor radio.

'What's this then?' I enquired of the French horn player.

'Oh that,' he replied. 'Just play one octave lower.'

Play one octave lower! Every stem seemed to have several dots attached and how on earth was I supposed to know which one to play.



'and he played beside still waters'

The conductor tapped his baton and a hush descended on the assembly. He pointed, not at me thankfully, and the string section burst forth with Mozart's *41st Symphony*. I managed an F and a G before losing the plot and laying down my horn beside the chair.

It's not often you have the chance to sit with an orchestra in full volume. Not to one side but slap bang in the middle for the whole 30 minutes. I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

The music eventually died down and everybody congratulated everybody else on a memorable performance. I was left out of the accolades although one comment, from the French horn player tossed in my direction, was memorable.

'Maybe your forte lies more with a training session of the local brass band.'

I packed up my horn, put on my coat, and retired gracefully from the orchestral scene. At the *Barley Mow* I treated myself to a pint and a packet of crisps. Maybe my forte does lie with a brass band but I can now proudly add Mozart's 41st to my CV.

I have a large collection of videos and DVDs of most of the major works and wanted to have folk round to my house to view them, and make new friends into the bargain.

I had never heard of the U3A, but found a leaflet about it in the library. I went to the next open meeting and joined up, then put forward my proposal for a new group.

I made posters and printed leaflets and several members showed an interest and signed on. The group was advertised in the newsletter as being held at my address – 2.30pm on the second Wednesday of every month.

The first meeting was on 12 November 2003 and I showed a video of the opera *La Bohème* by Giacomo Puccini, recorded at the Sydney Opera House. Thirteen members came and we had a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon, ending with tea and biscuits. I had printed out a programme with the cast and synopsis and everyone had a copy.

I have since put on 42 performances, with an average of 11 members at each viewing. I use videos of opera with subtitles in English.

I've only once repeated a performance and that was the first one, *La Bohème*, by special request because it was so popular.

We've seen the popular Puccini operas, and several by Verdi, Bizet, Britten, Mascagni, Leoncavallo, Saint-Saëns, Tchaikovsky, Strauss and Gounod.

The ballets have included the well-known ones, but also experimental works by Matthew Bourne.

Gilbert & Sullivan have proved to be favourites (several of my group were in performances during school). These seem so topical even today – funny, tuneful and satirical.

Only one of Richard Wagner's operas has been put on for the afternoon session, and that was *The Flying Dutchman*.

I am a great fan of the *Ring* and have several versions of the four operas that make up the whole. If you see it on stage, you go for four days. It lasts about 16 hours. Each opera is long, not possible to show in one sitting. So I asked my group if any one would be interested in coming along in the evening and we could start showing it as a kind of Germanic soap, doing say two hours, and then taking in a further two the following week.

Five brave ladies agreed to come and this worked extremely well. I used the DVDs of a staging at the Metropolitan

Passion For Opera

Jeanne Yarde: Warminster U3A

After my husband died in October 2002, I decided to find like-minded people to share my passion for opera, ballet and Gilbert & Sullivan



"It is a joy to exchange knowledge with the group members."

Opera House in New York, filmed in 1993. It was traditional in set and costumes and they so enjoyed it. One said she had been waiting for years to see it and her brother, who was a *Ring* fan, was delighted that she had been introduced to it at last.

I invited them to view a television documentary about Wagner that explained his personality, genius and the composition of his formidable works. I have recently purchased *Tristan and Isolde*, but it is about four hours long and I may have to show it in the evening to my Wagner converts.

We've spent many happy Wednesdays watching ballet. On the last occasion it was *La Fille Mal Gardée*. This is a light-hearted piece, famous for its clog dance and it has dancing chickens too. Everyone found it so amusing.

I am fortunate to come from a musical family and, whilst not playing an instrument, I have picked up a lot of information on the way, and can talk

about the operas, relate anecdotes, whistle and sing bits. My group members say I am fired with an enthusiasm that spreads to them.

Most have visited opera houses and seen famous singers and ballet dancers, and it is a joy to exchange knowledge with them. We chat over tea after the video is over, and at Christmas we have sherry and mince pies.

I have made some lovely friends and it is wonderful to have this interest in common. It has helped me to come to terms with my husband's passing.

I'm 81, mother of four, grandmother of nine, great-grandmother of two. I've been a published writer for many years. I have about 70 novels in print and am still churning them out.

The Passion for Opera group is one of my greatest pleasures. Thank you U3A!

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A Ring For All Ages

The North Cotswold U3A Opera Group recover after a spellbinding performance of Wagner's monumental work



John Busbridge

At one o'clock on a February Wednesday, a dozen members of the North Cotswold U3A Opera Group were enjoying lunch in a pub across the road from the house where they had just spent two hours watching the Prelude and Act One of *Götterdämmerung*.

During the previous two days they had watched the three earlier operas which with it comprise Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

This 'Ringathon', celebrating the group's tenth season, concluded four hours later as, in Patrice Chéreau's memorable production from the 1980 Bayreuth Festival conducted by Pierre Boulez, the chorus remained silent, staring at the audience like the figurines in Anthony Gormley's community sculpture *Field*, as if to ask: "What next? Hope or despair? What do you think?"

As Barry Millington writes in his *Master Musicians* book on the composer: "Whether the *Ring* is perceived as optimistic or pessimistic, revolutionary or conservative, is for each listener to decide for him – or herself."

Throughout 15 hours of viewing there was an aura of concentration and absorption in this gigantic work as 15 members fell under its spell.

Thanks to the brilliant camera direction of Brian Large, the internationally recognised master of this art, you could appreciate every detail of the personenregie – the emotion, motivation and interaction of the various characters – to a degree well nigh impossible in the theatre.

Eight years ago some of us went through a similar experience. But with a VHS recording lacking subtitles, the impact was less potent, even though that performance of another, later Bayreuth production was as fine.

Now, with a subtitled DVD and on a wider screen, it is arguable that this was as complete an introduction to the great work as you could hope to experience and, for those who knew it through live performances, a way of increasing understanding and appreciation otherwise obtainable only in the best opera house stalls – assuming you could afford them.

The *Ring* is inexhaustible because, as the eminent musicologist Deryck Cooke wrote: 'like Hamlet and Goethe's *Faust*, it is one of those "problematic" works in which their creators have attempted to delve so deep into the springs of human action that they have been unable to make their findings clear. (But) there is the hope, with problematic works, that the intellect may solve the problems and leave our feelings free play'.

Forget that Wagner created a saga with gods, giants, dwarfs and so on, the *Ring* deals with some of the most fundamental social and political issues facing humanity: the use and abuse of power; human love and loyalty; legal constraints and morality; and environmental pollution.

The study of this astonishing and thought-provoking masterpiece could last a lifetime and is one that, given the immediacy of today's audio-visual technology, any U3A member might consider.

Playing Music

Bernard Wilders

Gt Baddow & Galleywood U3A

This Music Playing group was formed in Sep 1999 by two not-so-good pianists who wanted to play duets. The other person got in first and I was made the coordinator.

I have no special musical background apart from being made to play the piano up to the age of 11 years when I managed to reach Grade 4 back in 1938.

Then the war started and in any case Sports Activities was much more interesting than the piano.

When I retired in 1991 I thought I would have another go at the piano. It was not a roaring success but it was most enjoyable. Back to the group.

After a few months we were joined by a further four pianists of more or less

similar abilities. We met as a group every two months or so and played what ever music we had been practising.

Sometimes we got to the end of the piece without breaking down but not always.

At each meeting we formed partnerships who would then decide what to practise and present at the next meeting. Practise was in each individual's home. Meetings were held in members' houses which involved a cup of tea and a chat as well as playing some music.

After a time, a few more members joined. Some played other instruments including violin, viola a viel (baroque violin), recorder, flute and eventually one or two vocalists.

The group has grown to 20 members



and some are excellent musicians, music teachers and the like.

The format is still much the same but meetings are held in a larger room off the local parish hall every three months. At each meeting partnerships are formed – some trios and occasionally a quartet.

From Little Acorns



The music group celebrates its 5th anniversary

Imagine a beautiful summer's day, the sun filtering through the trees creating patches of dappled shade, and in the background the stylish villa where we toasted the health of a lady who was 90. She sat on a velvet 18th century chair, which might have been used by Mozart.

Following this, a wonderful concert given by two talented young musicians, a violinist and a pianist, and there you have a picture of an idyllic afternoon at the Villa Bertramka in Prague.

So why am I telling you this? Well, with the U3A many things are possible. For those of us who experienced this musical venture, it was a highlight in a successful holiday, together with the Dvorak, Smetana, Mozart connection and a performance of the *Marriage of Figaro* at the Estates Theatre.

The event was sparked off by a course at the 2004 Eastern Region Summer School at Harlaxton Manor when, under the leadership of Anthony Burton, we discovered Czech music. (Since then we have continued with Early English Music 2005, Mozart 2006 and this year it is Elgar's turn.)

'Great oaks from little acorns grow' so they say. Well, we might be a sapling but music is strong and growing in our U3A.

For ten years we have had a fine choir inspired and led by Bea Poole, who is also the accompanist. Its fame has spread and regularly receives invitations to entertain, including the U3A AGM at Leicester University in 2005. It is also an essential part of the U3A Christmas Party each year.

Angela Newport Market Harborough U3A

Three years ago they sprouted another 'branch' – hand bell ringing.

When the leader of our music appreciation group moved away, we had to grow yet another limb in the shape of Exploring Music. The idea was to encourage U3A members who had little knowledge of music, as well as those who were devotees.

The members (50 in two groups) together with the new leader, embarked on a voyage of discovery. Five years on and some 50+ programmes later, we have expanded our knowledge and enjoy a varied musical diet. Indeed, the tree is blossoming.

And what of the future? More pleasure from our music, more serenading by the choir and more chiming of bells, and this year we are pushing the geographical boundaries further.

A party of 36 (including U3A members from Melton Mowbray and Stamford) are off to Tuscany for the Puccini Festival at Torre del Lago. During the six-day trip we will attend a performance of *Madame Butterfly*. We will also discover the delights of Tuscany – its scenery, architecture, paintings and sculpture with visits to Florence, Siena, San Gimignano and maybe get a new perspective on the leaning tower of Pisa.

Music is well in Market Harborough U3A and the sapling is developing into a sturdy tree. Where the roots will lead in the future is anyone's guess.

That's Jazz!

Brenda Söhngen: Spelthorne U3A

It started in early 2004 – a small advertisement in our monthly newsletter *In Contact* placed by our group coordinator Marion Robertson.

It read: 'First jazz appreciation conference/study day will be held in Reading on Saturday 30 March. The main speaker/performer will be cornet and trumpet player Digby Fairweather'.

I thought: "That's for me." I roped in a U3A friend and off we went. In the April newsletter I wrote a report of the study day and how successful it had been.

In our next newsletter, another insert from our coordinator was headed: 'How about some jazz?' and suggesting maybe somebody out there might be interested in forming a group.

I was sunk. How could I not rise to the challenge? So here we are, two and a half years on with 15 members. We meet on the last Friday afternoon of every month in my home – until we run out of chairs.

I joined the jazz appreciation network run by coordinator Bob Jones of Reading U3A. He organised the first jazz study day. Last year we had another, and one is planned for this year. He also keeps us up to date with newsletters and informs on jazz festivals and holidays, plus general jazz news.

My group are research addicts and can't wait to share their latest finds. They ask for homework! Last year we boldly stepped outside my humble abode and spent happy evenings at other local venues – a jazz club and an arts centre.

What more could you ask for? Thank you U3A for making it possible for me to do something I so enjoy in the company of friends of like mind.

Finally, an observation on the last study day. Have you ever seen 160 people sharing one big smile?



Bob Jones: U3A Jazz Appreciation Network Coordinator

All That Jazz



A marching jazz band at the U3A holiday in Perugia

What is Jazz?

The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz defines it as: 'A music created mainly by Black Americans in the early 20th century through an amalgamation of elements drawn from European-American and tribal African music. It cannot safely be categorised as folk, popular or art music, though it shares aspects of all three. It has had a profound effect on international culture, through its popularity and by shaping the popular music that developed around and out of it'.

How many types of Jazz?

Two: good and bad. However, jazz fans are as divided as football supporters and not many, I think like me, appreciate it all. I suppose in broad terms we could divide the music into: Plantation songs, Ragtime, The Blues, New Orleans Jazz, Stride and Blues Piano, Swing - Big Bands and Small Groups, Bop and Modern Jazz, Jazz-Rock and Acid Jazz. There are, of course, many other categories to be enjoyed by enthusiasts.

How did I become keen?

My father blamed the War! I was born in Liverpool. The Americans were based at Burtonwood about 20 miles away. I listened to the American Forces Network and heard everything from Louis Armstrong to Lester Young. It was a musical education by accident. My only regret is that I never learnt an instrument – only the gramophone. Or as one lady in the Network calls it, the Grannyphone

Becoming coordinator?

I was 'persuaded' to become the Jazz Appreciation Convenor when I let it be known, many moons ago, that I knew something about the music. There were so many members of Reading U3A that turned up for the first meeting that we needed rubber walls. At a following National AGM I was talked into becoming Jazz Appreciation Network Coordinator.

What do I do?

I have a Start-Up leaflet in National Office which is available if you wish to arrange an appreciation group. I have placed Jazz Music CDs into the Resource Centre that are available for loan. I send a newsletter to members of the network.

I have arranged holidays each year to jazz festivals in Europe. So far, members have been to Perugia and Ascona. This year, from 10-16 October, we are hoping to go to Perpignan by train.

I am also into my third year of arranging a Jazz Study Day in Reading. This year it will be on Saturday 22 September. A poster showing details has been sent to your chairman and business secretary. (See back page)

I am also willing to come and give a talk on Jazz to members of your U3A.

Someone, I forget who, said if you have to ask what is Jazz you won't understand it. By going to your groups you can increase your understanding and enjoyment of the music.

Happy Listening.

Bob Jones Jazz Network Coordinator
48 Mowbray Drive, Reading RG30 4XY
Tel: 0118 9413889

The Jazz Group

Dick Kempshall: Reigate & Redhill U3A

Our group was formed in January 2004 with the help of Bob Jones. It has developed satisfactorily at our monthly meetings with support, enthusiasm and even erudition.

In the first two years we used the historical Jazz TV* series by American film maker Ken Burns. This takes in New Orleans and Chicago traditional jazz, the swing bands and the rise of be-bop. It stimulated lively discussion and we learnt a lot.

The third year brought stability in a membership of eight and confidence in our ability to present meaningful programmes. We programmed profiles and concerts on members' videos to form the basis of our discussions – Count Basie, Adelaide Hall, Fats Waller and Ben Webster.

Two feature films were shown: *A Great Day in Harlem*, the story of how 50 leading jazz musicians of the 1950s took part in a photo shoot for *Esquire* magazine, and *Jazz on a Summer's Day* about the 1958 Newport (RI) Festival and famous for singer Anita O'Day's Ascot-style hat.

We enjoy a member's choice session each month. Our thanks go to those who have entertained us with their favourite tracks and personal reminiscences, and to those who have shared the hosting of our meetings. Material chosen has never failed to be of interest and has ranged over artists from Clarence Williams (one of the earliest recorded clarinetists) up to Andy Shepherd (one of the leading jazz saxophonists in Britain today).

Good humour always prevails at our meetings. No surprise then that one of last summer's highlights was a member's prized video *The Story of the Bass Saxophone!*

We look forward to the future with great confidence.

* available from the Resource Centre

U3A Online Courses

The courses listed are available online. Visit the website, www.u3a.org.uk and click on the link to Online Courses.

The copyright to the courses is owned by the Third Age Trust or by U3A Online Inc in Australia.

Course Titles

Tutored courses (£15)

Introduction to Astronomy (Aus)
The Night Sky (Aus)
Saving the Soil (Aus)
Online Genealogy (Aus)
Maintaining Independence (Aus)
Introduction to Western Philosophy (Aus)
The Romans (Aus)
Renaissance Italy (Aus)
Religions of the World (Aus)
China: An Introduction
Visiting Artists in Rome
Digital Imaging
Creative Writing: Short Stories
Writing for Publication

Untutored Courses (£8)

Artists of Spain
Italian Art
Venice and Her Artists
Visiting Artists in Rome
Great Northern European Artists
Creative Writing: Fiction
Creative Writing: Poetry
Writing for Good Effect
Writing for Publication
Writing Family History
Digital Imaging
Garden History
Understanding Computers
Introduction to Astronomy (Aus)
The Night Sky (Aus)
Saving the Soil (Aus)
Online Genealogy (Aus)
Maintaining Independence (Aus)
Introduction to Western Philosophy (Aus)
The Romans (Aus)
Renaissance Italy (Aus)
Religions of the World (Aus)

For details check the websites:

www.u3a.org.uk/online_courses

www.u3aonline.org

Courses available only to U3A members. U3A tutors and writers are unpaid volunteers.

Since last September I have been national coordinator for music performance.

So far I have been contacted by more than 90 U3As telling me about vocal and instrumental activities, including singing groups, choirs, recorder groups, jazz groups and instrumental ensembles.

What a wealth of musical activity there is going on out there.

Some group leaders have been in touch, by letter, e-mail or phone, to report what they do, while others have had queries which I have done my best to answer. In due course I hope to send out a newsletter dealing with some of the

The Story of God

by Robert Winston

Our Religions group is looking, and will pay, for the tape that goes with this. It was shown on BBC TV some time ago. Please write to me at:

Alan Seymour
8 The Approach, West Clacton
Essex CO15 2NE

Discussion Groups

Don Drew has received 300 topics and would like to thank:

Joyce Jones	Arun
Don Macdonald	Chard/Ilminster
George Rogers	Cheadle Hulme
Don Sherwell	Cheltenham
Ray Harman	Maldon
Alan Seymour	Tendring

Here is a selection:

Is there an After Life?
Are there advantages to Old Age?
War on Terror - is it real War?
Ban non-seasonal goods in shops
Do TV soaps have any value?
Capitalism - good or bad?
Do we know the Highway Code?
Is 'cheap' cheap?
Retiring to die, or dying to retire?
Should women rule the World?
When is it right to 'blow the whistle'?
Make poverty history
Class division
Farming - is a decline inevitable?
Does every cloud have a silver lining?
Ethics and roles of nursing
Faith schools - a good option?
Sharing the World's resources
Technology bites back
Does life really begin at Forty?
For the full list, contact Don:

Tel: 01267 234773

dondrew@tiscali.co.uk

Music Performance

Diane Ford

most regularly raised issues.

During my first year as coordinator I would like to compile a list of music groups so that I have an overview of the extent and range of what we are engaged in. From what I know, there must be thousands of us happily singing and playing regularly.

I shall be pleased to hear from you.

Diane Ford

199 Victoria Avenue, Hull HU5 3EF

Tel: 01482 343199

Diford2001@aol.com

JAZZ STUDY DAY

Saturday 22 September 2007

The Sanctuary, Wycliffe Baptist

Church, Kings Rd, Reading

11.00am - 11.30am

Coffee/Registration

11.30am 'Women in Jazz' A talk by
Historian and Pianist Jen Wilson

1.00pm Lunch

2.00pm British Jazz Great, Tommy

Whittle and his Quartet with

Barbara Jay who has sung with

Benny Goodman and Ronnie Scott

Interval for Afternoon Tea

Cost: £19.50 all inclusive

Admission by ticket only:

Apply to Bob Jones (pg23)

Holiday to Perpignan

10-16 October 2007

Are you interested in architecture, Catalan art and history, wine appreciation, languages, as well as jazz?

Come and enjoy this interesting and inviting part of Southern France.

The holiday includes return rail travel by

Eurostar and TGV between

London Waterloo and Perpignan.

Coach transfers in Perpignan between
rail station and the Hotel Kyriad.

Prestige use of local coach for 2 full day
excursions, with guide to Carcassonne and
Narbonne/Beziers. Hotel accommodation
with private w.c. plus bath or shower.

B&B arrangements whilst at hotel. Dinner
in a restaurant on first and last evenings

Cost £446.00 per person. Single room
supplement £96.00 Insurance £29.00

Apply to Bob Jones (pg23)

Mark envelope Perpignan. Inc. SAE