

CLASSICAL MUSIC STUDY 2014

NOVEMBER 2013: PLANNING MEETING

We had a great planning meeting. Many thanks to all of you who could make it, and a big thank you to David for hosting us and plying us with coffee and biscuits.

We agreed that:

- The group should focus on classical music - broadly defined - and would exclude pop music and jazz.
- We should be a self-help group, with members taking it in turn to prepare a presentation of musical excerpts for the rest of the group to listen to and discuss.
- The theme of the presentation should be chosen by the presenter - examples were given from those with a relatively wide focus: a composer for example, or a type of musical form, to those with a narrower focus, such as a musical form by a particular composer or even a particular piece of music.
- Presentations could be shared by a couple of members.
- Presentations would include around 50 to 60 minutes of musical excerpts and a tea/coffee break.
- The only format for music excerpts at the moment is CD's.
- We will meet on the second Monday of the month from 10am until 12noon.
- We should contribute 50p per session for tea/coffee and biscuits.
- For the time being we will meet in members' homes. David Dobbs has very kindly offered to begin with.
- Paul will offer the first presentation in December. The theme will be Beethoven's string quartets. David will offer the January presentation.
- Everyone would have a think between now and our December meeting about what they would like to present in the future.
- If we grow in numbers, we might have to consider moving to a larger space, but we shall cross that bridge when we come to it.

We noted that:

- Between us we had a wide range of musical experiences, but what we all shared was a love of classical music and a desire to find out more about it.
- The model of learning we have adopted enables us to get back from the group many times what we contribute individually.
- We have fantastic local resources in terms of the central music library and the internet.
- We could, from time to time go to concerts as a group.
- We could, from time to time, concentrate on bringing and comparing different interpretations of the same piece of music.

- We can use the meetings to share information about local performances of classical music.

DECEMBER 2013: INAUGURAL MEETING

Many thanks to all of you who were able to attend our first regular meeting in December, where we looked at Beethoven's string quartets.

We agreed that we have a wide range of musical knowledge, a common enthusiasm and enjoyment and we all want to learn more.

Future meetings will look at J S Bach (David), Vivaldi (Ian), Rachmaninov (Steve) and Fugues (Ken). We are looking for new members and if you're interested, rest assured, you don't need a lot of technical knowledge!

JANUARY 2014: J S BACH

A talk by David

FEBRUARY 2014: VIVALDI

Stravinsky apparently said of Vivaldi that he 'wrote the same piece of music 600 times.' At our latest meeting, Ian Robey demonstrated convincingly that he was wrong. In a humorous and lively presentation, Ian introduced us to Vivaldi's life and work.

His music included a wide range from sonatas to operas and from religious pieces to concertos. The fourteen of us who were present enjoyed ourselves immensely.

Every second Monday we meet to listen to one of our members present a composer, a theme, or a particular work that they would like to share. Previously, we have had Beethoven's late string quartets and a personal view of J. S Bach.

Whether you are a musical scholar, an enthusiast or interested in finding out more, come and share our enthusiasm. Failing that, come and spend 50p on a cup of high quality coffee and a biscuit. Eat your heart out Mr Morrison. Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month from 10:00 until 12:00 and generously hosted by David Dobbs.

MARCH 2014: RACHMANINOV

We had a great presentation in March from Steve Smith, introducing us to the music of Rachmaninov. David Dobbs was our genial host and eleven of us spent a very rewarding two hours. The idea of the study group is that we take turns in researching a composer or a theme or even a single piece of music and then run a session, illustrating the talk with pieces of recorded music.



We don't have any musical experts in the group, but we do have people who are enthusiastic about classical music and who are prepared to spend a bit of time to prepare a presentation every now and then.

APRIL 2014: FUGUES

Who says that modern technology and classical music don't mix? On Monday 14th April we were treated to an exposition of "The Fugue" by Ken Savage. Using the internet, television and programmable key boards many of the mysteries of baroque and Classical fugal composition were revealed making what is sometimes considered to be "difficult" music a rewarding experience.

Thank you Ken and thank you Trish for your hospitality.

Our next meeting on Monday 12th May will be at our usual venue of 33 Orlando Drive when Kath Robins will be presenting some of the work of Maurice Ravel. That's right, the Bolero man!

MAY 2014: RAVEL

No, we didn't get the Bolero but a dozen of us were introduced, in varying degrees, to the music of Maurice Ravel. Kath Robins presented us with a packed two hour programme of his keyboard, instrumental and orchestral music along with a potted history of his life and the influences that informed his work. The progression of his musical development from early classical influences through romantic to modern were clearly demonstrated.

Thank you Kath.

JUNE 2014: MESSIAEN

Paul introduced us to the works of Olivier Messiaen. The music was quite challenging, but everyone seemed to find something of interest and all agreed that it was an interesting session. Thank you, Paul.

JULY 2014: MOZART

We had a good meeting in July. Maggie had done a lot of research on Mozart and took us through his whole career from his first symphony (aged 9!), through to his last works just before his death aged 35. It was an amazing life and he apparently wrote enough music to fill around 160 audio CDs. Maggie brought out the diversity of his musical output, including chamber music, operas, concertos and symphonies and brought home to me just how much Mozart was an innovator, who wanted to be at the forefront of musical developments.

AUGUST 2014: PURCELL

Gwen Woolley gave a really interesting presentation on Henry Purcell to 12 of us. Collectively, we didn't know much about this English composer who was working at the end of the 17th Century, and his choral and opera works were particularly striking. He died tragically young and we can only speculate how English opera might have developed had he lived longer.

SEPTEMBER 2014: HAYDN

The September meeting of the study group was a real eye opener. David Dobbs presented the vocal and choral music of Haydn. He argued very persuasively that Haydn's choral music was rather lack lustre and uninspired, compared to his chamber and orchestral music, until he visited London and came into contact with Handel and, in his own words, 'had to start his musical studies all over again'.

The before and after differences were copiously and entertainingly illustrated with musical excerpts from Haydn's 14 masses and the same number of operas (the 'before'), and from his late career masterpieces *The Creation* and *The Seasons* (the 'after'). *The Seasons*, in particular, was a revelation to me of the English influences Haydn had absorbed and which he

expressed through settings of English poetry and folk song, and some stirring orchestral tunes. David was also the genial host to our 15 strong meeting. Many thanks, David.

OCTOBER 2014: BRITISH COMPOSERS

Brian and Jill Thomas hosted the October meeting of the study group and Brian presented a really interesting survey of 20th Century British composers. These ranged from the relatively well known to the fairly obscure. The works by better known composers were also unusual. Brian introduced us to Britten's very uncharacteristic Simple Symphony and to the paired and contrasting choral works The Lamb and The Tiger by John Tavener. We heard the Celtic Symphony by Granville Bantock, a rousing piece including a number of folk songs and airs and scored for no less than 6 harps (but alas, no bagpipes). Brian also had a special place in his heart for Victor Healey-Hutchinson's A Carol Symphony, first heard on Children's Hour during the way.

NOVEMBER 2014: WET, WET, WET

A talk by Trish

DECEMBER 2014

Quiz