



U3A MUSIC APPRECIATION GROUP



9th NEWSLETTER – June 2009

Johann Nepolmuk Hummel

At our session on 18th June, Keith presented the first in an occasional series on less famous composers who perhaps should be better known. He summarised the life of Johann Nepomuk Hummel, who was the most famous Austrian pianist, composer and conductor of his time at the crossroads between the classical and romantic periods. He composed in almost every genre except symphonies. His early works were in the Classical style, greatly influenced by his teachers/mentors, including Mozart and Haydn. But in his later music he developed a proto-Romantic style that anticipated the later stylistic developments of composers such as Chopin, Schumann and Mendelssohn. He has been described as “the pianistic nautilus machine, with which the younger Romantic composers developed their technical prowess”. Keith hopes that the extracts from chamber music, choral works and concertos that he played demonstrated that Hummel wrote some of the most attractive and scintillating music of the early 19th century.

Why, then, is his music not more widely known? Contributing factors may be (1) that he did not achieve the emotional depth of some of the later Romantics, (2) that some of his best works from the Weimar years are fiendishly difficult to play and (3) that he reverted towards his classical roots towards the end of his life rather than developing further his early Romantic style, and hence fell out of favour with academics and critics.

The Origins and Early Years of Jazz

Brian then presented the origins of Jazz, from African music and the slave trade, negro spirituals and beyond emancipation in 1865 to the development of the blues. Colin then explained the 12-bar blues and demonstrated on the keyboard. Brian’s musical examples from the early years (up to the 1920s) included blues numbers from Bunk Johnson, King Oliver, Bessie Smith (the most famous of the 1920s blues singers) and Jelly Roll Morton (one of the foremost early jazz pianists). Louis Armstrong was also heard on some of these recordings. We also heard an example of Ragtime – *The Entertainer* – by Scott Joplin. Brian ended his review of New Orleans bands of that period with the first white jazz bands: the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, and Bix Beiderbecke (*right*).



Future Sessions

On 16th July, we will have an entire session devoted to 20th century music. Starting promptly at 10.00, Mike Cary and Keith will introduce us to works by Aram Khachaturian (1903 - 1978). Brian will then continue his introduction to jazz music covering the late 1920s to the 1940s, including such artists as Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Earl Hines.

As Brian mentioned on 18th June, in the next few months we would like you all to bring along some of your favourite music on CD/MD/vinyl record or video/DVD. We will

contact you individually to arrange this and put several sessions together under various headings. Even better, if you would like us to help you to put together a session on a particular composer, period or genre, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can work together with you and schedule it the next few months.

A provisional programme for next few months is provided below.

Month/ Date	Provisional Programme
16 July	1. Orchestral music by Aram Khachaturian (<i>Mike and Keith</i>) 2. Jazz during the late 1920s to the 1940s , including Duke Ellington, Earl Hines and Count Basie (<i>Brian</i>)
(no meeting in August)	
Sept-Nov (dates for each item to be confirmed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♪ “Selections 1” and “Selections 2” based on favourite music from members of the group (<i>Group members are invited to contribute pieces and say a few words about them</i>) ♪ Orchestral, choral and chamber works by Sir Hubert Parry, including a review of his five symphonies (<i>Keith</i>) ♪ Brass Bands (<i>Roy</i>) and Brass Instruments (<i>Mr Vanryne</i>) ♪ “The Greatest Symphony of Modern Times” – the story of a late Romantic symphony (<i>Keith</i>)

Concerts

The CLS will be returning to Wycombe Swan for another season of concerts commencing on 18th October with:

Britten *Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes*
Mendelssohn *Symphony 5 (Reformation)*
Elgar *The Music Makers*

Please let Brian know if you would like to attend this concert.

Averil alerted us that Theatre Group are arranging a trip to the Valentine’s Day concert by the Philharmonia at the Royal Festival Hall (Sun 14 Feb 09 at 3pm). This includes music by Tchaikovsky, Bruch, Khachaturian, Dvorak and Bizet. Contact Theatre Group if you would like to attend. In conjunction with this, we plan to have a session on Max Bruch in January.

If you have any suggestions for other orchestral, choral or chamber music concerts that we could attend as a group in the next 6 months, please let us know as soon as possible.

Happy listening!

Brian (484099) and Keith (891507)

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