



Upbeat

August 2017

Imogen – An honest Critic.....

Our ten year old granddaughter Imogen accompanied my wife to the Summer Concert at Craigiebuckler Kirk. In order to keep her interest I had asked her to score each item out of ten and write her comment on the programme; a la X Factor. She has no particular aptitude for music but knows what she likes and is not afraid to be honest. She enjoys dancing in a group in competitions to the usual diet of popular stuff enjoyed by her age group and I wondered what she would make of our programme. Her unedited comments are in brackets. I found her criticisms innocent and refreshing and would like to share them with you.

We Praise Thee O God - 8/10 [very loud]

Highland Mary – 7 or 8/10 [high pitch]

The Banks O' Doon – 9/10 [calm]

The Invention of Printing 10/10 [funny]

The Abolition of Slavery – 5/10 [long and a bit boring for me]

The First Powered Flight – no score or comments

Liverpool Girls – 9/10

Roll Alabama Roll – no score but [not my cup of coffee]

Tundra – 10/10 [great I think]

Nella Fantasia – 9/10 [very good]

You Raise Me Up – 10000/10 [lovely]

Miserere – 9/10 [high pitch]

Green Grow the Rashes, O – 6/10 [was all the same words over and over again]

A Red, Red Rose – 6/10 [I didn't like]

The Greenland Whale Factory – 10/10 [loved it]

The Leaving of Liverpool – 8/10 [it was ok]

Let The River Run – 10/10 [grandads song – great singing]

Goin' Home – 9/10 [it was nice]

Here Comes the Sun – 1000000/10 [favourite one of all]

She gave mixed reviews to Ian Watt's excellent set but the Spanish Dance Op 47, No 5 "Andaluse" was described as "lovely"; and the Recuerdos de la Alhambra as "fantastic". Both got full points! Clearly this is a girl with great taste!

Imogen enjoyed the concert and let's face it we perform for our audience; of all ages. I hope her feedback made you smile.

Raymond Dick

For an alternative view of the concert, please find Alan Cooper's excellent review on our website - www.aoc.org.uk/Reviews/reviews.html

Ed.

Introducing Janice Montgomery

Some of my earliest memories revolve around music. My parents are lovely singers and my mum sang with the Aberdeen Chorale Society and my dad with a Gospel Male Voice Choir so they were always good at creating harmonies! My maternal grandparents were also super singers and for a treat on a Sunday afternoon, we all sang along to Jim Reeves hymns on an old fashioned record player. Intriguingly, for a small child, my grandparents also had a cupboard full of all kinds of instruments including a banjo type thing made out of a turtle shell (weird but true) and anyone who came for supper on a Sunday evening got their pick of

the instruments and sang while my grandma played the piano. I think that is where I got my love of twangy things and bangy things!

Accordingly, I had piano lessons as a child but I confess to being a fairly execrable kind of pupil. If one learned one's piano piece well and played it without fault, Miss Reid would then lift the lid of the baby grand and let the pupil play it again. Suffice to say, I never had the lid open! I wasn't very good but it did give me the priceless gift of being able to read music which has stood me in great stead in later life. When I was 11, I decided to learn to play the guitar. I taught myself and have used the ability in various worship bands and for children's assemblies when I was a schools chaplain. I have learned other instruments along the way. I am not particularly good at any of them but I defy anyone to see someone playing the ukulele and not start smiling!

In terms of choirs, I started young in various schools choirs, in church choirs and eventually sang in a madrigal choir in secondary school. I loved performing in musicals at school and more recently spent ten very enjoyable years with the Aberdeen Chorus of Sweet Adelines so I am no stranger to bling! In women's barbershop it is virtually a crime if you sing without moving so if you see me start to move, please feel free to kick me in the ankle – it's a hard habit to break!

When I am not singing I am a university careers adviser and am very involved with my husband Neil, in City Church Aberdeen where I encourage people to be involved in small group bible studies and train the leaders as well as sharing what Jesus has done for us with others. I am also a big sports fan and particularly like watching tennis and cricket, and somewhat oddly, darts. I just like to watch – I don't think I could hit a darts board at all, never mind the treble twenty!

Music remains for me a central interest. I have always loved beautiful harmonies and now I have the privilege of singing accompanied harmonies (thanks Erica!) and singing them with a delightful bunch of people who made Alison and I feel incredibly welcome so thank you.

Tim'rous Beasties

During a recording session years ago I spotted a large spider on the floor near the altos. I stepped forward, picked it up gently and deposited it in the garden, and then rejoined the sopranos. All this happened silently, with none of the screaming or standing on chairs that women are expected to do in the presence of spiders, and the recording

continued uninterrupted. It was arguably my most significant contribution to the twentieth century Early Music scene.

I still like spiders. A little one has his own web-site high above our front door. We have a miniature rope ladder hanging from our bath taps so that any arachnid emerging from the plughole can scale the slippery white slopes.

We have other small pals too. Years ago, Andrew and the children built a little pond under our bedroom window. Gradually it acquired varied plant and animal life, including soundless and mysterious newts. In spring, frogs serenade us with lively croaking and splashing during their nocturnal mating parties. A few days later spawn appears, a mass of bubble-wrap on the water. If there's a mild spell in February, sometimes the frogs lay too early – and then the weather changes again. I've occasionally come home from a rehearsal, gone out with a bucket and rescued the spawn from frost. This is a very cold job, especially as you can't wear gloves to do it.

When the tadpoles emerge, they are immediately vulnerable. Andrew once saw a crow fly down with a piece of stale bread, soften it in the water and proceed to make a tadpole sandwich. Once a crow even stole an adult frog, flew off but dropped it when I ran out shouting. It was a large female, apparently unharmed, to my relief.

Frogs are inquisitive and like to watch us gardening on summer evenings, their heads emerging from the pond like tiny periscopes. Before the AOC summer concerts I sit by the pond and let them calm me down. If I trail my hand in the water several swim up and nuzzle my fingers. Sometimes one sits on my hand for a while, gazing at me with gold-rimmed black eyes.

Another garden friend is the mouse that lives down a hole under the bird-table. Andrew has seen her sunbathing and smirking at him as he mows the lawn. Mice are Bad News as they tend to bring all their friends and relations, but this one is solitary, a busy little figure with pointed nose and big dark eyes. Not everyone likes spiders and frogs, but mice have a place of honour in Scottish hearts. If you feel that we are sentimental in our feelings for, er, Mousie, remember this: that a far greater writer than myself was distraught when his plough disturbed a fieldmouse's nest and shattered her world.

Erika Fairhead.

A Good Read

Being the member of a book circle means that, each month, two or three books, not of my choosing, are to be read. As you can imagine this means meeting authors, previously unknown and reading about subjects which I would not normally pick. 'Safe Passage' by Ida Cook was one such book.

On the surface this tells the true story of two ordinary English sisters who, between 1937 and the outbreak of war 'were the most effective British transporters of Jews out of Germany' (Daily Telegraph).

Incredibly all of that arose through the sisters' passion for opera. Opera is my least favourite musical genre, but I was immediately drawn into this book by the two young folks' pursuit of singers, conductors and operas in most of the grand concert halls of America and Europe. By so doing they made the most amazing and lasting contacts and friendships.

Few of the operatic stars had I heard of other than Galli-Curci, but the book tells how by saving from their meager earnings, they travelled firstly to New York and then throughout Europe, following a particular singer or opera.

As troubled times came in Germany in the thirties, they were approached by a famous conductor, Clemens Krauss, to help find passage out of Germany for beleaguered Jews. Their profound knowledge of opera and friendships formed with opera divas such as Rosa Ponselle and Viorica Ursuleac – and later with Callas herself, is quite unbelievable.

By becoming familiar faces to German high command in hotels and opera houses, they succeeded in smuggling out e.g. furs and jewellery for Jews whom they eventually managed to get to Britain or America in the most extraordinary fashion.

It is jaw-dropping stuff. All I can say is, 'read on' and be equally enthralled.

'Safe Passage' by Ida Cook, pub. Harlequin Mira (2016) - £8.99.

N.B. By ordering through Amazon on the AOC website, Orpheus benefits financially.

Margaret Wood

Early Orpheus Dates for Christmas 2017

Westhill Trinity Church.

Wednesday 6th Dec, 7.15 - 9.30pm Rehearsal

Friday 8th Dec. concert ... Arrival time to be confirmed.

Craigiebuckler Church.

Wednesday 13th Dec, 7.15 - 9.30pm (to be confirmed) ... Rehearsal

Friday 15th Dec, concert Arrival time to be confirmed

Competition Result!

In our last issue, there was a competition to re-name the newsletter. Thankyou for the excellent suggestions you came up with. There can only be one winner, however, and I've chosen one of Val's *multiple* proposals as the new name – 'Upbeat'. It's succinct and effective – just like the AOC! Congratulations to Val on her winning contribution.

Ed.

A Big Thankyou

As you will see from reading the latest issue of Upbeat, there has been a varied and high quality selection of pieces submitted by choir members. This adds up to what I think is the best issue of Upbeat so far. Thanks then, to everyone who has given me contributions and keep them rolling in!

Ed.

