

Upbeat

April 2020



APRIL THOUGHTS

I think we will all agree that it is a strange world we find ourselves in just now. A named, but really a fairly unknown virus, has changed how we live, work and interact with others. But, this week, I started wondering just how our lives will be after this pandemic has passed by. Will we go back to life as before or will we keep up the community spirit that this virus has brought out? An elderly friend calls it "The War Time Spirit" but, as most of us are not really old enough to remember that, it was a time when everybody made the best of friendships and food supplies rationing made sure everybody got a fair share of what food was available, although the black marketeers were always around to make a quick extra pound or two! My own ration book is somewhere in the loft, maybe I should look it out!! The big difference between wartime and now is the restriction on movement. Then folk were able to go visiting, to the Theatre or Cinema. We are just not used to having to stay at home and only travel if necessary. I also wondered about the wee shops that barely exist but are so vital to our usual shopping. Will they be able to afford to open up again? I reckon hairdressers will be inundated with customers! However, I realise just how lucky I am to have a garden to exercise in, to sit out in (in isolation) and to be able to enjoy the activity of the birds, see my daffs and various spring flowers bloom with their bright colours which say nature is unaffected by the virus and will continue come what may. Also, in our wee corner of Scotland, we have had some lovely sunny days which do entice us outside, within the restrictions, but just seeing the bright skies help cheer us up. At Clatt, we still have an underlying nip in the wind, but it looks good from inside. We must all just hope and pray that we, and our loved ones, all remain safe and I look forward to being able to meet up again.

I thought I would try one more time to see about getting into Cadbury's delivery list – Number 79,573! All Grannies must have had the same idea! Either that, or Jane M has an awful lot of folk sending her *chocolate*.

With my very best wishes to you all. Please stay safe.

Moir

Just in case you thought you were having problems, here's a cautionary tale from Spike Milligan, in the form of a poem.

(for disease, substitute virus. I would have changed 'disease' to 'virus' but that of course, would have ruined the rhyming) –

Have a Nice Day

Help, help, ' said a man. 'I'm drowning.'
'Hang on, ' said a man from the shore.
'Help, help, ' said the man. 'I'm not clowning.'
'Yes, I know, I heard you before.
Be patient dear man who is drowning,
You, see I've got a disease.
I'm waiting for a Doctor J. Browning.
So do be patient please.'

(Sound of waves lapping and seagulls crying – 2.5 minutes)

'How long, ' said the man who was drowning. 'Will it take for the Doc to arrive? '
'Not very long, ' said the man with the disease. 'Till then try staying alive.'
'Very well, ' said the man who was drowning. 'I'll try and stay afloat.
By reciting the poems of Browning
And other things what he wrote.'
'Help, help, ' said the man with the disease, 'I suddenly feel quite ill.'
'Keep calm.' said the man who was drowning, ' Breathe deeply and lie quite still.'
'Oh dear, ' said the man with the awful disease. 'I think I'm going to die.'
'Farewell, ' said the man who was drowning.
Said the man with the disease, 'goodbye.'
So the man who was drowning, drowned
And the man with the disease passed away.
But apart from that,
And a fire in my flat,
It's been a very nice day.

Warning! Drowning Limerick!

There was a young fisher named Fisher,
Went fishing for fish in a fissure,
When a cod with a grin it pulled the lad in.
Now they're fishing the fissure for Fisher

THE CANNA HAM by Angelo

It's sad to decide to write something for our magazine because of the global scary situation forcing us to stay at home. I at least hope it might help cheer our spirits up a little. Still in the musical spirit (or almost) which keeps us joined, here's an anecdote about my early musical "career". As I mentioned already, as a teenager and until my early 20s, I used to play in a band and at some point, we had become locally renowned, so people would hire us for entertainment at weddings and such.

One time we travelled to this tiny village on the mountains, named Canna, of which before then I only heard of as being liable to get isolated by heavy snow in winter. The time it took us to get there was quite long but the landscape made up for it. Once there, people were quite welcoming and we started our performance for the wedding party. Bear in mind, at that time (I'm speaking early 70s), this kind of celebration was much simpler than now, as it was more about gathering together and having fun by dancing and drinking, mostly in private places. Nowadays it has turned into a big business event, held at big venues, with hundreds of attendees (many of which don't give a damn about the newlyweds), enormous menus, big parts of which go to waste. The couple and relative families spend a huge amount of money because they "have to do it bigger and better".

The meal lasts for hours and hours and hours and at the end almost everybody looks forward to going back home as soon as possible because they're fed up and need to get those belts off. Anyway (please excuse my digression), after a good couple of hours, all of a sudden our instruments stopped playing while the lights were still on, so we thought a fuse had blown. Soon we realised our main power source had been unplugged while a big guy told us quite abruptly we had to stop and without explanation demanded that we follow him. We looked at each other under the impression there was something wrong going on, but with no answers to our questions, we had no other choice than to follow him down some dark stairs. Imagine our state of mind as teenagers when, big surprise, we got to a cellar where a fair number of hams were hanging off the ceiling, while a guy was slicing one of them. On a table there were some slices of homemade bread newly cut for us and we were told to help ourselves and eat as much as we wanted! All accompanied by a glass of some nice and fresh fizzy wine - no rules back then about age!

Well guys, let me tell you that so far (and in my life I have tried quite a few), no Parma or San Daniele ham has ever compared to the smooth, moist and well balanced flavour I tasted that night. We were told those hams were 6-7 years old and had been cured over that time especially for that occasion! Usually a well cured ham, like the renowned brands I mentioned, would not go over 24 months, because beyond that time it would start to get too dry and salty. It would appear that I actually had the chance to taste a miracle of nature. But probably in that special situation, the environment had favoured some sort of microclimate that created that 'miracle'. I have never again had the chance to go back to that small village but be sure I will never forget the 'Canna ham'!

Editor: Q. Can a can o' ham be better than a Canna ham or a Cannelloni? **A.** Candidly: no, it canna.

Warning! Canning Limerick!

A Canner exceedingly canny
One morning remarked to his granny,
"A Canner can can
Any thing that he can,
But a canner can't can a can, can he?"

GRAVE HUMOUR by Raymond W. Dick

Recently I was typing a reply to a friend whose husband was celebrating his birthday; it came out that he was a “twin” and I was reminded of something which happened to me which set of a chain of memories; so here goes...

While all the following anecdotes are tasteless they are most certainly true; but if anyone is offended or upset by them I can honestly say “I am not bothered”! (Yeah! Go Raymond!!)

Many years ago my cousin who lives in a village in Aberdeenshire very sadly lost her husband to cancer. I went to the very well attended funeral service in the church and then on the graveyard. Picture the scene; I am standing there on a desperately cold February day watching them lowering the casket into the grave listening intently to the minister’s words when one of the pall bearers looked up and it was him, the deceased! The hair on the back of my neck stood on end and a potential bout of incontinence threatened. I then suddenly remembered that my cousin’s husband had an identical twin brother and I started to breathe again. However for one moment.....

One Friday evening I was reading the local paper when I realised that a young man who had been killed in a car accident a few days earlier was the son of close colleague who I had trained with and worked with for many years. There can be nothing worse than losing a child [of any age] and I was shocked that I had almost not made the connection and resolved to pay my respects. The funeral was the following day [Saturday] at Aberdeen Crematorium. I set off bright and early and joined the large crowd outside the West Chapel. I confess to feeling a little uneasy as I did not recognise anyone, but when the doors opened I filed in along with the others. The principal mourners arrived and I could not understand why my friend and colleague was not among them. I had a real sense of panic when the minister started the service by saying how the deceased had lived a long and active life in London and retired to his roots in Aberdeen. The penny dropped - *I was at the wrong funeral!*

I needed to be at the next one; but how to leave without a fuss? I joined in the service but felt like an intruder; sweating buckets with embarrassment. It did not matter that nobody knew I had no right to be there; I knew it and my stress was palpable. I needed to get out before the service ended and the “hand shaking” began. An exit strategy presented itself. As luck would have it I was at the end of the very last row of seats. When the last hymn started I stood up with the others but put my hymn book on the seat and sneaked along behind the back row. I then walked round the building and recycled myself into the next funeral.... I don’t like funerals at the best of times but that was a day best forgotten!

I told the above story to a relative who lives near Windsor and he said that he could go one better. A friend of theirs [ex Aberdeen] had died in Bristol and they went to the funeral in Bristol Crematorium. When they got there after a very long drive along the M4 they asked a local for directions. Unfortunately they did not realise that there was more than one crematorium in Bristol and yes, you’ve guessed it; they ended up at the wrong one. They missed a funeral -while I almost made a career of attending them.

Just after Ann and I got married a relative died and we went to the funeral service taking my elderly dad and Jim, a friend of his, with us. After the funeral his friend did not want to go back to the house for “the boiled ham” so we dropped him off en route. As Jim exited the car my dad’s farewell words to him were “well Jim that’s been an outing for you!” Ann and I were shocked with the casualness of the remark considering the circumstances and remonstrated with him; but it brought home to us how older people view the inevitability of death. I remembered his words several years later when we returned to the house after his funeral and I said to the others on leaving the funeral limousine, “well in the words of my dad; that’s been an outing for us”! I think he would have laughed!

In these surreal and stressful times someone has to take it upon themselves to lower the tone and I am happy to revert to type and do just that. After all I must be the only member of the choir who has to

delete their own surname from “Google” before taking their computer for servicing! [Think about it] With a surname like mine a sense of humour comes as part of the territory!

Finally: to end on a musical note [no pun intended]. A very good friend of ours whose wife is in the Inverurie Choral Society died just over a year ago. My abiding memory of him is his reply when I asked him if he was going to their next concert. His response was “indeed I am not – I have been subjected to more requiems than the Pope - enough is enough!” He had the last laugh as the congregation had to sing ‘Keep the red flag flying’ at his funeral – unforgivable! May he rest in peace!

I dedicate these ramblings to all our relatives and friends who are no longer with us and who we miss!

These are difficult times for all of us and we do not know where this is going; stay safe and well!

Raymond W Dick



Raymond, think how difficult things must be for the Dik Dik!

PORTUGAL

(but not as you know it)

It all started with an unusual invitation from my friend Swat. Come and sing with my choir in Portugal at their concert. Well, Brain and I are suckers for a challenge, so we accepted the invitation, got hold of the music and started practising. With no guidance apart from the voice part tracks it was demanding, but when the first full choir rehearsal took place it all became clear.

We had arrived at Swat’s one lunchtime and were soon creating a dormitory with camp beds donated by the army. With exacting instruction on how to fold the blanket corners, it reminded me somewhat of the pictures of the soldiers’ hospital run by Florence Nightingale in the Crimea.

The orchestra assembled on the Saturday. These professional musicians came from all over the world. Mike arrived in his usual manner, the bell of his Tuba packed instead of a suitcase. As a professor at the Royal Academy in London, he endeared himself to us with his sense of humour. He has been seen both playing his Tuba in the swimming pool and cycling in his tails down to the concert venue with his Tuba on his back. All the conductor’s instructions were in Portuguese, so the challenges continued.

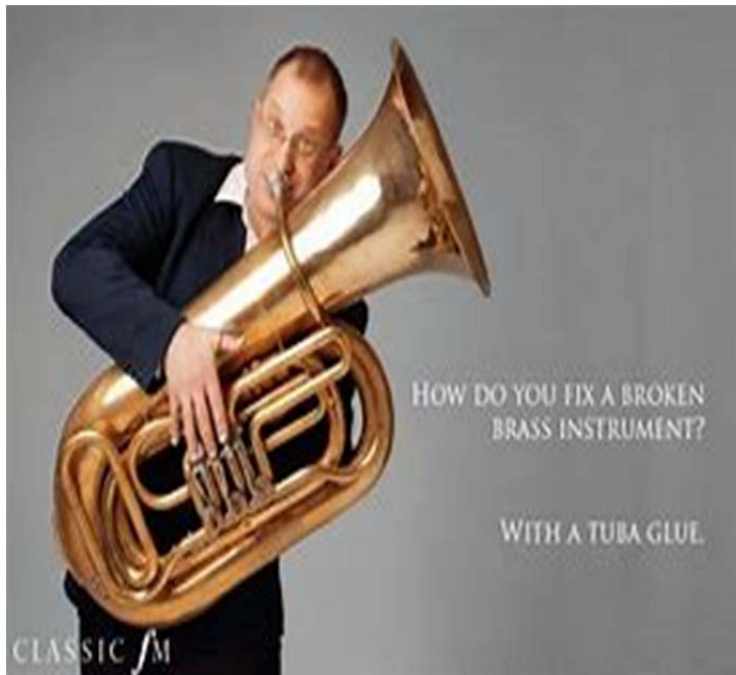
Swat and her husband left the UK to explore and had a notion to go to Greece. It appears they turned right instead of left somewhere in Europe and continued their journey by horse-box (including the horse) until the vehicle broke down. Asking a farmer if they could camp on his land and work to raise money for repairs, he let them use the shepherd’s hut on his land. After a while they learned that the farmer was seriously in debt. The farm was the idyllic spot for Swat and the family, so they offered to buy the farm acquiring land which now supports organic figs and olives.

Slowly but surely they built a farmhouse big enough for their growing family. Swat then began planning to develop her passion for music. Back in Wales, the land of her birth, she had already excelled in both performing on the piano at the investiture of the Prince of Wales at Caernarfon and as a very accomplished accompanist. We have seen her investiture seats in the music school.

(Cont'd)

Discovering that Portugal did not have a tradition of choral music and that the area had no access for people to learn piano, she and her husband built a music school within the farm boundary. Her choir, Coral Sinfonico de Portugal, was launched, performing twice a year. Friends and family are always welcome and both Brian and I feel very lucky to have been part of this special venture.

Jane & Brian



We are approaching difficult times ...

Prestissimo, ma con rubato

Soprano

Alto

Tenor

Bass

6

♩=60

continue a tempo

ignoring conductor

11

S.

God, the fear of God.

A.

God, the fear of God.

Two men waiting at the pearly gates strike up a conversation. "How'd you die?" the first man asks the second.

"I froze to death," says the second.

"That's awful, how does it feel to freeze to death?" says the first.

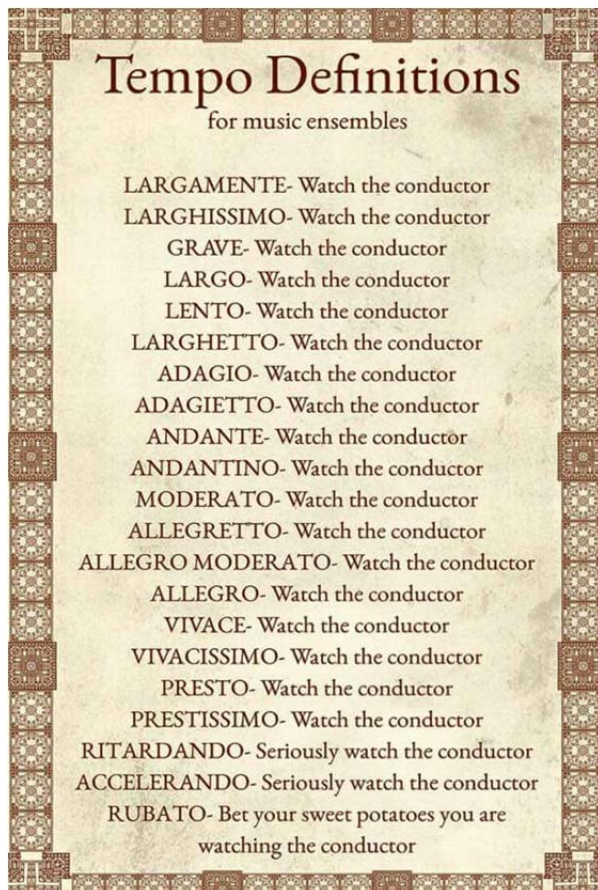
"It's very uncomfortable at first, you get the shakes, and you get pains in all your fingers and toes. But eventually, it's a very calm way to go. You get numb and you kind of drift off, as if you're sleeping. How did you die?" asks the second.

"I had a heart attack", says the first. "You see, I thought my wife was cheating on me, so one day I showed up at home unexpectedly. I ran up to the bedroom, and found her alone, knitting. I ran down to the basement, but no one was hiding there. I ran up to the second floor, but no one was hiding there either. I ran as fast as I could to the attic, and just as I got there, I had a massive heart attack and died."

The second man shakes his head. "That's so ironic," he says.

"What do you mean?" asks the first man.

"If you had only stopped to look in the freezer, we'd both still be alive."



INHERITANCE TRACKS – Jane Murray

Some of you may be familiar with "Saturday Live" on Radio 4 , 9.00 -10.30. It features a section where a well-known person selects music they have inherited from someone. They also suggest music they would like to pass on.

On my solitary daily walks just now, I started to think what I would choose. My Mum had a lovely voice and played the piano by ear. Dad was a very good violinist and taught me to play. We often played Scottish music and a particular favourite was 'The Rowan Tree'. When Mum died, aged 90, I chose that to play at her funeral.

During the war Dad was ordered to go home and collect his violin before going overseas. He played in the dance bands entertaining the troops. He looked back on this time with happiness unlike being one of the troops liberating Holland, which he found difficult to talk about.

He loved the music of Stephane Grapelli and once I had taught myself to play the piano we enjoyed playing swing music together.

It was Liz Foubister's father, Mr Richard Cutbush, Principal Teacher of Music at Aberdeen High School for Girls, who auditioned me and arranged for me to receive free piano lessons in my 3rd Year and it is thanks to him that I have enjoyed a happy career in music.

I would never have imagined then that I would one day have the opportunity to accompany the leader of the Scottish Opera Orchestra at our concert in May 2018. When Tony Moffat came to stay with us when he was in town with the opera, he would bring music for us to play. One Saturday I took out Dad's music and we played 'Red Resin' and 'Blue Strings' by Cyril and Clifford Hellier. He

loved these pieces and immediately went online to find more by these composers, adding them into his recital programmes. He played 'Chinese Rhythm' at our concert.

One of the major joys in my musical life has been conducting A.O.C. since 2007. You have passed on to me your delight in choral music and hopefully I may have introduced you to some music and composers with which you were not familiar, such as 'Sure on this Shining Night' by Morten Lauridsen.

What music would you choose to pass on?

(Suggestions please for next edition)



Greetings from Costa del Cults! by Jan

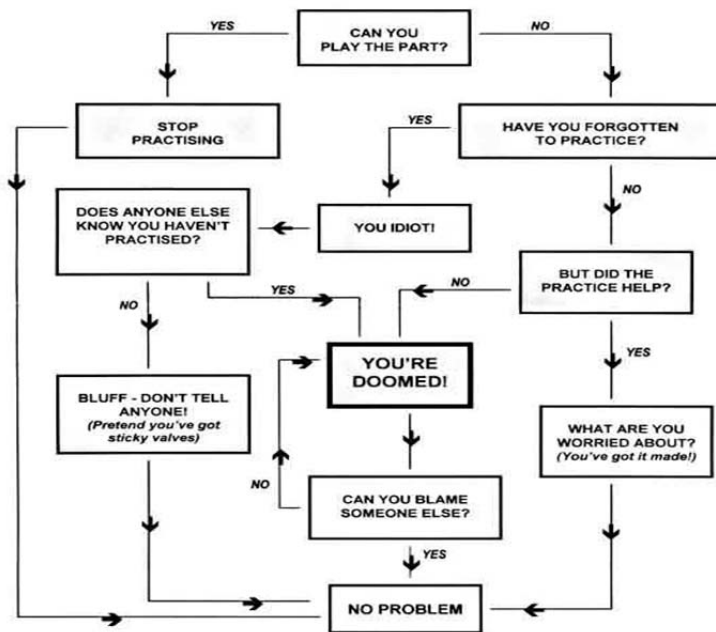
Today's the day I've decided to spend in the garden. It feels really hot here inside writing this... the sun is well up, I was up late last night logging into 'Click & Collect' as that is what one has to do in order to get a slot on the next available day!

Yesterday I spent the whole day up in my sun-kissed loft at the sewing machine... making scrubs bags for front line workers. Hopefully today I will drop them off when we take our 'constitutional'. My total is now 20 and I feel quite proud of the way the last lot turned out. The first lot started very tentatively, cutting up old sheets and trying to maximise how many I could get out of different sizes of fabric. But it got a bit better each time and I now feel I've got the system. However I couldn't work as a machinist in a factory. I was totally whacked and the eye strain was worse than spending all day at a computer!

The scrub bag idea was initiated by a nurse who said it would be wonderful to have bags roughly the size of pillow cases, with a draw-string tie, that they could put their uniforms into as they came off shift and put straight in the wash. The bags needed to be washable at 60° in order to kill off all the nasties. I have found it particularly satisfying to a) be doing something to help and b) recycling a lot of old, but good sheets, pillowcases and scrap material. I am an inveterate hoarder and hate throwing good stuff away!

Now... to the garden!

REHEARSAL PROBLEM-SOLVING FLOWCHART



(I wish I could substitute 'play' with 'sing')

Question - AMALGAMATE PURE PHOTOSYNTHESIS!

Answer – ANAGRAMS TO HELP YOU PASS THE TIME!

Moira will print off the answers for next Upbeat. No prizes this time, just a challenge!

Towns and Villages in Scotland

eg:- HAY STORE – ROTHESAY

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-------|
| 1. BOIL RARE WIG (11) | ..... |
| 2. POST SPANNER (11) | ..... |
| 3. BROOM TYRE (9) | ..... |
| 4. I HEAL GLASS (10) | ..... |
| 5. I LIKE RACE LINK (13) | ..... |
| 6. HAVE NO NEST (10) | ..... |
| 7. MAIL LIFT ROW (4,7) | ..... |
| 8. BATTLE IDEA (10) | ..... |
| 9. COULD STEAL GAS (6,7) | ..... |
| 10. STRONG HEEL (10) | ..... |
| 11. THIN GREY BED (5,6) | ..... |
| 12. A HOLE TOFFEE GUEST (9,2,5) | ..... |
| 13. TO FLOWER AT BACK (14) | ..... |
| 14. USE DEAR MILK (11) | ..... |
| 15. JOG RON A SHOT (4,1,6) | ..... |

16. BEAT CLOWN M.P. (11)	.....
17. TINSEL TOWN (4,6)	.....
18. RUINS A COTE (10)	.....
19. IN FLORAL BADGE (6,2,5)	.....
20. I MAKE DRINK (10)	.....
21. BREACH RIDER (11)	.....
22. DEEP EARTH (9)	.....
23. BREAK LIT SIDE (4,8)	.....
24. TENTH PRIME FOOT (4,2,8)	.....
25. FED BARLEY (9)	.....
26. TRACTOR TO HELP (4,9)	.....
27. MARLED SCOT (10)	.....
28. SCALP PORES (10)	.....
29. WRECK HORN BIT (5,7)	.....
30. NORMAL KICK (10)	.....

EDITOR: Thanks Moira! You readers will now be overwhelmed with anticipation until you send me some new material for the next edition of Upbeat. I’m looking forward to it at

stevejstuart@outlook.com

Editor asks: Do friends ALWAYS get along together in times of lockdown? Or does a lockdown have the power to turn the loss of the remote into a dispute?

AND THAT’S HOW THE ROW STARTED!!

My wife sat down next to me as I was flipping channels.

She asked, “What’s on TV?”

I said, “Dust.”and that’s how the row started!

Saturday morning I got up early and quietly dressed, made my breakfast and slipped quietly into the garage. I hooked up the boat to the van and backed it out into a torrential downpour. The wind was blowing at 50 mph so I pulled straight back into the garage, turned on the radio and discovered the weather would be just as bad all day.

I went back into the house, quietly undressed and slipped back into bed. I cuddled up to my wife’s back. I whispered, “The weather out there is really terrible.”

My loving wife of 15 years replied, “Yes. And can you believe my stupid husband is out fishing in that?” and that’s how the row started!

I rear-ended a car this morning: the start of a really bad day.

The driver got out of the other car and he was a dwarf !

He looked up at me and said, "I'm NOT Happy!"

So I said, "Which one are you then?"..... and that's how the row started!

We went on a safari and met a Lion

I threw a brick at him and hit him right between the eyes.

I said to my wife that we had better run.

She said, Why should I run?

It was you who threw the brick."..... and that's how the row started!

ENOUGH???? AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED, PLEASE, PLEASE, GIVE ME ANY MATERIAL YOU CAN, ANY TIME AT ALL, FOR THE NEXT EDITION. REMEMBER, IT'S REALLY NICE WHEN IT'S ABOUT SOMETHING RELATING TO YOU.

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