



Workers' Music Association

BULLETIN: SPRING 2006

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Next Issue

We hope to produce the next issue by the end of August. The cut-off date for receipt of material for publication will therefore be 15 August.

E-Bulletin

If you would like to receive Bulletin by email, thus saving the WMA the costs of both printing and postage, please send a note of your email address, with your request to Steve Randall – steve.bugster@virgin.net

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AGM/EGM REPORT

At the AGM to be held at the Priory Street Centre in York, the attendance – 17 – made it inquorate. It was therefore necessary to hold an EGM instead, for which the quorum is 10.

The EGM approved the financial report and the rule changes relating to audit. It received the other reports. Laurie Bielby was confirmed as auditor. Chris Harrison and Tom Tomkins were appointed tellers and the results of the ballots were reported as follows:

President: **Vernon Frost**; Chairman: **Jill Snowdon**;
Executive Committee:

Aubrey Bowman, Audrey Brown, Mavis Cook, Rob Harper, John Jordan, David Martin, Ron Phillips, Steve Randall, Anne Schuman, Jennie Vaughan.

The coded envelopes passed to the tellers for counting were: 18, 19, 26, 27, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 41, 42, 44, 45, 50, 51, 54, 55, 57, 61, 63, 68, 71, 72, 77, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 97, 98, 99, 100, 103, 104, 105, 108, 109, 114, 115, 116, 122, 126, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 143, 145, 146, 149, 150, 152, 153, 154, 158, 160, 161, 165, 167, 168, 169, 171, 178, 179, 180, 181, 183, 186, 187, 188, 190, 195, 197, 198, 201, 204, 205, 206, 208, 209, 210, 212, 217, 218, 220, 236, 242, 245

Decisions were taken on motions as follows:

1. Increase in Subscriptions
(EC) – After a tied vote, the chairman ruled that it should fall.
2. EC Minutes to be sent to Members when Requested
(EC) – Passed.
3. Summer School
(Roy Bride/Nita McCrossan) – Passed.
4. Motion to re-organise WMA Executive Committee
(Roy Bride/Nita McCrossan) – Ruled out of order.
5. Rule Changes
(Roy Bride/Nita McCrossan) This had been listed as a rule change but was considered as a motion. After a tied vote, the chairman ruled that it should fall.

The rule changes set out on the agenda could not be considered because the meeting ran out of time.

Mavis Cook

NOTICES

David Martin, Irene Frost, Jill Snowdon, Robert Cruden and Reginald Christie have all received surgery since the last edition of Bulletin. They are all reported to be making good recoveries and we send them all our good wishes.

Ken Hughes died in March. Curiously, for about 25 years he had been a colleague of another member, violinist John Whalley CBE, who had died the previous summer. Ken's interest in music was lifelong and we were always absorbed by his ability to sing, often in thirds and sometimes in organum, to almost any classical theme. If he had the right partner, they could provide a most attractive duo and, naturally, were sometimes very funny.

His father too had a connection with us which derived indirectly from being a violinist with the Halle Orchestra. Alan Bush, long before the WMA was formed and shortly after the British Broadcasting Company was replaced by the chartered British Broadcasting Corporation, had been one of the composers represented in the first concert of chamber music to be broadcast by the new BBC. This would have been around 1928.

Unfortunately we do not know which of Bush's works was played although, at a guess, it could have been the work which had won a national prize a short time before. It was the string quartet formed and led by Ken's father, and one which, in its day, was well known, which performed this first broadcast of chamber music. The audience figures were very low although, as it was long before modern sampling techniques, it is not clear how the BBC made such a judgement. The Head of Music wrote rather sniffily to John Reith (the BBC Director General) that the compositions were attractive and the performance accurate and forceful musically, but that "the British public were not yet ready to listen to chamber music".

Ken, a widower, leaves two sons – Dr Richard Hughes is Professor of Computer Technology in San Diego at the University of California and Ken is an IT specialist at the National Statistical Office. Vernon Frost

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There are several dates for your diaries:

24 June, in Birmingham, an event to celebrate the 100th birthday of one of our Vice-Presidents, Katharine Thomson – writer on Mozart and supporter of Birmingham Clarion Choir. For further information, please contact Birmingham Clarion Choir.

****On behalf of the membership of the WMA, the Executive Committee sends congratulations and best wishes to Katharine on her birthday.****

Concert of Music by Keith Sparrow and Dal Strutt
7.30 – 9.30 pm on 15 July 2006 at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London. Tickets will be priced at £8.
Keith's works will include a Sonata movement for clarinet, 'cello and piano; and settings of words by writers including

Sir William Davenant, Alison Prince, C Day Lewis, A E Houseman, Thomas Hardy and Shakespeare.

Sunday 10 September, 7.00 pm at Lauderdale House, Highgate Hill, London N6: A performance of Vice-President Ronald Stevenson's song cycle "Songs of Innocence", plus other songs by him and yet another Vice-President, Aubrey Bowman. Performed by "The Artsong Collective". Tickets - £12 (£8 concessions)

WMA 70th Anniversary Concert. This is proposed to take place on 21 October in London. Date and venue to be confirmed.

Autumn Music Weekend at Sheringham Youth Hostel, 17 – 19 November 2006. Price £73. Contact Mavis Cook

ARTICLES

REINCARNATION MUSIC

Back in the mists of time, in 1993, someone ran an article in Bulletin in praise of contemporary music. The writer sang the joys of whizzo-wonder dissonance in Music of the Avant-Garde. But the Bulletin's readership begged to differ, and the following Bulletin was filled to overflowing with letters deriding contemporary music and defending more conservative musical values.

Now I want to go to the opposite pole from that much-attacked writer of 1993, and introduce the idea of reincarnation music. I do not suppose that anyone will bother to throw bricks at me, but I would welcome it if they did. Stravinsky once observed that no composer has arrived until he has caused a riot. The nearest that I have come to this was when two people walked out of a concert at the start of some music of mine; so I would welcome a little gentle rioting.

Reincarnation music is music written by a living composer wearing the persona of a composer living in a past age. In my case, I write music in the persona of a pupil of J.S.Bach in the year 1730. At this stage I must make clear that I am not writing mere pastiche. Those of us who have toiled away in the salt mines of doing a music degree will remember pastiche. This meant writing in imitation of a composer in order to learn lessons about compositional technique and consistency of style. Our tutors expected no individuality of expression.

But reincarnation music should be as full of individuality as any other kind of good music. When I compose as if a pupil of Bach's, I am NOT trying to write in Bach's style. Bach had

his personality and I have mine, and the two are different. I am writing in a style that comes naturally to me, a style with which I appear to have been born.

And that is the essence of reincarnation music; you write in style with which you appear to have been born. It is also the mark of a true composer, to compose in an inborn style, rather than a style that is adopted because it is fashionable. I use the term "reincarnation music" to describe a style that is not only inborn, but so closely reflects the style of a past age as to suggest that the composer has previously lived in that age, and learned the style at source.

Now I must confront the Avant-Garde of music head on. I am thinking of the sort of person who, as someone once told me, thinks that I am a traitor to our age. Our age is assumed to be the most wonderful age that ever was, full of tension and excitement that ought to be expressed through music in a permanent state of revolution, which moved the composer to write music that is ever shocking and ever new.

Well, thank you, but no. I wouldn't be true to myself if I tried to write that way. There was a time when I did write that way, propelled by fashion. But I did myself great damage in trying to compose that way, and I ceased writing such harsh music long ago. I still write some music in a mildly contemporary style, but it is a style that I have naturalised into myself, and I do myself no violence in using it.

So far this has been all about myself. But what about other people? Does anyone else write reincarnation music? Can anyone have a go at writing it?

Alas, I know of no one else who writes it; but then, I do not know that many other composers. I have heard of something called the Neo-Romantic style, which is by way of a return to 19th century music. But I have never heard any of this music, so I cannot comment. And can anyone compose reincarnation music? Well, no. You have to be called to it. You have to identify with an older music so strongly that you start composing in the style, no matter what your friends and teachers say. Then you have to force other people to listen to your music. This is not easy, but persevere. You may find that audiences, if unbiased, actually like what they hear. This has been my experience.

Once at a concert that included some of my music, my wife put it in the programme that I am the reincarnation of Jan Dismas Zelenka, a Czech composer and a friend of Bach's. After the concert a German lady, as lovely as she is musical, came up and embraced me, saying that my wife was entirely correct. Worse things can happen to a composer than being kissed on both cheeks.

David Martin

ANTI-WAR CO-ALITION DEMONSTRATION, LONDON SATURDAY 18TH MARCH 2006

Members of the WMA Singers joined with singers from Strawberry Thieves, Red & Green and Raised Voices to entertain and cheer the marchers as they passed by the Westminster Abbey after assembling in the square opposite the Houses of Parliament. The Police, although present in considerable numbers, were conspicuously laid back, much to the relief of the organisers, I am sure. The law concerning gatherings in this location seem to have been more honoured in the breach than otherwise to date.

The programme was a familiar one, with a range of songs to suit the occasion, including some old favourites and one or two new additions to the general repertoire.

We warmed up with Siya Hamba, which includes a certain amount of "dancing", as the temperature was low, with a keen east wind winding around the buildings, and then went through the 13 songs on the sheet in order.

Foolish Notion, by Holly Near,
Liberty, words Wolfe Tones/Jennie Sibley, tune
from Verdi's Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves,

Watch Out, by Holly Near,

The War Machine, by Sue Gilmurray

Boycott Song, anon

Lives in the Balance, by Jackson Brown,

Who Do They Think They Are, (Raised Voices)

Not in my Name, by Mal Finch (& J.H.)

Go, Go Antonio, anon

Get Out! Music Hans Eisler, words John H

One Song, One Dance, One world, One chance. Anon

and, of course, the Internationale.

The various choirs have some different arrangements of the various songs, but the general effect was harmonious, and seemed to be appreciated by those stalwarts marching past the choir.

It took over three-quarters of an hour for the passage of all those walking the very indirect route from Parliament to Trafalgar. The choir members who made the transition to the final singing spot did the trip along Whitehall in about 15 minutes, and got there just as the first marchers appeared out of Haymarket. The square looked very inviting in the afternoon sunshine.

Music is now well established as a part of these demonstrations, and the words of the songs suited the occasion very well.

A F Schuman
SE23 2QT

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WEDGEWOOD COLLEGE – MUSIC WEEKEND

Many thanks must go to Audrey Brown for organising the excellent music weekend at Wedgewood College, Barlaston, which is actually just south of Wedgewood, of Potteries fame. Barlaston itself is a pretty spot, with a large canalside pub, and a quaint little station with level crossing, although when the gates closed, Pedolinos hammered through from Stoke to all points south.

The college itself, which was up a short hill from this quaint scene, was split into three large houses:- a catering house, with a common room and large airy dining room, which looked out onto a large garden, which was just starting to blossom on this, one of the first, warm weekends. On the mantelpiece was a bust of Josiah Wedgewood himself. There was a second main building where the three large lounges for the classes were situated. They were well insulated, and with the doors closed, no disturbance from other classes was experienced. Upstairs were the bedrooms, all named after famous pottery themes. John Jordan and I shared a large four bedded room, the Royal Doulton, which was light and airy, and looked out across the adjacent fields. I liked the bathroom very much. It was also large, and tiled from floor to ceiling. The shower had one big lever on the wall, which I suspected would be dangerous. However, turning this brought water at the correct temperature with no slipping of the hand, unlike the small grippless knobs that control showers these days. An engineering triumph! There was a third smaller house, housing a library and more bedrooms, and the wind group duly installed themselves in the library here.

My journey from the soft south was not too traumatic, apart from a cloudburst, just south of Northampton, during which the traffic on M1 became stationary. My 237,000 mile Granada, being somewhat elderly, didn't allow me to close the sunroof completely, and I got a bit wet. I was able to get into the service area and close the thing after a while, but of course, by that time, the rain had virtually stopped.

We all went for the evening meal, and I was delighted to see Jill Snowdon, so soon and fighting fit after her big operation. After the meal, we all made our way to the main block to start our playing. I was in the group doing jazz and enjoyed playing my bass, which I hadn't managed to do this year at Giggleswick. Bill Oldham led us for the trad and Mick Brown for the Big Band. The latter I found varied in degree from easy to difficult, though knowing the tune helped me enormously, not being much of a reader. The vocal group did their thing in one of the other rooms and the wind and discovery jazz also played. During the weekend I slipped into the vocal group as people moved round, and the singers were short of men.

We were well fed, and it seemed like we spent more time eating than making music. I'm sure most of us all don't eat that much during our normal routine. I didn't eat the Saturday evening meal as I was stuffed already.

Apart from the classwork, there was a small concert of items prepared by all the groups and the composers on Saturday night. Owen Manning opened the batting with singing Mavis Cook's setting of A.E. Houseman's "Something". Joyce Mason then followed playing and singing her own setting of "She is like a Swallow". These seem to be old folk lyrics, with certainly at least one Canadian tune to them. Steve Randall then sang two songs with his own guitar accompaniment. The first was his Politician Song, first aired at Giggleswick last year. This was followed up by The Wrestler, which has of course been heard many times, and is inspired and dedicated as always to Tara Tierney. John Jordan then treated us to two of his own piano pieces, Lovers Walk and Five Finger Exercises, a teaching piece, which can be adapted to be played by 1 to 4 students at once.

The instrumental group, basically a wind ensemble plus cello, then treated the listeners to the "St John Choral", "Swing Low Sweet Chariot" and "Yellow Bird". The above were conducted to good effect by Audrey Brown. Owen Manning then treated us to a very pretty French love song called "My Ladies Garden". Having warmed up his voice, Owen then joined the rest of the vocal group for four songs, Brigg Fair, Pretty Little Horses, The Golden Wheat and Being of Sound Mind. The latter was Joe Hill's last poem, written before his execution, and was a setting by Mavis Cook, arranged by John Jordan. The next item was a first time airing for The Bower Song, from Steve Randall's, as yet unfinished opera, Lorna Doone. It was sung by Helen Mathers and accompanied on piano by Jan Williams. Not many of us had seen Jan in the role of accompanist before. Being a little long in a solo song context, because of four similar verses before the B and C sections, it is now earmarked for lyric compression. However the two ladies delivered the song admirably. The concert concluded with 2 sets of music from the Jazz Course, a rousing set of Trad. Jazz led by Bill Oldham and then some Big Band music led by Mick Brown which included some great singing from Tom Tomkins and Jennie Vaughan.

Having gotten the concert over with, the groups went back to playing round and imbibing the various liquid comestibles they had bought along before turning in for the night. On the Sunday those of us who lived further away, drifted off after lunch, though most of the wind group were still going until afternoon tea. It was all very relaxed and there was no rush to vacate the rooms on our very successful weekend.

Steve Randall

SPRING MUSIC WEEKEND

The above weekend, which took place from 21 to 23 April at Wedgewood College, Barlaston, Staffordshire, was a tremendous social and musical success.

27 students attended - 23 residential and 4 day students. The College was a superb venue, with good accommodation and excellent food. The rooms for the sessions were also ideal, and there were sessions for singers, instrumentalists, traditional jazz and big band/modern jazz. People were fairly flexible, and migrated from one session to another fairly freely. The quiz on Friday night was also good fun (and my team won – Yay!!).

I made a conscious decision NOT to attend as a singer and borrowed some hand-held percussion equipment to join the jazz groups. I had a great time, and was particularly fascinated by what I perceived as the difference in the way I was treated when a “player”, rather than the way I have been treated on occasions as a singer. I sometimes get the feeling that vocalists are accepted as a necessary evil by instrumentalists – things to be tolerated and occasionally allowed to “have a go” when it is not too inconvenient. As a player (however inexperienced) I felt I was treated with respect and as an equal, and I was pleased and proud to then be INVITED to sing (a beautiful old song I had never heard before – thanks Denis!!) to give a bit of variety to what would otherwise have been all instrumental sessions.

As a singer, I have often felt that instrumentalists would rather not have to cater to a singer, and I have also been concerned at the tendency there can be to talk about “musicians and singers”, as though only those whose instruments are something other than their voices are worthy of the name musician! There is no doubt I am a far better singer than I am percussionist, but I felt far more respected as the latter, however much of an absolute beginner, than the former.

I should be really interested to see some views from others on this perception, to see whether it is just paranoia on my part, or whether others have also been aware of it. It would be particularly interesting to see what those who are equally accomplished at both singing and playing an instrument feel, as they will have had an opportunity to see the issue from both sides.

Anyway – to return to the Music Weekend – I should like to thank Audrey Brown for organising the event, and would like to commend such events, particularly if held again at this venue, to other members. I had a really wonderful time, and it has had a direct influence on the Summer School courses for which I have chosen to apply. Jennie Vaughan

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Demonstration at the Harmondsworth Detention Centre for Asylum Seekers

On Saturday, 8 April 2006, Raised Voices, one of London's political choirs, participated in a demonstration outside the Harmondsworth Detention Centre which is not far from Heathrow Airport.

There were over 200 demonstrators and included various instrumentalists including a large number of drummers. The intention was to make enough noise to be heard by the asylum seekers inside the centre.

The demonstration was also addressed by various speakers, one of whom was in communication by mobile telephone with someone on the inside. We were told that the inmates were moved from rooms from which they could have watched the demonstration and were locked into another part of the building. In protest against this, they decided to go on hunger strike for one week. They also said that they were “enormously encouraged” by the demonstration.

It was because of this information that some demonstrators left the permitted demonstrating area and went round to the side of the centre which bordered a public foot path. Some of them went inside right against the chicken wire enclosure and proceeded to bang loudly on the wire. They were removed by the police. This procedure was repeated several times.

The choir, which had been permitted to sing to the demonstration at the front of the centre, then proceeded to the side and started singing on the grass by the side of the foot path. We were told by the police that we were trespassing. I said to the policeman that trespass was not a criminal offence. “No”, said the policeman, “but we can move you on.” However, the police decided not to remove us and we were allowed to sing our songs (and quite a few others) concluding with a rousing rendition of the Billy Bragg Internationale. We were the last demonstrators to leave.

Mavis Cook

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MANA Concert at Ripley Arts Centre, 11 March 2006

A superb afternoon concert of mainly classical (dance) music took place in a beautiful mansion in Bromley. Sheila Searchfield (WMA Summer School Tutor) played the concert flute, the alto flute and the bass flute, also the piccolo, while Ann Dixon played the guitar. The instruments blended perfectly and the choice of music was ideal.

(Dance through the Ages). I particularly enjoyed Fauré's “*Sicilienne*”, so poignant and haunting, and the Bartok pieces at the end of the concert were truly exciting and

unusual folk dances from Rumania (Transylvania to be exact). There was plenty of variety in the programme with Scott Joplin's "**Weeping Willow Ragtime**", a feet-tapper to end the first half. Joan Horrocks, Hon. Org. of MANA, gave a short, invigorating explanation of what MANA stands for, and urged us to sign the petition against renewing Trident in the interval, when we had tea and biscuits (courtesy Co-op for Fair Trade Fortnight), and plenty of time to talk to old friends.



(Picture of Sheila Searchfield and Ann Dixon by Anne Schuman)

About thirty people had come to the concert and Ripley is a really excellent place for such an event. There is an atmosphere of peace in such a well-kept house with its fresh banana yellow walls and outside the large charming garden. The sun came out after the rain, and it looked splendid.

There was a delightful Spanish flavour in the pieces which was to be expected as music by Granados and Albeniz was prominently featured where the guitar fully came into its own, with a fine, mellow timbre.

It was pleasant to have Brazilian music, too, by a still-living composer, Machado. I should like to hear a lot more music by him. I was particularly struck by the bright high notes of the piccolo, an admirable contrast to the bass flute, equally lovely in its own way and played with such skill.

This was one of the most enjoyable concerts I have ever attended. I hope there will be other MANA concerts at Ripley.
Jeanne Conn
SE9 3LE

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Law Report: Bride v Cook

Members may know that Royston Bride, one of our more active members, initiated an action at law seeking to compel

the WMA to provide him with a copy of the WMA Membership Register and secondly he asked the Court to assert the priority of the wishes of the AGM over decisions which are made by the WMA Executive Committee. The issues of Bride v Cook were dealt with by a Case Management Conference at the Central London County Court on 24 March 2006 before His Honour Judge Collins. (It would have been an option to brief barristers for a full County Court action but both sides agreed to settle for a Case Management Conference, primarily to bring a swift conclusion and to save costs.)

The Judge said he was willing to settle disputes but he would not be interpreting the law. Bride answered the Judge's questions about the activities of the WMA, the Summer School, the membership size, the type of music, its finances and its objectives. During the proceedings the Judge sat firmly on any discussion which dealt with the nature of the disagreements which have been going on.

Judge Collins' opinion as to inspection of the Register of Members by members was that they were entitled to inspect it at convenient times. Since there was no point in inspection unless the applicant had a phenomenal memory, the applicant could record names and addresses. There was no obligation on the WMA to provide a copy of the list of members. (This ruling was entirely in accordance with the advice we had received from our member D. V. [Tom] Tomkins who had kindly looked into the matter some months before when the Financial Services Authority had suggested we seek an opinion.) Members who did not wish to receive material circulated by the applicant, said the Judge, would have to put up with it.

On the question of whether decisions of members' meetings had priority over the Executive Committee, the Judge examined several possibilities at some length. He concluded that the EC had authority to manage the WMA's affairs and that, if EC lost the confidence of members, they could be "turfed out", and this opportunity occurred annually. The consideration he gave to this EC/AGM issue was quite extended, and he made reference to paragraphs in several Acts, and the WMA rules, but it seemed that his judgement was made essentially on common sense, practical grounds rather than on any obvious legal issue.

We shall not be able to assess the full significance of this judgement until the transcript has been received. (The Judge will edit the recording of the case to "tidy up the grammar" and, no doubt, to correct any slips he may have made when he was "thinking aloud", and any ambiguities he notices.) We have asked to purchase a transcript of the judgement only, and not the whole of the hearing, to save expense, and it may be available in May. The cost is expected to be between £40 and £150. There are

distinctions to be made between inspecting and recording the Register of Members and recording the names and addresses of members which, I would suppose, the transcript will make clear. Further, I would expect the judgement to make it clear that the Executive Committee may act with complete authority within the sub-clauses of Rule 5 – but this is speculative and we shall have to wait and see.

What the costs of the action may be are simply not known. Neither Cook nor Bride asked for costs. The Judge made no order as to costs and we do not know who will pay for the case, how much it will cost or whether costs will have to be taken from the main (rather than the Summer School) WMA account. The Court officials were not willing to give even the slightest indication. The cost of the transcript may be between the limits of £40-£120. I have offered to supply a copy to Bride when it is received and this offer will be left open in case he changes his mind.

When we receive the transcript we shall be able to proceed to action, and to letting Bride have sight of the Register or the names and addresses, a fine distinction which was not made clear in the judgement. The process by which the Judge reached his conclusion about the powers of the Executive Committee should be enthralling, and I shall recommend to the EC that a copy of the transcript of the judgement be made available at copying cost to those members who express an interest in these absurd proceedings.

Vernon Frost

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ARTS FESTIVAL IN FULHAM

Wednesday 22nd March was a bright sunny afternoon when the WMA Singers gathered in the prestigious Exhibition Hall at the Fulham Library, to practice before their performance with the Women's Inc writers group, as part of the Hammersmith and Fulham Arts Festival.

The programme had been chosen in conjunction with the writers to illustrate a set of pieces to be read out by their authors, on subjects as varied as love, war, transport, and women's work. The group is self-supporting and meets for writing workshops on alternative Wednesdays during term time, and they submitted items in prose and poetry, while the walls of the room were decorated with Rorsarsch inkblot posters which had poetry added in haiku form.

The Singers opened the proceedings with a rendition of **Tyger Tyger**, the illegal **Poetry On The Underground** words attributed to Greenpeace, music by Aubrey Bowman, which was well received. We were treated to stories describing a journey by steam train, a visit to Granny, and trying to get a little girl out of bed. Love poems followed, and

a description of Africa in anacrostic form called **Africa**. A little story about cooking, and the section closed with another Transport Tale. To illustrate this section, **The Underground Song**, protesting the privatisations of the London underground system, brought wry smiles to the faces of the audience.

Poetry about war, **Shell Shock**, bad enough, but **Recycling**, by Doreen Isherwood, was outstanding. This postulated the parallel of hankies being waved to see the soldier off to the First World War, and recyclable paper tissues having become standard. The question was, shall the soldiers in their body bags be recycled too? It sent shivers up our spines.

Two anti-war rounds, **No More Iraqs**, and **Peace for their Children**, which were well received, before everyone relaxed for an interval with wine and discussion. Workers' Music Association literature was on display and some sold, some application forms were taken as well as other leaflets.

The second half opened with **"The Sacrifice"**, words by Mordecai Vanunu, in which he warns the world of Israel's nuclear capability, and for which he has spent decades in prison, the music by John Jordan, which is always heard sympathetically. This was followed by literary pieces which worked their way through poetry, descriptions of a mother-in-law who came downstairs looking like a meringue, in her white nightgown with frills and lace, a justification and celebration of being single, a wonderful action poem about workers in a charity shop, with props, an amusing piece from a hospital bed, and finally a detailed "day in the life of a housewife" called **The Wash House**, with a step by step description of the laundry day in a typical back-to-back working class terrace.

The Singers produced the climax of the evening with a folk song **"Woman's Work is Never Done"** – which went down really well. The venture was one which we hope may be repeated next year. We made new friends, and perhaps influenced some of them.

A F Schuman
SE23 2QT

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TRANSATLANTIC TROUBADOURS:

Pete Seeger, John Hasted and the English Folk Song Revival by E. David Gregory

When Pete Seeger set foot on British soil in October 1961 for a month-long tour of English and Scottish folk clubs, he was already a legend. Knowing the affection and admiration felt for Pete throughout the London folk music community, Bruce Dunnet, manager of Ewan MacColl and Peggy Seeger's Singers' Club, took the gamble of booking the 5,000 seat Royal Albert Hall for a farewell concert. It was

the first time a folk singer had appeared at that most prestigious of venues. If anything, Pete was even more popular in Britain than in his native USA, where he was still fighting a prolonged legal battle with the House Un-American Activities Committee. He chose a good time to visit Britain. The (second) folk song revival had just entered its boom phase, and "the movement" (as it was sometimes called) had a mass following at long last. But how had Pete come to be acclaimed in England as "one of the world's great folk singers"?

During the 50s Pete had some formidable promoters in the "old country". They included his half-sister Peggy, her partner, Ewan MacColl, and their mutual friend, broadcaster and collector Alan Lomax. But the story of Pete's influence on the English revival goes even further back, to 1946 and his days in New York with the Almanac Singers. One of the 78 rpm records he made in 1941 with Mill Lampell, Lee Hays and Woody Guthrie was "**Talking Union**." You couldn't buy that disc in England during the forties, but merchant seaman Bob Hinds picked up a copy while his ship was in an American port and when he got back to England he played it to a friend, a young Oxford physicist named John Hasted. As soon as he heard the disc, Hasted knew instantly that he wanted, above anything else, to make music like the Almanacs'. John Hasted is not very well known these days, even in English folk music circles. He might be termed – with some justification – "*the forgotten man*" of the English revival. Yet in fact he played a key role in the revival for more than a decade. One of the many things he did was to imitate and popularise Pete Seeger's way of playing guitar and banjo.

As a student in Oxford before the war Hasted had sung regularly in New College Choir, and his left-wing political beliefs had led him to join the newly formed Workers' Music Association, founded by the communist composer Alan Bush. A career move in 1948 took Hasted to London, to work at University College. He was free, in his spare time, to assist Bush in directing the WMA Choir, and before long he was also running the WMA's Topic Singers and the London Youth Choir. All three groups sang a mixture of English traditional folk songs (usually in arrangements by Bush or by Vaughan Williams), union songs, left-wing anthems such as "**The Red Flag**" and a smattering of Almanac material, including "**If I Had a Hammer**." It wasn't folk music, but it was close. And Hasted still had in mind his goal of making music like the Almanac Singers'. Through the WMA he eventually encountered a kindred spirit, fellow Party member and folklorist, A. L. (Bert) Lloyd. Hasted later recalled that on meeting Lloyd he casually asked him if he wanted to start an Almanac-style group in England. To his astonishment, Bert's normally high-pitched and squeaky voice dropped about an octave and he replied very quietly, "Passionately".

This was the encouragement Hasted needed. But there was a problem. Where on earth could you get a folk guitar in London in the late forties, let alone a long-necked banjo? And even if you did find the right instruments, how could you learn to play them?

Hasted's solution to the problem of how to learn Almanac-style guitar and banjo was to go to the horse's mouth. As a communist he was well aware of the Peoples' Songs organisation in the USA and had seen copies of its Bulletin. So why not write to Pete Seeger for help? He did so, and Pete responded with detailed instructions, including tablature, on how to play both guitar and banjo. He encouraged Hasted to begin by learning the Cart family "Church lick" as his basic strumming style. By the end of the decade, Pete's correspondence student was confident enough to pass on his new-found instrumental skills to members of the London Youth Choir, and to form his own folk group, the first of several called The Ramblers.

One of the Ramblers' first performances was at a rally of the Clerical Workers' Union addressed by Clement Attlee, an occasion on which the Prime Minister and Labour Party leader was roundly booed. Many more such unpaid gigs followed, at left-wing demonstrations in support of strikes or the peace movement, and the group developed a quite extensive protest repertoire of Guthrie and Leadbelly material, union songs, Negro spirituals, African freedom songs, and such anti-American ditties as "**Yankee Go Home**." But although he campaigned vociferously against the presence of American troops and weapons on British soil, Hasted remained a passionate champion of the music of the Almanacs, and a devoted fan of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger.

Bert Lloyd stimulated Hasted's interest in English traditional song, and around the time that The Ramblers broke up Hasted also met collector Peter Kennedy. Encouraged by Kennedy and by Alan Lomax to try his hand at field-collecting, Hasted did so in the West Country (where he later recorded Charlie Wills) and in the Lake District. In the early fifties tape-recorders were still few and far between in England, so he initially used the traditional method of pen and paper,

After the demise of the Ramblers, Hasted focused his efforts once again on the London Youth Choir. By now he was determined that the Choir should diversify its activities, and he steered it away from agitprop and classical music and towards folk music. This was the time when such figures as Ewan MacColl, Bert Lloyd, Isla Cameron, Peter Kennedy and Alan Lomax were consciously attempting to kickstart the sluggish folksong revival in England, and were earnestly debating the form it should take. How much emphasis should there be on British material, and how

much on American? Should one stick to unaccompanied English songs in local dialect and traditional style, or was it ok to sing the blues and adopt American instruments and playing styles.

Hasted was no purist. Like Seeger's, his concept of folk music was broad and undogmatic: an eclectic mix of traditional and contemporary material, British and American, political and non-political. By this time he was an accomplished "semi-professional" musician, and he had a good voice, but he had a low opinion of himself as a folk singer.

This move of Hasted's away from overt political material paralleled Pete Seeger's own career during the late forties and early fifties, when he was a member of the Weavers. Indeed, in the early fifties Pete was known in England primarily as a member of the Weavers. The Weavers' single releases on Decca were available in Britain and sold fairly well, so that the group quickly built up a solid following. Seeger was lost to the public eye during most of the fifties, when he experienced black-listing in the US entertainment industry and fought his prolonged struggle with the House Un-American Activities Committee. But his stand made him a hero to British communists and their sympathisers. Hasted kept in touch with Seeger by mail, and was an avid reader of "**Sing Out!**" a magazine Seeger helped to form in the wake of the People's Songs Bulletin. It was he who first argued in WMA meetings that the English revival needed a sister magazine as a place to publish both contemporary political songs and the traditional industrial and occupational songs that MacColl, Lloyd, Kennedy and others were beginning to collect.

The first issue of *Sing* appeared in May-June 1954, and the second contained a letter from Irwin Silber conveying good wishes from Pete Seeger, Betty Sanders and Leon Bibb. Early next year the magazine printed the first of many Seeger songs, "**Dig My Grave**," perhaps not one of Pete's classics but less an exercise in political doggerel than an early Ewan MacColl effort that appeared that same year, "**Ballad of Stalin**". As Music Editor of *Sing*, Hasted devoted many columns to promoting DIY music, patiently explaining how to play different guitar styles and Seeger-style banjo, or how to build a three-string tub bass. He was one of the earliest and most fulsome champions of the skiffle movement, which he saw as a form of teenage urban folk music. He was also the founder of what may have been the first English folk song club, **The Good Earth**, at 44 Gerrard Street, Soho, in the heart of London. By 1956, in the wake of Lonnie Donnegan's hit record of "**Rock Island Line**," this became a skiffle club, and its resident band was renamed John Hasted's Skiffle and Folksong Group. It included Redd Sullivan and Shirley Collins as its lead vocalists. Yes, Shirley Collins made her semi-professional debut as a

member of Hasted's group, and the backing musicians on her first recordings included John Hasted playing Seeger-style banjo.

One of the positive side effects of the skiffle movement was that it encouraged the WMA to expand one of its subsidiary activities, the production of a limited number of 78 rpm records for its members, into a full-fledged independent record label specializing in folk music. Early Topic 78s had included Pete Seeger singing "**Talking Union**" c/w "**Dark as a Dungeon**" (TRC 92), and among the first few dozen Topic microgroove releases were to be found **Pete Seeger's Guitar Guide** (12T20), **Pete Seeger's 5-string Banjo Tutor** (10T23), **Pete and Five Strings** (TOP33) and **Hootenanny N.Y.C.** (TOP37). Not surprisingly, these received favourable reviews in the pages of *Sing*. Occasional mention was also made of Pete's American releases on the Folkways label, which could sometimes be picked up – at a price – as special imports in the bins of two specialist London record stores, Collett's and Dobell's. Such LPs as **Darling Corey**, **Frontier Ballads**, **American Favorite Ballads**, **American Industrial Ballads**, **Gazette** and **At Carnegie Hall** with Sonny Terry were rare and prized items until the early 60s when the Folkways catalogue became more readily available in Britain.

One way or another, the name of Seeger was rarely absent from the pages of *Sing* in the late 50s. The August-September 1957 issue, for example, included an article by Pete, "**I knew Leadbelly**" and the words and music of "**If I Had a Hammer**" which he had written jointly with Lee Hays, while the December issue included the words of the Almanacs' "**Talking Union**" and reprinted an article about Pete from the American folk music magazine **Caravan**. The October 1958 issue saw Peggy Seeger writing a self-portrait, and there was a laudatory review by Leon Rosselson of the Vanguard album, **The Weavers at Carnegie Hall**. The issue also contained the words and music of a beautiful song that John Hasted had learned from a Pete Seeger album, "**Miner's Lifeguard**" tune: "**The H Bomb's Thunder**". It had been the hit of the first Aldermaston March organised by the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament that Easter. "**The Hammer Song**" was another favourite of the marchers. *Sing*'s cover for that issue was a photograph of a trio of guitar-playing folk singers marching for peace.

On the long and weary road from Trafalgar Square in London to the nuclear weapons research establishment at Aldermaston the spirit of Pete Seeger lived on. "**If I had a hammer, I'd hammer in the morning, I'd hammer in the evening, I'd hammer out danger, I'd hammer out a warning, I'd hammer out love between all our brothers, all over this land!**" Thanks to John Hasted, and others, Pete Seeger's songs and the warmth of his love for humanity had crossed the Atlantic years before he ever did so in person. That was

one reason why thousands flocked to the Royal Albert Hall to see and hear him on November 16, 1961.

LETTERS

10 April 2006

I write in response to Roy Bride's article concerning "Two Matters of Great Concern".

Roy Bride, by insisting that the Bulletin print his most recent diatribe, has unleashed on all members some of the missives he has been sending to committee members for some time. The nuisance value of these letters is getting beyond a joke although the 'Dangers' which he is now warning the membership about amount to the farcical.

In respect of 'Danger One' - the Committee examined the feasibility of becoming a Charity in an effort to reduce the mounting costs of Summer School. Upon examination it was decided to forgo the application to become a charity and instead look to changing the venue for Summer School to Giggleswick School. By moving to another venue we have managed to make sufficient savings to keep the price below the £400 mark for another year at least.

In respect of Roy's 'Danger Two' his suggestions regarding the future make-up of EC, I am just gob-smacked! Such undemocratic solutions to funding problems are illegal within the WMA. I spent many years as a Union Representative. During my working life I served as Branch Secretary, Branch Chair, and Regional Rep. for my branch of NALGO and later UNISON. If any member had endeavoured to foist the sort of proposals upon our organisation which Roy Bride is attempting to impose upon the W.M.A. they would have been expelled from the branch and the Union.

I suggest that this is the course of action we should now take if Roy Bride continues to propagate such ludicrous and illegal ideas - seek to expel him.

Audrey Brown (Member of the WMA. Executive Committee and Summer School Committee).

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My Day in Court

As you will see from the court report by Vernon Frost, on 24 March 2006 I attended the Central London County Court. I was travelling to York by car on that day and wasted a whole morning, with the result that John Jordan and I arrived at the York Youth Hostel, where we had booked and paid for accommodation, at 11.15 p.m. We were lucky to get in!

My summons to the court was a notice to attend a case management conference in which I was described as the

defendant against I knew not what. Royston Bride had brought action against me but did not have the courtesy of sending me a copy of his claim so I went into the court completely ignorant of what I was facing. I was given a copy of his claim and had to digest it in a few minutes. It was only later that I read his entry: "Not a financial claim, but if the court finds in my favour I believe it fair that any financial costs should be borne by the defendant mainly because I think this matter need not have gone before the court."

I am reminded that, some years ago, the Workers' Music Association suffered a serious loss of income by virtue of the world-wide pirating of its publication, "Songs of Irish Resistance" by Patrick Galvin, on which we hold the copyright. The music companies were a lot richer than the WMA, the ones in the USA being particularly rich and powerful. So there was nothing we could do because we could not afford to go to law to seek redress.

In the same way, ordinary working people, and especially retired people like myself living on a very modest and limited income, cannot afford to go to law and certainly cannot afford to pay the costs of going to law. The law is accessible only to people with a sufficiently high income or to the very very poor who would qualify for legal assistance.

Royston Bride is a man who is very comfortably off and well able to afford the financial risk of going to law. In this instance, he has used his financial clout to clobber someone very much poorer than himself. Judging from the Court Order, it would seem that we do not have to worry about costs. Had there been any costs, they would have had to be borne by the WMA, which is no more able to afford such costs than I am.

I asked the court whether it would be possible for those members who did not wish to receive communications from Royston Bride to be excluded from his attentions. But the learned judge told me that this would not be possible. If members did not want to receive communications from Royston Bride – tough! (his words). So Royston Bride not only wants to obtain the entire membership list but clearly has every intention of thrusting his views down the reluctant throats of those of our members who have made it clear that they do not wish to receive them. This would no doubt also apply to other members who similarly express the wish to be excluded from his unwanted attentions. I think this latter point could be challenged but the organisation could not possibly afford to do so.

I should be interested to learn what other members think of this case.

Mavis Cook