

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2007

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Welcome to new committee members John Porter & Helen Porter who have volunteered to take up the tasks of secretary and minute secretary.

Great response to raffle – amount raised \$646.00.

“Congratulations for a fine effort Well Done!” says Glenda Burke, Treasurer.

inter Concert at Holy Trinity Cathedral – Sunday 24 June 07.

- ☞ Please be ready to sing at 12.00 midday.
Listen and watch Ruth so we can polish our performance.
- ☞ If you will be late or unable to sing at the concert please phone your Section Leader.
- ☞ Music to be in concert order including all booklets.
- ☞ Dress – bold, single coloured tops or shirts, black pants or skirt with black stockings.
Warm socks advisable.
- ☞ Stool – bring your own stool if required.
 - ☞ Bring your lunch and drinks.
- ☞ Bring your best singing voice and a big smile 😊 to enjoy the concert.

Dates to Remember:

☞ Tuesday 26 June 07 (our usual rehearsal night) is to be a Social Evening.
Partners welcome.

Bring supper or a drink to share.

Return your concert music in alphabetical order – the order it was given to you . This will assist Anne our Librarian.

The evening will include:

Singing from the blue folder music. Folders to be returned at the end of the evening.
Travellers Tales from our travelling singers.

📅 Tuesday, 3 July 07 – No Rehearsal – holiday rest!

📅 Tuesday, 10 July 07 Rehearsal at St John's Hall at 7.30 pm. – "Hope to see all your smiling faces there. Collect and begin to learn your new music" says Joan Huggan, President.



Our Christmas music books have arrived from America.

Ruth is to go on leave for 9 weeks from July and will be travelling overseas. We hope she has a great time. ✈️

10 August 07 (Friday) – 12.00 Luncheon for the King Valley Moyhu Guild. We have been invited to sing for 30 mins. Only 20 singers will be needed. Lunch will be provided.

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And now for some really mean Soprano Jokes:- (We do really love our sopranos though).

What is the difference between a soprano and a pit bull?
The jewellery.

What is the difference between a soprano and a Porsche?
Most musicians have never been in a Porsche.
(Whoops! Does this need censoring?)

How do you get a mezzo soprano into a small car?
Grease her hips and put a chocolate bar on the dashboard.

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NOTES TAKEN FROM “JAMES GALWAY’S MUSIC IN TIME”, written by William Mann, 1982.

..... continued.

“VIBRATIONS AND PAGAN RITES”

Oral Tradition:

There was plentiful music in the centuries before our “anno Domini”, and enough evidence that it was splendid and highly coloured. Nobody wrote the music down on paper, so we cannot perform it now as it was heard then. Music was passed on orally from teacher to pupil, as a living document, not to be codified. India’s high musical culture, several thousand years old, has never been put on paper, nor has the music of Sumeria or Egypt or China (some isolated attempts from 138 BC tantalize the scholar).

The resistance to music written down, arrested in its development once and for all, has persisted. No Asian musician would dream of writing down his composition, for unlike argumentative modern western music, the essence is improvisation – the aim is inward contemplation.

For the ancient Greeks, the purpose of music was therapeutic, to purify the mind and harmonize the soul through dancing or song. They believed that each of their modes or scales had its own effect on the listener, some harmful, others beneficial – thus one inspired courage, another - level headedness and so on.

They discouraged the writing down of music as detrimental to the activity of the memory. So while Classical Greek art can show us the instruments used and representations of music in performance, and the literature can detail for us their theories and systems, we have no inkling how the music sounded. Two hymns and a drinking song dating from the 2nd Century BC do exist, but about how these should be performed, scholars cannot wholly agree.

Invention of Musical Instruments:

The earliest extant instruments are a one-note whistler made of reindeer phalanx bone (10,000 BC), and bone flutes almost as old, with 3 or more finger holes. Both whistle and flute were successful attempts to copy nature – the wind whistling down a hollow tree-trunk or through the reeds, or the call of an owl.

Clay rattles, or pitched stones (ancestor of the xylophone) and scrapers made of phallic shaped bone (associated with courtship in primitive societies even today) date back to the Stone Age -likewise, the bullroarer, whirled round the head on a thong and believed to connect man with the souls of dead ancestors. Rattles, like the maracas, mimic the sound of the sea – pottery drums and bells survive from about 2,500 BC and suggest a refinement on perishable wooden prototypes, perhaps originally used to counter the thunder claps in a storm or exorcise beneficial influences from this world or beyond. The first high cultures began around this time.

In Sumeria, 3 stringed harps are portrayed on writing tablets dated 3,000 BC. Lyres, clappers and other simple percussion instruments from a few centuries later have been found in Ur of the Chaldees, as well as drawings of what look like trumpets or megaphones.

Double pipes are portrayed in the art of Ur, such as shepherds in central Europe still play. With them, music could be played on 2 pitches simultaneously, heralding the beginnings of harmony.

Sacred and Secular Music:

The Sumerians cultivated music for sacred rites, including funerals, military triumphs and banquets. That remained a pattern until very recently – an art for the elite.

Popular music always went its own way unchronicled but perhaps more mobile and more durable.

It was at Babylon in Sumeria that King Nebuchadnezzar maintained the famous orchestra listed in Daniel 3. Music in the Temple of Solomon was choral with instrumental accompaniment, though the use of instruments was banned by the time Christianity became an independent religious sect – perhaps to exorcise reminders of the long captivity – just as the Christian liturgy did its best to wipe out all traces of earlier pagan practice.

Sounds of the Pre Christian Orchestra:

The orchestra of these earlier high musical civilizations was reported to be numerous, but even the most enthusiastic descriptions and pictorial representations do not suggest a great variety of instruments, or any music that we would call grandly harmonious. The modern concept of harmony is based on the natural phenomenon of resonance or overtones. You can hear them if you depress the sustaining pedal of a modern piano and loudly strike a very low note. It will resonate upper overtones of itself, developing naturally up the scale. These overtones can be heard on quite primitive instruments like the bell.

One of the principal instruments of the early orchestra was the natural horn – restricted, like every bass instrument without valves, to a low fundamental note and a series of overtones, playable by altering the position of lips and the pressure of air into the instrument.

The harp and its other stringed derivatives (lyre, guitar, violin etc) were legendarily assumed to be of divine origin.

The Greeks believed that the god Hermes bound animal sinews round a tortoise shell, and let the wind blow through them exciting sounds of varied pitch – the shorter the sinew, the higher the sound. King David's harp in the Old Testament was similarly, but miraculously, put together.

In the 10th Century AD St Dunstan claimed to have been given such an instrument by God himself – it was what we now call the Aeolian Harp – strings fixed to a sounding board, placed in a draughty spot, and resonated by breezes to enchanting, indeed magical effect.

The harp and lyre were current from Sumerian times – at first plucked, then bowed with an archer's bow for greater penetrating power and eventually stopped with the fingers to vary pitch.

The brass instruments could only reproduce the harmonic series of upper overtones, but the bowed and stopped harp, or lyre, could vary pitch minutely and so brought about the modern seven-note scale and all its refinements, including tones between notes – or microtones (less than a semi-tone).

A full orchestra was still far in the future, but there are mentions of a wind instrument with a single reed to blow through, like the clarinet.

A picture of 630 BC shows a singer squeezing his epiglottis to produce a vibrato sound.

In Roman times – music was greatly cultivated – we read of concerts by mixed chorus and large orchestra in 284 AD; of the organ as an orchestral instrument; but of Roman musical theory and practice there is nothing.

Evidence shows us that Rome seems to have developed an instrument similar to the bagpipes, and there is testimony that music was commonly used during work and in leisure time, as it must have been in earlier times, a spin off from army, court, and religious worship for humbler enjoyment, or incentive to harder work.

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