HAPPY CENTENARY BILLY 1902-59

Patrons:
Sir Richard Rodney Bennett
Susan Tomes, Eric Parkin, Peter Jacobs

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2002 - This year we celebrate Billy Mayerl's Centenary- (born 1902)

Susan Tomes is playing Billy for the BMS.

Alex Hassan *is coming over from the United States to add his inimitable style and knowledge to what will be, I'm sure, an exciting and informative musical experience.*

Robert Petillo *an American tenor, will sing Billy's songs with panache.*

Erles Jones *is making a very welcome guest appearance.*

In future we intend to publish one magazine (larger than usual) per year in time for each years AGM plus a separate newsletter in the Summer. Annual subscription reminders will be sent out with the magazine and summer newsletter issues so that all annual memberships will run from either January or June, the subscription remains at £10.00

Sunday Concerts & Meetings at *Shellwood*
St Leonards Rd. Thames Ditton 3 - 6pm

July 9th	Billy's Birthday Concert (see back cover)
Aug 11th	*Concert* Alex Hassan *piano*, Robert Petillo & Alison Taffs
Aug 18th	*Concert* Alex Hassan & guest *Erles Jones*
Sept 15th	BMS members' meeting
Oct 27th	*Concert* Pianola recital (various performers)
Dec 8th	Members' Xmas concert (£5 per person)

Please try to reserve your programme at least one week before your chosen date.
Members can bring 2 new guests to any concert/meeting subject to availability.
Concert reservations are £12 per person and include refreshments.
Please phone 020 8224 1521 Reservations are not available at the door.

Editorial

The English language has a huge vocabulary, but nonetheless there are a few glaring gaps that I should very much like to see filled.

One of the most glaring regularly crops up in conversation with a new acquaintance, when it is common practice to ask about their hobbies and interests. A frequent reply is '*sport*,' which is fine, but when I go on to ask 'What do you play?' I am informed that they mean watching it, not playing it.

My dictionary defines sport as '*a game or competitive activity, usually involving physical exertion*', a description which does not seem to include being a spectator.

I will forbear to remark that this latter activity, if that is the right word, seems to me to be a ridiculous waste of time, suitable only for those whose lives are so empty that they need to fill them by watching a set of complete strangers compete against another similar set and get emotionally involved in the outcome. I may remark in parenthesis how appalled I was to hear that six million people took time off work to watch a recent football match in the World Cup competition. Instead I will pass on to the second example, the one which prompted this little discursion, the use or abuse of the word '*music*'.

With books and printed matter in general, we have a clear and useful distinction between *literature* and various lesser forms, from *escapism* to *trash*.

Unfortunately music lacks an equivalent set of terms, so that sometimes people will inform me they like music when they mean they like pop, which is nothing of the sort. Even to distinguish lighter calibre such as we in the BMS are concerned with, we have to make use of the cumbersome terms '*classical music*' and '*light music*'.

In my opinion both these terms mitigate against fuller acceptance of what they describe. Classical carries overtones of the schoolroom which put off many who would otherwise derive considerable pleasure and satisfaction from it, while light carries derogatory overtones downplaying the craftsmanship of composers like Sullivan and BM, to name but two.

The depth of thought and level of emotional commitment may well be, and usually is, greater in a 'classical' piece, but the craftsmanship is not necessarily less. In fact, the division between them is of comparatively recent origin: composers like Haydn and Mozart wrote 'light' or 'serious' pieces according to requirements, a tradition that persisted through to Sibelius and Elgar and even as recently as Shostakovich.

I recently went to a performance of Iolanthe, to find that, in spite of being well over a hundred years old, the music retains its freshness and charm. Anyone who imagines that Sullivan just sat down and thought of a good tune is grievously under-estimating the craftsmanship behind these works: they sound light-hearted and spontaneous, but only because their composer worked very hard to make them appear so.

In this, his centenary year, we are sufficiently distanced from Billy's period to be able to make a similar judgment about his compositions. Whereas there are so many pieces that one plays once or twice,

occasionally more, there are very few that one can constantly return to and never find stale. But after close acquaintance with practically the whole of Billy's oeuvre, I find that this is the case with his works, particularly those for piano.

They are of course very well laid out for the instrument: no one can say they are easy, but it isn't possible to make them easier without losing something essential. However, that is not what makes them last so well. There are, in my judgment two main factors.

One is the quality of the ideas: Billy had a wonderful melodic gift, more instrumental in nature than vocal, though he also wrote some good songs. The other is his unfailing taste: there are occasional moments in his compositions when the quality of the inspiration dips below its usual level, but offhand I can't recall a single lapse of taste.

Elsewhere in this magazine you will find details of commemorative events to celebrate the hundredth year since his birth. In the meantime, let us give thanks for the rich treasury he has left us, while the BMS continues its endeavours to make it more widely known and generally available.

Mike Harth

Some of you may know that our editor Mike Harth shares Billy's birthday (May 31st) and that there is no truth to the rumour that he is actually the same age as Billy ..... more power to your elbow Mike.

I would like to thank the BMS archivist John Smith for all his work in supplying Trinity College with BM's piano pieces for inclusion in their new syllabus for teaching piano, Billy's finally got home! Mike L

With great sadness I have to inform members of the sudden death at the tragically young age of 60 of David Ebbage. He was well known as a pianist/conductor and a member of our Society for a number of years.

I first met him at the South Bank complex where he generously handed over rare Billy Mayerl orchestral parts for storage in the society's archive. He was a charming man and often helped the society out of tricky situations by supplying a band and solo performers.

I remember visiting Bexhill on more than one occasion to hear the Spa Palm Orchestra perform in the famous De La Warr Pavillion most notably when Mr and Mrs Fred Mayerl were in the audience.

He will be greatly missed.

David Ebbage

For all he touched the silence is too loud.

David Ebbage 1942 - 2002: obituary

David Ebbage, a much-loved and respected musician, died suddenly on Monday 27th of May. Born, 24th May 1942 in Bingley, Yorkshire and educated at the Bingley Grammar School, he graduated from Trinity College of Music, London, in 1964, where he won the Alec Rowley Memorial prize for musical achievement, and then went on to attain his Bachelor of Music from Durham University, 1965.

He taught and lectured in music at Trinity College of Music, the Universities of Salford, Manchester and Leeds and was Head of Music for S.E.Berkshire College and Scarborough Technical College. In 1978 David and his family moved from Yorkshire to Tunbridge Wells, Kent, where David was to be the Area Director for the Kent Music School for ten years. He also became instrumental in running the Summer Schools at Benslow Music School, Hitchin which he continued to attend for the last 20+ years.

In addition to his work in education, David was also an active and respected performer. A freelance pianist and conductor, he worked with countless Orchestras, notably the Scarborough Symphony Orchestra which he founded and directed from 1972-78, and the West Kent Youth Orchestra from 1978-87. He performed frequent and ambitious programmes, including tours to Denmark and Wiesbaden. As a solo and orchestral pianist, he worked with Max Jaffa's Orchestra, Kur Orchester Bad Oeynhausen and the Spa Palm Court Orchestra, which he also founded. He has given concerto performances with among many others, Julian Lloyd Webber, Timothy Brown, Jeremy Menuhin, Paul Manley, Jennifer Stinton, Richard Stuarnd Anthony Hopkins. Recent projects included performances of all Claude Bolling's works for Piano, Jazz Quartet and Orchestra and virtuoso soloists at the South Bank London.

His career was diverse and challenging and he was passionate about music from all genres, from Chamber music to Jazz, Film and Musical Theatre to Big Band and swing. His special interest was the neglected early years of English light music and he was recently involved with the preparation of "Syncopation" a musical based on the life of Billy Mayerl, which was short listed for the Vivian Ellis Prize in 2000.

Over the last 10 years his time has been divided between teaching, performing, playing at a major London Hotel and running, with his wife Avril, a music services agency based in Tunbridge Wells. His London work was recorded for posterity in the BBC series *Paddington Green*.

He was a wonderful family man, who brought support, love, adventure, excitement and an abundance of happy memories, which will comfort his family in years to come. Adored by his wife Avril and his 3 children Adele, Ursula and Carl, he nurtured a family whose closeness and affection for each other is evident to all. He took great pleasure in his 8 grand children Anton, Alex, Lauren, Ben, Amie, Jeremy, Harvey and most recently Sidney.

David had taken a quotation from Sir Huw Weldon as his philosophy... *"Our aim is not to avoid failure but give success a chance"*

Participating was his pleasure, making music and helping others to perform music of all kinds was his life's greatest joy. He will be remembered for his amazing ability to involve all levels and all ages, and for his encouragement, enthusiasm and sense of fun.

Mike Lorenzini

(with contributions by Adele Ebbage)

Reginald King - A Personal View

The first time I became aware of the music of Reginald King was about 5 years ago, when the BMS archive acquired *Summer Breezes, Tropical Moonlight* and *Spring Meadows.* I found the music a real joy to play, very pianistic, of great charm and memorable melodically. The music has its own personality, though not as strong a personality as Mayerl. I had a go at the first and third mentioned above at one of our meetings.

Fellow member Sid O'Connell asked me if I was aware that, after not composing at all for many years, King started to compose again towards the end of his life and that these pieces were published by Bardic Edition. Indeed I was not aware of this at all, but, very shortly afterwards, I purchased the *Elegie* and *Meditation.* This proved to be a revelation for me - what a wonderful sound. The music I found not quite as pianistic as Mayerl, in the sense that I had to think more about fingerings. At first you might find that the music does not always move in the way you think it might do. It is about as modern as John Ireland, and not perhaps music for the masses. I can see no similarity in style with the earlier pieces. As well as the difference in sound, the music does not lie as easily under the hand. There is one more very beautiful late piece entitled *Reverie* this was the last piece he ever wrote. Of these 3 pieces, I find that the *Meditation* is the one that most people respond to; this is, I think, because it is the most emotional.

King's music can be divided roughly into 3 parts - his early classical style, e.g. the 2 sets of preludes, dating from 1923 & 1925, his light music, for which he is best known, and finally the few late pieces composed towards the end of his life. I think perhaps, as he started and ended his career with a classical style, his heart lay there, and not in his lighter pieces. No doubt somebody who loves *Summer Breezes* and *Song of Paradise* will want to hit me, next time they see me!

His most major work for piano solo is the *Piano Sonata in F# minor.* The revision of this early work was the last thing he was working at before he died. It is in 3 Movements. The first movement stands perfectly on its own, the opening reminds me a little of Cesar Franck. It is at times very romantic, passionate and virtuosic in sound. Very near the end there is a passage, about 2 pages long that reminds me of a big romantic virtuoso concerto cadenza - towards the end of this it is very dramatic indeed. This cadenza-like section is perhaps the most physically demanding part of the movement to play.

The second movement is a theme & variations. At the beginning, we are in much calmer waters. Variation 1 has a moderate tempo and is clearly in his early classical style. Variation 2, still in the same style, is the most physically demanding one to play, even though the tempo is moderate, difficult for both hands. There are some wide stretches and leaps in the left hand and quite a lot of 5 in the right hand, against 3 in the left hand. The difficulty is that the stretches and leaps in the left hand, can easily interrupt the flow of the right hand. It needs a lot of practice. Variation 3 is much more tranquil & romantic. The last 6 and a bit bars, I always find quite magical. At one moment here, I feel the music starts going towards his later style. Here, with these few bars, I think we have a moment of greatness. Variation 4 is

very contrasting, quick and in triplets, and in his early classical style. Variation 5 strikes me as having a little bit of the character of an Elgar slow movement. This by far the most emotional of the variations. Variation 6, the final one, is quick and virtuosic in sound. The final movement, only 6 pages, is based largely on material from the first movement and is also romantic, passionate and virtuosic. Two bars near to the last page, came as a bit of a surprise to me; both right hand and left hand consist largely of augmented triads - here we are clearly in his later style. They seem to work quite well if you pause a long time on the last chord, and play the "tempo I", which immediately follows, considerably slower than marked. The very last page contains some material not heard before. This last page is physically very demanding and needs virtuoso treatment in the "grand manner". I did wonder if the original version of this Sonata was available to look at, but Barry Ould at Bardic Edition informed me that King wrote his revisions on top of the original. I wondered, because of some of the stylistic inconsistencies, if King had time to finished all his revisions before he died. It is a work I have a very great affection for, and hope to have a go at playing it, and also the 3 late pieces, for the rest of my life. I regard these 4 pieces as by far the most important of his works for piano solo.

Fellow member Sid O'Connell knew King very well in his final years. He was a witness on King's contract with Bardic Edition. He was also the recording engineer at King's 86th Birthday Concert. I once asked Sid, what kind of a man King was; he replied that he was just a lovely sweet old man. Hopefully Sid's reminiscences will eventually be the basis of an article for the Magazine.


Reginald King

At our first Convention, I asked Eric Parkin, after his memorable recital, if he liked the music of Reginald King; he replied that he didn't and that he didn't normally change his mind. Listening to Parkin's admirable 2-CD set of King's piano pieces, I am ever so glad that he does change his mind! I am sure King will never get a better pianist. Great sensitivity to textures and inner parts, great discipline and yet flexibility when required are features of Parkin's playing that I take for granted. These qualities serve King's music so well. This set does not give a complete picture of King's piano music. The lighter music is very well represented. His early classical style is represented by just 2 of the quieter, easier Preludes. One of the louder, more virtuosic preludes - op. 7, no. 1 in F# minor or op. 5, no. 4 in F minor would have added have added a bit more to the pictureThere are 2 sets of preludes - book 1, op. 5 (1-4)(published 1923) and book 2, op. 7(1-5)(published 1925). The Sonata, alas not

recorded here, would have added a lot more to the picture. This revised Sonata, dedicated to Martin Eastick, was published in 1993. The Elegie and the Meditation give a good picture of his later style, but the Reverie (published 1991) is not recorded here. In a way, I think it would have been the most appropriate piece to have finished this 2-CD album, being his final work. More than 60 years separate the earliest and latest works, but no dates are give in the CD notes. There is certainly scope for another CD - the Sonata, the remaining preludes, an unpublished Sonata for Violin & Piano, the Reverie, have all yet to be recorded - one day I hope!

P.S. I would very much like to hear from anybody who enjoys playing the Sonata and the 3 late pieces.

John Smith (BMS archivist)

SWCD17 Double album £16.50 inc. post

Song of Paradise
Humoresque Op4 No1
Sentimental Interlude
Pierette On The Balcony
Beside The Lake Op4 No2
Polka Piquant
In Bluebell Land:
The Cottage By The Shore
Garland Swing
Among The Bluebells
Prelude In D♭ Op5 No2
Tropical Moonlight
Passing Clouds
One Summer Day
Windflowers
Where Water Lilies Dream
Julia
The Haunted Ballroom
Summer Breezes
Lilacs In The Rain
Elegy
Marionette Op6 No2
Whispering Violin
Meditation
Money Spider
Green Valleys
Yorkshire Relish
June Night On Marlow Reach
Moonlight Reverie
Prelude In A♭ Op7 No4
Three Miniatures Op8:
Toccatina
Valse Impromptu
Autumn Leaves
Cynthia Op4 No3
A Prayer At Eventide

Cakewalks to Concert Halls

It was a pleasure to welcome back Helen Crayford with a new, and very well selected, programme.

She started off in classical mode with a short selection from the famous Rachmaninov prelude, when it was immediately noticeable that the recent work on the piano has softened the tone, so that when Helen played it sounded even more delectable. There was no need to worry she had us mixed up with the Wigmore, for it was only an introduction to part of George Cobb's Russian Rag, one of the best of the many attempts at ragging the classics, and I for one would have liked more of it.

Then we went on to an example of the predecessor of ragtime, the cakewalk Doc Brown's Cakewalk by Charles Johnson, and this was followed by a much earlier piece, Creole Eyes by Louis-Moreau Gottschalk, one of a regrettably small number of rhythmic pieces in Latin-American style. This is one of the best (most of his other pieces are sentimental numbers with titles such as The Dying Poet, and so far as I am concerned they can stay in the grave with him).

Then a piece completely new to me, A Bunch of Blackberries by Abe Holzmann, better known as composer of the famous march Blaze Away.

One of the features of Helen's programme was the inclusion of a number of pieces by composers better known for works in the classical idiom, and this was the first of two by Claude Debussy, General Lavine eccentric, one of his twenty-four preludes.

That was followed by a ragtime waltz, Scott Joplin's Bethena, one of his most beautiful pieces.

Eubie Blake had the longest career and life of any of the ragtimers, and it was a pleasure to be reminded of him with his Kitchen Tom.

Then we had the Castle House Rag by James Reese Europe, a prolific and talented ragtime composer, and this was followed by the second Debussy prelude, Minstrels.

A particularly interesting item was a version for piano of what was originally a music-hall song by one of the quirkiest composers, Erik Satie, a genuine eccentric. My favourite story about him is when he had composed some music to be played during the intervals of a play, when people were supposed to be chatting, and getting refreshments. But as soon as the music started everyone stopped what they were doing to listen, infuriating Satie, who rushed upon and down the aisles shouting (in French, of course) "Talk! Talk!' The number is called La Diva de l'Empire.

Stravinsky, like a number of composers of the period, was very interested in ragtime, and composed a number of pieces in what he no doubt thought was the idiom. For my money, melody is an essential element of ragtime: take that away, and what you have left is dry bones, which is how I feel about his Piano Rag Music. For all that, it was very interesting to hear it.

Rialto Ripples is one of Gershwin's earliest compositions, written in collaboration with the famous song-composer Walter Donaldson, and I would love to know who wrote which bits. It's a delightful rag, still one of my favourite Gershwin pieces.

Anbother example of ragging the classics is Schumann's Traumerei, ragged by Zez Confrey, who was far better pianist than composer.

In a Mist by Bix Beiderbecke is one of a set of four piano pieces he wrote and generally acknowledged to be the best. As it's rambling and not very inspired, it didn't fill me with any desire to hear the rest.

Then the first half of the recital was brought to a resounding close with Carolina Shout, the best-known piece by James P Johnson, in my opinion the finest composer/player of the period (another claim to fame is that he wrote the music of The Charleston, perhaps the defining piece of its era.) I hear rumours that Shellwood are to issue a CD of some of his best piano-roll performances, and I am looking forward to that immensely.

After the usual generously provided refreshments, Helen started the second half with Tango Brasiliero by de Sa Pereiers.

Milhaud's Rag Caprice No. 1, which came next, like the Stravinsky piece played earlier, needed a good tune. Fortunately it was followed by just that, Billy's transcription of My First Thrill by the team of Sigler Goodheart and Hoffman.

Then one of Billy's earliest rags, All-of-a-Twist

To follow we were given three numbers from Fats Waller's London Suite,

Limehouse, Piccadilly, and Whitechapel. Helen played them with real feeling for the idiom, but they clearly demonstrate that Fats' real talent was as a performer.

In recent years, a few classical composers have tried their hand at writing rags, none more successfully than William Bolcom. We heard two of his pieces, the first from his Garden of Eden suite, Old Adam. This is a particular favourite of mine, and in fact I played it at a Members' Concert some years ago, but it needed Helen to do it justice.

Percy Grainger was a pianist of virtuoso calibre, and that sort of level of playing is needed for his arrangement of Gershwin's song, Love Walked In. Incidentally, it's surprising, and disappointing, that Billy never published any transcriptions of any GG numbers. But to make up for it we had one of Billy's most infectious numbers, Honky Tonk, played with suitable panache.

Alexander's Ragtime Band by Irving Berlin isn't really a ragtime number, in spite of being probably the best-known piece with ragtime in its title. But we got real ragtime, albeit of a sophisticated kind, in the second Bolcom number,

Graceful Ghost, as tuneful as the first one, and a shining example of the fact that the style isn't dead.

To finish, one of Billy's most graphic pieces, Beetle in the Bottle , brought off with the style we expect from Helen.

Helen clearly loves performing, and she has the gift of communicating her enjoyment to her listeners. We all came away refreshed and invigorated, and I am sure she will be delighting us again at Shellwood in the not too distant future.

Mike Harth

The Billy Mayerl Society 3pm. March 3rd 2002

Prelude in C♯minor (exc.)	*S. Rachmaninov*
Russian Rag (exc.)	*George Cobb*
Doc Brown's Cakewalk	*Chas. Johnson*
Creole Eyes	*Louis Gottschalk*
Bunch o' Blackberries (exc.)	*Abe Holzmann*
General Lavine-eccentric	*Claude Debussy*
Bethena (A Concert Waltz)	*Scott Joplin*
Kitchen Tom	*'Eubie' Blake*
Castle House Rag (exc.)	*James Reese Europe*
Minstrels	*Claude Debussy*
'La Diva de L' Empire'	*Erik Satie*
Piano Rag Music	*Igor Stravinsky*
Rialto Ripples	*G.Gershwin/W.Donaldson*
Traumerei	*Zez Confrey*
In A Mist	*Bix Beiderbecke*
Carolina Shout	*James P. Johnson*

INTERVAL

Tango Brasiliero	*A. Leal de Sa Pereiers*
Rag Caprice No.1	*Darius Milhaud*
My First Thrill	*Sigler, Goodhart, Hoffman arr. Mayerl*
All-Of-A-Twist	*Billy Mayerl*
Limehouse	
Piccadilly from the 'London Suite'	*'Fats' Waller*
Whitechapel	
Old Adam	*William Bolcom*
'Love Walked In'	*Gershwin/Grainger*
Honky Tonk	*Billy Mayerl*
Alexander's Ragtime Band (exc.)	*Irving Berlin*
Graceful Ghost	*William Bolcom*
Beetle In The Bottle	*Billy Mayerl*

VHS Video Available from Shellwood for £17.00 inc. post

Helen Crayford

VHS-PAL
Hi-Fi
127 mins

Helen Crayford made her concert debut as a cornet soloist, aged three, and one year later won Hughie Green's talent contest "Opportunity Knocks" broadcast on Radio Luxembourg. This led to an invitation from Jack Hylton to appear on his TV show, recorded in a Britannia aircraft mid-air en-route for New York. At the age of eight, Helen won a scholarship from The Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, enabling her to become the youngest ever student at the Guildhall School Of Music. Her South Bank debut was as trumpet soloist in Shostakovich's Piano and Trumpet Concerto at the Royal Festival Hall, when still a member of the Kent County Youth Orchestra.

After taking a degree at Cambridge University (specialising in performance and composition) and a Postgraduate Diploma from the Royal College of Music, Helen won a French Government scholarship to study in Paris. This resulted in a fascinating year as one of Nadia Boulanger's last private pupils, studying the piano repertoire and attending musical history and analysis classes.

On returning to London Helen was invited to join the first all-female brass quintet, which soon won many prizes, including the Royal Overseas League Ensemble Prize and the Greater London Arts Award for Young Artists. Gallina Brass gave many concerts throughout Britain and Europe, appearing in the Park Lane Group's 20th Century Series in London's Purcell Room and as featured soloists at the Royal Albert Hall.

As soon as Helen left Gallina Brass to devote more time to the keyboard, she was in demand as a coach with major European opera companies, including the Royal Opera House, English National Opera, Glyndebourne, Aldeburgh and Garsington Festivals and Swedish Folk Opera. This involved working closely with conductors such as Sir George Solti, Elgar Howarth and John Eliot Gardiner.

In a lighter vein, Helen worked with Henry Lewis and Simon Callow on their award-winning London production of 'Carmen Jones'. She was closely involved with both the operas written by former 'Police' drummer, Stewart Copeland, (namely, 'Horse Opera' for Channel 4 TV and 'The Cask of Amontillado', performed in Barbados).

In 1986, Helen's desire to return to the footlights inspired her to devise a solo show, RAGS TO RICHES, which traces the history of Ragtime and Jazz. Since its debut in Italy, RAGS TO RICHES has been met with critical acclaim from the Edinburgh Festival to New York City. In April 1996, London's Purcell Room was sold out for the show's South Bank debut. RAGS TO RICHES has been frequently heard on BBC Radio and four recordings have been released on the Maxsound label.

In 1994, Helen was invited to be an official accompanist for BBC TV's 'Young Musician of the Year' competition and the associated master-classes given by Haken Hardenberger and Evelyn Glennie. She is now increasingly sought after by singers and instrumentalists as a recital partner, especially in contemporary repertoire. Most notably, her violinist sister Marcia, former leader of the Nash Ensemble, invited her to form the CRAYFORD DUO. In October 1997, the Duo were visiting lecturers at Princetown University, USA, and also giving a recital as part of the Celebrity Series.

Since being appointed principal keyboard player with the Britten Sinfonia in 1995, Helen has also appeared with them as soloist in such works as Gershwin's 'I Got Rhythm' variations and Stravinsky's Tango, pieces for prepared piano by John Cage, Britten's 'Young Apollo' from Ely Cathedral and Poulenc's Sextet for Piano and Wind in a 1999 BBC Chamber Prom. Future plans, in addition to further CRAYFORD DUO and RAGS TO RICHES performances in the UK, include a tour of universities in Georgia, USA with flautist Nancy Ruffer in 2002.

VERNON DUKE

Vernon Duke 1938

In a departure from writing about well-known dance band pianists of yesteryear, as is my wont, on this occasion I am devoting my energy to conveying the essential facts about the prolific composer of some well-known songs, several of which have become jazz standards. That latter statement, I must confess, represented just about the summary of my knowledge of Vernon Duke until I researched this article. However, I was so overwhelmed by the amount of material which was very quickly unearthed (though full of inconsistencies) that it was difficult to know just where to start (or should I say "I Can't Get Started" *sic*). Vernon Duke proved to be such an interesting character that I thoroughly enjoyed my brief exploration of his background and achievements, with a promise (to myself) to continue my researches in more depth at a later date.

Vladimir Alexandrovitch Dukelsky was born in the railway station of Parfianovka while his mother was on a journey to Psov in Russia on the 10th October, 1903. His obvious aptitude for music quickly became apparent and he subsequently turned out to be something of a child prodigy; even as a child he was already composing classical music. The Dukelsky family lived in Psov, but moved to Kiev in 1913 after the death of Vladimir's father. Young Vladimir was enrolled at the Kiev Conservatory as a pupil of Boris Lyatoshinsky, but also studied composition with Reinhold Glière there from 1916 to 1919. The latter was also teaching Serge Prokoviev at the time, and the two became best friends. When the Bolshevik Revolution broke out in 1917, the Dukelsky family, who were White Russians, escaped to Odessa but subsequently left for Constantinople in 1920, where Vladimir joined them.

It was while he was in Constantinople that Vladimir discovered the music of George Gershwin, and was excited by it to the extent that when he arrived in New York in 1921 sought an interview with him. George not only encouraged him to write popular music but also is credited with suggesting he should change his name to Vernon Duke. From that time onwards he decided to compose under two names retaining Dukelsky for his classical work (including poetry) but using Duke in the field of popular music. In his early days in New York, Vernon tried his hand at composing popular songs in the style of Irving Berlin and George Gershwin but was hampered by his poor command of English, and often used pseudonyms rather than risk sullying the name of Duke, until he was surer of himself. Lacking any commercial composing successes during this early period, he kept himself afloat financially by conducting orchestras for burlesque shows and writing for nightclub and vaudeville acts for pitifully low fees. He also managed to compose a piano concerto and an orchestral overture.

Having made little headway in New

York in his first two years, Duke decided to try his hand in Paris, which he journeyed to 1924. There, he made two very useful contacts, the legendary Ballet choreographer Serge Diaghilev and the conductor Koussevitsky. In Paris, Duke wrote a ballet for Diaghilev, "Zephyr and Flora", which was performed in Monte Carlo in 1925. Serge Koussevitsky with his orchestra, gave the premiere performances of Duke's first two symphonies, some concerti (the Concerto in C major was written at the request of Artur Rubinstein, but not performed until many years later) and various short works. Having begun to establish something of a reputation, Duke was invited to London in 1925 by C.B. Cochran to write the score for a stage musical he was producing. In the event, it was never produced, but six of his songs were incorporated in another of C.B.'s shows, a Viennese operetta, "Yvonne" which opened at Daly's Theatre on the 22nd May 1926. He also wrote the music for a musical entitled "The Yellow Mask", based on an Edgar Wallace crime novel, which opened at the Carlton Theatre on the 8th February 1928, and enjoyed a 17 month run. These shows were Vernon Duke's first and only musicals to be produced in London.

1929, saw the call of the U.S.A once more, and a return to New York, where he worked for Paramount Pictures writing incidental music for films using the name of Vernon Duke for the first time. In 1930 he collaborated with Yip Harburg and Ira Gershwin on a Broadway show called "The Garrick Gaieties", contributing the song, "I'm Only Human After All". This was his first Broadway musical, and opened on June 4th 1930. From this time on, Duke wrote the music for 16 Broadway shows including the last one "Blues in the Night", produced posthumously, but using his music on June 2nd, 1982. His Broadway shows included, Three "Ziegfeld Follies" and "Cabin in the Sky" in 1940/1941 featuring an all-black cast. He also wrote two operas, "Zenda" and "Mistress Into Maid" which were produced in San Francisco and Santa Barbara respectively, towards the end of his career, as well as many ballets.

His numerous shows produced many memorable hits including the following standards, 'April in Paris' (Walk a Little Faster, 1932), 'Autumn in New York' (Thumbs Up, 1934), the jazz classic 'I Can't Get Started' (Ziegfeld Follies of 1936) which was immortalised by the Bunny Berigan recording, and 'Taking a Chance on Love' (Cabin in the Sky, 1940). Interestingly, with the exception of the latter, they were all written early on in his song writing career. During 1944-45 Duke served in the U.S. Coast Guard, at which time he wrote the Coast Guard revue "Tars and Spars". Following the limited success of "Cabin in the Sky" Duke's other shows of the early '40's were not particularly successful, and following his military service, he decided to take a two year break from composing, in Paris. However, he was never again to recapture the inspiration that brought him the successes he enjoyed in the '30's. His memoirs, entitled "Passport to Paris", were published in Boston by Little & Brown in 1955. They were also published under the title of "Passport to Paris" in 1960. In 1957, Vernon married Kay McCracken, who had studied with Lotte Lehmann and they settled in Pacific Palisades in California. In 1961 he wrote the Ballet, 'Lady Blue' for Roland Petit. 1962 saw the publication of his first book of poetry entitled 'Epistles'. "Anima Eroica" (Ode to St. Brigitte) was

Vladimir Dukelsky (right) - or should it be Vernon Duke? - working with Ira Gershwin on "The Golwyn Follies"

Duke's last completed work in 1966. Sadly, he died during an operation for lung cancer at the age of 65 on the 16th January 1969 bringing to an end a very colourful and eventful life which never quite realised his early promise, unlike his friend George Gershwin.

John Archer

As an interesting sequel to this article you may like to know that Alex Hassan will be recording a Vernon Duke CD with Shellwood as part of his visit here from America. Mike L

This & That

It is turning out quite a year for Billy with concerts all over the place. In conversation with Prof. Peter Dickinson, a month or so ago, I happened to mention that the BMS was planning to bring Alex Hassan and a good tenor singer over from the States to entertain us with that neglected area of Billy's output, namely his show songs. Peter immediately showed great interest and suggested we contact the organisers of the Aldeburgh Festival held at Snape Maltings near to where Peter lives. To cut a long story short we received a favourable reaction and Alex and Robert are booked for the 14th August and will be performing a varied programme (see page 17).

After the tragically early death of our chosen conductor, David Ebbage, It was my sad duty to find a replacement to conduct and rehearse the Trinity School Of Music students for our 9th July concert, after consulting Malcolm Riley it was decided to offer the job to Gavin Sutherland, who comes well recommended.

The BMS has an exhibition about Billy currently on display at the Barbican Music Library, up in London, and it is interesting to note that we have already received requests for more membership leaflets for inclusion on the display which is housed in six large locked glass display cases. The exhibition was staged by Mike Lorenzini with the help of John Playle.

Congratulations to Susan Tomes on her excellent radio broadcast celebrating Billy's Centenary from the Wigmore Hall. Just a week later Susan is playing the same programme for the BMS. Susan writes articles on music for the Guardian newspaper, visit the Guardian website and type in her name.

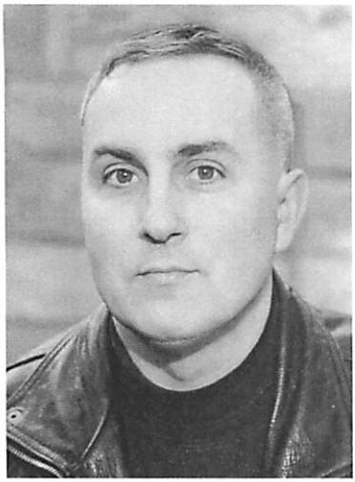
For those of you who bought Prof. Peter Dickinson's book "Marigold" the drop-out list of corrections to be found in this issue is designed to be inserted into the back page of the book. Mike L

Alex Hassan

Alex Hassan is a Northern Virginian pianist thoroughly immersed in the musical styles and arrangements of the 20s and 30s (there may be a dozen or so melodies in his post-1939 repertoire). Utilizing the resources of over 1600 syncopated and novelty piano solo 78s, a comprehensive sheet music collection (some 25000 sheets), fairly broad classical training, and an intense love of this nebulous, somewhere between classical and jazz, idiom, Alex recreates the spirited and glorious melodies of the Golden Age of popular music.

Among the highlights of his musical career, Alex counts performances at the Smithsonian, Scott Joplin Festival (Sedalia, MO), Rocky Mountain Ragtime Festival (Boulder, CO), Stanford University, Pizza-On-The-Park (London), Player's Club (Manhattan--a party for the Gershwin family), Toronto's McMichael art gallery, Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater, the El Segundo Ragfest (CA), and concerts for ragtime societies in St. Louis and Indianapolis. Since 1991, he has given 7 (including 2 in May of 1998) solo recitals for the 2 Billy Mayerl societies of England, recorded extensively at the BBC and at one of the Mayerl concert venues. Alex is the regular pianist with Washington's Interact Theatre Co., having performed numerous runs of original shows, spotlighting the music of Ivor Novello and comedy/music of Joyce Grenfell--shows nominated for various local "Helen Hayes" awards. He has made both piano roll and piano diskette (Pianomation) recordings for Buffalo's QRS Piano Roll Co.; a CD has been issued by Pennsylvania's Stomp Off Records of solo novelty piano recordings done at the BBC, both in 1993 and 1996 (reviewed very positively in the February 1998 "Jazz Journal", as well as the "Mississippi Rag"). Three CDs are now available, recorded in England, among the issues of the English record label Shellwood. "Billy Mayerl Rediscoveries" SWCD1 received an embarrassingly good review in the January 1998 issue of the British "Gramophone" magazine, the reviewer of which later hailing it as among his favorite (perhaps he said "favourite"!) 6 CDs of the year. A CD of tunes from those rollicking Vitaphone shorts of the 30s has been issued, in which Alex performs solo and accompanies two marvelous Washington area singers. Alex can be heard frequently performing for the Northern Virginia Ragtime Society, one of the longest-lived organizations of its kind (soon to be 20 years), of which he is current president. Oh, yes....Alex works for the Defense Dept.---you see, there's wife, 2 young'uns and a mortgage.....

Robert Petillo is the first tenor section leader for The United States Army Chorus, an element of The United States Army Band (Pershing's Own) stationed at Ft. Myer, Virginia. Since 1986, Master Sergeant Petillo has been privileged to sing frequently for our nation's leaders, visiting foreign dignitaries, and large public audience across the country. Featured often as a soloist with the Chorus and the Concert Band, he especially enjoys entertaining for overseas guests in their own language and has sung solos in Swedish, Thai, Russian, Dutch, Spanish, Hindi, and Italian along with the more common French and German! He appears as a soloist on many recordings made by The U.S. Army Chorus and is featured singing "The Last Full Measure of Devotion" on the Army Band's soon-to-be-released compact disc titled "A Hero For Today," which is based on their October, 2001 concert in the Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall given to honor to the citizens of New York City.



Robert Petillo: tenor

In his free time, Robert is very active as an tenor soloist on the East Coast with groups such as the Raleigh Oratorio Society, the Northeast Pennsylvania Philharmonic, the Virginia Symphony, and early music groups in Charlottesville and Williamsburg. He has sung several times in Europe, appearing as Jupiter in a production of *Semele* for Germany's Halle Handel Festival, in two tours of Germany with the Washington Bach Consort, and twice as a soloist in Venice with the baroque orchestra Accademia di San Rocco performing Vespers of Monteverdi and Cavalli.

His portrayals of the Evangelist in the J.S. Bach and C.P.E. Bach Passions have earned critical acclaim, along with his solo work with The Washington Kantorei in their American premieres of Telemann's *Der Tod Jesu* (The Death of Jesus) and CPE Bach's *Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt Jesu* (The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus). In 1994, Robert joined Dr. Dale Voelker in forming the Kantorei, a chorus specializing in the performance of Baroque-era German works that they have edited from manuscript, as well as in modern choral music. In the Washington, DC area he is often heard with the Washington Bach Consort and with many of the area's numerous choral groups, including The Washington Singers, Cantate Chamber Singers, The Washington Sängerbund, The Masterworks Chorus, The Fairfax Choral Society, Maryland Choral Society,The Alexandria Choral Society and The Cathedral Choral Society.

Since 1999 Robert has been performing and recording songs from the rhythm/syncopation era of the 1920s and 30s with pianist Alex Hassan. For the centennial year of English composer Billy Mayerl, the duo was invited to record and to perform for the Billy Mayerl Society at Shellwood Studios in Surrey.

Robert studied music at Rutgers University in New Jersey, and at the University of Maryland, where he completed a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in 1994. His voice teachers were John Powell and James McDonald. For more information, visit his website at www.robertpetillo.com

Alex Hassan, Robert Petillo & Alison Taffs
Billy Mayerl Centenary Program for Shellwood 11th August 2002

Medley by Bud De Sylva, Lew Brown & Ray Henderson
The Best Things In Life Are Free
You're The Cream In My Coffee
If I Had A Talking Picture Of You
The Varsity Drag

Introducing Alison Taffs
Shy Springtime Love
Nice to Know *Runaway Love*
Life Is Meant For Love *The Millionaire Kid*
Exuberant Love in the Summer of Life
You're Not Too Bad Yourself *Crazy Days*
Love Was Born *Crazy Days*
The Dance Goes On *Over She Goes*
I'd Be Lost Without You *The Millionaire Kid*
A Comic Interlude
Toodle-oo Sal
Never Stop Rainin' Blues
Steak And Kidney Pudding *Cheer Up*
Love in the Autumn of Life
Apart From Business *Cheer Up*
It Must Be You
I'll Build A Fence Around You *Honeymoon For Three*
What Might Have Been *Between Ourselves*
There's A Star In The Sky *Cheer Up*
Do *Crazy Days*
Resting

Alex Hassan and Robert Petillo
Billy Mayerl Centenary Program for The Aldeburgh Festival Snape Maltings 14th August 2002

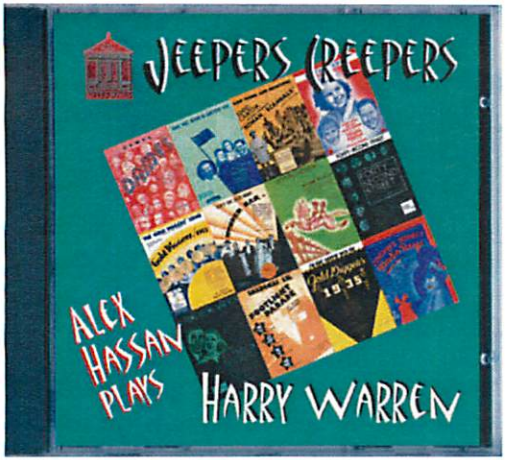
Scott Joplin's Peacherine Rag
Joplin arr.. Hassan Maple Leaf Hora
Joseph Lamb's Cotton Tail Rag
Roy Bargy's Pianoflage, Sweet And Tender
Billy Mayerl's Misletoe, Sleepy Piano, Jazz Mistress
Robin Frost's What A Relief, Whipped Cream
Lothar Perl's Hollywood Stars
Ernst Fischer's Sektlaune
Warren arr. Hassan Harry Warren Fantasy
INTERMISSION
Rob Petillo sings: Billy Mayerl songs

Toodle-oo Sal
Love Was Born *Crazy Days*
Life Is Meant For Love *The Millionaire Kid*
Never Stop Rainin' Blues
I'll Build A Fence Around You *Honeymoon for Three*
What Might Have Been *Between Ourselves*

Gershwin: group from *Damsel In Distress*
Nice Work If You Can Get It
Things Are Looking Up
I Can't Be Bothered Now
A Foggy Day
Stiff Upper Lip

Jerome Kern:
The Way You Look Tonight
Look For the Silver Lining

Mayerl: group from: *Cheer Up*
Apart From Business
Steak And Kidney Pudding
There's A Star In The Sky



Harry Warren in 1920

SWCD21 This CD is the latest offering from Alex Hassan on the Shellwood label and it has to be said Alex does it again with this inspired collection of 43 songs transcribed for piano. Bravura playing from start to finish. CD contains a very informative 16 page booklet. £10.50 inc post

All music by Harry Warren ..... All lyrics by Al Dubin, unless otherwise noted

1. **"Gold Diggers Of 1933" Selection (1933)**
   "The Gold Diggers' Song (We're In The Money)"
   "Shadow Waltz"
   "Remember My Forgotten Man"
   "I've Got To Sing A Torch Song"
   "Pettin' In The Park"

2. **"Colleen" Selection (1936)**
   "Summer Night"
   "An Evening With You"
   "I Don't Have To Dream Again"
   "You Gotta Know How To Dance"

3. **"Go Into Your Dance" Selection (1935)**
   "Go Into Your Dance"
   "The Little Things You Used To Do"
   "About A Quarter To Nine"
   "She's A Latin From Manhattan"

4. **"Serenade In Blue" (from "Orchestra Wives")(1942) (Lyric by Mack Gordon)**

5. **"Forty-Second Street" Selection (1933)**
   "Young And Healthy"
   "Shuffle Off To Buffalo"
   "You're Getting To Be A Habit With Me"
   "Forty-Second Street"

6. **"Gold Diggers Of 1935" Selection (1935)**
   "Lullaby Of Broadway"
   "The Words Are In My Heart"
   "I'm Goin' Shoppin' With You"

7. **The Lush 1940's**
   "There Will Never Be Another You" (from "Iceland") (1942) (Lyric by Mack Gordon)
   "At Last" (from "Orchestra Wives")(1942) (Lyric by Mack Gordon)
   "This Heart Of Mine" (from "Ziegfeld Follies") (1946) (Lyric by Arthur Freed)

8. **"Twenty Million Sweethearts" Selection (1934)**
   "(You May Not Be An Angel, But) I'll String Along With You"
   "Fair And Warmer"
   "(You May Not Be An Angel, But) I'll String Along With You" (reprise)

9. **Mixed Melodies - Part 1**
   "I'd Rather Listen To Your Eyes" (from "Shipmates Forever") (1935)
   "Keep Young And Beautiful" (from "Roman Scandals") (1933)
   "Shanghai Lil" (from "Footlight Parade") (1933)
   "You're An Education" (out-take from "Gold Diggers In Paris") (1938)
   "Fifth Avenue" (from "Young People") (1940) (Lyric by Mack Gordon)

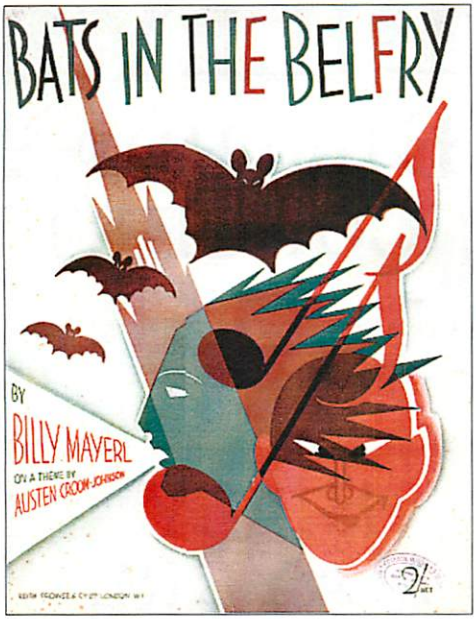
10. **"You're My Everything" (from "The Laugh Parade") (1931) (Lyric by Mort Dixon & Joe Young)**

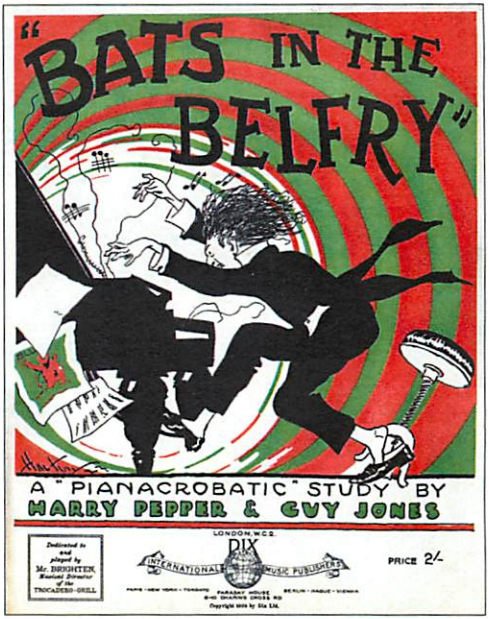
11. **"Dames" Selection (1934)**
    "Dames"
    "I Only Have Eyes For You"

12. **"Wonder Bar" Selection (1934)**
    "Don't Say Good-Night"
    "Wonder Bar"
    "Why Do I Dream Those Dreams?"

13. **Mixed Melodies - Part 2**
    "You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby" (from "Hard To Get") (1938) (Lyric by Johnny Mercer)
    "The Boulevard Of Broken Dreams (Gigolo And Gigolette)" (from "Moulin Rouge") (1934)
    "September In The Rain" (from "Melody For Two") (1937)
    "Jeepers Creepers" (from "Going Places") (1938) (Lyric by Johnny Mercer)

14. **"Ooh, That Kiss" (from "The Laugh Parade")(1931) (Lyric by Mort Dixon & Joe Young)**





On the left is the Bats In The Belfry we all know .....on the right is an American take on the same subject

Alex Hassan & Erles Jones August 11th Concert at Shellwood 3pm - 5.30pm

This last concert by Alex Hassan before returning to the USA will be all piano and no singing. Erles Jones is appearing with Alex as guest pianist on a piece arranged for two pianos of Rio Gebhardt's *Concerto For Piano And Orchestra* a fascinating syncopated piece composed about the same time as Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* which eclipsed it. The piece lasts about 12 minutes and with these two brilliant pianists performing we can expect a treat. Alex will also be playing quite a number of pieces and some by Vernon Duke, Harry Warren etc. etc.

No comment

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