

Billy Mayerl

PIANO EXAGGERATIONS

January
2010
No.27



Price \$10⁰⁰
(EXCEPT CANADA & FOREIGN)

Patrons:

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



Rarely seen in the UK, an American folio edition.

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Editor : Mike Harth, artwork & layout : Mike Lorenzini assisted by Kathy Lorenzini

The BMS website www.billymayerlsociety.co.uk continues to attract interest in far flung places courtesy of BMS member Roy Wainwright.

All BMS members on the net please tell as many people as possible to set up links.

For our first concert of 2010 Julian Dyer, pianolist extraordinaire, will be performing a selection of rare and tuneful syncopated rolls from his extensive collection, don't miss this wonderful demonstration of a first class instrument by an expert.

Our second concert is by Alex Hassan who will be playing solos and accompanying fellow American Doug Bowles in a performance of 1930s era songs.

They will also be recording a CD with Shellwood Productions.

To conclude, our very own super talented BMS member Christopher Duckett will be playing another entirely Billy Mayerl concert including some of Billy's rarer pieces. Our thanks go out to all members who provided articles and especially Mike Harth for remaining our editor and providing a challenging competition.

It remains only for the BMS to wish its members a very happy new year in 2010.

Concerts 3-6pm. are now £15 inc. Refreshments

Sunday Concerts & Meetings at **Shellwood** St. Leonards Rd. Thames Ditton KT7 0RN

Feb 28th AGM followed by a members' meeting

March 28th *Concert* Julian Dyer *Pianola*

May 16th *Concert* Alex Hassan *piano* & Doug Bowles *voice*

Aug 15th BMS members' meeting

Oct 31st *Concert* Christopher Duckett *piano*

Dec 12th Members' Xmas concert (£5 per person)



Pay to reserve your programme at least one week before your chosen date.

(no paying at the door) Members can bring 2 new guests to any concert/meeting subject to availability. Concerts are **£15** per person & include refreshments.

Members' meetings are **£3** per person inc. refreshments.

Please phone **020 8224 1521** Reservations are not available at the door.

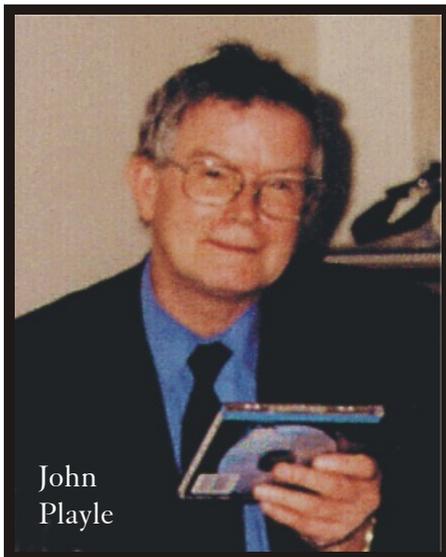
Sid O'Connell..... Bequest

After the sad news of BMS member Sid O'Connell's death last year, it came as a pleasant surprise to be told he'd left a bequest to the BMS. It was specifically for helping to update the video equipment at Shellwood. Since the BMS started to use the music room at Shellwood, I've endeavoured to provide video facilities to record our concerts for posterity. This will be the third time the four cameras have been updated since 1996, and the first time the BMS has received money from a member's will. So we now boast broadcast quality facilities, which will greatly enhance the quality of our DVD output.



Obit. John Playle 2009

John Playle will be remembered for his faithful support of the Society, always encouraging and contributing. In his will he left sheet music, LPs/CDs & books related to Billy Mayerl and light music in general to the BM Society archive.



John
Playle

Fancy That!

It was noticed by John Watson that on eBay recently the following pieces of Billy's sheet music were bought at the remarkable price of £49.99 each, these weren't being bid for but bought as "buy now".



In the real world the prices for Billy's sheet music can vary according to condition and rarity, more usual prices are:

- Virginia Creeper £4.99
- The Big Top (suite) £10.00
- Two Of Everything (song, "Nippy") £9.50
- Love In Bloom (piano Transcr.) £2.99
- The Song Of The Busy Bees £18.77



For those among us who are Youtube fans there is a fantastic clip of an eight year old Oriental girl called Kate Lee playing Billy's "6am. The Milkman" brilliantly (another Ben Grosvenor in the making) go to Youtube and type in 6am. The Milkman.

www.youtube.com



Editor Mike Harth back from Spain

Our esteemed editor has finally returned to the UK email: mh83@live.co.uk I'm sure we all welcome him back and look for ward to his invaluable contributions for many years to come.

History of the Pianola & Player Piano

Members of the BMS who attend meetings and concerts at Shellwood are no doubt familiar with Mike Lorenzini's Pianola. Dating from 1912 it is an elegant item of furniture known as an 'Aeolian 88' which, when pushed up against a piano keyboard, depresses the keys with protruding felt-covered levers and becomes a magical music-making device. There is another essential addition required, an 11 1/4" perforated paper roll an equivalent of a musical box 'barrel and pin' movement to make it play a tune, and with hands on the controls and feet to work the treadles to make the roll rotate and supply the required suction to the mechanism, it's all set to go.

Is it easy to drive? Well, it does take some experience to create a realistic recital of the piano repertoire, but you don't have to be a musician to make it work and, until the gramophone was perfected, they were the complete musical answer to many households in the early 20th century.

Invented in America, the Pianola evolved from the ingenious workings of many creators, but is generally ascribed to Edwin. S. Votey, whose machines were marketed by the Aeolian Company in 1897. They became familiarly known as 'push-ups', but by the turn of the century the necessary equipment was being built into existing pianos, including grand pianos. Some manufacturers eventually perfected their own systems, such as the French Pleyel Pleyela, the English Boyd Pistonola and the German Hupfeld Solophonola, but a 1913 Aeolian advert announced its presumed supremacy by stating that "The necessary mechanism, now being installed in such makes as Steinway, Weber, Steck or Stroud pianos, can all be purchased on easy payment terms."

Instruments with built-in mechanism became known as Player Pianos for, although the word Pianola later became synonymous with any automatic piano, it was in fact an Aeolian trademark for the original 'push-up' version.

The piano rolls, varying from 65 to 88 note capability, could be automatically notated by a star pianist on a special instrument fitted with a marking mechanism, but generally the perforations were cut to a format from printed music sources with often a great temptation to add extra holes, creating chords that would, in reality need far more than ten fingers to play them!

The genuine performer-notated ones became a valuable archive enabling us to hear the playing of such legendary names as classical pianists Paderewski, Godowsky or Rachmaninoff; composers Percy Grainger, Edvard Greig, George Gershwin; jazz performer 'Fats' Waller, plus pianists like ragtime star Scott Joplin, who were around too early to record for the then imperfect gramophone.

The perfection of amplification and gramophone recording, plus the arrival of radio, eventually caused the popularity of Pianola Pianos to wane, but they were available well into the 1930s and remained rather expensive. A 1929 Keith Prowse advert offered conventional pianos ranging from £33 to £63, whereas its player pianos were priced from £90 to £120.

Surprisingly, although the manufacture of such instruments ceased many decades ago, small quantities of piano rolls are still in production.

From the mid-1940s I spent some thirty years of my life working in the Aeolian Company's London headquarters, a grand building at 135-137 New Bond Street and known as 'Aeolian Hall' but sadly without a single Pianola in sight. By then it was in use as the headquarters of BBC Radio's Variety and Light Entertainment departments. Apart from its multitude of offices, the building contained an impressive brass-railed staircase leading to its fine first-floor concert hall, another large area on the second floor used as a studio, and several rehearsal rooms. The Aeolian Company must have been a lucrative business in its hey-day the office I occupied contained a walk-in safe, its room dimensions

being about 10 feet by 6 feet. Plenty of space there to store a great deal of money! The ⁵ building remained in use by the BBC into the mid-1970s before being gutted, turned into a mere office block and enduring the indignity of a name-change to 'Renoir Hall'.

If this article has tempted you to sample some Pianola performances, Shellwood have 3 CDs available, 2 of them with superb performances by master pianolist Julian Dyer. On them you can listen to piano rolls cut nearly a century ago or hear the playing of a ghostly Jelly Roll Morton but all sounding as fresh as this New Year.

Let the Pianola Piano bring you happiness in 1914.

Do not merely hope for increased happiness in the year that is before you – ensure it by purchasing a Pianola Piano. There is no other investment you can make which will so surely bring pleasure to you and every member of your household, for by its means all can play the music they love. Day in, day out, through many a year the influence of the world's sweetest music will brighten and cheer you through the dull routine of life.



THE ORCHESTRELLE COMPANY, ÆOLIAN HALL,

135-6-7, New Bond Street, LONDON, W.



The life and times of Stanley Black

Seldom does a dance band pianist become a serious music conductor, but Stanley Black was a perfect exception. Classically trained but instinctively jazz orientated, he moved effortlessly across the musical spectrum and, like so many famous names in British music, he was the product of Jewish immigrant parents. His Romanian father and Polish mother migrated to France in the late 19th century and opened a leather goods shop in Montmartre, Paris. Two daughters were born there before moving to London at the turn of the century, where their first son was born. Stanley was next, arriving ten years later, in 1913.

There was no musical heritage in the family, but young Stanley when seven years old eagerly listened when his two elder sisters were taking piano tuition. Once their lessons were over he would try to play them, and these tentative ventures indicated a talent that his sisters did not possess. The teacher eventually persuaded their parents to give up on the girls and allow Stanley to be taught and, by the age of eleven he was hailed as a child prodigy and became a pupil at the Matthay School of Music. Syncopation came naturally to him and in 1930, aged 17, he won a *Melody Maker* arranging contest which immediately saw him providing scores for many personality dance band leaders of the period notably Ambrose, Lew Stone and Harry Roy.

Around 1934 Stanley featured on records playing piano for American jazz legends Coleman Hawkins, Louis Armstrong and Benny Carter, before joining Harry Roy's band as one of his two pianists. When the piano duo became Stanley Black & Norman Yarlett,

Harry changed Yarlett's name to Norman White enabling him to bill them as 'Black and White'!

Enlisting in the RAF in 1939, Stanley's service was short-lived due to ill-health and ten months later he was back with Harry Roy, remaining until 1944 when he then took over from Billy Ternent as conductor of the BBC Dance Orchestra. Stanley added two vocalists to the personnel Diana Coupland and Monty Norman, both of whom went on to achieve further fame in other directions. Monty became a composer for the musical theatre and famously created 'The James Bond Theme'; and Diana Coupland became an actress, probably best remembered as the wife of Sid James in the 1971 ITV sitcom *Bless This House*.

Another lady essential to this story is Edna Kaye, a dance band vocalist who sang and recorded with the bands of Carroll Gibbons and Harry Roy. In 1947 she became Mrs Stanley Black, and added a son and a daughter to the family during 55 years of happy marriage.

Stanley remained with the BBC until 1952 when he then joined Decca Records to deal with classical and light music. He was additionally appointed Musical Director of Associated British Picture Corporation and for the next 30 years film music became a major part of his life. He scored and composed nearly 200 movies winning an Ivor Novello Award in 1962 for the score of Cliff Richard's *Summer Holiday*.

He gained a Gold Disc when his world-wide Decca album sales reached in excess of one million, and his universal fans began clamouring to see him in action. Extensive tours commenced and in 1977 he became the first British conductor to direct the Boston 'Pops' Orchestra.

Awarded an OBE in the 1986 New Year Honours list he was amused when, during his investiture, the military band on duty obligingly played his signature tune, *That Old Black Magic*.

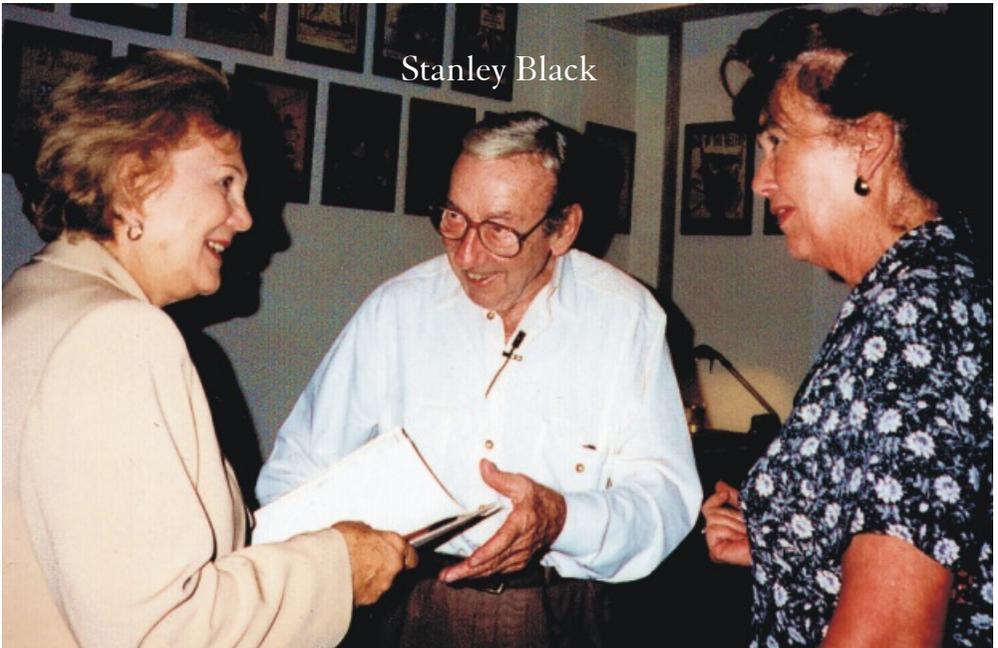
I first met Stanley during his years with the BBC Dance Orchestra and, maintaining a working relationship with him into the mid-1980s, had the pleasure of producing many of his memorable concerts in Jersey, Hong Kong and London's Royal Festival Hall.

Under some circumstances he could be highly intolerant of lesser musical talents and I have a vivid memory of one such occasion. We were in Jersey, for a concert held in Fort Regent. The hotel in which we were staying offered us both an early evening meal which we gladly accepted. Upon our entry to the dining room a pianist began playing, the management having engaged him

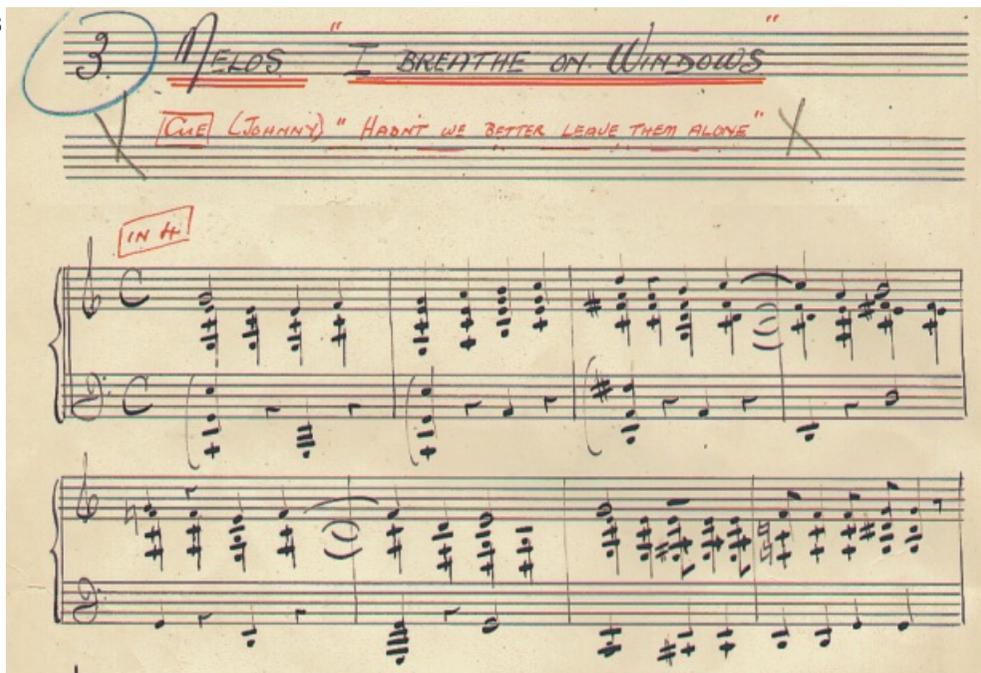
especially for our entertainment.⁷ Frankly, he was not very good and, as we sat down Stanley said, "I can't stand that, he will have to go." Being the only diners present at that time, he informed the waiter that we did not require the pianist but, to his great annoyance, the playing continued. When our first course was served the waiter enquired, 'Is there anything else I can do for you, Gentlemen?' 'Yes' snapped Stanley, 'You can stop the bloody pianist!' We ate our meal in musical silence!

In his later years he began to lose his hearing a tragic occurrence for any musician. Possessing a natural vanity, it took great persuasion to convince him that a 'hearing aid' would solve the problem. He finally succumbed to wearing one - so small that no one knew it was there!

Brian Willey 2010



Left: Mrs. Stanley Black (Edna Kaye) & **Right:** a friend
on the occasion of a BMS concert 12th. July 1998.



A small section of the score.

eBay find

Astute eBay watcher, John Watson, was intrigued to hear about an experience I had the other day. A sheet music seller on Ebay emailed to ask if I could help identify some handwritten sheets of music by Billy Mayerl. Now, as the BMS has quite a few autographs in the archive by Billy, I could, without fear of contradiction, confirm that what he had was in fact the complete handwritten piano-conductor music as used by Billy for the show 'Over She Goes'. The whole thing was found between cardboard outers and frankly tatty looking. The seller had split it up into individual parts so as to make more money. Being grateful for the provenance I'd supplied, he promised to send a

couple of sections to the BMS for free and he duly did so. That left about 8 more separate sections on eBay, so I started bidding on behalf of the BMS, not realising that the lots had caught the attention of our good friend Alex Hassan in the States, who was also bidding. Anyhoo! The lots went to Alex, who excitedly emailed me to tell me of his coup, only to be told he could have got 'em all much cheaper if he had told me he was bidding.. Needless to say the whole score will be reunited in March, so nothing is lost. Mike L.



Mr. & Mrs. Mayerl

Obituary: Julie Legg

Julie Anne Legg, wife of Harold and mother to Simon and Philip passed away 2/11/09. Julie was born in Portsmouth, sadly her parents divorced when she was very young and she was brought up by an aunt and uncle. From an early age she showed a keen interest in all things musical and started ballet and tap lessons, something she was to be involved in right up to the time of our marriage. She had many successes in competitions including an all England gold medal. She studied to gain her teaching

certificate and taught for some years at the Iris Barnes academy in Southsea. She was always extremely hard working and diligent and gained a scholarship to the Northern Grammar School for girls in Portsmouth. On leaving school she served an apprenticeship as a book keeper with a local drapers and managed to combine this with her dance teaching including private lessons mornings and evenings. She became interested in Billy Mayerl, Fats Waller and other artists and devised dance numbers to suit the pupil's speciality requirements for competitions.

I first met Julie whilst I was on weekend leave from the R.A.F. It was during a rehearsal for a concert party we were both involved with. At the outset we seemed to have similar musical interests and I suppose the rest as they say is history. We married shortly after my demob., and not long ago celebrated our golden wedding, a lovely day to remember. Julie continued working in accounts for several companies when the lads were of a suitable age to be left to their own devices,- they seemed to almost live at the golf club in those days. They seemed to all descend upon us after

eighteen holes and would ravenously devour the food Julie would prepare. She finally retired from the Marconi accounts department around twelve years ago and we had many happy holidays all over Europe.

Julie loved animals especially her cats, four in number over the years. Julie also loved her home & garden, her two sons, Simon and Philip plus daughter-in-law Andrea, and more recently Amy, who most of you know. Julie was most unspoilt and always considered others, myself included, before herself. She was much

loved and will be missed by us all.

Harold & family

P.S.

We entered the chapel of rest to the strains of *Life Is Nothing Without Music*, a piece Julie particularly requested, a sentiment I am sure most B.M. members would share.



10 Hutch sings Cole Porter

I imagine many of you will have seen the recent film *De-Lovely*, about the life of Cole Porter, which kept much closer to the facts than the earlier biopic, *Night and Day*, starring Cary Grant, that was made while the composer was still alive. A number of his best songs were included, but unfortunately in performances by modern artists so out of style as to make one wince. However, the Americans treat their artistic heritage with much greater respect than the English, and so there are several sets of reissues of a number of his songs in the original performances, one of them under the aegis of the Smithsonian Institute. (In this country, alas, there is no sign whatever of the National Sound Institute or for that matter any other official body doing anything similar for Billy, Noel, or Ivor, to name three figures of equivalent importance.) I may discuss these sets one day, but for now I want to look at a set of performances by Hutch which have a special interest, as Hutch was coached by Cole himself: they are reissued on CDHD213 by Conifer Records, known as



Desiree Arthur Julien Hutchinson.

'Hutch', was one of the biggest cabaret stars in the world during the 1920s and 1930s. He was born in Grenada in 1900 and didn't arrive in England till 1927, via a stay in Paris, when, encouraged by his lover Edwina Mountbatten, he came to perform in a Rodgers and Hart musical. He soon

became the darling of society and the population in general. 'Hutch' was a favourite singer of the then Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) and was regularly heard on air with the BBC, being at one time was the highest-paid entertainer in the country.

He married Ella Byrd in 1923 or 1924. Their daughter Leslie Bagley Yvonne was born on 9 April 1926. Hutch would go on to sire six further children to five different mothers. He was also rumoured to have been a bisexual and was alleged to have had relationships with Ivor Novello, Merle Oberon, and actress Tallulah Bankhead as well as the composer whose work is featured here.

There is general agreement about the excellence of Hutch's piano-playing, rather less about his singing, and I confess to having heard performances of his with which I wasn't entirely happy. But as with any artist, the right way to approach their work is not to ask something from them that is not within their compass, but to enjoy what they are offering. Hutch was a very emotional singer, occasionally even putting more into a number than it could comfortably hold, and I imagine his performances in intimate settings, aided by his good looks and charisma, must have been fairly overwhelming.

This disc starts off with *Let's Do It*, in which Hutch sounds rather similar to Noel Coward. There are more sets of lyrics than usual, and no piano interlude, but the second track makes up for that particular lack, starting off with a sizeable intro to a much less well-known number, *I'm A Gigolo*, specially written for him by Cole, and into this, as well as all the other numbers, Hutch injects real feeling, with a proper regard for the lyrics. It is

followed by *Looking At You*, again with plenty of piano, and then comes perhaps the finest performance on the disc, his version of *What Is This Thing Called Love?* which sounds as if it comes straight from the heart.

Another less well-known number, *Two Little Babes In The Wood*, is next, Cole playing on the modern slang version of 'babe'. Then *Night And Day* receives a quietly intense rendering, while *Anything Goes* is in lighter style.

He is joined by a percussion section for *Begin The Beguine*. Beguine rhythm was a particular favourite of Cole's, with this song of course his most famous example, and Hutch gives it a restrained but effective reading. Next comes *Just One Of Those Things*, which has a delightful underlying rhythmic lilt: then in *So Easy To Love* the verse seems slightly overdone, but that's soon forgotten when he gets into the refrain.

I've Got You Under My Skin is another beguine, with Hutch almost making the listener feel he or she is being personally addressed, after which *It's De-lovely* gives you a chance to cool down. In *Do I Love You?* the first refrain is quietly intense, with the piano interlude lightening the atmosphere. The selection closes with *I've Got My Eyes On You* and *So Nice To Come Home To*, in intimate style with lively interludes.

The disc continues with four songs by Noel Coward. If we didn't know from other sources that Noel was a romantic, whereas Cole was more drawn to the physical element, it would be obvious from their respective lyrics. The first of Noel's, *Half-caste Woman*, quite probably had a special resonance for Hutch: certainly he puts plenty into it. It's followed by *I'll Follow My Secret Heart*, but in this his mannerisms become a little

intrusive. Much more enjoyable is *I Travel Alone*, while *Close Your Eyes*, which concludes this short set, starts off slowly but ends in rhythm style.

Now comes the first of two numbers with orchestral accompaniment, an old favourite *All I Do Is Dream Of You*, with the orchestra just there to add a spot of colour, as Hutch still plays his piano in it. *Slipping Through My Fingers* suits him down to the ground, and this is another heartfelt performance, while *Fall In Love, Says My Heart* is nearly as good, with a more than usually jazzy interlude, and finally the other song with orchestra is *You Go To My Head*.

To fill the disc we are given a couple of Cole Porter medleys, and these contain one or two numbers not heard elsewhere on the disc, including another favourite, the torch song *Get Out Of Town*. This is a disc I wouldn't be without.

Mike Harth 2010



Billy's Birthday Concert

Christopher Duckett DVD available

Billy's birthday occurring on a Sunday was too good an opportunity to miss, and the BMS celebrated with a recital of his works. Who better to give it than Chris Duckett, whose previous all-Billy recital was a great success, and this time he gave us a completely new selection, beginning with one of the *Pianolettes*, *All-of-a-Twist*. Those of us who are pianists will be painfully aware just how demanding this piece, and its companions, are, but one of the satisfying things about Christopher's playing is that one never feels he is anywhere near the limit of his abilities: he makes the pieces seem almost easy, so that the listener can relax with the comfortable feeling that he is in good hands, while the enthusiastic

12 applause after this first number made it clear how much the audience appreciated this return visit.

In *Hop-O-My-Thumb*, the second of the two *Stepping Tones*, which followed, he somehow managed to suggest the figure of the title in his playing of the opening theme, while *Carminetta*, one of Billy's three pieces in Spanish style, this time a tango, was given a sensitive performance. (Chris plays another Spanish number later in this programme, and by an unexpected coincidence Simon Mulligan played the third in his September recital.) The group finished with *Parade Of the Sandwich-Board Men*, one of my favourite novelties, and the jaunty performance conjured up an amusing vision of sandwich-boards skipping around.

In the first half Chris chose to play a selection of transcriptions rather than at the end, as is usual, and he mostly picked some of the lesser-known ones.

Piccolo Pete by Phil Baxter dates from 1930, and in this version sounded more like an original piano piece than a version of a song.

Thanks by Johnston and Coslow, with its unusual intro, followed, and then we were given Billy's version of the *Lambeth Walk*, the great hit from Noel Gay's musical, *Me And My Girl*. This was played lightly but with infectious rhythm, and precipitated a spontaneous outburst of applause.

Blue Shadows, a n arrangement of Billy's piece for violin and piano, came next. The transition from the lively middle section, in the style of a Hungarian dance, to the more reflective opening mood, was beautifully executed, and the piece was succeeded.

by one of Billy's earliest transcriptions.

I Would Like To Know Why by Eubie Blake, who incidentally died not that long ago at the impressive age of 102. Christopher made light of its brutal difficulties.

The Mood That I'm In by Sherman, another number I didn't remember, followed, then came *Bye-Bye Pretty Baby*, which dates from 1927, and sounded very much of the twenties. Christopher brought this piece to life for me: I had played it without finding it of great interest, but this performance made me realize what I had missed. The opening fast pace of *Blue Velvet*, which came next, makes one wonder about the appropriateness of the title, but the middle section, with its bluesy feel, makes it clear why Billy chose it. It also was originally a violin solo, but made an effective piano piece with which to end the first half of this recital.

The second part began with one of Billy's lesser-known suites, *Three Contrasts*. *Ladybird* which opens the suite seems to have been a favourite insect of Billy's, for it turns up again over ten years later in the *Insect Oddities*. The *Pastoral* which follows is very much in the style of English music, but the *Fiddle Dance* seems to show the influence of Grieg, with the middle march-like section harmonically astringent and the fiddle rather forgotten.

We had yet more contrasts then in the form of four pieces from the *Musical Moments* set: *Beside A Rustic Bridge*, *Little Lady From Spain*, *Many Years Ago* and *Air de Ballet*. In spite of their small scale, there was no condescension in Christopher's performances, and I particularly enjoyed the last of the four, which vividly brought up a picture of a ballerina pirouetting away.

Beguine Impromptu is one of two pieces in which Billy used the beguine rhythm, though the opening section sounds more like a scherzo by Mendelssohn or Weber, and even in the middle section there are only a few bars that use the classic beguine style. It's a gorgeous piece in Billy's later style, and it was given a scintillating performance. *Siberian Lament*, in contrast, is much more serious, in keeping with its title, but though it was deemed worthy of orchestration, it is not a favourite of mine, and though Christopher pulled out the stops I was not completely convinced by it. Then *Look Lively*, which sounds like a piano arrangement of an orchestral piece, while lively was an understatement in this performance.

Puppets Suite, his final selection, is one of Billy's finest works, and here was well characterized, *Golliwog* capricious, *Judy* a trifle melancholy, and *Mr. Punch* aggressive: even, in the last section, slightly demonic, bringing this worthy tribute to Billy's memory to an exciting close.

Then for an encore we were given the *Nimble-Fingered Gentleman* in a relaxed performance which demonstrated once again Christopher's complete mastery of the keyboard. I am sure we all eagerly anticipate his next recital for the society.

Mike Harth 2010



Rachel Barrell & Colin Zammit

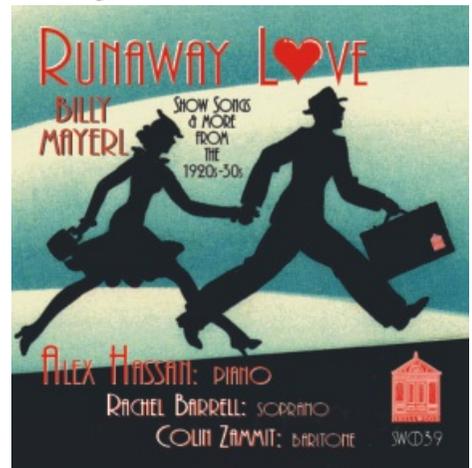
"Runaway Love" Songs by Billy Mayerl

Rachel Barrell, soprano:

Colin Zammit, baritone:

Alex Hassan, piano

We owe a great debt of gratitude to Alex Hassan. As well as introducing us to much music that we would never have heard otherwise, organizing 2 performances of Billy's songs, rarities indeed, but well worth reviving, as this recital and the previous one showed. We are also indebted to Mr & Mrs Dexter for sponsoring this recital and SWCD39 which will be available in March. Sadly ill health prevented the Dexters from attending.



This recital started with a charming duet, *While We're In Love*, which comes from *Nippy*, Billy's first complete score for the stage, and the performance told us we were in good hands for an enjoyable recital. It was followed by a solo for Colin, *I Know Something That You Know*, a 1930 number with lyric by Gee Paul, who wrote the words for most of Billy's early numbers.

Then Rachel sang *A Bird's Clear Note*, one of the ballads that Billy wrote in the post-war period, and this group ended with another duet, *Somebody Likes You* from *The Millionaire Kid*, a show from 1930 which, sadly, had a very short run.

14 Singers always appreciate a chance to rest their vocal chords, and Alex duly obliged with one of his famous medleys, this time of numbers by one of the Hollywood greats, Harry Warren.

Your Sunny Disposition is another number from *Nippy*, which had a moderately successful run at the Prince Edward theatre, with Binnie Hale playing the nippy, as the waitresses in Lyon's tea-houses were called, which no doubt some of you will recall nostalgically. After this duet, Rachel sang *Song Of The Fir Tree*, an arrangement by Billy of his piano piece. He only used the first part, but Alex has added a vocal arrangement of the 'swung' section, so successful that one wonders why Billy didn't do it.

Hand In Glove, another duet, was one of two numbers from the revue *Between Ourselves* that was published - others were advertised but never appeared.

The second half began with one of my favourite Billy songs, *Indispensable You*. It was the only number by Billy to appear in the show *Silver Wings*, but it was also far and away the best, with a bluesy feel to it, and our singers did it justice, while Alex contributed a chorus on piano before the final duetting. Then Rachel sang *Over She Goes*, which is of course the title song from the show of that name. We know that it was Billy's favourite among his shows, perhaps because it was the most successful, though in my opinion it is not his best score, I would rank *Nippy* and *Crazy Days* higher.

I've Got A Sweetie On The Radio has a lyric by Kenneth Western of the Western Brothers, in fact cousins, not brothers, and Kenneth wrote all their material. I've just acquired a disc which includes their performance of what was perhaps their signature number, *The Old School Tie*, but time has not done it any favours, and this lyric is rather better, while the melody has an attractive slight melancholy

It's Not Fair, which followed, comes from *My Sister and I*, which ran for less than a week, so this charming number never achieved the notice it deserved. Then another break for

the singers while Alex played a medley of numbers by J Fred Coots, a name which springs to mind less readily than his best numbers merit. Even without Alex's eloquent advocacy one can see why he was successful.

You're The Reason Why comes from *Sporting Love*, one of the two shows Billy was involved in concerned with horse-racing the other was *Twenty To One*. It's rather more complex than might have been expected, and one wonders how the original cast would have coped with it, though of course it posed no terrors to Colin and Rachel.

Valse Eugene is an early 'commercial' many of you will surely remember the Eugene wave. To us today it seems naïve but none the less charming. Next was *How Do You Like your Eggs Fried?* which comes from *Twenty To One*, mentioned earlier, and once again seems a cut above its ambience.

To conclude we were given another of my favourites, *Like A Cat With a Mouse*, which comes from Billy's last show, *Runaway Love* and, incredibly, was not chosen for separate publication incredibly because it is one of Billy's best numbers, and Billy chose it for one of his piano transcriptions for the Club magazine: in fact it appeared in the last issue, published as war broke out. Fortunately both verse and chorus can be found in the piano selection, so Alex was able to put together a complete version, and we got hold of the lyric from the play-script held in the Lord Chamberlain's collection, now in the British Library, showing that a much-maligned gentleman had his uses.

This recital gave further proof of the quality of Billy's song writing, and it was a genuine treat to hear his numbers performed by singers and accompanist who were fully equal to the demands. As Alex suggested, this was probably the best performance they have ever received, and I for one would love to hear more.

Simon Mulligan, piano: Sep 27, 2009

In addition to his talents as a pianist and improviser, Simon Mulligan has charm and an easy relaxed manner. A propos of that, Lorenz Hart says in one of his lyrics:

*'You can get away with murder
of that kind, too,
If you do it with a twinkle in your
eye.'*

The temptation with those so gifted is to take things easy, and Simon's intros to the pieces he played were a little too off-the-cuff, and would have benefited from a spot of preparation. There was no lack of preparation about his playing, however, which started off with a piece by Jelly Roll Morton. He is of most interest as a historical figure, leading the way for the transition from ragtime to jazz. His compositions are of lesser interest, since he had no great melodic gift, but *Frog-I-More Rag* is one of his better numbers, and Simon certainly brought it to life.

Perhaps it was slightly cruel to play Scott Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* next, for it showed up Morton's deficiencies as well as Simon's abilities. Simon took it at the sort of pace which would, I think, have pleased Joplin himself, instead of rushing through it. His version of *Solace* I found too mannered, though Joplin himself does legitimize liberties to an extent through his liberal use of fermatas, but then in general I prefer pieces played straight rather than having them, as I would put it, pulled around.

The title of the next piece, *Instant Rag*, comes from the fact that Simon offered to make it up from themes given him by the audience, and John Watson, among others, took up the challenge, coming up with a theme that

could be recognized even by the untutored 15 ear: if my memory serves me correctly, 3 E flats followed by a C, Simon used this to good effect. I enjoyed this piece very much.

Simon followed this with his versions of two Hoagy Carmichael numbers, the first of which, *Up A Lazy River*, was unfamiliar to me, though *Stardust* and Errol Garner's *Misty*, which followed without a break, certainly weren't. The first of these was given a fairly lively rendering, but the second two were played in a more reflective style. Personally I prefer going from slow to quick, as Billy does in nearly all his transcriptions, rather than the reverse direction, just a question of personal taste.

Form is the biggest problem in composing music. If you're using words, then the shape of your writing is usually dictated by the demands of the plot if it's fiction, and the thread of the argument if it's some sort of disquisition, with beginning, middle and end fairly easy to discern. With music there's no such simple thread. Quite a few of Bach's pieces, for instance, seem to me to come to a stop rather than have any kind of climactic end, and improvisations by their very nature tend to lack structure. All too often, the improviser, no doubt carried away by his inventiveness, goes on too long, and the music has to be of a very high level of inspiration for the listener's attention not to wander, which I'm afraid happened to me during this set.

Alexis Weissenberg is known only to me through his Chopin recordings, and it was interesting to hear of him as a composer. Simon played two of his works, both of them virtuoso pieces, though Simon was clearly equal to their considerable technical demands. They were very enjoyable, particularly

16 the *Charleston*, the quintessential marker of the 20s with its infectious rhythm, a sort of North American version of the South-American rumba, then we were treated to two of Simon's own compositions. *St Croix In The Rain* certainly conjured up the atmosphere suggested by its title, but I preferred *Sassafras*, in which Simon again demonstrated his impressive technique.

The second half began with four Billy pieces, *Railroad Rhythm*, *From A Spanish Lattice*, *Marigold* and *Look Lively*. All very accomplished performances, and I particularly enjoyed *From A Spanish Lattice*, which received one of the finest interpretations I have heard, while in *Look Lively* the tempo was just right - too many pianists tend to rush it.

Next an improvisation on some of Fats Waller's best-known songs, *Honeysuckle Rose*, *I'm Gonna Sit Right Down And Write Myself A Letter*, and *Ain't Misbehavin'*, which I enjoyed much more than the earlier set, and I thought stayed true to the spirit without being any kind of slavish imitation.

Simon finished with his own arrangement of *Rhapsody In Blue* for solo piano. For me this piece is too hackneyed to provide much listening pleasure, but nonetheless Simon had clearly done an excellent job of making a piano solo version which gave us much more of the original's feel than the standard arrangement. All in all it was a very impressive performance, and I will be interested to see how his talents develop.

Mike Harth 2010



Fidgety Digits SWCD 36

Every so often one comes across something that strikes one as a must-have, and this disc, which represents the cream of five collections, is one of those, containing a couple of dozen reissues of recordings by top pianists of the twenties and thirties. Just to look down the contents list is enough to make your mouth water, and perhaps the *crème de la crème* here is the very first track.

I imagine most of you reading this will know the name Lothar Perl: some of you will even have played or possess recordings of all or some of the fourteen novelties he published before the war, and all those who have attended of the Billy Mayerl Society soirées will have seen the reproductions of his sheet-music covers on the wall (much better quality than most and highly prized by collectors). Now the indefatigable Alex Hassan has managed to track down two of the three records he made around the same time, and they are a revelation, demonstrating beyond any doubt that Perl was a master of the keyboard, up there with Billy and da Costa. His performance of *Cowboy* opens this disc, and it is truly stunning: what is

more, he adds another section not in the printed score. When one remembers that this was a single take, in the days before editing removed errors and wrong notes, one is left breathless with astonishment and admiration, and it is incomprehensible that he wasn't asked to make more recordings and that those he did make are so rare and so little known.

Next comes Lee Sims, and he is a different kind of mystery. Why should someone who can play as brilliantly as he does on this version of *Mine, All Mine* be content in the main to turn out the bland performances that make up most of his output?

The tricky figuration of the opening section of *Spring Feelin'* doesn't give its composer, Donald Thorne, any problems, while, like many novelties, it has a more melodic second section.

Billy's own selection, which follows, consists of snippets from some of his pieces, played on both sides of the record. On the first is the opening section of *Marigold*, played at a speed that anyone who has grappled with it will find pretty well unbelievable, followed by short sections from *Wistaria* and *Chopsticks*, and lastly a more extended one from *Ace Of Spades*.

Though Ernst Fischer wrote a lot of piano music, nobody had the enterprise to record it, but fortunately much of it was also taken up by dance bands, and *Little Fool* is an example, with a two-piano team as an extra.

Sefton Daly was an Australian of whom little is known, but he produced a small number of novelties late in the period, *Colour Scheme* being the best-known of these. His playing is elegant and assured, and the piece itself charming, the middle section

particularly delightful, both to play and to listen to.

The manic playing of Garland Wilson in *Shim Sham Drag* makes one wonder whether he had taken something before going into the studio. By contrast Raie da Costa seems almost relaxed in her version of *Varsity Drag*, but between these two tracks comes another sample of Lothar Perl, *Grasshopper Dance*, again with an extra part not in the printed score, but just as good as the rest of it.

Harry Engleman had a penchant for titling his novelties after games, and *Cannon Off The Cush* is typical of that as well as of his light bouncy style, which favoured the top end of the keyboard. Thomas Haines, our next composer, was not a performer as well, unlike the others in this selection, and his *Fidgety Digits* is played here by Patricia Rossborough, a favourite pianist of mine her disc, SWCD10, is one of my most frequently played, and the technical problems here certainly don't give her any trouble.

I have never heard Willie Eckstein's playing before, but after listening to *I'm All A-Twitter* I shall certainly look out for him in the future.

Another Ernst Fischer number, *How Nice*, follows, this time with three keyboardists as well as the band. Then we get one of the medleys with a connecting theme that Jack Wilson favoured, this one on raindrops.

Ducky, the third Perl track, I first came across in a two-piano arrangement that I picked up in a second-hand dealers by pure luck, as I rather imagine that score will be even rarer than the solo pieces. It wasn't much easier than the original, played here as expertly as we would expect.

Don't Worry 'Bout Me is played by Arthur Sandford fuses his classical

18 background with a nice feeling for rhythm which, it seems, he later turned his back on.

Snakes And Ladders by Harry Engleman was chosen by Billy for one of his few two-piano arrangements, but here of course is the solo version played by Harry himself.

Pauline Alpert, as Alex remarks in his notes, was considered a sort of American Raie da Costa, though she hasn't quite got Raie's class, making up for it with an excess of pizzazz, as demonstrated by her version of the old standby, *Chopsticks*. One gets the feeling at the end that she has stopped because there wasn't any more space on the disc rather than worked up to a finish.

Quirky and enjoyable, it seems strange that *Fourths Fever* and its flip-side companion are the only pieces produced, or at least published, by, Neville Melland. It's certainly good enough to make you wish there were more.

Firecrackers is another of Donald Thorne's novelties, and recognizably by the same hand as penned *Spring Feelin*.

Alexander's Ragtime Band is something of a tired old number, but Monia Liter's inventive handling of it brings it back to fresh life.

The second side of Billy's own selection consists of the middle section of *Ace Of Hearts*, *Junior Apprentice*, *Hollyhock*, *Canaries Serenade* and *White Heather*.

Finally we have a concert pianist letting his hair down: *Bless 'Em All* is given the works by Isador Goodman.

To anyone with an interest in the piano music of the period, this is a must-have. The CD is worth having for *Cowboy* alone, and there are plenty of other gems nearly as good. Don't miss it. £10 to members.

Mike Harth 2010

Maurice Bentley

BMS member Maurice is an example of the interesting people the BMS attracts to be members. Maurice started his employment as a junior clerk at the National Film studios, Borehamwood working alongside Ron Moody with whom he shared the same showbiz interests and a love of song writing. They tried out their ideas on a canteen piano after 5pm. The imminent threat of call-up concentrated their minds on enjoying parties but also inspired them to try their hands at writing a song hit for the 1945 UK Amateur Song Competition it was *You And The Moon* sadly it was beaten by *Cruising Down The River*.

Later in 1950 Ron left the London School Of Economics for a stage career and in 1952 Maurice got married to Vera and later in 1954 he became a public librarian in Tottenham where he and Vera joined Southgate College Opera and Maurice contributed some more songs for their revues.

I recently received a home made CD from Maurice of his songs with him and his daughter singing with Maurice at the piano, his sense of harmony and general pianism was of a high order. I consider the BMS lucky to have him share his memories of the early Billy West-End Shows, they lend an insight into a bygone era. Mike L.



Rhythm Piano Digest

New information about Billy Mayerl and His Claviers will be disclosed in a forthcoming authorised biography of veteran jazz pianist Marian McPartland. The author is Paul de Barros, a jazz journalist based in Seattle. The book promises to be entertaining as well as authoritative, for combined with much

library research the writer has enjoyed the full cooperation of the subject herself during a number of personal interviews.

During email correspondence with this writer last October, Mr de Barros was supplied with essential source material from my personal music archive, including pre-war Billy Mayerl Club Magazines, as well as a specially written contextualization. Marian McPartland's time with the Claviers is covered in depth in an early chapter. The manuscript extract I have seen not only has a wealth of new detail bringing the Claviers episode vividly to life, but also gives a brief yet valuable insight into Mayerl's teaching methods. His ensemble was filmed by Pathe (available online), and I am informed that Marian was intrigued to see it again recently.

oOo

The stories of most of the major rhythm pianists of the inter-war period have been reasonably well documented (although not all have been published). One musician with a major talent who is often overlooked through being under-recorded and few novelties published was Peggy Desmond (1913-1977). Little or nothing has been written about her since her career in music ended in the post-war years. Her vibrant piano playing survives only through six film clips for Pathe (available online) and three uncommon 78s. But who was she? This question had intrigued me for some years. If her career had been little researched, her personal life was even more obscure. The breakthrough came when, after much research and investigation, I managed to locate Peggy Desmond's daughter, Wanda, and in the summer of 2009 was thrilled to interview her in person. The meeting was memorable; with

Commendable frankness she kindly filled 19 in the gaps of the story, and also found some fascinating family photographs. Thus the life and career of the last 'unknown' great rhythm pianist has finally been chronicled.



oOo

An interesting and lively, if a times provocative and controversial, article entitled *Rhythm Piano - Those Syncopated 78s* by Alex Hassan appeared in The IAJRC Journal Vol. 42 No. 1 in March 2009. For those who do not know, this American publication is The Research Quarterly of The International Association of Jazz Record Collectors. The article is available online at:

www.iajrc.org/alex-hassan-rhythm-piano.pdf

As its title suggests, the writer looks at vintage popular piano recordings and the musicians who made them. All the familiar names are mentioned, as well as some of the lesser known.

20 Informative comment is made, but what is questionable is when personal taste and subjective opinion is presented as fact. Consider the following: "Let me quickly explain what's junk and what finds permanent placement at H.A.P.S. (The Hassan Archives of Piano Syncopation). Rubbish is one of Charlie Kunz' seemingly zillion medleys and its ilk in the UK (Ian Stewart, Len Green, etc) [...]. Such an assessment is unduly negative and is unlikely to be shared by either fans of those named or serious historians. It is true that the aforementioned three made some bland recordings, but being so dismissive is not helpful. Many find listening to them now-and-again to be a pleasant experience.

oOo

Following on from the above item, most BMS members will be very familiar with the name Charlie Kunz, and many also with Ian Stewart. But what about that of Len Green? Record collectors know that his 78s turn up frequently and at low prices. Like those of Charlie Kunz, whose style he emulated to great success, the discs are often quite worn, which is generally a sign of popularity. But the ubiquity of his shellacs is not matched by the amount of biographical information available; in fact it is quite the reverse. That an artist who in the 1930s sold records by the thousands but about whom little or nothing is currently known was something which intrigued this writer for years.

By chance this all changed. To my surprise, I was told that an appeal for Len Green's 78s made by his granddaughter, Sue had been broadcast by a local radio station. She was hoping to find one disc; to her amazement I supplied her with nineteen! Being able to provide old

recordings to relatives of those who made them is a rewarding part of this kind of research. And so, together with a discographer colleague, we all met up in April 2007. Then, for the first I learned something of the man behind the name on countless record labels. Like Peggy Desmond, Len Green's story has now been documented and awaits publication.

oOo

For those interested in vintage English jazz and dance bands featuring pianists a new CD entitled Cambridge University Jazz 1927-1936 (Jazz Oracle 8061) could be well worth investigating. Space limitations prevent a full review, as is merited, so instead I will quote from the explanatory publicity material: 'While this CD examines the music emanating from Cambridge University much of the pioneering sounds were the work of Fred Elizalde'. The music here follows the Quinquaginta Band through the years. Elizalde played piano and arranged from his arrival at Cambridge in 1924 until his talents were recognized by Ambrose whose Savoy Orpheans were headquartered in London. In 1929 the recordings featured George Monkhouse and His Cambridge Quinquaginta Ramblers. The leadership passed on to pianist Richard Philpott whose six solos are included on this CD.

The latter, whose piano style was clearly influenced by Elizalde, is interesting but until now largely forgotten to all but the connoisseur collector. It is good that such very rare and historic 78s have been assembled and made generally available in modern format, most (if not all) for the first time.

The fine pianist and composer Lothar Perl needs no introduction to members. It was through a most unusual source that I learned of the relatively recent death of his wife Gitta, the announcement being made by Alex Hassan in an eBay listing during January 2009. His description for an original example of Zebra Stripes from 1932 states it is 'One of the greatest of all novelty piano solos, by the woefully under-recorded German syncopator, Lothar Perl, whose delightful widow, Gitta, I regret to inform interested parties, passed away last March [2008] at 97.' I wonder if she would have been surprised to learn that the very rare sheet music written by her husband three quarters of a century earlier sold for a respectable \$86.

oOo

We are sad to report that Joan Childs, the second wife of band leader and pianist Carroll Gibbons, passed away on 3rd October 2009. Joan attended a few Society events, including the first ever concert, given by Alex Hassan in 1992; the Stanley Black concert in 1998, and also the Society's second Convention in 2000. At the latter event she appeared sprightly and was friendly and approachable.

Born Joan Lidstone, she became an actress and was known professionally as Joan Alexis. By the mid-1940s she was appearing in revue, some of which also featured Carroll Gibbons and His Orchestra. She and the American-born band leader married in 1951, the union lasting until his untimely death three years later. She later remarried and her second husband also predeceased her.

While it is well known that Joan's famous first husband was a noted composer, and that she continually



Joan Childs (Mrs Carrol Gibbons) Aug. 2000 Sutton House

championed his music, it is less well known that she herself was also something of a songwriter, albeit much more modestly. Apparently she penned lyrics for a few songs and at least one melody.

A message posted on the British Dance Bands discussion group on Yahoo says 'Joan's wishes were that she wanted to be buried with Carroll at the American Cemetery in Brookwood, near Woking.' She is survived by a brother and sister.

oOo

We continue with the subject of Carroll Gibbons, thanks to the late Sid O'Connell. Sid was a good friend of both the Billy Mayerl Society and also the Player Piano Group. His technical skills were put to good use to combine his passion for vintage popular piano styles with an enthusiasm for the pianola. The results were the production of several new rolls of interesting yet previously unavailable material.

Thanks to some appreciative pianolists, Sid's work continues posthumously. Some of this can be seen on YouTube at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=1FR7AniBExo.

This especially worthy project concerned turning audio recordings by Carroll Gibbons into piano rolls. The basis was published transcriptions and used

22 computer software to produce a hand-played effect as close as possible to the original, at least as far as a standard 88-note roll allows. The commentary on the film clip says: 'This features the original audio track of Carroll Gibbons playing 'Carroll calls the Tunes #18' parts 1 & 2. After each original section is the newly re-created version. There was a contemporary printed transcription of it made in the 1940s which was only basic and not particularly accurate. The late Sid O'Connell was working on this score to produce a simulated hand-played piano roll of the original 78 at the time of his death. To honour Sid's extensive musical achievements in this field we have completed this work in his memory. The roll will be issued as a regular roll.'

I certainly look forward to the release of the roll, and would like to see more like it by similar pianists who remain unrepresented in the perforated paper medium.

oOo

The recent online phenomenon of the so-called social network sites is well known. Facebook in particular is both well established and one of the most popular. In addition to individuals having an online presence there, the site also hosts organisations, both real and virtual, old and new. It was thanks to Google that I recently discovered that a Billy Mayerl Appreciation Society exists on Facebook.

The society appears to have been founded mid-2007 by one Tristan Hall, an enterprising young man with connections to the Royal Northern College of Music. But with only a handful of messages posted from just a few core members in almost three years, the group cannot be said to have taken-off. Also, the casual nature of its

environment means credibility and serious acceptance could be difficult to achieve, were it desired. Still, it is good that Billy Mayerl's name is being perpetuated, and I wish the informal group well.

oOo

It says much about the ongoing popularity of Billy Mayerl that the above mentioned collective brings the number of enthusiast societies named after him to a grand total of six. Some of course are long defunct but nonetheless were significant in their day. To remind ourselves, in order of formation they are: The Billy Mayerl Club, The Billy Mayerl Circle, The Midland-Gershwin-Mayerl Society, The Billy Mayerl Society, The Billy Mayerl Group (an online Yahoo Music Group) and The Billy Mayerl Appreciation Society (online at Facebook). I am sure that Billy himself would be amazed yet delighted.

I can think of no other comparable performer or composer from Billy Mayerl's era to have enjoyed such a sustained and devoted following. This is all the more remarkable when it is realised that only the first group existed during Billy's lifetime (which he himself founded). The latter five were not launched until years after Billy's death, the two most recent being more than four decades later. To the general public he is a forgotten figure, but to the connoisseur of light music he undoubtedly remains a key performer and composer.



Stop Press! *Runaway Love*

SWCD39 £10 to members

Just in time to appear in this issue of the BM magazine comes another disc of Billy's songs, and what a treat it is. We knew from their recent recital that not only are Rachel's and Colin's voices eminently suited to the material but also that they are in tune with the style of the period. A quick look at the contents list shows that there are quite a few songs that weren't included in their recent recital, all of them well worth having, while even on a first listen it's noticeable that the performances have been tightened and now sound more polished.

They start off with the delightful *Hand In Glove* from *Nippy*, followed by another number from the same show that we hadn't heard before, *I Feel So Safe With You*, just as good. The lyric of *I've Got A Sweetie On The Radio* is by Kenneth Western, who wrote all the material for the Western Brother music-hall act and quite a bit besides: to these cynical old ears it sounds like the sort of excuse one comes out with when mothers, for instance, want to know why their son shows no sign of a romantic entanglement, while the melody, attractively bluesy, betrays American influence.

It's Not Fair, the next number, is another new one: it comes from an unsuccessful show, *My Sister And I*, and is followed by *I Know Something That You Know*, one of the two numbers that Billy contributed to the show *Darling, I Love You*.

The performance of *Song Of The Fir Tree* is subtly different to that we heard previously: on that occasion Rachel swung the second half, but here she sings it straight while Alex swings the accompaniment, and the result is even more delightful.

Just A Little Love is followed by *A House On A Hill-Top*, which he contributed to *Love Lies*. Then comes the title number from Billy's most successful show, *Over She Goes*, which was also his favourite, and which was even made into a (pretty dreadful) film.

Why Not, Madame was written for the film *Honeymoon For Three*, and is followed by one more song from *Nippy*, *Your Sunny Disposition And Mine*. *Miss Up-To-Date* comes from *Love Lies*, and *While We're In Love* is yet another number from *Nippy*, demonstrating how good Billy's first complete show score was. An early 'commercial,' *Valse Eugène* is quite charming,

but I'd love to know if it actually persuaded anyone to have a Eugène wave for that matter I have grave doubts about how much advertising affects our purchasing practice.

How D'You Like Your Eggs Fried? comes from the sporting farce *Twenty To One*. Stanley Holloway, who wrote the book as well as starring in the show, was a keen follower of the 'gees,' and I believe the comic aspect was more important than the music, but as we can hear Billy kept up his usual high standard.

Somebody Likes You was in another unsuccessful show, *The Millionaire Kid*, though Billy's music was praised by reviewers.

I Love Cinderella was the single song he wrote for a pantomime production, and sounds as if it was performed with audience participation.

You're The Reason Why is from another sporting farce by the same team, *Sporting Love*, and *Any Time, Any Place, Anywhere* is one of Billy's earliest numbers, appearing in *Charlot's Revue*.

Indispensable You is the only number that Billy wrote for the show *Silver Wings*. The rest of the score is forgettable, but this number, one of Billy's best, would stand out anywhere. For a change, *I Shan't Let You Out Of My Sight* wasn't written for a show, but *I'm At Your Service* is another number from *Twenty To One*, while *Thank You Most Sincerely* appeared in *The Millionaire Kid*.

Like A Cat With A Mouse is a particular favourite and it's great that with the help of Alex and the unwitting connivance of the Lord Chamberlain we are able to have a performance. The show in which it appeared, *Runaway Love*, was a particular favourite of King George VI, who called for a command performance which took place at Windsor Castle, with Billy leading the orchestral ensemble. Its initial run was cut short by the outbreak of war, though it went on to tour.

There are two dozen songs on this disc, but that doesn't feel too many: indeed I was ready for more, for the producers have certainly picked a galaxy of winners. I haven't time to comment on individual performances, but they are all well up to standard, while Alex's accompaniments are a model, and the occasional piano chorus is done with his usual inventiveness and grasp of the idiom.

Many of these numbers will be the first recording ever, and altogether this disc is indispensable for any true lover of Billy's music. Well done, Shellwood.

Mike Harth 2010

JANUARY 2010

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March 2010

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DECEMBER 2010

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- March 28th *Concert* Julian Dyer *Pianola*
- May 16th *Concert* Alex Hassan *piano* & Doug Bowles *voice*
- Aug 15th BMS members' meeting
- Oct. 31st *Concert* Christopher Duckett *piano*
- Dec 12th Members' Xmas concert (£5 per person)

