

SRP Meeting 18 April 2015

Our conductor today was Pete Willis who was making his last visit as a conductor. It seems he has decided, or been persuaded to cut down on his activities somewhat; there was some excuse that he is now 86yr old but who could possibly believe it after the wonderfully energetic and enthusiastic way in which he led us through some very varied, challenging but playable pieces. Those present were privileged to enjoy one of his last engagements - a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

We started with two Canzons by Paul Peuerl, a Renaissance composer; each part is given its share in the tune so got everyone's fingers warmed up. Not difficult pieces but gave us a gentle and enjoyable start to the afternoon.

We followed with two 17thC Spanish Dances by Gaspar Sanz, the Master of Spanish Baroque guitar.

1. The Española, one of Spain's most beautiful melodies, this haunting melody inspired many Baroque guitarists to compose their own versions.
2. The Canarios, perhaps the most popular of all of Sanz's works, is a musical portrait of the lively, syncopated dance from the Canary Islands.

These were arranged for recorders by Andrew Charlton, very lively and great fun to play with Pete accompanying on a tambourine.

Next we were encouraged through Orlando Gibbons Fantazia of Four Parts, arranged by Dom Gregory Murray, from Parthenia which contains music composed by three famous masters: William Byrd, Dr John Bull & Orlando Gibbons.

We had some problems keeping on the beat to begin with but Pete patiently persevered and we achieved a lovely sound just in time for tea! We all felt ready for refreshment, not least Pete and we weren't disappointed.

After a very welcome tea, provided by Vivienne and Mary, keeping up our usual high expectations, we launched into something completely different. Our fourth piece being a recorder version of Jerome Kern's The Way You Look Tonight; modern, light hearted and fun to play.

The next piece was over before we knew what had hit us - The Hobby Horse from Tchaikovsky's The Seasons Children's Album - a 32sec very fast quaver exercise!!

We then returned to something more fitting for recorders - Stabat Mater, a 13th-century Catholic hymn to Mary, by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi; this brought us all back down to earth to soak up and enjoy this wonderful slow and atmospheric piece.

We followed this with L'embarquement pour Cythère by Francis Poulenc; it was a very jolly fun piece to rouse us once again.

Pete's final choice was an arrangement by David Grosvenor of Pie Jesu from Faurés Requiem, an amazing finish to a really brilliant afternoon which worked us hard but without exception gave us all something by which to remember our final experience of Pete Willis' conducting.