

18th January 2014 Sue Farrant and Gwynneth Flitters

To begin the New Year at Somerset Branch two of our in-house members took turns with the baton. When you have two conductors you also have twice as much music to play – and a very wide variety – a great start to the year.

Sue began the proceedings by introducing us to some (miserable) **Morley**. This demanded both Contra basses being brought into use, having their own part, not just the F-bass ‘down and octave’. Sue talked us through the finer points of the *Pavan and Gagliard.*, which, although written by Morley, had been arranged for recorders by his near-contemporary, Peter Phillips. We moved forward slightly in time playing one of my favourite pieces – **Purcell’s Chacony**. Again we kept the contras playing as this provided a solid bass-line for the ground bass – although this is not an easy part as the basses often have a variety of walking quavers and dotted rhythms. Moving forward in time again to **Mozart** – and one of his early Köchel numbers – (so obviously written when he was just a strapping!) – a *Contretanz*. Here the descants were expected to reach the heady height of top C – although the basic piece was straightforward, there were some challenging moments in most parts. Again another time shift – to the rag tune which is so well known- the Entertainer, but Scott Joplin. This was an excellent arrangement that Sue had found, providing more challenges for the descants who now had to reach top D. Great fun to play, and we discussed the fact that rag tunes aren’t played too fast – helpful with all those semi-quavers. We ended the first half by playing a beautiful tune by **Handel**, from one of his seldom heard operas. The aria itself is very well known - *Lascia ch’io pianga*. We were exhorted to play it as if we were the singer, thinking carefully where we would breathe and being aware of the sad nature of the piece. Such a lovely arrangement again Sue, and clearly conducted.

Tea was at the usual standard of Somerset teas – excellent! Miriam, Mary and Anna were in charge in the kitchen department, and did a wonderful job.

After tea it was Gwynneth’s turn to take charge. We began playing **Andrew Challinger’s** arrangements of 3 country dances – *Drive the cold winter away, Cottey House* and *Portsmouth*. There was no bass line in these pieces, so the bass players were invited to play another line – but chose instead to make up the audience. No-one seemed to know the first two dances, but Portsmouth was well known, and Andrew had cleverly woven in another counter melody to keep it interesting. Was this Southampton? The audience showed their appreciation! We then used our latest Recorder magazines as is now the custom at Somerset Branch, playing this quarter’s insert – *The rakes of Mallow* by Ann Wright. It was a fun arrangement with plenty of opportunity for practicing staccato playing. We coped so well with the piece that we decided successfully to up the tempo. Staying in the 20th century we then played a lovely arrangement of *Polly Oliver and Gathering Peascods* (after an in depth discussion on the nature of Peascods!) by Stanley Taylor, who is more famous for his *Blow away the morning dew* arrangement. This was equally well written, with challenges again in all parts and some beautiful harmonies. We concluded the afternoon with a recorder arrangement by Ross winters of **Debussy’s Little Negre**. A pretty piece, but it caused some issues over bar numbering! I think the group were tiring by then as we had had a feast of beautiful music, so I hope that Gwynneth brings this piece again next item she conducts.

Thank you to both Sue and Gwynneth for an interesting and music-packed afternoon.

Our next meeting is on February 15th in the Nag’s Head pub.