

Saturday 21st November 2015

Steve Marshall

I arrived a little late to this meeting due to having a Christmas concert prior to SRP, but the group sounded in full swing and there was an excellent turn-out for the final session of the year. Steve was conducting the second piece when I arrived, so I missed the 2 Madrigals by Francis Pilkington, which apparently were lovely.

We were then working on Fugue on Twinkle Twinkle little Star, arranged/written by J. Lee Graham. This had a baroque feel to it as all good fugues do, and was a fun arrangement with interest in all parts. As we had previously played a lot of Michael Meeches' Variations on a well-known theme, it set me wondering if we could have a whole afternoon of Twinkling!

Tea and much needed lovely cakes were then served by Diana and Mary – much needed by the trio who had played carols as we hadn't had time for lunch, but you can always guarantee a good tea at Ruishton.

After tea Steve gave out percussion instruments- Anthony had claves (big discussion on the type of wood) and Gwynneth had a tambour (apparently very cheap – I must get one!). The rest of us had 'body percussion' – stamps and claps. Harder than it looked, we played Ann Marshall's Claps, Stamps and toots, and had tuition in stamping and clapping correctly. On our echoey floor this was much needed as we were producing an arpeggione of stamps and our clapping technique was quite grand! There was some recorder playing (toots) but we seemed to manage this mostly without issues.

Moving on to Steve's composition for Mary Steele – Nerves of Steele, from which we played 'Riffin on the Itchen'. Great fun to play true jazz style and pretend we were a big band. Having got us to play in strict time in the previous piece, Steve now allowed us a degree of flexibility.

With a few minutes left of the afternoon, Steve distributed a fairly simple version of Tchaikovsky's 'Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy'. Fun to play, and a specific part for both Great and Contra basses.

It was lovely to see both Steve and Ann again and I think everyone enjoyed their afternoon, so we look forward to another visit in 2016. Many thanks Steve – hope the M5 was easier going home than it had been coming to Ruishton!