

If you are of a very certain age, you may remember listening to Children's Favourites on a Saturday on the BBC. One of the popular records was Billy Goats Gruff and another was Sparky's Magic Piano. *Sparky's Magic Piano* is the second in a series of children's audio stories featuring Sparky, an original character created for Capitol Records in 1947. (Sparky also appeared in comic books as a sidekick to Capitol's other famous creation, Bozo the Clown). Sparky is a little boy with an overactive imagination. His adventures involve inanimate objects which magically come to life and talk to him. The piano will play anything he wants it to – and it looks to the audience like Sparky is playing it. Sparky becomes very famous because everyone thinks he is an amazing piano player.



*Sparky's Magic Piano.
Credit: Capitol Records.*

It was about the time of the 78rpm record release that I started learning the piano which progressed over many years as I traversed the numerous examination grades, finally taking the ultimate Grade VIII, although I never reached the standard achieved by my late mother who won a Gold Medal from the Royal Colleges of Music before the Second World War as being the highest placed student that year.

Anyway, pianos have featured in my life and so it was with some concern that I learnt recently that the much valued piano at the Ipswich Corn Exchange might be in need of care and attention, as does its organ installed when the Corn Exchange was repurposed in the 1970s. Pianos need more than occasional tuning, as proved by a recent small mishap at a major concert at Snape I believe when the performance had to temporarily stop whilst a technician attended to a glitch in its action.

The point I want to make is that Ipswich Arts Association is there to help, support and advise over the cultural heritage of the town and that includes keeping an unofficial watch over these precious instruments as well as promoting the events, details of which you send to me. There is also a prime display space at the Ipswich Corn Exchange provided to IAA. Do use it for any event by IAA members.

Amongst these events is one by a new venture, the Suffolk Savoyards on the 28 September. *An A to Z of G&S* is being performed that night at 7.30pm at Crowfield Village Hall, and the following day in Wingfield Barns at 3pm. Tickets cost £7 and are available at the door or you can book by phoning 01379 384656. Excerpts from many of the Savoy operettas are conducted by Andrew Burke.

Pianos seemed to have been the link in this week's column, and to round off I want to mention a recent CD from the much-loved Lyrita label, in which pianist Simon Callaghan is accompanied by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales conducted by Martyn Brabbins, in six piano concertos by British composers including John Addison and Elizabeth Maconchy. This is largely unfamiliar territory in current programmes but there are some mighty good tunes, especially the final movement of Addison's concerto which has distinct reminders of Arnold's *The Belles of St Trinians* (Lyrita SRCD 407).



Music in Felixstowe. Credit: Hattie Bennett.

concerts. He joins Nicholas Ward (violin) and Kathryn Parry (cello) in the concert which starts at 3pm at St Andrew's Church, Felixstowe. There will be more goodies by the sea in the coming weeks.

I also want to mention an autumn series of concerts in Felixstowe because an old acquaintance of mine, pianist Tim Carey, is playing with the Ward Piano Trio on Sunday 22 September as part of the Felixstowe



St Andrew's Church, Felixstowe. Credit: Sufflok Churches.

If you have a story to share with other organisations, please email IAA chairperson, Professor Chris Green at: cjc.green@talktalk.net
