

COMMUNITY NEWS - Tuesday 26th. July 2022

IPSWICH ARTS ASSOCIATION with CHRIS GREEN

The past three weeks have been a real pleasure for me. I was able to join in with musicians- singers and players- to rehearse. At last, it was possible for me to do something useful- that is if you call “conducting” a useful activity. Because I am waiting to have two cataract operations, my eyesight is not as good as it ought to be and that does mean that, when it comes to rehearsals, I cannot engage with all the musicians eye-to-eye. That is something very much of a debate within conducting circles; indeed, I was reading an article in a well-known music magazine last week about different conductors and how they used their eyes. Herbert von Karajan would often conduct with his eyes shut as if communing with some spiritual force. Leonard Bernstein would engage not only with his eyes but his whole body when he came to conduct. There were also conductors with whom eye contact was scary including Fritz Reiner. Carlos Kleiber was also mentioned as a conductor whose eyes could communicate many things.



Carlos Kleiber. Credit: Financial Times.

He happens to be my chosen conductor of the week with a recording of two Beethoven symphonies played by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra (Deutsch Grammophon 471 630-2). The recordings from the mid-1970s have been remastered to enable them to be played in

different formats. In CD format, the sound is spacious due to the famous home of the CPO. What strikes me is that Kleiber understates that famous opening of the Fifth Symphony with the four-note motif almost thrown away, but the balance between the various sections of the orchestra is judged to perfection. The bridge into the final work is an object-lesson in building up tension with the orchestra entering majestically rather than in a frenzy as often is the case with some conductors. The eyes must have been working well at this point.

During the course of life, I have met many young musicians (well, I suppose I was one of them decades ago), and some have gone on to make distinguished careers for themselves in the competitive world of music. I was so pleased to hear from one of my players that her son had distinguished himself in the world of composing. James Symington is an Ipswich lad who now serves as a musician in the armed forces. He also plays double-bass and will be conducting the Ipswich Hospital Band at the Ipswich Town Concert on 11 August at Museum Street Methodist Church, Ipswich. Well, James has been composing and a march he has written was premiered at the July 2022 Beating of the Retreat on Horseguards Parade by the Massed Bands of the Household Division.

The March is a quick March entitled *Men at Arms*. (This was the name of the first fund raising campaign of the Army Benevolent Fund - the soldier's charity. ABF). The march was played as the bands marched towards the parade ground for the British Army Spectacular on 6 July. Proud mother was there as were other members of James's family, and I believe that the march has been adopted as the march for the Army Benevolent Fund. I will keep you informed when I get more news, as I am sure I will. I can thoroughly recommend the video of the event. It brings goosebumps to one's body.

From *Men at Arms* to volunteers with arms (and legs). I wonder how many of you realise the amount of work that has to be undertaken before a music rehearsal can take place. Each time over the past three weeks a team (different each time) have ensured that the rehearsal venue is unlocked very early; those doors and windows are opened to ensure maximum ventilation; chairs are positioned to enable players or singers to have a good sight line; tables set up for display material; equipment erected such as conductor's stand and lighting; and the tea turn filled and put on (now that is the most important item). Then, of course, everything has to go into reverse at the end of a rehearsal, and some volunteers have to cope with the A12 south at present. So, I want to extend my thanks to all these volunteers – not only the ones that support my activities but in other music organisations. Without you, things would not run smoothly, especially during the heat wave we had last week.



James Symmington, composer. Credit: Ruth Symmington.

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