

Music Department Christmas Party:
Thursday, 8:30pm, Theatre Bar, Victoria Rooms, tickets between £3 & £6.

The age-old tradition of heavy drinking returns with the Music Department’s equivalent of the office party. The mysterious, anonymous brewers have been preparing their ‘heavy water’ cocktail/punch and all is in place for a rollicking good time. Formal/smart is the dress code, so ensconce yourself in velvet, don your dinner jacket, drape yourself in student chic and come, listen to the Coventry Carol followed by Kylie and eventually both at the same time. Tickets available in advance or on the door.

Carol concerts (see front page for details)

Make sure you embrace the only concerts of the year that offer mince pies and hot sherry/wassail as a post-concert treat. Many are free, and a good sing of your favourite hymns and carols purges the inclination to be Scroogey. Open your mouth-pipes and cleanse your soul with some festive communal singing in this, the season to be merry... I can’t resist – Merry Christmas.

Armistice in Old Market – *In Terra Pax*

It seems Terry Riley and the Comductors Union (Vladmir Ashkenazy and Valery Gergiev) have found it in their hearts to call a truce. Old Market and Easton has seen a catastrophic few months of intense musical culture, leaving the streets littered with rosin and weeping audiences. Cultural refugees poured into neighbouring communities of St. George and Fishponds with severe post-concert stress, trying to deal with the emotional scarring too much music has left them with. But finally, after months of negotiation there is, it seems, peace. Chief negotiator/undercover musicologist Pauline Fairclough has clinched a deal that sees the disbanding of the Riley Boyz and the disarmament of the militarised Comductors Union. There will be a kiss and make-up session at the Victoria Rooms Christmas party this Thursday, the only venue, it seems, where the two parties were happy to negotiate.

Following this triumphant and unexpected role, Pauline Fairclough will be returning to the department in the new year to write up her findings with a view to publishing the aptly titled, semi-auto-biographical, novel *Toward Cultural Ganglands: A Discourse of the Musical Yob*.

Across:

- 1) ‘Tis the season, Fa La La. (9)
- 5) Not-so-jolly Joan, fiery subject of Tchaikovsky opera. (3)
- 6) Verdi’s naughty Shakespearean parrot? (4)
- 7) A short operation precedes a number of musical works. (2)
- 8) Ballet season is upon us, full of Beauty, Disney on TV as well, so Be My Guest! (5)
- 10) Definite article in Wagner’s Rings prologue; sad, sort of. (3)
- 11) The first _____; Sir Christémas or Gallagher, or Coward? (4)
- 12) Inventor – more or less – of 2 down, short, playing singular drum of same name (3)

Down:

- 1) Cymbal of Wall St. 1920’s meltdown. (5)
- 2) Vinyls, LPs, liquorice pizzas, call ‘em what you will, they changed music forever. (7)
- 3) Second painting in Imaginary Museum of Modest’s mind. (9)
- 4) Elektra’s haunting ground, now a prime Christmas shopping destination. (5)
- 9) Massive Mahler Symphony. (5)
- 10) Note, musicians slang mirrors German death. (3)

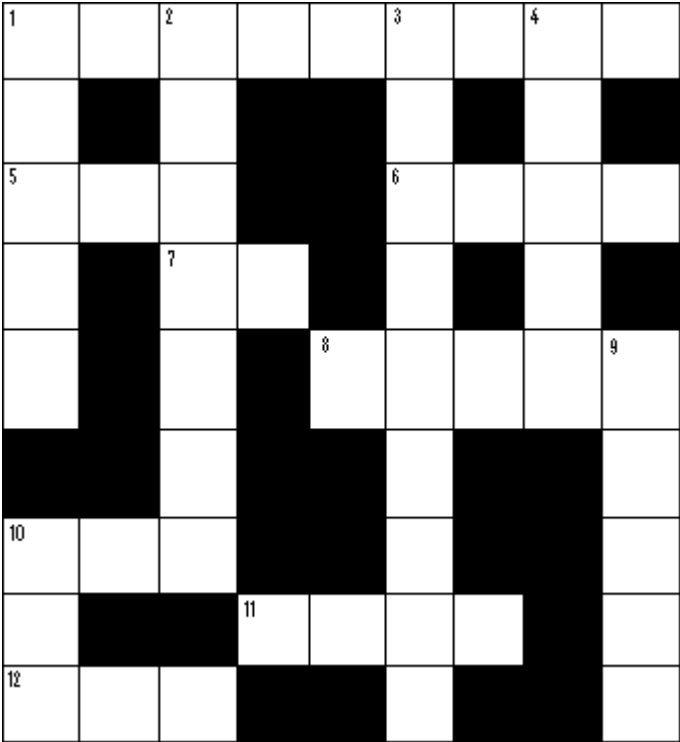
Submit solutions to ak6750@bristol.ac.uk
first correct response in this week wins a
Mint Aero

The lucky winner last time was:

Phil Farr-Cox

Congratulations to you..
Bob Dylan says “Have a merry, messy Christmas”

Warning: Enjoy confectionary responsibly



We welcome submissions of reviews from all; to submit a review, to write regularly, to receive this publication by e-mail or for any other query please contact:
ak6750@bristol.ac.uk



Velkomin! Velkomin! Velkomin!

Velkomin to the rather Christmassy tenth issue of *Octogenarian*, your friendly reviewer and lobbyist for Bristol’s music scene. We hope to fix your festive fancies for the foreseeable future by filling this fortnight’s forecast with festive frolics and fact! As we break up for the seasonal jollities we introduce yet another new feature – ‘Obscure Composer of the Fortnight’. This is the brain child of Mary J. Blige and Mark Thatcher who will be ‘guesting’ with this feature in issues to come – something of a coup methinks... (to have writers of such eminence on our staff!).

Despite my normal bemoaning of Winter programming (it’s *all* for pesky children) there’s lots to do in Bristol over the next week or two – check out *Upcoming Concerts & Muesli News and Events* for details of Carol Concerts and parties. And there is of course a crossword to keep you busy, which is, perhaps, a mite trickier than you’re used to this time.

Of course last fortnight’s crossword had its issues... more to come on that, but triumphant, in a record time (hence the slight increase in difficulty) and with his own, witty versions of the two absent clues was **Phil Farr-Cox** who delighted in his Lion Bar trophy and choice of the font **impact** – well done to you sir, well done indeed.

In this, our final release before 2011, we had hoped to bellow out a resounding boom of Christmas tidings to our loyal, misguided readership, but there are some sour notes to resolve from the diabolical fiasco of our last issue. We have taken all complaints very seriously and here issue an unequivocal apology for the numerous mistakes in our last pamphlet– felt most keenly in the crossword. Problems arose due to the contracting of an external sub-editor – here named and shamed as Feronia Parker-Thomas. Her service was below par. We have since employed a policy of “don’t trust anyone else” and hope never to repeat the mistakes of the last issue, lest we face a readership crisis that would make the recent violent protests in London seem like a provincial teddy bear’s picnic. Included in this issue is one of the more acerbic of the two thousand and twelve complaints we received (a record for unlicensed, unregulated, unofficial, ill-informed, in-house documents) by way of cathartic purging of the issue – think of it as Two Minutes of Hate. In response to these justified criticisms we can only apologise and remind our beloved readers that the goal of this humble publication has always been, and will always be, the pursuit of mediocrity. So sorry.

Thank you. Merry Chrimbo.

Upcoming Concerts:

| When? | Where? | Who? | What? | How much? |
|---|--------------------|---|--|------------------------------|
| 7.30pm Wednesday 15 December | Bristol Cathedral | Bristol Cathedral Concert Choir | Carol Concert and Music for Christmas | FREE for students |
| 8pm Thursday 16 December | Bristol Cathedral | UWE | UWE Carol Service | FREE |
| 7.30pm Friday 17 December | Bristol Cathedral | Bristol Cathedral Choir with Bristol Voices and Readings by Chris Torpy | Carols by Candlelight | £4 student |
| 7.30pm Friday 17 and Saturday 18 December | St. George’s | Bristol Bach Choir | Carols and Readings | £5 students |
| 7.30pm Saturday 18 December | Colston Hall | Bristol Choral Society | Handel <i>Messiah</i> | £5 Under-25s |
| 2pm Sunday 19 December | St. George’s | Bristol Schools Chamber Choirs | ‘Family Christmas Spectacular’ to include Britten <i>A Ceremony of Carols</i> | £8 |
| 6.30pm Sunday 19 December | St. Mary Redcliffe | St Mary Redcliffe Choir | Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols by Candlelight | FREE (it’s a service) |
| 7.30pm Monday 20 December | St. George’s | La Serenissima | Vivaldi <i>Concerti</i> | £9 or £5 BUMS |
| 7.45pm Tuesday 21 and Wednesday 22 December | St. George’s | Bristol Ensemble/ City of Bristol Choir/Exultate Singers | ‘A Christmas Spectacular’ to include Rutter, Bach, Handel, Corelli and Vivaldi | £7 student |
| 6.30pm Tuesday 21 December | St. Andrew’s Park | Everyone | Come and Sing | FREE |
| 1.15pm Wednesday 22 December | St. Mary Redcliffe | Everyone | Carols for All at Lunchtime | FREE |
| 7pm Thursday 23 and Friday 24 December | Bristol Cathedral | Cathedral Choir | Service of Nine Lessons and Carols | FREE (it’s a service) |
| 7.30pm Thursday 23 December | St. Mary Redcliffe | Brass Band and Choirs | United Carol Service | FREE (it’s a service) |
| 7.30pm Friday 31 December | Colston Hall | Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra | New Year’s Eve Viennese Concert | £8 Under-26s |

Letters to the Editor

-Cross words:

Sir,

I write to express my disgust at the abominable journalistic standards to which your so-called 'rag', The Octogenarian, has sunk. I speak not just of the incomplete question to Ms Lee's answer No.8 (we remain unclear as to whether the alternatives on offer to the bag of cake were -gum, -and-squeak, or, indeed, -wrap), but of the low-down trick of not supplying clues for 13 and 11 Down in your valuable prize crossword.

I... **[content removed in the interest of common decency]**, I shall post the complete solution on Wiki leaks and demand satisfaction on Clifton Down at 7am Saturday (unless it's still cold).

I remain, sir, your humble servant,

Disgusted of Tunbridge Wells.

Libor Novacek (piano)
St George’s
2.12.10 1pm £4

“That piano! Those acoustics! Those notes! That man’s hands! Could anything be nearer to perfection?” This is a thought that just kept on popping up in my mind as Libor Novacek graced his way through Haydn’s *Piano Sonata in C*, one of the works that the Daddy of the classical period composed in London. He would, to be sure, have been seated improvising upon a forte piano, and not the lush Steinway sat on the stage at St. George’s. Nor would he have woven his way through the delightful lines that he was in the process of creating as romantically as did Novacek in his recreation. And yet, if these ‘authenticity’ qualms had worried our virtuoso, I’m sure we would not have been treated to such a stunningly beautiful sound as our ears beheld that frozen afternoon. The sonata is the epitomy of charm, and incredibly charming was Novacek’s performance of it: perfectly balanced and delicately poised. Charming was he, too, when introducing his pieces to the audience, though perhaps a little cheesy. But then again, maybe St. George’s really is one of his favourite venues to perform; with a sound such as the one we heard in this concert, it’s easy to believe he was being genuine.

Upon my entrance into the concert hall, a jovial steward asked “Did you want a programme, or do you know it off by heart?” As I smiled and nodded and took a programme, thanks very much, I wondered if this was perhaps a nod towards the programmatic nature of the second work in the concert, Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*. This performance of the piece made famous by Ravel’s

fantastic orchestration made me realise exactly in what respect Mussorgsky’s writing is programmatic: not, as I’d assumed, music that accompanies an imaginary promenade through an art gallery, but music that *creates* the very images upon the walls. After a very robust ‘Promenade’, I could really *see* the despotic little Gnomes, I could really *feel* the ruins of the castle, I could really *hear* the children’s teasing voices. Oh, there are the cattle, standing strong at a frozen waterhole! Ah, I see the little eggs, clumsily frolicking, pre-empting the chicks they will become! This visual, tactile effect that music – intangible, evanescent – can have is nothing short of astonishing. It is tribute both to Mussorgsky’s genius and vivid (drunkard) imagination, and to Novacek’s prodigious talent and complete control of the piano. He was really enjoying himself, and in the last movement I fancy he was imagining commanding the podium of some phenomenal orchestra – rather than the piano stool – so extravagant were his bodily gestures, so loud were his thick, heavy chords as we arrived at the Great Gate of Kiev. Upon receipt of tumultuous applause, our enchanting pianist gestured appreciatively at the Steinway and the air of St. George’s hall; well he might, for ‘twas the combination of the acoustics, the instrument and the artistic interpretation that made this piano recital the finest I’ve ever experienced.

Barry Elkington

Brodsky Quartet with Diana Baroni
St. George’s
14.12.10 £5 BUMS

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The problem with having high expectations is that quite often they can be disappointed. Like the funfair coming to town. Rarely, though, are they shattered to the extent that you feel physical pain, real rancour and actual anger. I’m sorry to report that this concert was one of these dreams-crashing-into-less-than-absolute-nothingness occasions. The Brodsky string quartet is renowned for its interpretations of the contemporary repertoire for that oh-so-glorious combination of instruments, and with one of my favourite composers, Sir John Tavener, heading up the programme, I was a wee bit excited. What’s more, I was eagerly awaiting the influence that singer-cum-flautist Diana Baroni would have upon the players. Oh, how misguided. The concert began with a tacky procession of the players from the back of the hall to the stage, lead by Baroni’s voice chanting an ancient Peruvian hymn, accompanied by seemingly aleatoric tapping of fingers on violin-backs. Trendy, yeah? Once settled on stage, two more Peruvian numbers followed, the first full of fire, red blood and soul, the second with more ‘Latino beats’. This ‘poppy’ programming was to last the entire half, complete with Bjork arranged for strings, the text inexplicably translated into Spanish. Fortunately, Golijov’s *Tenebrae* provided exquisite respite through truly beautiful, brilliantly, intelligently composed string quartet music.

Jeremy Johnny Bravo Spinks

Obscure Composer of the fortnight:

JOHN JENKINS *By Mary J. Blige*

In the Nave of St Peter’s Church, Norfolk, is an inscription reading:

Under this Stone Rare Jenkins lie
The Master of the Musick Art...

John Jenkins lived from 1592 to 1678, and composed through the tumult of the English Civil War. Principally known for his consort music, he was a virtuoso viol player. He built upon the works of Byrd, and eventually saw the beginning of the Baroque period with a collection of three-part Fantasias in response to the popularity of the new Trio Sonata style. Over 800 of his works still survive, and his 5-part Fantasias are well worth a listen.

Thank you for that... We at the Octo wonder if his music was a trifle Cavalier? We certainly can’t get our Round-Head it!

8 Questions innate seconds:

We asked Dr. Emma Hornby 8 questions; she answered innate seconds:

1. Better at last, thank goodness
2. None. I am perfectly happy with the brother I have.
3. Pringles, sour cream and chive
4. Regent
5. A trashy novel
6. It's empty, actually, but Ensemble Organum 'Polyphonie Aquitaine du XlIe Siecle' is sitting right next to it
7. X Factor. Definitely. Can't you just see Schola storming through to a recording contract and international fame and fortune? But me doing the cha cha cha? Not so much.
8. "Now that's what I call music 2" or possibly the Thompson Twins "Doctor Doctor". Can't remember which came first.

Questions: **1.** How are you? **2.** Which Composer would you like as an older Brother? **3.** What is your favourite flavour of crisp? **4.** What is your favourite street in Bristol? **5.** What is first on your list to Santa? **6.** What is the music either in your CD/tape/record player or on your portable music playing device right now? **7.** Strictly Come Dancing or X Factor? (Neither is not an option) **8.** What was the first CD/tape/record you ever bought?

Bristol University Symphony Orchestra with the massed
choirs of the University of Bristol
Mahler Symphony no. 2
Colston Hall, 04.12.10, 7:30pm, £7

WOW! If Spinal Tap played at 11, Colston Hall witnessed a group of over 350 performers belt out Mahler’s HUGE 2nd Symphony at at least... well you get the idea.

This gigantic work (in every dimension – it lasts 1h20+) was performed by an all University gang made up of the three choirs (University Singers, Choral Society and University Chamber Choir) and the University Symphony Orchestra, all ably conducted by John Pickard. Arriving almost late, as is my wont, the foyer of Colston Hall was a buzz of excitement; friends, parents, long-lost-lovers, music aficionados, Mahler enthusiasts, University enthusiasts, myself & Mummy Pickard all came together in one excited bundle, buying drinks for each other and eating the odd, well-placed nut. The concert was really well-attended, just the odd seat upstairs stood vacant, a visual representation of an opportunity missed.

Not satisfied with the 300+ performers on stage, Mahler just had to include an off-stage band (conducted via video link (of JP) by Michael Ellison) that could take the high-ground of performing out-of-sight – the effect was incredibly dramatic, the spectacle of a conductor producing these noises ‘from the depth’ seemingly played by no-one was great to watch, if that does miss the point a little.

In a concert consisting almost entirely of high points very little topped the entrance of the choir: standing in unison and producing a sound to send shivers down the backs of even the most hardened listener... ah, but there was the entrance of the organ for the final, catastrophic cataclysm – the full force of the choir, orchestra and organ belting out the finale knocked numerous toupees from their perches atop the olds in the front row.

* Maximo Park ** Pepsi Max *** Mediocre to the max **** Uncle Max from The Sound Of Music ***** Maximus Decimus Aurelius - father to a murdered son, husband to a murdered wife, who will have his vengeance, in this life or the next.

The playing was incredible – this is a work that demands so much from its players, not an orchestral section was left without the satisfaction of being able to claim that it really is harder for them than anyone else. Though *my* thoughts were with the conductor; at times, controlling these large forces resembled a man trying to manipulate/coerce a king size mattress to the top-floor flat of a pokey converted Clifton pile (a rather too familiar image I suspect!) and on every beat there was a hell of a lot going on – and I presume a great deal more than even my hawk-like eyes, ears and instinct could detect.

The performance over, soloists looked pleased with themselves (particularly with their choice of jacket) whilst conductor looked both pleased and proud... as well he should. This was one hell of an achievement for a University Music Department to pull off, staggering both in scale and in quality of performance. The scale of the achievement is perhaps obliquely reflected in the (somewhat irritating) quip adopted by so many post-performance jesters “So!... What next?... Mahler 8?!”.

This was great for all those involved, and for all the students that attended, but it was also great for the wider Bristol public. At a time that the University is receiving largely castigatory publicity as regards the student protests, it was fantastic to push the University into an undeniably positive public role, perhaps reminding those not involved directly with the establishment what a great force for good a University can be. Well done.

Constance Folliop