



### ***Chair Chat***

Music is so important to so many people, it crosses international borders and cultures, and all music breaks down language barriers.

Evidence of bone flutes has been found in Palaeolithic archaeology and there is a popular story that credits the Greek Philosopher Pythagoras with inventing music. The oldest musical composition to have survived in its entirety is a first century Greek tune known as The Seikilos Epitaph.

There is no doubt that music is good for you, listening to music whether it be a Mozart Symphony, Jazz or a pop song, lowers blood pressure, improves the heart rate and can de-stress one.

Music can be used as Therapy; Nordoff-Robbins is the UK's largest Independent Music Charity, whose mission is to provide music therapy for those affected by life-limiting illness, isolation or disability. There are many local music charities helping in the wider cause. The late Sir David Amess supported a charity called The Music Man Society, which provides musical opportunities for local people with learning disabilities. They have performed at The Royal Albert Hall and the London Palladium.

There are dementia choirs all over the country, which are enjoyed by the participants and the audiences.

My sister doesn't always remember who I am, but she will join in singing hymns from her younger days and always sings along to Happy Birthday, so music stays with her in spite of everything.

There is a foot tunnel in a Dartford Park which plays classical music and to date there has been no vandalism.

I love most kinds of music and since lockdown has eased I have been lucky enough to see lots of musicians play live again - some beautiful violin symphonies with an unexpected performance of 1812 Overture with fireworks and cannons!

I recently spent 5 days watching and listening to a swing orchestra, with some Glenn Miller, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra classics.

And before Covid, I was lucky enough to see Bryan Adams and Rod Stewart live.

Listening to and playing music gives a lot of enjoyment, but for many many people singing in choirs is a source of great joy, and at our AGM we will enjoy our u3a choir entertaining us. I know they will enjoy it as much as us.

This is my last Chair Chat after 4 years, and I intend to spend more time listening to, and enjoying music of all kinds.

*Sandra*



The location of the Factory was carefully chosen close to Richmond Park and the River Thames to aid injured soldiers' recovery and rehabilitation. It still stands on its original site. We were shown pictures of some of the terrible injuries suffered by soldiers not only from WW1 and WW2 but also from recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thousands of Remembrance poppies are made at the factory every year for the Royal British Legion Poppy appeal and sold all over the British Isles. Wreaths and other remembrance items are also produced. After this interesting talk, we were taken on a tour of the workshops to see the making of the poppies in action. Production is ongoing throughout the year. We were shown the materials used to make the poppies and the machinery that punches out the flower petals and leaves. We were then introduced to the workers assembling the poppies at their workbenches and even allowed to have a go at making one each for ourselves. This visit gave us a real insight into the work of the Poppy Factory and the origins of the poppies that most of us buy in November for Remembrance Day.

**On 7<sup>th</sup> November 2018, the group went to The Imperial War Museum**, a walk from Waterloo East Station, with Caroline Piper, a London Blue Badge Guide. We went to see a special exhibition to mark the centenary of the end of World War I as well as a guided tour of some of the museum covering both World wars. We divided into two groups – some to view the exhibition and then changing places for Caroline to give us a detailed talk about the lead up to both the first and second world wars, the battles and weapons used and the ultimate end of these horrific wars. She led us through the Museum, pointing out the development of the weapons over the decades, ending with the exhibit of the infamous V2 rocket used by Germany in 1944/45 to bombard Britain. She went on to say that an even bigger and more powerful V2 was in production but thankfully for all of us, this never came to fruition because Hitler and his armies were defeated by the Allies. We also had a walk through a mock up of the trenches of World War 1 and heard stories of the bravery of the troops and their commanders in both wars. We have employed Caroline for several of our group visits and she has always been excellent. Our visit to The Imperial War Museum was no exception.

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### Book Reviews

From Norma:

#### The Binding by Bridget Collins

Emmett Farmer learned when he was young that books were dangerous, but after a mental breakdown, he is apprenticed against his will to a bookbinder and spends months learning the basic skills. He never sees a completed book because they are all locked away, and he is curious about the people who visit the bookbinder, including the aristocratic Lucian Darnley, but cannot guess why they are so desperate to be seen. The idea behind the story is imaginative and original (to me, at least) and I would recommend it very highly.

#### Sarah Mayfield by J S Anthony

This book is set just after the American Civil War and is about a woman who leaves Virginia after her husband is killed, and on the strength of just 3 letters from a man she has never met, she agrees to marry him and travels west by railroad, riverboat and stagecoach to meet him, only to find him drunk in a buggy behind the saloon.

I rarely read anything about the American Wild West or pioneers but the description sounded interesting and it was free on Kindle so there was nothing to lose. Actually, there's not much wildness in it, Sarah was prepared to face hardships but her husband-to-be Grady has inherited a ranch, almost against his will, which contains every convenience a woman could wish for. She makes friends among the townspeople,

who are loyal to Grady and keep the secrets he should have told Sarah about before she promised to marry him. When she discovers the biggest secret of all, she has to decide if she can live with it, or should she take a step into the unknown and change her life forever.

From Carole:

### Trio by William Boyd

The story takes place in Brighton in 1969 and centres around the making of a film entitled *Emily Bracegirdle's Extremely Useful Ladder to the Moon*. (Shades of *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* and other ridiculous lyrics of the time).

The trio of the title is made up of Elfrida Wing, the director's alcoholic wife who is a novelist with writer's block, Talbot Kydd, the producer who is having difficulty in coming to terms with the fact that he is gay and finally Anny Vikland, young American lead actress who is addicted to any kind of pill that you can imagine. It sounds like a recipe for disaster but is dealt with in a comic way that somehow hides the tragedy to some extent.

The 3 main characters are very well drawn. Elfrida, for example has been compared to Virginia Woolf in the past and attempts to start her new novel about Woolf's last day on earth and ultimately to re-enact the suicide unsuccessfully and comically. There are many other characters well drawn to bolster up the story. I found it a very interesting picture of the 1960s with all its excesses.

### HHhH by Laurent Binet

Several years ago, whilst on a City Break to Prague I visited the St Cyril and Methodius Church, scene of a tragic incident that culminated there in 1942.

The book, written as a novel, recounts the true story of *Operation Anthropoid*, the assassination of the Nazi leader of the then Czechoslovakia, Reinhard Heydrich, the Butcher of Prague and the subsequent fate of his killers, who were two Czech patriots parachuted into the city by the British Secret Service and the OSS. Grim I know, but very interesting nonetheless, particularly since I was completely ignorant of what happened in Czechoslovakia at the time. - if the walls could talk!

The title stands for *Himmler's Hirn heisst Heydrich* translated as *Himmler's brain is called Heydrich*, which was apparently a joke that circulated in Nazi Germany circles at the time.

From Christine:

### The Benefit of Hindsight by Susan Hill

Susan Hill has been a professional writer for over fifty years. She has won many prizes and was awarded the CBE in the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Honours. "I'm the King of the Castle" and "The Woman in Black" are just two of her many prolific novels.

The Benefit of Hindsight is a book in the Simon Serrailer Cases series.

One rainy night a couple welcome two strangers needing help into their home. It's an act they will regret for the rest of their lives.

On the other side of town, a woman is brutally murdered and her husband is left unconscious.

Are these two crimes connected? Serrailer sets out to investigate but will his own demons get in the way?

Simon used to work in the Met; but after an incident where he was badly beaten up, resulting in having his left arm amputated, he transferred to a country division to be nearer his doctor sister and her family.

Whilst investigating this crime he also has to contend with the after effects of the attack, which is beginning to interfere mentally with his life.

From Hilary:

### The Man on the Street by Trevor Wood

A vagrant hears an argument and then a splash. He believes he's witnessed a murder but no one takes him seriously. Then he teams up with a woman whose father is missing.

It's a good story, but I thought there was too much padding.

Wanted by Robert Crais

Set in current day USA featuring PI Elvis Cole.

Devon, a mother, searches her son's room as his behaviour is worrying her. She finds a gold Rolex watch and lots of cash. She hires Elvis to find out what her son is doing.

Meanwhile 2 men are searching for a group of burglars.

I liked the way this was written, sharp dialogue and fast pace.

From Irene:

The Long Drop by Denise Mina

A fictional version of the story of Peter Manuel, (The Beast of Birkenshaw) a serial killer in Scotland in the 1950s convicted of killing 7 people but suspected of killing more. I have no recollection of this, as I would have been only 6 or 7 when the case came to court. I did the research after I had read the novel and discovered that the Long Drop is a particular type of hanging.

The story is a gloomy and gritty portrayal of Glasgow's underbelly in the 1950's and the brutal treatment and attitudes towards women at this time. William Watt was a prime suspect in the killing of his wife, daughter and sister in law. Watt suspects Manuel of the triple homicide and sets out to clear his name. Watt has been told that Manuel has some knowledge of the murders, and he engineers a meeting with Manuel.

The story switches between the court case and the 11-hour drunken crawl taken by Manuel and Watt (which actually did happen).

The story is a mix of real crime and speculation and the trial was a performance with parts played by the attorneys, the audience and the witnesses. Mina does a good job portraying the mind of a serial killer.

This was not a psychological thriller as suggested by the blurb, more a portrayal of time and place when the police and the crime bosses ran the city. We were never sure just what was William Watt's involvement in the murder of his family.

Denise Mina's novels usually show the gritty and hard side of Glasgow. The novel wasn't what I expected but it held my interest all the way.

Her next novel is on another true crime, the murder of David Rizzio, secretary of Mary, Queen of Scots. It will be interesting what she does with this one!

From Jenny:

Home Front Girls by Rosie Goodwin

This was given to me by a friend Mary as it is set in Coventry where I lived for 31 years. Lovely to read the names of places I knew well.

Dotty has never known a life outside of the orphanage where she grew up, let alone love. Lucy is the sole carer of her little sister now that her brother has gone to war. Annabelle has led a life of privilege but everyone has to pinch the pennies at the moment.

Adjusting to life on the shop floor of Coventry's only department store is hard enough but then the bombs begin to fall . . .

As the devastating effect of war comes to bear on the three women, their bond deepens. One thing for certain the girls are going to need each other.

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Meet & Greet	Edna Sutton		Please let Edna know of personal events e.g. significant birthdays, anniversaries, condolences, etc. so that she can send cards.
Newsletter Editor	Mary Jupp		

All contributions for **December** newsletter to be submitted by

Midday ***Friday*** (please note the day) **26<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

Please ensure you contribute before the cut-off and have an email acknowledgment from me that I have received your contribution! Thank You

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