

## London; 15 October 2019

As the Society's centenary year continues, former Chairman Dr Peter Martland gave a programme on **Picking up the Pieces: the British Record Industry, 1919 - 1923**. Millions had died in the Great War, national treasuries were empty and revolution, famine and disease stalked the world. Hopes of a new world order were to prove largely illusory, a point nicely illustrated by William Thomas' 1920 recording of *I'm forever blowing bubbles*. This was also a period when the UK struggled with a war within which would lead in 1921 to the Irish Free State. We heard the Irish National Anthem, *The Soldier's Song*, unusually rendered in English in an early recording by J C Doyle; and we enjoyed John McCormack's 1920 recording, unissued in Britain at the time, of *Oh sleep! Why dost thou leave me* ("magic Handel" as someone has put it).

Drawing on statistical data (turnover, machine and record sales), we were given a remarkably clear and authoritative picture of how the record industry coped in this troubled period. For the detail, see Peter's published works, including his very readable article in the Society's centenary publication (RS100).

Other recordings used to illustrate the talk were that strange phenomenon, the Hawaiian guitar on which in 1921 Segis Luvaun improbably played *If you were the only girl in the world*; Fred Douglas offering us the escapism of *Pasadena*; Sol Plaatje, a founder of the African National Congress, movingly singing the ANC anthem during a visit to Hayes in 1923; a novelty orchestra playing *Dardanella*, supposedly the most popular tune in the post-war years; and Caruso's *Vieni sul mar*. Shortly before the advent of electrical recording in 1925, the dance band era began to take off. Jack Hylton (*It ain't gonna rain no more*) and the Savoy Havana Band (*Last night on the back porch*) brought this fascinating programme to a close.

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