

Northern Group Meeting

19th May

Our first session, presented by guest speaker, Peter Smart, was **Sullivan without Gilbert**, with modern performances on CD. Arthur Sullivan (1842 - 1900) became a member of the Chapel Royal at the age of eight, and by fourteen had already received an award for composition. Our first excerpt, from *The Tempest*, was composed by Sullivan aged 19; we heard part of Act 4, performed by the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra. Later orchestral works by Sullivan included symphonies, two ballets and nine operas, including *The Rose of Persia*, *Emerald Isle* and *Haddon Hall*, written with Sydney Bramley in 1872. First produced at Edinburgh, it was based on a true story. We heard excerpts from Act 1. In contrast we then heard a ballad, *Once Again*, by soloist and piano accompaniment. It was published by Boosey & Co in 1872, with words by Lionel H Lewin, composed expressly for Sims Reeves. Sullivan also composed for solo orchestral instruments, including a Cello Concerto in 1866. The original manuscripts had been destroyed in a fire at Chappells, in 1964, but Paul Watkins recreated the score, which he had performed from memory. Sullivan never married, but had several relationships during his life. Today he is best regarded for his work with W S Gilbert; but he should be remembered as a composer/musician. Finally, various ballet orchestral arrangements not usually in the G & S operas, arranged later by Stanford Robinson pre-1957, as Pye early stereo experiments, were enjoyed. Our thanks to Peter for his presentation.

Machines with a story featured several machines, and anecdotes as to how owners had come across them. Help had been encountered from CLPGS contacts including Paul Austwick and the late Miles Mallinson, to get machines in running order. Our display included an Edison Fireside phonograph, a 1920s Peter Pan portable, a Gem Model A phonograph, and an uncommon Columbia Graphophone model BQ. This had been acquired by a member, who had heard of the demolition of a farm building in the south of England via an acquaintance employed to clear it. The owners had gone on holiday, and were not interested in the recently acquired out-building and its contents; our member received a garbled message that there was "One of them Roller things, that you like!" in situ. This turned out to be the Columbia BQ, actually in very tidy condition once the years of dirt and corrosion had been removed; unusually it has a tone arm, and exclusively designed horn, with its correct Columbia reproducer, circa 1906/7, possibly imported by Murdochs. This played Indestructible cylinders and we heard Albany 1184 *Lonesome* by Byron G Harlan. Separately we saw a horn gramophone which had once surfaced in a Kendal antique dealers. Again the late M Mallinson had been asked to do work to it. Separately it transpired another former CLPGS member had owned it prior to then! – a smart mahogany based machine, with two-tone painted horn and Swiss motor, probably European circa 1908. Thanks to members for their support.

John Astin