

## London; 16 May 2017

Our London programmes have been particularly varied this year, a principle maintained when Sean Davies presented **This Modern Stuff**. Sean began by providing an overview of how classical music has evolved and how, in the twentieth century, some composers would stick to the traditions of keys and harmony while others would abandon tonal structure producing scores that are, shall we say, difficult. Following this introduction we listened to extracts from a wide variety of music starting with Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*. Premiered in 1913, it still sounds very modern as do Webern's five pieces for orchestra (so short they would have fitted on a Blue Amberol had anyone thought to do it). Other featured composers were Constant Lambert, Copland, Holst, Rawsthorne (his *Second Piano Concerto*), Maxwell Davies, Britten (his *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*) and Walton (*Crown Imperial*). Recognising that truly modern means the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the first half concluded with *Reggae Dub*, a mixing of backing tracks by King Tubby (a name seldom heard in CLPGS circles).

Sean's second half was billed as **Comedy in Music**. He began with unintended comedy - songs so awful they are almost funny. Conversely, performances that are meant to amuse can be pretty gruesome. We heard examples from Bobby Helms and Jonathan and Darlene Edwards respectively. Along the way Spike Jones pointed out that *The Blue Danube* is not blue and two German professors pontificated at length at a Hoffnung Festival. Laugh-out-loud comedy came from Dudley Moore: his *Little Miss Muffet* performed in the style of Britten and Pears and *Colonel Bogey* in the style of a Beethoven sonata. Sean ended this refreshingly different and thought-provoking programme with the delicate, subtle humour that is to be found in *Walton's Toy*.

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