

London; 21 November 2017

Big Ben may be silent for the rest of the country but for those of us gathered at the Conway Hall it boomed out through a vast EMG horn to signify the start of our meeting at 7.00pm sharp. Howard Hope's programme bore the title **A Short Evening with a Long Horn** – curious records played on an oversize EMG. The evening would include many facts and figures but also one whopping lie. Would we spot it?

Howard began with one of the many records banned by the BBC, Harry Roy's *She Had to Go and Lose it at the Astor*. He continued with instructions in tap dance delivered by Bill 'Bojangles' Robinson, once the highest paid male black artist, and an advertisement for University Motors from the inimitable Gillie Potter. Next, the ukulele: starting with Jack Hilton's *He Played his Ukulele as the Ship went Down*, we learned of the instrument's origins in Hawaii and of the Keech Brothers' inspirational idea of mating it with the banjo to produce the banjulele. We moved on to Frank Laskier, a merchant seaman, movingly describing his wartime experiences, injured and adrift at sea; and we heard a Verdi *impromptu* sounding remarkably like *The Lambeth Walk*. In a second half for which the word 'variety' might have been invented we continued with Billy Costello (the voice of Popeye); Suzanne Lenglen, the tennis legend; Billy Peach, a budgerigar with a vocabulary of over 500 words; Sir Malcolm Campbell describing his 1931 attempt on the land speed record; Tommy Handley celebrating the first canned ale; and Henry Hall with *The Broken Record*.

During the interval, Mike Langridge became the latest recipient of the Frank Andrews Trophy for his services to discography. Both he and Howard received prolonged and much deserved applause from a packed audience.

.....and so to the lie. Well, Verdi didn't write *The Lambeth Walk* but Frank Rayston cleverly played it as though he had.

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