

SCOTTISH GROUP MEETING

29 October 2016

Peter Adamson gave a fascinating presentation on the theme 'Old Records, New Music', concentrating on new sounds of the 20th century on 78rpm records.

This ranged from a Berliner recorded in 1900 emphasising the 'newness' of the Act 2 duet from 'The Queen of Spades' by Tchaikovsky, to a 1940s recording by Maro Ajeman on prepared piano of a John Cage piece entitled 'Amores'. A listing of what else we heard would take too much space but there were many highlights which should be mentioned. We heard the opening from the ballet 'Skyscrapers' by John Alden Carpenter (recorded by the Victor Symphony Orchestra in 1932), as an illustration of modern machine age music with its musical representation of a skyscraper under construction; Henry Cowell making use of tone clusters (and fists!) in his piece 'Advertisement'; the French composer Paul Vellones using the electronic 'ordes martenot' in his ballet 'Le Paradis d'Amitabha'; and the microtonal music of the Mexican composer Julian Carillo as displayed in 'Preludio a Cristobal Colon'.

Further highlights were the use of a nightingale recording by Karl Reich in Respighi's 'I Pini di Roma'; the rather eerie music written by Werner Egk for the 1936 Berlin Olympiad; and in contrast, the more peaceable 'Contrasts' written by Bela Bartok for the jazz clarinettist Benny Goodman and played by them with violinist Szigeti on an American Columbia recording from 1940. We ended with Percy Grainger's use of (Danish) folk music in 'The Power of Love' recorded by Anita Atwater in 1927 and finally a real firecracker – William Kapell on a 1944 Victor recording playing Shostakovich's 'Prelude in D major'.

I'm sure that I was not the only one present who learned a lot from Peter's informative and entertaining presentation.

Ken Jobling

10 December 2016

Peter Chaplin set us a puzzle. He played records which had been discovered in a friend's loft in North Berwick in 2007 and which had been there since 1941. With one exception, all were issues from the period 1934 to 1940. He asked his audience to try and guess what sort of person owned the records. Whilst playing them he also asked a number of mini questions about the records which kept us further entertained.

The records we heard included: the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra playing the Waltz from Tchaikovsky's 'Serenade for Strings'; a couple of Henry Hall BBC Dance Orchestra records; 'The Floral Dance' by Peter Dawson; Sibelius' 'Karelia Suite' (essentially new music in the 1930s); and records by Grace Moore, Anona Winn, and the Comedian Harmonists (mainly film related). We finished with perhaps the most surprising record in the box - Douglas Byng singing 'Doris, the Goddess of Wind',

The exceptional issue date wise was 'Cadiz' recorded on Odeon by Orchestre BOSC in Paris in 1906.

There was general agreement that the owner was possibly a young woman who went to the cinema and listened to the radio. Peter eventually clarified it for us. Yes, it was a woman who had met an American in 1939, married him in 1941 and went with him back to the States, leaving the records behind in her parent's house. She came back to North Berwick when her parents died and the records were discovered after she herself died.

This was an intriguing presentation which kept us all thoroughly entertained.

Ken Jobling