

Last night, after another wonderful concert in the fantastic setting of the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, we said goodbye to the Conchord Ensemble. We have had three brilliant days with them, and they were a great hit at Parkland Primary School yesterday morning too.

However, we can't dwell on the past - today we look forward to the concert at Newton with Christian Li and Gordon Back at 7.30pm. This concert is a sell-out, but there may be some returns if you want to try on the door, but we can't guarantee a seat.

Today's concert is sponsored by Mike and Judy Thompson and by Aston Lark Insurance. We are very grateful to them for enabling us to put on this concert.

Many of our concerts this year sold out very quickly. You, as Friends, know the benefits of being a Friend and getting priority booking, and this is becoming more and more important as the popularity of the Gower Festival increases year on year. Therefore, if you have any friends who enjoy coming to the concerts, but are not Friends of the Gower Festival, do encourage them to join us.

On Saturday we have two concerts!

The first is at 1.00pm at Gowerton School (SA4 3DL) and is a Children's Concert - a concert for adults and children, at which the performers are all children from Gowerton School and Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr. Please do come along and support these youngsters if you are able to. Both schools have a strong musical tradition and have produced some notable musicians including Sir Karl Jenkins, Alun Hoddinott, Mark Thomas, Dennis O'Neill, John Hugh Thomas etc. etc. from Gowerton, whilst the choir of Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr has appeared many times on television and radio including 'X-Change', 'Dechrau Canu' and 'Caniadaeth y Cysegr'. They will be travelling to Toronto to perform in October.

At 7.30pm we will return to St Peter's Church, Newton for Llŷr Williams who will be playing pieces by Chopin, Poulenc, Ravel and Liszt. Llŷr is a patron of the Gower Festival and always a great favourite.

The Children's concert is being sponsored by Mary Sylvester, and Llŷr Williams' concert by Prof. Richard Taylor and Gareth Evans in memory of Melva Taylor (1918-2018). Again, we are very grateful to those sponsors without whose help these concerts might not be possible.

I am sorry this is such a long email today, but I must just mention one more thing - ROAD CLOSURES!!!!

Due to the Swansea Airshow this weekend, which includes a display on Saturday evening which won't finish until after 10.30 pm, many of the roads around the bay will be closed from midday Friday to early Monday morning. This means that there will be no direct access along Mumbles Road. There will be diversions in place, but from my own experience last year, with everyone using the same diversion traffic jams are inevitable. This means your journeys will take a lot longer so please leave plenty of time to get to any concerts over the weekend. (For further details please see the official Swansea City Council Wales Airshow website where there is free access to all the roads closed and traffic management details. Go to [www.swansea.gov.uk](http://www.swansea.gov.uk), enter the keyword 'airshow' and you will see 'wales airshow' click on that and then scroll down to 'Airshow FAQs including .....road closures' click 'road closures' and the information should come up.)

And finally.....over to the Mumbling Maestro of Mumbles.....

*"When I was a little boy, I told my Dad, 'When I grow up, I want to be a musician"*

My Dad said: *"You can't do both, son"* - Chet Atkins (legendary American guitarist)

Howdy folks - How y'awl doin'?

July 4th is the day all Americans celebrate. Here are some true stories especially chosen for any American readers and British readers should enjoy them too!

Once, when someone asked President J.F. Kennedy what his favourite song was, he replied "Well, *Hail to the Chief* has a nice ring to it." As you might know, *Hail to the Chief* is the tune traditionally played to announce presidential arrivals at public events. What most people don't know is that the composer of the tune was British, one James Sanderson, to be exact. Sanderson was an early 19th century violinist and the conductor at the Surrey Theatre in London. He wrote incidental music for a stage adaptation of Sir Walter Scott's romantic poem *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810.

The tune we now know as *Hail to the Chief* was the hit from that London show and it eventually made its way to America. Sanderson's tune was originally called 'Wreaths for the Chieftain' but with new lyrics and a new title *Hail to the Chief*, it was first performed in Boston in 1815, at a memorial service on Washington's Birthday.

In 1828 the U.S. Marine Band first performed the song for a LIVING President. The occasion was the ground-breaking ceremony for the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal attended by President John Quincy Adams. Subsequent First Ladies Julia Tyler and Sara Polk continued the tradition, asking the Marine Band to play *Hail to the Chief* to announce the arrival of their spouses. By 1954, the Department of Defence established the tune as the official musical salute to their 'Commander in Chief' and it's now played to herald the arrival of the President of the USA at events throughout the land.

Mind you it isn't at all unusual for America to pinch a tune by a British composer and make something of it. For instance dear reader have you heard of John Stafford Smith? Well for those that haven't Smith was born in Gloucester in 1750 and he became a composer, organist and musicologist. Apparently he met and became close friends with Mozart and Haydn. In the 1770s he was elected a member of the 'Anacreontic Society' (odd name). This was a popular gentlemen's club of amateur musicians that was dedicated to 'wit, harmony and the God of wine' (can I join please? I like a drop of wine). They met every two weeks at the 'Crown & Anchor' in the Strand, where they had a concert, a dinner and shed-loads of wine! Smith composed music for the society's constitutional song called *To Anacreon in Heaven* (snappy title). The song became popular in Britain and also in America following the establishment of several Anacreontic Societies there.

In 1812, a well known Washington lawyer and amateur poet by the name of Francis Scott Key, was on a prisoner exchange ship in Baltimore harbour. He watched the British bombardment of nearby Fort McHenry (sorry, I forgot to mention this was during the War of 1812). At dawn, seeing the American flag was still flying over the fort he was inspired to write a poem called *Defence of Fort McHenry* which, in 1814 was re-titled *The Star-Spangled Banner* and set to the tune of *To Anacreon in Heaven*. In the original 1814 sheet music there's quite a howler of a misprint - it has the words 'A Patriotic Song' as the subtitle. This song was officially designated the United States' National Anthem in 1931. (frankly, this surprises me because, in MY humble opinion, it's not an easy tune to sing, the melody meanders and the words don't really fit the music. In my equally humble opinion no anthem can hold a candle to *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* - Agree or disagree?). They could have had John Philip Sousa's *The Stars and Stripes Forever!* which was around and well known; all it needed was some words. Sousa wrote this famous march on Christmas Day, 1896, in a New York hotel room.

There are five verses of *The Star Spangled Banner*. (oh no - really!!) Whilst the most well known verse is the only one that's regularly sung, there are four others that follow it, each ending with the line "O'er the land of the free and the home of the brave." The unheard verses contain even more challenging phrases such as "Foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes" and "Fitfully blows, half conceals, half discloses." (that explains why they're never sung!).

In 1941, Stravinsky re-orchestrated *The Star Spangled Banner* and played it through in an afternoon rehearsal at Boston prior to a planned concert performance that evening. He claimed his version "makes the linear and harmonic best of the material and is superior to any other version". (nothing like a spot of egotistical self-promotion). Just before the concert, a Boston police commissioner visited Stravinsky's dressing room and informed him of a law against "tampering" with national property. The policeman told him that his officers had already removed all copies from the Orchestra's music stands. Stravinsky's version was never performed and has never been heard since.

What happened to John Stafford Smith I hear you ask? Well, he died in 1836 at the age of eighty-six. He's buried in Gloucester Cathedral where there's a memorial plaque to him. (go and see it if you can) His death was apparently caused by a grape-pip lodged in his windpipe (note to self: only consume grapes which have been made into wine - much safer).

Have a good day y'all!

If you like tales of whacky deaths, murder, mystery and skulduggery - join me for my mumblings tomorrow.

Mumbling Maestro of Mumbles