

The Worm's Head Hotel in Rhossili was a very fitting setting for Kathy Ace to tell us how she got into writing and the journey she has been on developing the characters she uses in her various series. It was delightful on a lovely summer's day, to sit eating scones and drinking tea looking at the Worm! Today's venues might not be quite so picturesque, but will be equally as enthralling! Firstly there is Gowerton School at 1pm for the Children's Concert and then we are back in Newton this evening to hear the wonderful pianist Llŷr Williams perform, but please allow plenty of time to get to the concerts as 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 . enter the keyword 'airshow' and you will see 'wales airshow' click on that and then scroll down to 'Airshow FAQs includingroad closures' click 'road closures' and the information should come up.)

There are still tickets for the children's concert available on the door, whilst the concert at Newton is another sell-out, but there may be one or two returns on the door.

On Monday we visit Siloam Baptist church in Killay at 2.30pm for a Live Music Now concert by Jessica Robinson (soprano) and Llewelyn Ifan Jones (harp) playing pieces with a definite Welsh theme. There will be pieces by Merion Williams, Morfydd Llwyn Owen, Ivor Novello, John Thomas , Rhys Jones, Evan Thomas Davies and David Richards. This concert promises to be a real treat. It is timed to last about an hour. Parking in Killay is on the streets around the chapel or in the car park behind the Co-op. There are still a couple of tickets left. If you would like to come, but don't have a ticket yet, please contact the Grand Theatre box office until Monday morning and then after that any tickets remaining will be on the door.

Now, once more, over to the Mumbling Maestro of Mumbles.....

"Too many pieces of music finish too long after the end" - Igor Stravinsky

I'm looking forward to the Festival piano recital with our patron Llŷr Williams. It will be sensational I'm sure.

I started thinking about quotes and stories that I've read and heard about pianos, pianists, composers, page turners, accompanists, recitalists etc. I thought I'll scribble a few of these down so that you can hopefully have a smile. You can share them with family and friends! If you're not aware the Gower Festival's Artistic Director, Gordon Back, is a wonderful pianist and a world class accompanist and he gets a few mentions today (and next week!). Luckily, he knows that these references are all just a bit of light hearted nonsense. Here we go:-

"When Bing started to play, Steinway came down personally and rubbed his name off the piano" - Bob Hope

تُحصى ولا مفاتيجه تُعدّ لا البيانو مثل الحياة
، ألحان من أردت ما كهذا بيانو على تعزف أن وبإمكانك
: الخاطئ الكرسي على تجلس لكنك

” الله إلا عليه يعزف لا البيانو فذاك - Alessandro Baricco

"The piano ain't got no wrong notes" - Thelonious Monk

"The piano is a monster that screams when you touch its teeth" - Andre Segovia

Q: What do you get when you drop a piano down a mine shaft?

A: A flat minor

Q: Did you hear about the piano player who could play in time? - Nor me!

Pianist Gordon Back was accompanying a singer on a tour. In a rehearsal, Gordon said: -*"We'll start in G minor and then on the third bar, modulate to A minor and go into 5/4. When you get to bar 68 go down to F# minor and alternate a 4/4 bar with a 7/4 bar. In the last section go into double time for six bars, slowly modulate to G# minor and sing the last note slightly flat"*

The singer answered: *"I don't think I can do all that"*

Gordon replied: *"Well, that's what you did the last time you sang it"*

Tonight's Page Turner is Eryllt Penôl-Enfawr, who studied under Caradog Spillover at the 'Dewi Pugh-Williams School of Page Turning' in Farteg. She has been turning pages for many years and has worked with some of Cwmtwrch's leading pianists.

In 1988, she won the coveted 'Gerwyn Llodrau-Lawr Scholarship', which allowed her to study for a year at Cwmllynfell's prestigious Royal Academy of Page-turning (CRAP), where she honed her skills in 'left to right page turning' and 'reading music upside down'.

She was the winner of the 1994 'Rimsky Korsakov Flight of the Bumblebee' Medal, having turned 47 pages in an unprecedented 32 seconds. In 1997 she got a silver medal in the 'Gordon Back Page Pickup Competition', wherein contestants have to retrieve and sort up to 12 pages of music characteristically scattered far and wide during a performance by the Maestro himself. The judges noted her 'grace and coolness under pressure' in the final, which was broadcast live on Fochriw FM.

As regards technique, she uses both the 'finger-licking' and the 'bent-page corner' methods. She works from a standard left of performer position and is the originator of the 'double dipped-elbow hand above page snatch and go' - a very tricky technique which few can master at anything quicker than *allegretto ma non troppo*.

She is currently 'Page Turner in Residence' at the Tylorstown Young Scaffolders School of Expressive Arts and this year she will page turn for 'The Pantyscallog Over 80s Female Synchronised Formation Clog Dancing and Penillion Team' at the Nantyglo Eisteddfod - it'll be a lifetime ambition achieved.

Eryllt is married to Emrys and they live in Heol-y-Cŷw, where they run their own successful Earwig Husbandry Practice, alongside the ever popular 'World Of Spinach' Theme Park - 'Byd Spigoglys'.

When asked if she has any advice for young aspiring page turners Eryllt replied: "I'll never forget what the great Gordon Back told me whilst we were waiting in the wings before a performance at Carnegie Hall, Skewen, and that is "Never eat garlic before a performance, always avoid curry for lunch, do not break wind but if it's an absolute necessity - wait for a lengthy 'ff' section and then glare disapprovingly at the nearest member of the audience".

Eryllt has a pet miniature chihuahua that goes everywhere with her - but you probably guessed that.

Q: What has forty feet and sings?

A: A choir!

Gordon Back: "Did you hear my last recital?"

Friend: "I hope so"

Q: What do you call an ant who can't play the piano?

A: Discord-ant.

Q: What is the perfect weight for a pianist?

A: 3 and a half pounds including the urn.

Q: Did you hear about the pianist who kept banging his head against the keys?

A: He was playing by ear.

"There's nothing remarkable about playing the piano. All one has to do is press the right keys at the right time and the instrument plays itself" - Johann Sebastian Bach

Finally, do you remember Boris Giltburg who came to the Gower Festival and give a wonderful piano recital a few years ago? Well, this is something he wrote recently and it's entitled:

The perils faced by the concert pianist

It was a beautiful setting, just perfect for an outdoor summer concert. As night fell, the brightly lit piano became a shining beacon in the surrounding blackness. It also became, I now realise, an immensely attractive object to various heat- and light-loving creatures. Shortly after the opening of Chopin's Ballade No 1, a thin black insect landed on the keyboard. Before long, it was joined by another, then a few more and by the time I got to the whirlwind of passages in the coda, I was fighting a mounting panic as there were insects everywhere. Those critters just wouldn't budge. They seemed to appear on the keyboard out of nowhere and then stayed there, lethargically, utterly unresponsive to any shooing movement I managed to produce while playing. I had a choice: to close my eyes and constantly risk my fingers landing on one, or keep my eyes open and observe a mass of insects all moving ever so slightly on the keyboard.

Then, there are my encounters with bats. Bats like to live in theatres, particularly in old Italian-style ones that provide them with comfortable rafters above the stage and plenty of flying space in the darkness above. I discovered this fact during a rehearsal in one such theatre, when loud, neurotic squeaks erupted above me as I started playing. "ah, the bats!" the promoters said with smiles, in reply to my slight concern. "They've lived here since always. Don't worry - you can't hear them from the hall". That night during the concert though, it turned out that having had the theatre as their residence for ages, the bats had become very cultured, and also very opinionated. They liked the Rachmaninov preludes well enough and listened politely. The darkening mood of Prokofiev's 8th sonata, however, put them into a state of nervous agitation. They clearly didn't like my take on it and I heard them fluttering above me, conversing in worried squeaks. Then came Ravel's La Valse, darker still. That turned out to be too much. At first there was ominous silence from above but then in the coda, first one and then many black-brown signs of the bats' displeasure rained down on to the stage, on me and the piano!!!

Tomorrow's mumbblings will be thought provoking - I hope.

Mumbling Maestro of Mumbles