

I was thinking the other day that this time of year was a time for exams and naturally it was followed by that anxious wait for results. I've had to go through my fair share of exams and I still have that awful panicky dream of going to sit a paper and knowing nothing. I do remember occasions which weren't dreams - they were all too real, of coming out of exams - particularly Maths and having the inevitable playground post-mortem and comparison of answers.

"Hey Dave - what did you get for number 3?"

"Oh, I worked it out as 3 feet 4 inches."

"What about you Tim?"

"Yes, 3 feet 4 inches."

"What about you Phil?"

"Yeah, the same".

Then they'd ask me:

"Oh, I can't remember now - I think it was something like that." I knew full well that my answer had been 2 yards 7 inches!!

So - with the rules of 'Lockdown' being slowly relaxed are you looking forward to returning to your local pub or favourite restaurant? I was thinking about the food and drink that I've missed having in recent weeks - because we all have our favourites. Brahms for instance had a weakness for sweet wines. His favourite tavern in Vienna always had a barrel of Tokaji available just for him! Brahms' last words before dying were for wine. On his deathbed, he was given a sip of a riesling from Rudesheim and he whispered "Ah, this always tastes good!" Then he conked out.

Mozart always had a bottle of wine on his piano to "foster creativity" (yeah - that's a good one!). He also loved champagne and oysters. Mozart used to drink loads of Champagne during the daytime, pairing it with shellfish and sweets at the end of a meal.

Bach was a smite more sensible - he was a passionate coffee connoisseur. Apparently, he collected loads of coffee blends and brewing tools. We know a bit about Bach's taste in wine - and he liked a glass or two. In his house in Leipzig, two entire rooms were used to store wine and spirits. One cellar was not enough, he needed two! Bach often demanded his services to be paid in wine instead of money.

Beethoven loved macaroni with butter and cheese and a soup made with twelve eggs. He chose fish over meat and his favourite was pollock with potatoes.

I know that in my Mumblings I quite often say - "Well, it's nice to have a hobby" and not always in a complimentary sense! A lot of the great composers did have hobbies - Mozart spent many an evening playing billiards, Wagner enjoyed whole days shopping for expensive fabrics, Verdi liked a good cigar, Brahms drank wine, Tchaikovsky went to parties and Elgar went to the races.

One chap who had VERY unusual hobbies and habits was Percy Grainger. Now, I often mumble about him in July because it coincides with the anniversary of his birth - this year

the 138th. I thought I knew a lot about this guy until I read a recently published book which mentioned that he was obsessed with (amongst other things!) 'Terry Towelling'. There is a massive collection of homemade terry towelling costumes that were found at his home and are now on show at the Grainger Museum in Melbourne. Nobody seems to know what they were all for or why - or if they do - they aren't saying!! It could possibly be because Grainger was a Nordic 'groupie'. He wanted to emulate everything Nordic in his music - and in his life. Many of his hand-made 'Terry Towelling' costumes show an obsession with Vikings. Not only did he hand sew these costumes but he took numerous photos of himself in them. Apparently he even dyed his hair to achieve that authentic Valkyrie look. Well, it's nice to have a hobby!!

Enjoy the summer!!

*Mumbling Maestro of Mumbles*