



## *TACET TIMES – 1*

Dear TPS member

This is the first of an occasional publication intended to bring you news, information and entertainment during this tedious time. There will be snippets, possibly gossip, and (I hope) personal tales.

I cannot do it all by myself! I need those of you out there with an interesting story to tell to send it to me for inclusion. If you are feeling creative and want to write a poem – let me have it, and if you don't feel you can do that but have a very special poem that you'd like to share – send that too. Anything to do with making music would be especially welcome.

And on that theme – you can also help me put together a book to celebrate our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I had intended to go around interviewing people about their experiences, but that is on hold. So, why don't you tell me how you found the Society, what it felt like to join, what experiences you have had while part of it? I may not use them all, but everything will go into the mix and you may find that, while writing about one thing, another occurs. For instance, where were you when you heard about the Chapel fire? What did you think when it re-opened? Or – which piece of music has made the most impact on you: it could be *The Cloud Messenger*, with its Eastern flavour, or it could be the first time you sang *The Messiah*. Or when you sang in the world's fastest ever *Messiah* with Matthew!

I'm sure that you all have lots to contribute. You can send things to me by email ([secretary@tonphil.org.uk](mailto:secretary@tonphil.org.uk)), by post to 16 Manor Close, Tunbridge Wells TN4 8YB. You can even pop things through the door if you are local. If you want to send a hard copy, it doesn't have to be typed. Handwriting is fine (if legible!) – just put your phone number on it so I can check anything that isn't clear. Photos would be great too, and even newspaper cuttings that can be scanned.

All suggestions as to what might be included will also be gratefully received.

Historical note: for people of my generation, Corona was a brand of brightly coloured fizzy drinks delivered to home from a truck on a regular basis!

**Joanna Mace**

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# News – TPS and otherwise

## Ben Westerman

It is especially hard that our growing relationship with Ben has been put on hold. The February concert was a great success, and the work we were doing on the French music was teaching us how beautiful those pieces are. Ben was very pleased with our progress and so encouraging.

A number of people have expressed concern about how Ben will cope, given the freelance pattern of his work. Rosie and Joanna have talked to him, and we hope to be able to announce something soon.

## Return of scores

Your Librarians, Colin and Kate, are working out the best thing to do about the scores that we had for the March concert. They came from different sources, so it is taking a bit of time to co-ordinate the best options. We will let you know when this is sorted out.



# Memories are made of this .....

**David Price      Tenor 1**

*David wrote a piece about his working life working that was included in the programme for our summer concert 2019. This is the next episode.*

In the summer programme I didn't mention how I got to Kabul from the UAE. There was an Afghan airline, maintained and flown by the Russians. The aircraft was an old Russian-made turbo prop, which when on the ground had discouraging drooping wings. I climbed on board up a short set of steps at the back. The last five rows had been removed and a rough canvas barrier in place. We all climbed over it and took our seats. The other passengers came on board; there were veiled mothers with babies, armed tribesmen and a platoon of regular Afghan soldiers, also armed. Both groups eyed each other warily. I hoped nothing would kick off between them.

Minutes before we took off there was huge racket at the back and a bunch of about 10 sheep and goats were shoved in. The door closed, the engines fired up and we chugged down the runway. The animals were terrified - the noise was deafening and the stench, as they emptied their bowels, was stupefying. But no-one seemed to notice except me.

I dreaded the inflight service, but there was none. The aircraft was seriously underpowered and had no hope of clearing the 10,000 feet peaks. So the plane flew low along the gorges, turned left, then right, and so on. I thought the pilot did a brilliant job of low-level contour flying. My nerves settled and I began to enjoy what was a first-hand geography lesson. The noise from the back continued. But most of the passengers weren't bothered.

The airport was in sight but this required a massive effort by the aircraft to rise above a seriously high mountain barrier at 17000 feet. The plane groaned and shuddered as every rivet popped. It lunged over the peaks then dropped fast. The pilot had the runway in sight but, instead of making a gradual descent, he aimed the aircraft at the ground. This steep angle had consequences. The effluent that had pooled at the back now seeped down the floor in a toxic sludge. The animals banged and slid at the back, still complaining loudly.

Then we were down with a thump and a jolt. The plane emptied quickly, animals were kicked off then passengers followed, treading carefully. The pilot saw us off – she was a Russian Amazon, with dyed red hair and a magnificent chest. She had a good look at me, then saw the mess in the gangway. She turned to the co-pilot – a melancholy Genghiz Khan in a crumpled uniform – and gave him hell at the state of the plane.

David Price July 2019

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# Poetry corner

*I was struck by the pictures of London (and other cities) empty of people, with little traffic and less noise. It made me think of the phrase 'silent, bare' in this poem, and how we so rarely see these familiar places in such unfamiliar states. JM*

## Composed upon Westminster Bridge September 3, 1802

Earth has not any thing to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

*William Wordsworth 1770-1850*



# Short Story

## Jalousie

I often bake when I'm cross. I find it therapeutic to organise the ingredients before I start, weighing out sugar and preparing fruit, finding the cinnamon and the mixed spice, or the turmeric and cardamom, filling the kitchen with the heady aroma of rum or garlic.

Last Thursday I was very cross indeed. It was one of those days when everything went wrong. The water in my morning shower was freezing - the boiler had failed again, so I had to go down to the utility room, wet feet flinching from the cold, tiled floor, to reset the thing. The milkman was late, so my coffee had to be black, and the postman failed to bring that letter I'd been waiting for. Not his fault, of course, but someone had to be the focus of my ire.

I sat in my study most of the morning, hands poised over the computer keys, but nothing would come. I did all the usual things, free writing, reading some poetry, listening to music, but to no avail. My latest story had withered on the vine overnight, and there was no recovering it. Then the phone rang. It was as good a diversion as I could hope for.

'Hi Jen.' Helen, my friend from school days.

'Hi Helen, what's doing?'

'You'll never guess what's happened!' I probably wouldn't, but I wasn't even going to try.

'Go on, tell me.' We've known each other a long time, which makes me patient with her when I might have been sharper with someone else.

'Well, you know Tim's in New York now.' Of course I did, this being her favourite child of three. Not that mothers are supposed to have favourites, but the other two are daughters after all.

'Is he having a good time?'

'He calls me on Skype two or three times a week, he's so enjoying himself.'

'That's good.' Indeed it was, but this wasn't getting me far. 'And...'

'He's only gone and sent me a ticket for the Queen Mary II, so I can go and see him.' She hated flying, not that I blamed her. It hit her very hard when her husband Adam died in that crash in the sea off Malaysia. So difficult, not having a body to bury, so you can't have a proper funeral, just a memorial service.

'That's great, what a thoughtful boy. When are you going?'

'In April, and I'll be away for a whole month.'

'How lovely, Helen, but look, can I ring you back later? I'm in the middle of something.'

'Okay, talk later.'

Well, you know I wasn't really in the middle of something, given that the something wasn't going anywhere. It's just that I couldn't bear the thought of Helen going on a transatlantic crossing on the QM2. I could just imagine the glamorous bars and restaurants,

the men all in black tie and the women in glittering dresses. When did I get a chance to do that? Not that I could rustle up a glittering dress from even the remotest corner of my wardrobe. I do a fine line in black trousers, jeans, sweatshirts, but cannot remember the last time I wore a dress.

I could feel the sharp-toothed worm of self-pity rising inside. Look at me, I'm the one who never does anything exciting, who doesn't have anyone to buy her a ticket to go across the Atlantic on an ocean liner. Poor Jen!

The boiling water tap spluttered boiling water onto my hand as I made my third coffee of the morning. I stood and drank it watching the rain fall diagonally across the green canopies of the trees at the bottom of next door's garden. It had been raining for days now, sometimes that drizzle that barely gets you wet, sometimes great splodges of drops that would soak you to the skin. There wasn't any point to doing my hair, since it would droop and be flat in two seconds in this humidity. Like there wasn't any point in getting dressed, since I wouldn't be going out.

I pulled my dressing gown tightly around me and imagined Helen dragging her suitcase down from the top of the cupboard and laying her clothes out on the bed, following her packing plan. She would have lists and lists to cover all that she might need, and, for all I knew, a list of the lists so as to keep track. She's always been the organised one, always knows where to find things, never misses birthdays, that sort of thing. I'm just the opposite; my mother used to say that I'd leave my head behind if it wasn't attached. It's probably why I've never been able to hold down a proper job, so it's always been the writing that's kept me occupied and just about in baked beans.

The phone rang again, but it was no-one I wanted to talk to. Even on the worst days I won't talk to cold callers, the people promising to sort out my perfectly functioning internet, or to get me thousands of pounds in PPI compensation. That way lies madness in my view.

I was going to have to do something I decided, go out somewhere. I opened the fridge and my food cupboard to see if I could manufacture a shopping list. There wasn't much marmalade left in the jar, and I was a bit low on tomatoes. That would do, and even if I had to get dressed and brave the rain, I would go to the supermarket and remind myself that there are other people in the world.

Hindsight is such a wonderful thing, isn't it? Looking back I can see now that if I hadn't been such a miserable friend, resenting Helen's good fortune, I might have been able to settle to work that day. Then I wouldn't have had to go out, and in my car, since it was still pouring with rain. And that stupid man wouldn't have come around the corner too quickly half on my side of the road, jammed his brakes on when he saw me and slid inexorably into the corner of my poor little bright red Aygo.

'What the bloody hell do you think you were doing?' he raged at me. I was tempted to laugh at the sight of his big crimson face with little trickles of rain running down it.

'Going straight along this road to the supermarket, actually. And I might ask you the same thing anyway. Weren't you going just a little too fast for the conditions? After all, it's not that difficult to see me.' I had only cracked my window open enough to hear him. A torrent of abuse followed, and I wound my window up until his mouth stopped moving. I found my mobile phone and took a picture of his number plate and then his face.

'Are you going to give me your insurer's details and your name?'

'No, I'm fucking well not.' He kicked at the car door (?another dent) and marched back to his own vehicle. Luckily both cars were still driveable, and we went our separate ways. I was a bit shaken by the incident, and even more by his aggression; the tomatoes and marmalade were going to have to wait. I drove home.

I'm sure you will find it completely reasonable that my 'crossness' level had just rocketed. I found the packet of chocolate biscuits that I keep for sugar emergencies and broached it with enthusiasm. I was just biting into the fourth (who's counting?) when I heard my mobile burbling from the depths of my bag.

'Hey Jen,' the voice of Sophie, friend and writing companion. 'You busy?'

'Only trying to deal with the most trying of days,' I responded with feeling.

'Poor love, what's happened? No, don't tell me now. I'm just ringing to say do you want to come for supper tonight, just six of us, and could you do a pud?'

Don't you just love friends like that? Ones who seem to know instinctively when you needed to be taken out of that muddy ditch life has dumped you in?

I found ready-made pastry in the freezer and some apples, soft and past their best in the fruit bowl. There was mincemeat, the last of a batch I made when I'd received yet another rejection slip for a story I'd submitted. I knew what would do the business, jalousie and rum butter, enough for six, served warm and comforting.

I collected all the ingredients and cleared the work surface so I could roll out the pastry. I use my grandmother's wooden rolling pin, and my mother's kitchen knife. And my own hands, which are always cold and so good with pastry.

As I rolled and turned and cut I thought of Helen, setting off alone on the Queen Mary 2 to cross the Pond. She doesn't like travelling alone, almost as much as she doesn't like flying. I piled on the apples and mincemeat, crimped and dusted the pastry, and popped the finished product on a tray into the fridge to rest. Then I pulled over my laptop and typed 'Cunard' into a search engine. I gasped at the prices, which would be double, of course, if you had to go there and back on the boat. Then there were the deficiencies in my wardrobe to rectify.

The jalousie went onto a tray and into the fridge to rest. I made another cup of coffee and reached for another biscuit as I pondered the possibilities.

There was always my grandmother's bequest, which I hadn't touched to date, even after two and a half years. Not a life-changing amount, but enough to cover the trip to New York and back, and a dress or two. And it would be doing Helen a favour, as a good friend should. Wouldn't it?

**JM**

# Jalousie recipe - *courtesy of Delia Smith*

Very similar to a combination of a turnover and a strudel, this is a delicious French pastry containing a sweet filling. The pastry dough is baked into a light and fluffy crust, and typically has baked fruits to provide a thick and syrupy filling within the thin outer crust.

## INGREDIENTS

14 oz (400 g) mincemeat  
1 small Bramley cooking apple (8 oz/225 g)  
zest of 1 orange  
½ teaspoon mixed spice  
2 tablespoons rum  
1 x 375 g fresh ready-rolled puff pastry  
a little plain flour, for dusting

## To finish

beaten egg, for brushing  
1 dessertspoon golden granulated sugar  
1/4 tsp ground cinnamon  
1 tablespoon sifted icing sugar

## METHOD

**Preheat the oven to gas mark 6, 400F, 200C.**

Quarter the apple, cut away the core but leave the skin on and chop fairly small. In a large bowl mix the apple, orange zest, spice and rum together with the mincemeat and give it all a good stir. Unroll the pastry on to a surface lightly dusted with flour, and roll it slightly thinner so it measures 18 x 12 inches (45 x 30 cm). After that, cut it into 2 long rectangles, which measure 18 x 6 inches (45 x 15 cm) each. For the top, take one rectangle of pastry, roll it a little thinner and bigger, then fold it in half lengthways and, with a sharp knife, cut diagonally about 2 inches (5 cm) into the fold at 1 inch (2.5 cm) intervals all along.

Next, place the second rectangle of pastry on a baking tray and pile the mincemeat filling in the middle, leaving a 1 inch (2.5 cm) border all round. Brush the border with a little cold water.

Now unfold the first rectangle of pastry and place it over the mincemeat and, using your thumbs, press the edges all round the filling to seal them. Finally, trim the pastry to ½ inch (1 cm) around the filling and use a small knife to crimp the edges. Place in the fridge to rest for at least 30 minutes. The raw jalousie can now be open-frozen on the baking tray, then removed once solid and wrapped in a double sheet of foil to continue freezing until you need it. You can cook the jalousie from frozen.

Before you put the jalousie in the oven, place it on a greased baking sheet. Then brush all over with beaten egg and sprinkle a mixture of 1 dessertspoon golden granulated sugar and 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon over the top.

Bake for 30-35 minutes and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon of sifted icing sugar just before it goes to the table. Serve it cut into slices with rum butter to accompany it.

**Remember – if you would like this publication to continue, your contributions are necessary! Please let me have:**

- **Stories of your life, especially your musical life**
- **Ideas of poetry for inclusion, books for reading**
- **Links to things the members would find interesting**
- **TPS recollections**

**With the agreement of the Chair, I have editorial control, so not everything will appear in the *Tacet Times*, but every submission will be read.**

**Look after yourselves!**

**Joanna Mace  
22 March 2020**