



## *TACET TIMES – 3*

Even for someone who has been retired for some years now, time seems to have slowed down. Yes, there is time to do all of those things we have been putting off – and I have done some, honestly. But there is also time to sit and listen to the unaccustomed silence around us. No aeroplanes, few cars, almost never an urgent siren indicating an emergency other than the one that involves us all.

For us it may be a quiet time, but for others this is not the case. Many of those working hard are being recognised for their efforts, but there are others, toiling away to keep things going. A family member in the civil service, whose Foreign Office duties have turned him into a travel agent, striving to get British citizens back home. A newly-appointed NHS dietician turned into a Health Care Assistant for lack of 'ordinary' patients to look after. There are so many individuals whose work has become more challenging. Even those working from home, struggling to cope with an overloaded broadband service and trying to keep offspring educated and amused.

We learn so much more about ourselves in challenging times, about our own strength and resilience and what is important to us. Asked what she misses most about this period, another family member said 'the hugs'. We are all deprived of the physical contact with our wider family and friends, and that may be the most difficult thing to cope with.

So, we listen to our music and become familiar with it, we practice our part so that we shall be well prepared when that longed-for first rehearsal happens, and we do our voice or instrument exercises to keep us in good shape. Because this period of difficult will end, as surely as all the others have.

And there are positives to be found. For those of us who can get outside, we've been blessed with beautiful weather, and my husband and I have discovered walks that we never knew existed. The bluebells are out. For those who are stuck indoors, things are available online that were never available without charge before, and we can greatly enjoy listening to concerts from a number of orchestras, and opera from some of the great opera houses. You can even find audiobooks being made available at no cost – perfect for entertaining you while you do something boring. Or you could think of a contribution for the *Tacet Times* – I love to read your memories, so thank you to Brian whose recollection of a trip to the Tower is vivid and amusing. Send me your favourite poem, and tell me why it is a favourite, as Rosie did. All these pieces are wonderful insights into the lives of our individual members.

Listening to the radio the other day, I heard a quote from the modern Polish composer Krzysztof Penderecki, who died only last month. He said *you have to look backwards to see the future*. If we look backward now, we shall remember all the good things that are waiting for us. We can look forward to the time when we are all together again, and, in the meantime, enjoy all the things that are there for us. Until then, stay safe and keep well.

**Joanna Mace** [secretary@tonphil.org.uk](mailto:secretary@tonphil.org.uk)

## News update:

- **ExCo meeting:** ExCo met on 15<sup>th</sup> April via Zoom for the very first time – well, if the Government can do it, so can we! It was very useful in discussing a number of issues that we felt needed our attention
- **AGM:** one of the items discussed was the need to hold an AGM – which we had planned would take place on 1st April. Our constitution requires that the AGM must take place within 15 months of the previous one, which means that it has to happen by the beginning of July 2020, and that we will be quorate if we have 10% of the membership present. Jo Willoughby (Choral Deputy Chair) has looked into the legalities of holding the meeting online, using a virtual meeting platform such as Zoom, and advises that this is permissible. We are therefore planning to hold the AGM via Zoom on Wednesday, 3rd June at 7:45 p.m.

We are aware that some members may not have access to the necessary technology, but we will send out the paperwork beforehand as usual, and those members who wish to do so can make their comments known in advance of the meeting. We will send out instructions as to how to join the Zoom meeting a couple of weeks before the AGM, and also will be holding a familiarisation session for those of you who would like this ahead of the meeting. Stephen Minton, our Orchestral Chair, has kindly said he will lead this for us one week before the meeting, so that people unused to the Zoom application can understand how to use it.

Dates to note: Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> May 19.45 – practice run  
Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 19.45 – online AGM

***So – watch this space (and others) for more information nearer the time***



- **Ben Westerman** – we were delighted that Ben was able to join us for part of the meeting, and sounded in good spirits. We discussed the input that he might have during this period of isolation, and he has prepared a playlist each for the choir and orchestra. He sent them with the following message:

Dear all,

As part of ExCo's efforts to keep the society together while we are unable to meet, I have offered to create some interactive content for all of you in the hope that it keeps everyone engaged and connected. I will be producing some video content for you on a range of topics – I hope they are of interest, and I'm more than happy to receive requests via ExCo. We are also hoping to do something "live" soon.

Alongside these, I have also offered to create regular playlists for you in which I will recommend some of my favourite pieces for your enjoyment grouped according to a number of themes, and will provide a few sentences to contextualise – I sincerely hope you enjoy them.

For this first one, I thought I'd pick up on recent repertoire that both the choir and orchestra have explored this season. Of course, there is so much that I could include in both; for now I'll stick to one piece per composer for as wide a spread as possible. This week, I've divided them into choral and orchestral, but I will combine in the future and also include chamber music, opera and other forms and genres - not just classical! They are not in any particular order, nor do they need to be listened to all at once. Maybe just pick out one that you fancy – each in isolation is wonderful. Just click on the links below and hit "play all" on the image at the top left of the screen.

Orchestral Playlist #1: Russian

*[if you wish to have access to this playlist, please contact the Secretary](#)*

As we all seemed to get on very well with the Shostakovich, I've started by collecting some of my favourite Russian music.

Choral Playlist #1: French

*[if you wish to have access to this playlist, please contact the Secretary](#)*

Given that we've all been getting to know one of the great French choral works recently, I thought this first playlist should focus on exactly that area.

**And the winner of the caption competition is ....**



**'Look up, Brian, you'll miss the rallentando!'**

from Liz Hicks (Alto 2)

## **Memories are made of this .....**

### **From a dedicated follower of Radio 3's 'Choral Evensong'**

Over the years I have tried to attend many Cathedrals and College Chapels during live broadcasts of Choral Evensong. I have been to Truro, Chichester, Canterbury, St Paul's, and Westminster Cathedrals, and also to parish churches such as St Pancras, St Martin's in the Fields, and St Alban's, Holborn in London, along with Magdalen Oxford and Royal Holloway, but not yet Armagh.

At Canterbury Cathedral they sang Handel's *The trumpet shall sound* as the anthem and I vividly remember the trumpeter - easy to do as I was sitting six feet away from him! This might sound like we were practising social distancing even then, but in spite of that, I was close enough to appreciate his expertise and tone.

For this year of 2020 I decided to make a New Year's Resolution - to attend as many live Radio 3 Choral Evensongs as possible. I got off to good start as the first Evensong was on 8 January 2020 at St Peter ad Vincula, HM Tower of London. Arriving early I was sent to a far distant entrance that I had never noticed before at The Tower. The men in the sentry box asked me for identification and then said I could not be admitted because I was not on the security clearance list. Entry was by selected invitation. I protested that it had said on the BBC that the public were invited. Not so they replied. This was ten minutes to go before the start of the service, due at 3.30p.m. Two other men came up: one stated he was from Birmingham, the other was from Bedford. They were also denied entry, whereupon the man from Birmingham said he would write to the Queen to complain, as the chapel as it is a Royal Peculiar and so open to all. The guards then said that they would contact the Events Administrator – who relented! She gave agreement for our entry provided we gave our names and addresses. We did as requested, and then had to run through the Tower Grounds to reach St Peter ad Vincula in time for the producer's instructions. We were met at

the church door by the kind Events Administrator and also a Yeoman of the Guard, both of whom were very welcoming.

No surprisingly given the hurdles we three intrepid worshippers had to overcome, there was not a large crowd - about two dozen plus the eight-strong choir. Owing to the recording, we were advised, you must refrain from coughing or moving once the service starts! The Canticles were sung to Gibbons Second Service and the Anthem was *The Three Kings* by Jonathan Dove. They were all superb. We stood for the final hymn 'From the Eastern Mountains ' and then listened to the organ Voluntary *Epiphanie* by Gaston Litaize.

We three 'guests' had sat together and, as the voluntary came to an end we gathered up our belongs in preparation for departure. We were amazed to hear the *No!* from the Sergeant of the Guard, followed by the order *You must stay for the reception!* Canapés, tarts, prosecco in copious quantities were served, and speeches were given by the Constable and the Chaplain. We were advised that the Chapel was opened in 1520, and so it was the beginning of a Festival 500th Year.

Once I could not eat or drink any more, I was given a personal escort by a Yeoman of the Guard past the polar bear in the Tower grounds. The entrance gate was unlocked just for me, and locked once I had passed through. I walked back to London Bridge Station in the growing twilight, with the offices all brightly lit on either side of the Thames and Christmas trees in many places. I had been sumptuously fed after Choral Evensong in the Chapel of St Peter ad Vincula, within her Majesty's Fortress and Tower of London.

Like St Peter ad Vincula, we are all in quieter times now. Many special events for their anniversary have been cancelled, just as we have had to cancel concerts and other activities.

Brian Stevenson

## Poetry Corner

### From Rosie Phillips – Oboe

Rosie writes 'here is one of my favourite poems that I thought might be suitable for the newsletter. It's called 'Another Reason Why I Don't Keep a Gun in the House' by Billy Collins, and references Beethoven, so I thought it would be appropriate and raise a smile. I also sit in the oboe section, although without the barking'

### Another Reason Why I Don't Keep A Gun in The House

The neighbors' dog will not stop barking. He is barking the same high, rhythmic bark that he barks every time they leave the house. They must switch him on on their way out.

The neighbors' dog will not stop barking. I close  
all the windows in the house and put on a  
Beethoven symphony full blast but I can still  
hear him muffled under the music, barking,  
barking, barking,

and now I can see him sitting in the orchestra,  
his head raised confidently as if Beethoven had  
included a part for barking dog.

When the record finally ends he is still barking,  
sitting there in the oboe section barking, his  
eyes fixed on the conductor who is  
entreating him with his baton

while the other musicians listen in respectful  
silence to the famous barking dog solo, that  
endless coda that first established  
Beethoven as an innovative genius.

**Billy Collins**

**US Poet Laureate 2001 - 2003**

## Short Story

### Found on the Circle Line

It just sits there, on the seat opposite me. A single shoe, high-heeled, red suede, with a strap to go around the ankle of the wearer. Except there is no wearer, or not one I can see. I look up and down the Tube carriage at the feet of my fellow passengers. Dirty trainers, polished brogues, court shoes with the leather scraped off the heels. But no red ones. And the shoe opposite me sits there, like a crown on a cushion, quivering slightly with the movement of the train.

No-one else takes any notice. Well, this is London, I think, where even the most outlandish is normal, where we walk, unblinking, past blue hair and torn jeans. Past people shouting and people kissing. Past people eating and people sleeping.

No-one notices me. I look at my reflection in the black window above the shoe. My hair needs cutting, my clothes are unremarkable. 'A vision in beige' my brother once said in an uncharitable moment. I've lost my desire to try.

The lights reflect off raindrops on the shoulders of my. I'm surprised by the shape of my mouth. This is the first time I've seen it so turned down.

My mouth looks just like my mother's.

I glance again at the other travellers. I can hear shush shush shush from the headphones of the guy sitting beside me. Eyes closed, head nodding, hand tapping on denim-covered thigh, he's doing his best not to be on this train. In fact, when I look more carefully, there are lots of people with their eyes closed. And some whose gaze is as blank as the dark walls that rush past outside our noisy cocoon. Perhaps they really haven't noticed the shoe, as they haven't noticed me.

It's still there. Not scuffed or marked, but I can see a small rip on one heel. The suede is the colour of a ripe tomato. It must be quite new then, I think.

The train stops. People get off, no-one gets on. We're on that eastern section of the Underground from Embankment to Kings Cross, deserted on a January Saturday afternoon. No-one going to see St Paul's or the jewels in the Tower, just a few shift workers on their way home to snooze in front of the television, or to tackle that pile of ironing. Or even to get dressed up for an evening out somewhere noisy and rammed with bodies. And me. On my regular Saturday circumnavigation. And the shoe.

Eventually, by Farringdon, I'm the only one left. I've been watching the shoe, sort of expecting it to do something. But, of course, it doesn't. It just sits there, moving gently to the train's rhythm. This is the Circle Line, so it could go on sitting there all day and into the night. Cleaners would get on at some point, maybe at three or four o'clock in the morning, when the ravers are staggering home or asleep on someone's sofa. I think of those night workers, plodding through the carriages, dragging their plastic rubbish bags, collecting the flotsam and jetsam of a day's journeys. Lost property by the sack full.

I check up and down the empty carriage. I've only got a few minutes before we get to Kings Cross, where there's sure to be people getting on. I grab my bag and swing across to the other side. I can't leave my shoe to be gathered up among the detritus. My shoe, what's that about? Do I see myself as some sort of Cinderella? Anyway it's decades since I wore

high heels, and from here it looks much too small for me. In a single movement I scoop up the shoe and plunge it to the bottom of my bag. The train sighs to a halt and the doors open.

The next stop is Great Portland Street, where I get off. My flat's about ten minutes' walk east of the park. The streets get narrower and the sounds of the city diminish. There are trees, houses have gardens, people walk dogs in spite of the persistent drizzle. My mother used to say that I acted as if money would burn a hole in my pocket. Now I feel as if the shoe's burning a hole in my bag, shining out like a beacon. I feel guilty, but I haven't stolen it, have I? I've rescued it.

I climb the stairs up to my flat, wincing as I put my key in the door. I'd love to have a housekeeping fairy to sort out my mess while I'm at work, but the housekeeping fairies are on higher rates than I can afford on my civil service pittance. I really will clear up this weekend, I promise myself.

I kick some scattered shoes under the bed, pull the rucked sheet and duvet straight and upend my bag. The red suede glows in the afternoon gloom. It'll be dark soon. Even the soles are red, and you know what that means. Louboutin, and over a grand a pair. I sit there for a while in contemplation. Every shoe has a partner. And a wearer/owner. Size 37, or 4½, definitely no match for my size sixes. So, this woman has small feet. And expensive tastes. Did she buy the shoe? And isn't she upset about losing it?

Did it drop out of her bag, making a bid for freedom and an escape from the other one? Or did she fall asleep and lose it as she scrambles for the door at her stop? Or the one after, having missed her station? And then what happened? I imagine someone reverently picking it up and placing it carefully on the seat, like when you see jewellers filling their displays with stock as the working day starts.

When I wake up, my bedroom's in darkness. Just the glow from the radio's display, shining green. I must have caught hold of the shoe as I slept. The red radiates warmth against my pale arm. It's as soft as velvet, carefully finished around the edges, with a tiny gold buckle on the ankle strap. We lie there, skin to skin, as I ponder my options. Then I get up and place it in the middle of the mantelpiece.

I've decided. I can't keep such a thing of beauty from either the other shoe or its owner. I have to try to reunite them. I ring and place an ad in the Evening Standard for next week - it might be seen by someone working in town, someone who might be away for the weekend. It reads Found on the Circle Line on Saturday 13th January, one red Christian Louboutin shoe, size 37, with ankle strap. Owner please call 07181 404 726 to claim.

I make sure my phone's charged.

'Something wrong?' asks the girls in the office when they see me glancing at it repeatedly.

'No, no,' I answer, 'just waiting for a call'. I catch sight of one girl nudging the other. They're usually quite discreet; they didn't ask what'd happened when I came in so often with red-rimmed eyes after Rob left, but one day there was a fresh box of tissues on my desk. The ones with balm in, so my nose must have been much the same colour as this shoe. It was very kind of them; it made me feel as if someone cared after all.

So I'm collecting up my things before lunch on Friday, my usual hummus wrap from the deli on the corner, when the phone vibrates inside my bag. I don't recognise the number.

'Hello? Is this the person who put the ad in the Standard about the shoe?' I stiffen.

'Yes.' I feel sadness that the beautiful object might be about to leave my life, and joy that it might be reunited with its owner and partner.

'I think I know who owns it.' The voice is deep, not a young man but not old either. 'My little sister, she was on her way home from a lunch and fell asleep on the Tube. Her friend woke her up as they got to their stop but her heel got caught as she stumbled down onto the platform. The staff can't have seen what happened through the crowd, they let the train go while Lindy was still on her hands and knees. They promised to call ahead to the other stations and try to find her shoe, but probably didn't. Anyway, she couldn't hang around - she was turning pages for me at a concert that evening out in Essex. I'm a pianist, you see.'

'Oh,' I respond, as all this information washes over me.

'So, can we meet and I'll collect the shoe from you? She's gone back to Vienna where she's studying, or I'd have sent her to meet you. After all, it's no way to treat a special birthday present, is it? Are you in London?' He must think me most odd, I've hardly said three words so far.

'Yes, just east of Regent's Park.'

'That's great. I live off Marylebone High Street. When can I collect it? We could meet in the Espresso Bar in the Park, and I could buy you a coffee to say thank you. How about tomorrow at 11.30?'

'That would be fine,' I confirm, even though that's my Circle Line time, and with a 'See you then, bye,' he rings off.

The sun appears teasingly but gives no real warmth as I sit on a bench to eat my lunch. Well, I've achieved what I set out to do, just as efficiently as I always do. At least, I suspect that's what my colleagues would say. I'm going to lose the shoe, lose the light and warmth it has bestowed on my dark flat just for a few short days, but I will have the satisfaction of knowing it's where it should be, returned to its partner, won't I? It's only a shoe, after all.

It's raining again in the morning. I wrap the shoe in a carrier bag and set off with my head down and a sense of determination. I'm going to do this thing. As I enter the Park, I realise that I don't have a name or description for the man I'm going to meet. Only a voice. The café's less than half full, echoing to the sound of children expending energy that should really be used up outside. Dads with their offspring, a couple of mums with little babies in those pushchair things that become car seats. No-one sitting on their own. I find a seat where I can watch the door and order a skinny latte, then unwrap the shoe and set it on the table for the avoidance of doubt. As the waiter brings my drink he blocks my view, and so it's the voice that I recognise, before I see him.

'It must be you. Look!' A man stands in front of me, my shoe's twin dangling from a slim, long-fingered hand. 'But you've got a coffee already, and I said I'd buy you one.' I look up and see, above the red suede, a dark face, with a beard and hair that was once deepest black but is now shot with silver. Square, dark-framed glasses and dark brown eyes. Brilliant

white teeth showing against tanned skin. I assure him that he can still pay for my latte, but he insists on buying another. Then, he says, he can truly be said to bought it as he promised. Then he suggest lunch, after which we go for a walk around the Inner Circle of the Park. Twice around, as we talk and laugh and grimace. The sun comes out and colour returns to the world. His sister, Lindy, will wear the red shoes to the wedding, even though they are now less than pristine. She promised she would. And I will have a pair of my very own.

## Help to keep TPS going for another 75 years!

### ***A message from the Treasurer, Robert Skone James:***

Did you know that you can help our Society by doing your shopping online – as well as protecting your health and that of others? And it doesn't cost you anything! There are a number of ways to do this, just two of which are outlined below. The sellers will make a small donation to TPS every time you place an order, and with nearly two hundred members, lots of little amounts could add up to quite a lot.

### **1. The Giving Machine How to register**

Go to <https://www.thegivingmachine.co.uk/sign-up/> and click on "Join as a giver"

In the search field enter: Tonbridge Philharmonic Society, then click on Tonbridge Philharmonic Society where it appears under the heading "Matching Search Results". Click on "Join and Support", then fill in your details in the form and click on "Join"

#### **How to use The Giving Machine**

When you want to purchase an item online (except using Amazon), instead of going straight to the seller's site, go to <https://www.thegivingmachine.co.uk/login/giver/> and enter your details as set up on registration.

On the main page select "My Shops" and enter the name of your chosen shop in the "Search retailers" box, then click on "return". Then click on "Shop Now" and proceed as usual. Once you have paid, the donation will automatically be credited to the TPS account.

### **2. Amazon Smile**

Although you can access Amazon via The Giving Machine, they are not able to give donations for legal reasons and so instead you can use Amazon Smile in a similar way.

#### **How to register and use if you already have an Amazon account**

Go to [www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk). Enter your ID and password and then enter Tonbridge Philharmonic Society when prompted for your charity. Click on "Search" and on the next page click on "Select", after which you carry on as normal

#### **How to register and use smile if you do not already have an Amazon account:**

Go to [www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk) and click on "Create your Amazon account"

Enter the details requested and click on "Create your Amazon account". Amazon will send a code to your email address. Enter that code and click on "Create your Amazon account"

On the next page click on "Get started" and proceed as above by entering Tonbridge Philharmonic Society and clicking on "Search"

If you have any questions or difficulty in registering or using these sites, please let Robert Skone James know at [treasurer@tonphil.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@tonphil.org.uk)

## There are lots of opportunities to carry on making music and listening to it. Here are just a few:

- **Choraline:** join the Self-Isolation Choir which now has over 2000 singers around the world. They plan sing Handel's *Messiah* on 31<sup>st</sup> May, and rehearse live on Monday at 19.30 (but you can catch up later if you wish). Find out details at [www.theseisolationchoir.com](http://www.theseisolationchoir.com). The Choraline website also offers vocal exercises.
- **Wigmore Hall:** [www.wigmore-hall.org.uk](http://www.wigmore-hall.org.uk) for lots of live-streamed concerts. Chris Brooks (bass) particularly recommends the masterclass by Thomas Quasthoff
- **Royal Opera House:** streaming of past performances on particular dates, find the list on [www.roh.org.uk](http://www.roh.org.uk)
- **Carry on singing**

Hello everyone!

I hope you're all coping during this new and interesting time, and not going stir crazy with isolation! Like many others in the performing arts industry, Coronavirus has really turned my world upside down, however I have bounced back with something which we can hopefully all do together!

I've set up an exciting, new 10 Week Online Singing Programme called 'Carry On Singing' to bring the joy of singing back into all our homes at this difficult time. This programme is totally flexible for entire families or individuals as one email address is valid for each household.

With 'Carry On Singing', participants will receive rehearsal materials every Friday (starting Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> April) as we get to know unique arrangements of three songs over a ten week programme.

In your own time, and from the comfort of your own home, you'll discover entertaining warmups and fun, useful exercises, before being guided through each vocal part with step-by-step video tuition. At the end of the programme, you'll then be invited to record your part (either audio or video) to be compiled in a Virtual Choir Concert recording that you can share with your friends and family – all for the price of just one singing lesson!

If you're interested and want to find out more, please visit my new website: [www.carryonsinging.com](http://www.carryonsinging.com) Thanks

all and stay safe!!

Best wishes,

Laurie Denman  
Carry On Singing

*Laurie is from Tunbridge Wells, currently residing in Manchester*

- and if you fancy a break from music, go to [nationaltheatre.org.uk](http://nationaltheatre.org.uk) and find the details of the plays they will be screening.

**I'm sure that there are lots more like this – if you send them to me I'll add them to the list – [secretary@tonphil.org.uk](mailto:secretary@tonphil.org.uk)**