



TACET TIMES – 14

I know at least one person who will have woken up this morning with a smile on his face! Yesterday I was talking to a local farmer who was in despair at the lack of rain, a lack made visible by the state of my garden after we had to be away for a few days. Shrivelled bedding plants that I hadn't got into the ground, and decidedly drooping pansies and tomatoes. Isn't it amazing, though, how quickly most of them recover after a good drink? So the precipitation predicted for this week will be very welcome for many a farmer and her/his plants.

We are moving into colder nights and darker mornings, so I thought I should include Keats' poem *To Autumn* in this edition. It reminds us of the richness of the season, and there are certainly still some glories to be seen. Some of the roses in full bloom seem to have a sweeter scent, almost as if the perfume has been distilled by the heat we have been experiencing. The poem also serves as a reminder that the quietness of our current extraordinary situation has meant that we have been able to hear, as Keats did, as:

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

As the days get shorter, who will not enjoy, at least for the first few times, the cozy sense created by pulling the curtains and turning on the lights, or settling down to watch the box or read without any feeling that we should be outside doing things? There are wonderful elements to each of our seasons, and we are lucky enough to watch them change in this country. Imagine how tedious it would be to wake up to sunshine every day! Instead we have the pleasures (and discomforts) of both warm and cool weather, of rain and dry times, and of all the plants that benefit from such variations.

And now – even though my mother would have shuddered, for we have not yet had a frost - I will go and make a comforting spicy parsnip soup for lunch. Mmmmm.....

Joanna Mace

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News:

- Christmas will be with us all to soon now, so ExCo have been thinking hard about what is possible. Please do complete the survey that has been sent out to help us judge what we might be able to put on to mark this season
- Jong-Gyung Park will be recording two pieces this weekend to go out as a 'concert'. She will play the Beethoven sonata 31 in A major op 110, and Franz Liszt's *Venezia e Napoli* from *Anneè de pèlerinage II*, s162. Thanks to Ken Morgan for helping to make this happen and to Steve Minton who will be our technical guide for making it viewable to all
- September sees MacMillan Cancer Support's *World's Biggest Coffee Morning*. Specifically on Friday 25th September, but with other events happening through the month, it is a great way to support the charity – and treat yourself to a slice of cake!



Memories are made of this

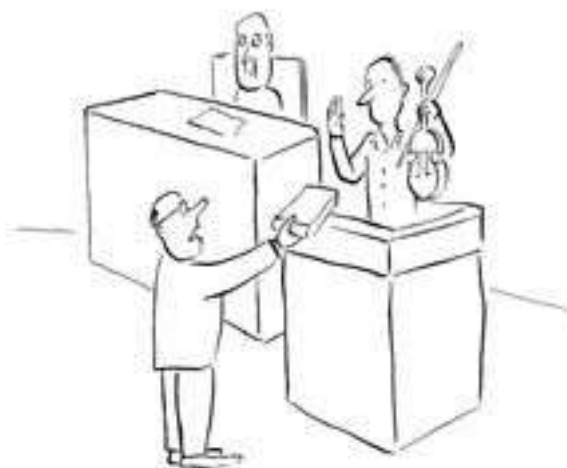
Forestry

Tractors, horses, bogs and hawks

While I was student at the UCW Aberystwyth, I had a holiday job with the Forestry Commission in South Wales. It was tough, early starts at 0700, a half hour drive up 900 feet by Land Rover, and then an eight-hour day in all weather. There were tin and wood shelters which kept out the rain, but not the wind or cold. Tractors were used to plough furrows for the forest seedlings; it was a skilled job because the ground was unstable due to hidden bogs and boulders. Yet time and time again the tractor would sink into the mire and had to be hauled out by another tractor. It was very expensive and time consuming. The Commission thought about it, consulted local hill farmers who recommended using shire horses in pairs. Apparently, they can spot or smell hidden bogs and never got trapped. So horses became the preferred unit of power.

One day an odd request came in – can you find our pigeons?. A pigeon club in the area had taken their birds to Birmingham and let them loose on a south west route back to South Wales but very few had made it home. Why? The foresters had a look at the route/flight map and knew the answer. As the pigeons came to the end of their return flight, the exhausted birds had to rise an extra 200 feet to get over the escarpment that loomed over the forestry plantation. So we got int position, waited and watched, and the answer soon came. Above the escarpment were a crowd of hawks, hovering and waiting. The pigeons struggled to gain height, the hawks dropped and the pigeons were decimated. The pigeon club changed the route .

David Price (tenor)



"Do you swear to play the notes, all the notes and nothing but the notes so help you Bach?"

This will leave you with a wonderful picture!

A Patron of Music

At Tonbridge Philharmonic we have a President and a number of Patrons. In this we are following a noble tradition in music making as composers and musicians have often relied on patrons to survive and be able to practice their art. Sometimes these are monarchs, aristocrats and occasionally clergy as in Salzburg and Rome. I am a member of 'Music in Country Churches', which arranges three festivals a year in Norfolk, Suffolk and Gloucestershire to raise money for the lovely churches in these counties. My son-in-law is a trustee, so we support him as much as we can.

The festivals run over three days with dinners and teas, as well as the music. The main Patron is HRH the Prince of Wales, and the other is the Bishop of Norwich. In July 2016 we were at the huge, beautiful church of Castle Acre in Norfolk. I had been told by my daughter to buy tickets in the very back pew for the concerts, partly because they were cheaper and, more especially, because I am a fidget and so would not disturb others if I were in the back pew. So my wife and I were safely tucked away when the concert organiser and the Vicar came up to us and said that, as we were in full clerical dress, we had to go the very front pew. We were being elevated as the Patron, the Bishop of Norwich and his wife had had to cry off at short notice. We were to replace them.

The front pew was very close to the orchestra, and in particular to the 'cello and double bass sections. During the energetic movements the bows of these string players kept shooting across their instruments and coming close to our faces so that we had to sway back and forwards in time with them. It meant that we could not afford to nod off. As 'Patron' and 'Bishop', I had to lead off the audience in the interval and preside at one of the tables in the Grand Marquee after the concert was over.

It was a balmy summer evening and the company, food and wine much enjoyed. Castle Acre is a lovely village and we took a late evening walk around it before driving back to our hotel in Swaffham. However, that walk was a mistake because it meant we were not at The George Inn until just before midnight. The front door was firmly closed and our keys would not open it. What were the 'Patron/Bishop' and his wife going to do? As it was a warm night one of the dining room windows was slightly raised and, after pushing it up more, we debated who should climb in. My wife volunteered for the task. She was halfway through the window when the hotel night watchman saw the intruder and demanded to know what she was doing. Jammed in the window, she explained that we were guests. He laughed and said that all the other guests that night were from Burnley on a coach holiday and had gone to bed for an early start, so he had assumed all had retired. He kindly helped my wife back out the window and let us in through the main entrance. We were relieved to be on *terra firma*.

It would have been awkward if the papers had heard that the patron/bishop and his wife were caught climbing into the hotel like cats through a cat flap. On the other two nights we returned in good time, eschewing a late night walk, and greeted the night watchman with full patronal, episcopal dignity .

Brian Stevenson – bass

And this

Here is a COVID tale which Kate shared with us when we were having a break in one of the singing sessions:



Knole Park has been stunning in the mornings this week with gentle autumn mists in the Gallops valley and the sun shining through the massive oaks with dappled rays. The fallow deer are munching the grass or standing in the shadow of the oaks waiting for acorns to fall; they love acorns and rush to chomp them when the breeze, the squirrels or the ring-necked parakeets knock them to the floor.

The Bucks are looking majestic with their stunning palmated antlers and their necks are thickening as they beef up ready for the rut next month. A few of the younger bucks are having a little practice fight, but they're only playing at the moment. The does are finishing weaning their fawns - last week one was so tall it had to splay its legs to get under mum's tum and she wasn't keen to have him there for long!

Then it's back to the Wombling (it sounds so much nicer than litter picking); hopefully you remember the Wombles of Wimbledon Common picking up "Things that the everyday folk leave behind". How many *Corona* beer bottles will it be today? How ironic that the majority are that brand! A walk to the 'dens of naughtiness' to see what we'll find. The naughties have gone up market today - *Malibu* instead of neat Vodka and only the bottle left behind instead of the shot glasses as well! Then it's ten green bottles sitting by the log and only two broken - result - they don't rip the bag when they're whole. Wow, *Maoams* are popular and who knew there were so many different coloured wrappers.

I don't believe it, two dirty nappies - what happened to the changing bag with everything one could possibly need to freshen up one's child's undercarriage, including nappy sacks to carry them home (the nappies, not the children)? Poor deer, fancy finding those in their resting area, and we call them wild animals.

Then it's back through the woods towards the house. The does and fawns are rummaging for acorns and beech masts, and take a passing interest in the ever increasingly testosterone fuelled bucks. They will wait until the fights start to see which buck to choose; who has the best antlers and the best smell (I'm so glad human males don't wee on the ground and lie in it - that wouldn't be my idea of Dior *Eau Sauvage*!)

Kate Howlett (soprano)



Poetry corner

How could I resist this one? – this does so capture the richness of the season, but I do hope that TPS cannot be described as having a ‘wailful choir’!

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind;
Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep,
Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
Steady thy laden head across a brook;
Or by a cyder-press, with patient look,
Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—
While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,
And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;
Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
Among the river shallows, borne aloft
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
Hedge-cricket sing; and now with treble soft
The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

John Keats

Short Story

A Winter's Tale

It's 09.20 on Tuesday morning. It's raining, gentle drizzle that fills the air with moisture and leaves a slick covering on the road that runs along the High Street. And cold, but that's to be expected in early January.

I've already been standing here for five minutes. I'm returning a sweater to a shop which doesn't open, I have just discovered, until 09.30. A bus is heading towards me and I turn away to avoid the wash from a puddle. The bus lights are on, and I see myself reflected in the shop window. Drab navy coat, navy boots and umbrella, navy scarf at my neck. Even my gloves are navy. Right wintery, my Dad would have said. I see my pale face, greying hair. Don't need to be smart now.

0924 I look at my watch. Not long now. I watch the people passing, all looking purposeful. You wouldn't be dawdling along in this weather. Occasionally a face turns towards me, even more occasionally the expression indicates confused recognition. Do I know her? Where from?

I had my fifteen minutes of fame a few weeks ago, when I, as a holder of a few shares, raised a contentious issue at a company board meeting in London. You remember the woman who berated M&S's Chairman over their knickers? Well, it was a bit like that. It made the press, I was interviewed on national radio, and then on the local television news. Sometimes I smile at the faces with their confused expressions, so that makes them even more confused; they think they definitely should know who I am. I imagine them in the office, on the bus, in twenty minutes or half an hour, having a lightbulb moment. Oh, it was that woman who was on the box, wasn't it?

0927 The sweater I'm clutching was from my brother for Christmas. No doubt bought by my sister-in-law, such a dear girl. Deserves a medal for putting up with my brother, but gets diamonds instead. This is the only establishment in our small town that stocks the same brand and I know Jane, the owner, somewhat distantly. Her clientèle is mainly size 10 or below, those sleek blonde women, so it is never a problem for her to take my tasteful but inadequately proportioned item and exchange it for a larger size.

I'm reviewing my 'to do' list, thinking about my forthcoming trip to an old friend in Yorkshire when I'm snatched back to the grey day. A hand has descended on my arm.

'It's you, dear, isn't it?'

Probably, I think.

'I saw you on the evening news, the local one. I thought you did really well. It's time someone stood up to all those fat white men

I smile.

'..... so, I knew you would be a good person to ask. After all, a woman who is prepared to stand up to those bullies...' Do I acknowledge this slight compliment?

'... is the sort of person I need ...'

For what?

'... to hold onto Coriolanus for me. Just for five minutes.'

Coriolanus? As in General Caius Marcius Coriolanus, the bloody warrior immortalised by our own dear Bard? I look around and can see no such figure. And anyway, why would she want me to hold onto him for any minutes at all?

The supplicant looks up at me, which is a novelty in itself. I'm not sure whether I'm shrinking or the world is growing, but 5ft 3½ins is getting shorter by the year. The faded blue eyes pinned on mine are pleading. A desiccated hand draws my attention down towards the pavement, where another pair of eyes, black and a little watery, peer back up at me.

I don't do dogs. Or children, for that matter. Apparently Coriolanus is a small, slow-moving corgi, winding his way around the legs of his elderly owner. I see the flapping butterfly wings of future chaos here on the High Street, so I lean down and sort out the lead.

'There you are, I knew you were the right sort of person.' With that the end of the strap is thrust into my hand and the woman scuttles away across the road. Her words '...back ... won't be so much ... grateful' come through to me from between the passing vehicles. I look down at my temporary charge, who twinkles back at me.

0934 The blinds in the shop window have been raised, the door is opening.

'Good morning,' says Jane. I'm sure my charge would not be welcome on her spotless cream broadloom carpet, so I say 'good morning' too, change hands and look back up the road, to where the dog's owner disappeared. With surprising alacrity, now I think about it.

0956 I've been clutching this lead for half an hour. The dog seems sanguine about it, settled down on the pavement. He's a peaceful soul, or is he just resigned? Trusting, certainly.

I'm not sure now that I could describe the woman. Older. English, slight West Country accent that reminded me of my Devonshire grandmother. My knees are now beginning to complain at all this standing around in the cold and damp.

1004 This is getting silly. I'm not standing here any longer, but what to do with the damned dog? He shifts position and looks up at me, questioning. Well, I ask myself, what do you do with found items? – and tell myself, you take them to the police. Jane comes out of the shop and says

'You've been out there forever, Mrs Cunningham. Is something wrong?'

I tell her my tale, and she tuts sympathetically. She says she'll take the sweater and I can collect the replacement later. She says she'll look out for the woman coming back, which makes me feel better. She can tell her where I've gone. I set off up the hill and Coriolanus trots contentedly behind me.

1012 The policeman seems more amused than anything. He takes my details and promises to let the owner know who has the dog if she comes in.

'You're going to have to take him home, though, aren't you?' he insists. I shake my head. That's not what I came here for. I came so that they could relieve me of this burden.

'I don't know anything about dogs,' I protest.

'It's all common sense, really,' says the policeman. 'You'll work it out, I'm sure.' I'm not sure at all.

'What'll you do if I leave him here?' I ask.

'They'll take him off to the dogs home, then he'll be put down unless someone chooses him, which isn't likely, old dog like that. Happens quite often, they'd have such a heap of them if they didn't.

1027 Home. Corrie (I really cannot continue to call him by his full, ridiculous name) seems quite at ease, finding a corner in which he can make himself comfortable, rear-on to the radiator and settling down. I get out my laptop and investigate what I need to do next for him. Food – from the supermarket, get them to deliver this afternoon. Vet – there's one just around the corner from the flat. They say they'll check him out and give me some advice.

1504 The girl at the vet's was so helpful. She looked him over, pronounced him healthy and gave me a handful of leaflets. She said she'd not seen him before, he wasn't chipped, and there was no other obvious means of identification. She offered to ring round the other vets' surgeries and ask if they knew him. The name wasn't like to have been missed, after all. I explained where it came from.

'Oh,' she said, 'that's nice.'

The following week Corrie seems to be a fixture now. None of the vets identified him, and there's no sign of his owner. I've sorted out the routine of feeding, watering and walking him, guided by Adrian, the man next door. He spent so long telling me about the Labradors they had when the children were young, I've not talked to (listened to) someone for that long in ages. I've checked my lease to confirm that I can keep an animal in my flat, and I've even put a notice in the local paper: *Found, corgi answering to the name of Coriolanus...* The girl on the other end of the phone had problems with the spelling. Nobody's called.

I retired four years ago. Not that I wanted to, I thought I had a good few years in me yet. Against company policy, to be working after 65 they told me. I think my team were sorry to see me go. I get lots of Christmas cards, even a few birthday cards from those who remember. I don't go back, though. You shouldn't ever go back, people have rearranged things and your place among them has disappeared.

I've never been one for socialising. Once I had the time to please myself, I realised that the people I'd choose to be around had moved on without me noticing. After retirement if I wanted to meet others it would be a question of 'joining' things – adult education, a choir, a bridge club. But I didn't, and the days ran on, one into another so that years went by without me actually doing very much, just getting from day to day. Some days better than others, but all pretty drab really.

Since that cold, damp day in January I've discovered a whole new set of people – the dog walkers. Corrie doesn't move very quickly, so there's plenty of time to stop and chat without any risk of him running off. We go out at around nine and again at four, weather and light permitting, plastic poo bag in hand, and see the same folks again and again. No-one knows anyone's name - you refer to them by their dog's names. Jock the West Highland White has an owner who 'walks' him in her wheelchair. The two Wheaten Terriers are sisters and a bit boisterous, so you can often hear their owner calling them, 'Ruby' and 'Saffy', as they bound away across the tufts and hillocks of the Common. Buster, an Alsatian, races around and around the cricket ground. Jenkins is a greyhound that can beat him hands down. Or paws down, I suppose. It's all friendly and very undemanding.

Unexpected things do happen though, don't they? With all this walking, my knees are so much better, and I've lost those stubborn ten pounds' weight. And now I'm just looking for that bright red scarf that's so flattering to the older complexion! I'll wear it with my navy coat tomorrow morning when I go to meet Jenkins' owner, who's called Brian. We're having coffee together at eleven.

Joanna Mace



There are lots of opportunities to carry on making music and listening to it. Here are just a few together with some other things to interest you:

- **Wigmore Hall - 100 concerts confirmed for New Autumn Series**

Director John Gilhooly introduces Wigmore Hall's new autumn series, beginning with Christian Gerhaher (baritone) and Gerold Huber (piano) on Sunday 13 September 2020 at 7:30PM. All 100 concerts will be live-streamed and free to watch on demand for 30 days after broadcast on Wigmore Hall's website (wigmore-hall.org.uk)

Detailed plans have been drawn up to ensure that most concerts will be in front of a limited, socially distanced, live audience in the Hall. More details on how to access tickets will be released in the coming weeks.

- **New Paths Music** – this may not be a name that is familiar to you, but it is a small group based in Beverley, Yorkshire who put on music festivals in the Minster and travel around the country giving concerts. Have a look at their 'postcards' project on www.newpathsmusic.com and enjoy a super rendition of Britten's setting of *O Waly, Waly* sung by baritone Johnny Herford in the Minster itself
- **For the Rutter fans among you** - www.stayathomechoir.com will be taking part in what they call 'a global Christmas', featuring Rutter's music and that of other composers and giving singers the chance to practice their part with the help of professionals.
- **Merry Opera** - locally-based group have announced that they are planning to surface into the real world once more in April 2021 with a production of *Mikado* - a delightfully feel-good show directed by John Ramster, who directed our *Pirates of Penzance* (2019) and *Don Giovanni* (2020) productions. www.merryopera.co.uk

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