

Dear Friends,

In any normal season, we'd have been happily looking forward to starting a new term and catching up with friends after the summer break, but of course these are unfamiliar times. We await further advice on safe opening of venues as well as research findings on the relative safety of group singing as opposed to – say – shouting across a crowded pub or nightclub.

Summer holidays too have had to be sacrificed, though many people will have benefitted from some kind of break and at least the weather has favoured outdoor pursuits at home or further afield. For most however, the idea of golden sands, clear blue tropical waters and gently wafting palm trees will have been parked for this year – so no apologies for focussing this month's Corona Chronicle on more members' choices of the 8 discs they would take with them as castaways on a desert island. We have contributions from **Chris Robinson, Chrissie Russ, Martin Fletcher** and **Roger Prangnell** – interesting choices and back-stories all round.

By some happy co-incidence, Roy Plomley (the originator of the BBC's Desert Island Discs) lived in Bushey for a while in the 1940s. **Audrey Adams** has contributed a lively account of his residence in Little Bushey Lane, together with an entertaining collection of DID trivia. We have a copy of a concert programme from May 1984 in the archive (see p3) which featured Roy Plomley as narrator – yet another famous name to have performed with us in the past. More to come on some of these mid-20th century greats in a future issue.

Meanwhile, we are planning to open the new season on Zoom, starting work on Mozart's Coronation Mass which we certainly intend to include eventually in our performance schedule. Some of you may recall singing it during a trip to Ireland in 2011 when we joined forces with Carlow Choir to perform it in the cathedral there, the Mozart Requiem also featuring in the programme. We spent 3 days in the company of our Irish hosts, enjoying the glorious countryside and including a visit to Dublin as an optional add-on. Our stay in Carlow coincided with the annual Festival, giving us an opportunity to participate in a spectacular water-based procession and firework display, including mass singing of the Hallelujah Chorus from the bankside.

Looking forward to a new season, and hopefully new opportunities to get together again.

Stay safe and stay in touch,

Judy



Our final, festive Zoom meeting of last term – amazing that Michael appears to have assembled the entire choir and orchestra without us noticing! Maybe we were too preoccupied with raising a glass (or two). Loving David Griffin's headgear (bottom left) Ed.

Desert Island Discs – Audrey Adams tells how it all began, in Little Bushey Lane!

Devotees of *Desert Island Discs*, the long-running Radio 4 programme, may not realise that it originated locally. Roy Plomley, who devised the format and was the first presenter, explained how it all started in his book *Desert Island Discs*:

“I was just going to bed on the night of Monday, November 3rd 1941 when I had the inspiration. I was living in digs in a Hertfordshire village, my coal fire had gone out and I was already in my pyjamas: nevertheless, I sat down at my typewriter and wrote to Leslie Perowne, who was in charge of the lighter kinds of record programmes”.

That Hertfordshire village was Bushey, and his “digs” was a small cottage in Little Bushey Lane named “Kerri”. Plomley’s letter drew an enthusiastic response from Leslie Perowne, whose official title was Head of Popular Record Programmes. He replied to Plomley two weeks later, but unaccountably addressed his letter to **Lower** Bushey Lane. Had it not been for an alert postman, *Desert Island Discs* may never have graced the airways.

Perowne commissioned an initial run of eight programmes, and the first was recorded on 27th January 1942 in a bomb-damaged studio at Maida Vale.

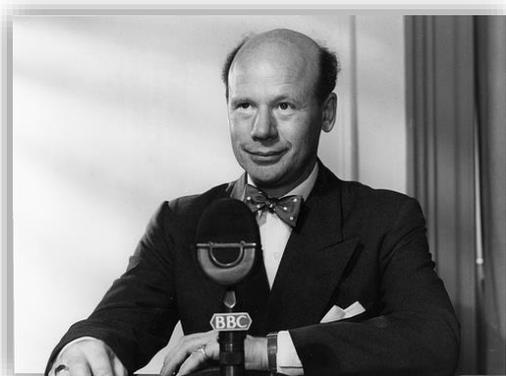
The initial guest was the comedian and musician Vic Oliver, whose first record choice was Chopin’s *Etude in C Minor “Revolutionary”*. The show was broadcast two days later in the Forces programme. (The BBC Forces programme operated from 1940 to the beginning of 1944. It was intended for soldiers serving overseas but could also be received in England. After the war, the Forces frequencies were taken over by the new BBC Light programme).

After the successful first series, *Desert Island Discs* was recommissioned and continued until 1946. In those days, all radio programmes were scripted and during the war they had to be passed by the censor. After a five year break, *Desert Island Discs* returned to the Home Service (now Radio 4) where it has remained ever since.

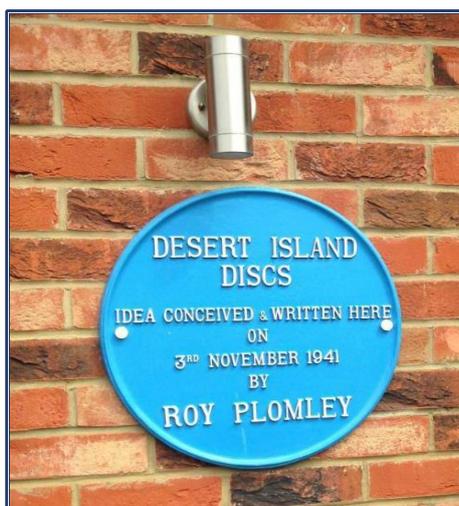
Roy Plomley (1914 - 85) started out as a jobbing actor, broadcaster and producer. In the late 1930s he was working in France, but the German occupation of 1940 forced him to return to England and to his rented accommodation in Bushey. Plomley went on to present 1,791 editions of *Desert Island Discs* stretching over 43 years. He was renowned for his courteous interviewing style and his meticulous research into his guests, who he would entertain to lunch at the Garrick Club before the recording.

The role of “Kerri” in broadcasting history was commemorated by a blue plaque.

However, a few years ago the cottage underwent a substantial makeover and was revamped and extended so as to be unrecognisable from its earlier appearance. The plaque disappeared during the building work and was thought to have been lost forever. However, the present owner has rediscovered it and restored it to its rightful place at the front of the house.



Roy Plomley (above) and blue plaque in Little Bushey Lane



A few years ago, Bushey Museum mounted a small exhibition about Roy Plomley and *Desert Island Discs* for which Audrey compiled the following collection of trivia. Sadly, the Museum remains closed to the public during the Covid19 pandemic but can be visited online at <https://busheymuseum.org> where you can take a virtual tour of some of its fine collections.

DESERT ISLAND TRIVIA

The programme has had **five presenters**: Roy Plomley (1942-85), Michael Parkinson (1986-88), Sue Lawley (1988-2006), Kirsty Young (2006-18) and Lauren Laverne (2018 to present).

The **theme music** is *By the Sleepy Lagoon* by Eric Coates, augmented by the cries of herring gulls. Listeners pointed out that herring gulls were unlikely to inhabit a desert island, and the cries of tropical birds were substituted. However, this did not sound right at all, and the gulls were reinstated.

There have been **more than 3,000 guests** on the show. Over 200 people have appeared on the programme more than once, while Arthur Askey and Sir David Attenborough have each made four appearances. Barry Humphries has appeared twice on the programme as himself, and once in the guise of Dame Edna Everage.

Famous **people who have turned down the chance** to become a castaway include Albert Finney, Mick Jagger, Ted Hughes, Laurence Olivier, George Bernard Shaw and Prince Charles.

Music choices

- The most popular classical composer is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, followed by Ludwig van Beethoven and Johan Sebastian Bach.
- The most popular artists chosen by castaways are The Beatles, followed by Frank Sinatra.
- Actress Dame Edith Evans chose *Rawhide* by Frankie Lane.
- The poet Ian McMillan chose John Cage's '4'33" - which consists of four minutes and 33 seconds of silence. Only a few seconds were played.
- In 1958, the soprano Elisabeth Schwarzkopf chose seven of her own recordings. (*ES later protested that she thought this had been expected! Ed.*) She was outdone by pianist Dame Moura Lympany, who selected a full house of eight of her own recordings.
- Many castaways have chosen sound recordings instead of music. Choices have included poetry readings by Dylan Thomas, Tony Hancock recordings, various items of Shakespeare and football and cricket commentaries.
- Ann Widdecombe chose the sounds of the hippo, while poet Roger McGough opted for a recording of foghorns on the Mersey.

Luxury items were introduced in 1951. The first to make a choice was actress **Sally Ann Howes**, who asked for a garlic plant.

Dame Edna Everage asked to take her bridesmaid, Madge Allsop. The presenter, Sue Lawley, reminded her that the luxury had to be an inanimate object. Dame Edna insisted that Madge was exactly that, so her choice was allowed.

Kirsty Young was startled when **David Dimpleby** asked to take Kirsty herself as his luxury. His request was denied and he had to settle for drawing paper and pencils.

Books

- **Charles Dickens** is the most popular novelist to be chosen.
- Show jumper **Harvey Smith** turned down a book on the grounds that he had "never read a book in his life".

FORTY-NINTH SEASON
WATFORD PHILHARMONIC SOCIETY
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GEMS OF OPERA
INTRODUCED BY
ROY PLOMLEY
soloists
ELIZABETH RITCHIE Soprano
KENNETH WOOLLAM Tenor
Conductor
GRAHAM GARTON

TOWN HALL - WATFORD
Wednesday 9 May 1984

PROGRAMME 25P

Our programme archive

Thanks to the dedication and expertise of **Margaret Burke** and **Tim Pettigrew**, our collection of concert programmes stored in the bunker is being made available as digital files to view via our website. Other than a few of the earliest programmes (from the late 1930s and early 1940s) we have a remarkably complete record which Margaret has now indexed on a searchable spreadsheet. This has been uploaded by Tim, who is in the process of scanning actual copies of our collection, linking images to the listing and using clever page-turning software which allows you to flip through an entire programme on your screen. Pam's more recent designs are produced digitally in the first instance, so can be readily uploaded as they become available.

Many people have taken responsibility for producing and editing our programmes over the years, including **John Jefkins**, **Alan Bannister** and **Judith Bruni**. All editors are reliant on a team of individuals to recruit advertisers, research and produce programme notes, proof-read and eventually help to distribute and sell the finished product. Our thanks to them all.

Take a trip down memory lane to view available programmes at
https://watfordphilharmonic.co.uk/wp2019_B/2020/03/11/a-list-of-wps-concerts/

Martin Fletcher (tenor) makes an interesting selection to take to his Desert Island

Editor's note: Martin actually submitted 3 lists – all equally interesting – and I was tempted to include them all as a small acknowledgement of the many years he has devoted to the management of our membership database, ensuring that we have had a proper system of recording individual contact details and subscription records. From this September, we are moving to a new system which will enable everyone to upload their own data so Martin will be able to take a well-earned retirement. Thanks, Martin, for all your help behind the scenes. We may well cast you away again and include more of your choices – not without precedent, according to Audrey's research!

Choice	Reason
Sabre Dance (from the Gayaneh Suite) by Aram Khachaturian	Heard it on the radio as a youngster and was fascinated by the glissandos. Reminded me of a circular saw! My mother thought the music came from "The Firebird".
<i>Firebird Suite</i> by Igor Stravinsky	Really looked forward to hearing a performance of this piece in Southampton Guildhall when I was 16. Very much liked it but couldn't hear the "circular saw" music anywhere! It was some time later that I identified it as the Sabre Dance when I heard it again on the radio (see above!)
Choral Prelude No. 5 <i>Ich Ruf zu dir Herr Jesu Christ</i> J S Bach	This is the theme music for the Russian science fiction film "Solaris", which I find very haunting and I much prefer it to the later American version. I can just about play it on the piano.
<i>Mooche</i> (Ellington) - performed by the John Harle orchestra including voice by Terry Edwards	A "crossover" piece, maybe, which attracted me immediately on hearing it. Much later on I noticed that the vocal part was performed by a certain Terry Edwards . (He does have a distinctive bass voice but I wonder how much he got paid for just saying the word "Mooche"!) <i>Wonder whether Terry recalls this recording? (Ed)</i>
The Orchestral <i>Tubular Bells</i> - composed by Mike Oldfield, orchestrated by David Bedford	Another "crossover" piece maybe. I bought the LP very soon after Brenda and I moved into our first house in 1975 (a terrace in West Watford and on which we had to do a lot of work). It reminds me very much of that time. I used to whistle or sing the main theme to my two young sons when they came along a few years later.
<i>The Fool on the Hill</i> (Lennon/McCartney) - played on two guitars by Manuel Barrueco and David Tanenbaum	A gorgeous piece of music. I used to whistle the tune (long before I heard this particular version) when as a 21-year-old I was cycling out of London on my way to one of my youth hostel weekends.
<i>Riders on the Storm</i> - performed by The Doors	I immediately liked it, and its opening words "Into this House we're born, into this world we're thrown". I fantasised about a baby's cry being heard within the music as well as with the accompanying thunder and the rain. It inspired me to write a poem with a slight modification of those opening words and a baby being woken up by a clap of thunder and being comforted by his mother, and then both of them peacefully asleep in the moonlight after the storm had gone away. I called the poem "Everything Yields to Time" and it's basically about a lifetime but also tied in to some extent with the seasons.
<i>Dance of the Little Fairies</i> - Played by Sky (John Williams), composed by Herbie Flowers.*	As well as liking this piece (and others by Sky) there's a bit of a saucy connotation. This piece accompanied a programme made some years ago about a journey along the Gann railway from Adelaide to Alice Springs. It took an interminably long time and there was a joke that a lady asked how much longer the journey was going to be because she was expecting a baby. "Well, madam, you shouldn't have got on the train in that condition" the driver told her. "But Sir!" she replied "When I got on the train I wasn't in that condition!"

A book? I'm a very slow reader, so maybe something like Tolstoy's *War and Peace*. Would I try and escape? Probably. Am I practical? Not very, but I would like to think I can learn. A luxury? A mobile phone? No point - there wouldn't be any signal. A Clavinova 709GP - solar powered perhaps. A pity there wouldn't be anyone around to hear my brilliant performances and creations!

*** Editor's note:** Martin's final choice is a piece by Herbie Flowers, played by the world renowned progressive rock group, Sky, with guitarist John Williams. A founder member of this ensemble was percussionist **Tristan Fry**. We were delighted when Tristan agreed to play with us for *Messiah* last March and very much hope he will be able to join us at some stage for a future performance.

Chris Robinson (alto) raises a glass to music with special significance in her life



1.	J. S Bach, <i>St Matthew Passion</i>	This was my introduction to large choral works. In the sixth form, our school choir joined the Bach Choir to perform it at the Royal Albert Hall.
2.	<i>Sa Jeunesse/Hier Encore</i> , Charles Aznavour	I've always loved this singer/songwriter and this reminds me of being in France in 1968.
3.	<i>Honky Cat</i> , Elton John	This track came out in 1972 when I was living and working in New Zealand - happy times.
4.	Nigel Hess, Piano Concerto No 1	The 2nd movement is my all-time favourite piece of piano music.
5.	Karl Jenkins Gloria IV - The Song: <i>I'll Make Music</i>	The distinctive voice of Hayley Westenra, accompanied by the composer – magic!
6.	Cole Porter <i>Every time we say Goodbye</i>	I was fortunate to see the great Ella Fitzgerald at the Festival Hall in the 60's, along with Count Basie, and this is a favourite track.
7.	Queen <i>Bohemian Rhapsody</i>	My late husband was a big fan of Queen and this reminds me of going with him to see their stage show 'I Will Rock You'.
8.	John Williams <i>Hymn to the Fallen</i>	It was a joy to perform this with Watford Phil. I hope we will get the chance to do it again.

Answers to Sheila & John Malin's brain teaser from Issue 5

27 B in the N T <i>Books in the New Testament</i>	240 O P in the P <i>Old pennies in the pound</i>	999: E T N <i>Emergency telephone number</i>	15 M on a D M C <i>Men on a dead man's chest</i>	64 S on a C B <i>Squares on a chess board</i>
M, M, L & J: 4 G <i>Matthew, Mark, Luke & John: 4 gospels</i>	29,002 H of M E in F <i>Height of Mount Everest in feet</i>	13: U for S <i>Unlucky for some</i>	1929: W S C <i>Wall Street crash</i>	6 B in an O <i>Balls in an over</i>
37 P by W S <i>Plays by William Shakespeare</i>	12 D of C <i>Days of Christmas</i>	90 D in a R A <i>Degrees in a right angle</i>	4 J: A I D <i>4 July: American Independence Day</i>	21 S on a D <i>Spots on a dice</i>
P 205 <i>Peugeot 205</i>	221b B S: H of S H <i>221b Baker Street: House of Sherlock Holmes</i>	80 D to go R the W <i>Days to go round the world</i>	93 M M to the S <i>Million miles to the sun</i>	L of a M = 26 M <i>Length of a marathon = 26 miles</i>
G S and M <i>Game, set and match</i>	22 Y: L of a C P <i>22 yards: length of a cricket pitch</i>	T of 2 C <i>Tale of 2 cities</i>	1917: R in R <i>Revolution in Russia</i>	18: V A <i>Voting age</i>
21 S in a G <i>Shillings in a guinea</i>	S Y: W 1212 <i>Scotland Yard: Whitehall 1212</i>	1440 M in a D <i>Minutes in a day</i>	26 L in the A <i>Letters in the alphabet</i>	8 F in a M <i>Furlongs in a mile</i>

5 free WPS raffle tickets to anyone who got them all right – just let me know!

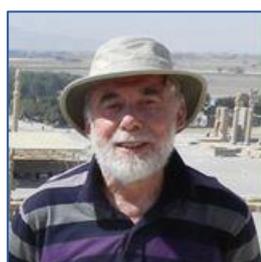


Chrissie Russ (alto) joins this month's crowd of castaways

Choice	Reason
1. Tchaikovsky: <i>Swan Lake</i> - Finale	I first saw this ballet when I was 7 at the Royal Festival Hall. Such a sad ending to the story - but which is transformed by the minor key changing to a major key in defiance of death and a celebration of love!
2. Morricone: <i>Gabriel's Oboe</i> from the film <i>The Mission</i>	Such a pure and beautiful sound - a reminder of when I played the oboe in the school orchestra (possibly not quite as well though!)
3. Bach: Concerto in D Minor for 2 violins	I was stopped in my tracks by this piece of music which was playing in a shop in Kensington High Street. I asked what it was - then went straight to HMV to buy the CD.
4. Queen: <i>Don't Stop Me Now!</i>	Whoever thought I'd be performing at Wembley Stadium? Coming out of the tunnel onto the pitch and dancing to this with my Love2Dance girls. Priceless!
5. Rachmaninov: Piano Concerto No. 2 - 1st movement	I'm just an old romantic - the music used in 'Brief Encounter' - passionate and powerful. Music to feed the soul!
6. Handel: <i>Zadok The Priest</i>	I first sang this with a choir of over 2,000 voices at the Royal Albert Hall. When the orchestra began the quiet, rhythmic intro - the hairs on the back of my neck were standing on end - building to the burst of voices. I think we almost took the roof off!
7. Tchaikovsky: Waltz from <i>Eugene Onegin</i>	This just makes me want to dance my socks off - with a great ending. I do like a big finish!
8. Wagner: Liebestod from <i>Tristan & Isolde</i>	The only word I can use to describe this piece is 'orgasmic!'...and the wonderful continuous single plaintive note on the oboe at the end...connecting the lovers beyond the grave



Keith Bevis (bass) shares his appreciation of Watford Phil and his recent experience with the Stay at Home Choir



Before I joined Watford Phil, my only choral singing had been a few months as a teenager. In 2014 I decided it was time to move on from just hearty non-conformist congregational hymn singing. After a chance conversation, Mary Coleman introduced me to Watford Phil and I jumped in! That autumn concert was hard work and very emotional, especially as we sang Fauré's Requiem, only a short time after my daughter had sung the Pie Jesu at my wife's funeral.

I have enjoyed every minute and even added Simon Halsey's Sing with CBSO workshops to expand the number of works I've now met and some vocal coaching to improve my singing. In recent months, virtual rehearsals have kept us all going. Thank you, Michael and committee, for making them happen.

Rather than resting, I have joined up with others in the Stay at Home Choir. We are just coming to the end of a ten-week project to sing choruses from *The Armed Man*, as part of a **World Premiere Performance with the World Orchestra for Peace to be aired at 6:00pm on Sunday 6th September on Classic FM website and Facebook and Twitter**. Sectional rehearsals have been supported by members of the Sixteen. The real bonus was having Sir Karl Jenkins explain his thinking and then be in the rehearsals. So, when discussing "Hosanna" in the Benedictus, yes, we had the "Hosanna" not "Osanna" but also for "*ff*" he wanted "elegant". So not a football crowd sound. There are more than 14,000 worldwide signed up to the choir and on this *Armed Man* project we started with just over 4000 singers. When this was announced Sir Karl suggested it might be good to get to 5000. We will have sung five of the choruses. Coming up next is Dougie MacLean's 'Caledonia' working with the Stay at Home Choir team and Voices8. If you fancy some more summer singing have a look at <https://new.stayathomechoir.com/>. Rehearsals are set up weekly at differing times to favour different groups around the world.

Roger Prangnell, first prize winner in our recent *Messiah* quiz, chooses his Desert Island discs

My choice of Desert Island Discs provides music that takes me away from everyday concerns. I especially love pieces that give me the feeling of 'floating up to the ceiling'. (On my island it would be the sky.) Others provide memories of home and significant past events.

1. The orchestral version of **Handel's Largo** first sparked my love of classical music, when I was aged about 9. My parents played a 78rpm record of this calm and soothing tune on a wind-up gramophone. Later on I discovered it to be the opening aria from Handel's opera *Serse*, in which Xerxes I, King of Persia, praises a plane tree for its welcome shade.
2. On my Desert Island I'd probably contemplate life's great mysteries. I love **Elgar** for the 'Englishness' of his music and would have to include *The Dream of Gerontius*. If I have to choose a particular passage it would be *The Angel's Farewell* sung by Dame Janet Baker. Her voice is wonderfully calm and reassuring, just as an angel's should be.
3. I would want to be reminded of the countryside and folk traditions of Europe including England. Nothing does this better than Joseph **Canteloube's Songs of the Auvergne**, in particular the rich pastoral accompaniment to the song *Bailero*.
4. Alexander Borodin became a musical hero for my group of friends at university while we were studying for our chemistry degrees! Borodin earned his living as a respected research chemist and lecturer, only composing in his spare time. I'd take *Prince Igor* as it also reminds me of the musical *Kismet* that borrows melodies from the *Polovtsian Dances*.
5. **Mahler** is my all-time favourite composer for his sublime symphonic writing which wrings the very last ounce of emotion from the listener. I love his use of the human voice with the orchestra, as in **Symphony No 2 The Resurrection** which the Phil sang with SASO in St Albans Cathedral in 2010.
6. There would probably be very little rain on my desert island and I would begin to miss our variable weather. So I'd take **Vivaldi's Four Seasons**, in particular the **2nd movement of Winter**. This has a 'largo' solo for violin with a pizzicato accompaniment that suggests rain falling on a windowpane while we sit round a cosy fire.
7. I must have oratorio, but as I already have a piece by Handel would take **Mendelssohn's Elijah**. In particular I'd like the trio *Lift thine eyes* which is a version of Psalm 121, my mother's favourite. I grew up in Sussex within sight of the South Downs so the words 'I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills' were special to both my mother and me.
8. Finally **Faure's Requiem** for its simple beauty. I enjoy singing the tenor melody of the Agnus Dei with its wonderful accompaniment, but I'd probably plump for the last movement *In Paradisum*. When the sopranos/ trebles begin to sing the words that translate as 'may angels lead you into Paradise' I inexplicably find that my eyes are moist!



Renewing your membership for 2020/21

Earlier this month you should have received your membership pack, outlining some of our proposals for the new season including **revised subscription rates and advice regarding the changes to our renewal/payment procedures**. You should very soon be receiving a follow-up email, inviting you to log onto our new members' database via the website, together with details of how to manage your own data and organise payment. We are encouraging as many people as possible to use online banking this year. If that's really not an option for you, you can send a cheque to Paul (our Treasurer) whose address you will find on the Payment Instructions page of the new database.

We hope that most people will decide to rejoin. Not only will your subscription enable us to plan for at least 2 live concerts in some form or another if and when we are permitted to do so, but it will also enable us to offer support to our professional musicians; ensure the continuation of weekly Zoom rehearsals; cover the annual costs of maintaining and running the Society – insurance; website hosting etc. And of course, your membership entitles you to access our closed Facebook group as well as ensuring that you will continue to receive copies of Corona Chronicle for as long as we are able to maintain publication. Worth every penny!