

Just On The Threshold

Rusthall Records: MBRRCD02

Sleeve Notes

(expanded in places for this Web Site edition)

Last Updated: 2007-03-03

[For full credits see page facing the CD.](#)

The 'Introduction to the Series', added here as a postscript, explains the mixed programming nature of these CDs.

Total time: 61 mins, 12 secs.

1. *I Didn't Tell Her, She Didn't Tell Me* - 2.01 - © EMI United Partership Ltd/Hornall Bros. Music Ltd

Learned from a Huw and Tony Williams album, *Rosemary's Sister*. Alice Kinloch is a professional freelance musician and 'Low Brass' teacher on trombone, euphonium and, here, tuba as she gets together with her erstwhile pupil, Janner Ball. (West Country Janner is to Jan as Johnny is to John.)

2. *The Threshold* - 3.05 - Copyright Control (Tuck)

Written by 16-year old Susan Tuck in 1963 and sung by Jennifer Johnson a week before her 17th birthday. Jennifer and her sister Fiona sing with the Oriana Singers, Tunbridge Wells, and at St Paul's Parish Church, Rusthall. T.Ball Keyboard & Percussion, Paul Stepto Guitar

3. *The Joy of Living* - 3.57 - © Ewan McColl Ltd

The Folk-singer, Song-writer, Actor and Playwright Ewan McColl wrote this moving farewell to his family and the world a few days after he gave up his hobby of hill-walking. "...I saw my family far ahead of me, getting smaller and smaller in the distance, and [at the age of about 64] I sat down on a rock feeling very sorry for myself and thinking that this was the end of the road ...". McColl wrote hundreds of excellent songs, *The First Time Ever I saw your Face* eventually becoming number 1 in the American 'hit parade' (years after Elvis Presley recorded it but failed to make much impact). Fiona's harmony line and doubled-up melody add welcome resonance to this old Sicilian air.

4. *Chega de Saudade (No more Blues)* - 3:52 - © TRO Essex Music Ltd

Pronounced "*Shay-ga Day Sow-daji*" in the Portuguese, this Bossa Nova piece by Brazilian composer Antonio Carlos Jobim is rhythmically complex, and Jan and Tom Ball do well to present their modern jazz treatment without a drummer.

5. *Innocent's Song* - 3.05 - Estate of Charles Causley / Copyright Control (Ball)

I have cast Charles Causley's poem in carol form, for choirs, using his third verse – a different metre from the other stanzas – as a chorus or 'Burden'. The friendly, avuncular, Father Christmassy figure becomes gradually more sinister, and eventually reveals himself as Herod the Great. This was the Herod who caused the 'Massacre of the Innocents', when all the boys of two years and under were slaughtered as a way of ensuring that the infant Jesus would be killed. After Herod interviewed the "...three Wise Men from the East" (the Magi), he saw Jesus as a potential challenger for his kingship. Holy Innocents' Day is marked by the Church on December 28th, the 4th day of Christmas-tide. "*..Melt in a Million Suns*" may be where the poet marks the slight background influence of the 'Cold War' (presumably the threat of nuclear desolation) to which he has referred in a note. The duet/verse sections were originally conceived as being – suitably – for choirboys, but here **Carolyn Johnson**, soprano, and **Jane Goldsworthy**, alto, tell the story, nicely articulating the word-music:

"Why does he Ferry my Fireside / As a spider on a thread; His Fingers made of Fuses / And his tongue of gingerbread?"

6. *Hop Garden Lullaby* - 2.40 - Copyright Control (Griffiths)

Christopher Griffiths took as his inspiration for this his father's voluntary work among the hop-field casual workers in Kent. Many of them were families from the East end of London, coming for a late summer working holiday. Mr.Griffiths, senior, served in various ways including putting on magic lantern shows of an evening. Five Oak Green is a village near Tonbridge, W Kent. **John & Di Cullen**, hosts at the Beacon Folk Club, perform this and Track 7.

7. *Song of Wandering Aengus* - 1.40 - © Donovan (Music) Ltd

Yeats's poem was given this tune by Donovan Leitch who before he became well-known played the Folk Club & Festival circuit, as did Billy Connolly, Jasper Carrot, Barbara Dickson, Jake Thackray, Joni Mitchell (in Greenwich Village, N.Y.,) whilst one of Bob Dylan's early L.P. records was marked by the influence of English Folksong absorbed when he came to London to take part in a film in 1962 (as I personally observed...)

Aengus was the Celtic God of Youth, Love, Poetry. He carries always a hazel wand (water-divining rods are made from hazel-wood) with which he catches a silver trout at twilight (an in-between time) which, when his back is turned, metamorphoses into a brief vision of a glimmering girl who calls out his name but who tantalisingly fades away at the moment of dawn ("brightening air"). Grown old, his quest for the girl ends with the imagery of light and blossom maturing into enormous shining fruit signifying the mystical union of the sun and moon with their opposite associations of, respectively, light, warmth, wisdom / cold, dark, lunacy.

Lying behind his early poems was Yeats's intention to create a new Irish 'religious' Literature, as William Blake did before him for England, but with the aim of uniting Irish Nationalism, occult symbolism, folklore: moreover the object of worship would not be God but the Rose as a symbol of spiritual beauty. These notes were based on excerpts from 'The Poetry of W.B.Yeats' by Nicholas Drake, Penguin Critical studies.

8. *Trim-Rigged Doxie* - 2.42 – Public Domain

There is many a song of this kind in the English tradition where Jack Tar, lately arrived on shore after months at sea, is worsted in the game. **Mike Wilkinson** tells this story with the relish the ditty deserves. **M.B.** Concertina

9. *Don't Get Around Much Any More* - 3.53 - © Chelsea Music Publishing Co. Ltd / EMI United Partnership Ltd

10. *The Way You Look Tonight* - 4.03 - © Chappell Music Ltd; Shapiro Bernstein & Co
It would be wrong, on an album of popular music of some variety, not to have a couple of standards from the American twentieth century tradition. **Tony Bye** has been in the forefront of rock and blues music-making in Kent and Sussex for a good many years. This is a meeting of musical opposites: Tony Bye as described above, **Tom Ball** a severely 'leading edge' modern Jazzer, both having to adapt in order to achieve these satisfying performances.

11. *Middle Class Jam Session* - 2.40 - Public Domain / Copyright Control (Ball)

The Bull-at-a-Gate Band of Rusthall has fun with this arrangement of two 17th Century dance tunes. The first is known as Royal Oak or The 29th May, in celebration of the accession to the Restored Throne of England by Charles 2nd after Cromwell's Republican Interregnum. It and 'Monkland' are used for well-known hymns. The Mellstock Band is featured in Thomas Hardy's novels (though the hilarious episode when they were replaced by a barrel-organ for church services occurs in a short story of his set in the village of Longpuddle). The verse from Mrs. Alexander's hymn 'All Things Bright & Beautiful' is the one deleted from hymn books since 1957 for the alleged 'sin' of modern 'political correctness. The fashion for taking offence at realistic and even necessary definitions, value-judgements, discriminations, even leg-pulling has led to the bowdlerising of many noble hymn texts with asinine, philistine and plain daft results. As to 'stations in life', people have them - 'twas ever thus- but nowadays one can change social and occupational stations, my preference being for the frequent 'Away-Day' with an occasional longer tour- but always with a return ticket. I picked up the tunes and much of the Cello part for 29th May from Chappell's 'Popular Music of Olden Time', Dover Pub'g Inc : the idea for the juxtaposition of the two airs I took from Maddy Prior and the Carnival Band's 'Sing Lustily and with Good Courage', a vivacious treatment of old, 'big' hymns on CDPM01 www.parkrecords.com Band: **Alice** doubling on tuba & trombone, **Fiona** on clarinet, violin & vocal, **Jennifer**, cello, **Caroline**, recorder, **Tom**, wood-block, **Mike**, vocal, ukelele, comb & paper.

12. *Somebody's Daughter...* - 4.12 - Copyright Control (Stepo)

An event likely to stimulate a poet/ songwriter into a response, in **Paul Stepto's** case a dispassionate and understated discourse, all the more powerful for that. In case you missed it, this commemorates British Mohammedans at work on 52 Londoners, not forgetting the 700 seriously injured, on July 7th 2005.

13. *Sweet Lorraine* - 3.56 - © Lawrence Wright Music Co. Ltd

Dr. Thomas Ball leads a modern jazz group in London when his hospital lets him out to play. Here he relaxes with a restrained and reflective piano solo in an untypical piece of 'Easy Listening'.

14. *Lime, Lemon & Sasparilla* - 3.44 - © Huw Colbourne Williams

It's a pity that no longer do we have Huw and Tony Williams on the folk club song-writing circuit; however Huw's portfolio of some 60 songs lives on. He is now a producer for BBC Wales and Radio 4. The proprietors of a group of Italian cafés in South Wales all hail from the same Italian village: "...it's a long way home from the Rhondda to Bari..." **Fred's** harmony line helps fill out the sound.

15. *Down at the Arsenal* - 4.09 - Copyright Control (Stepto)

Arsenal A.F.C. took the name with them when they moved to North London from the arsenal or munitions store at Greenwich. **Paul Stepto's** Grandmother told him of an incident during the 1914-18 War when her sister was working there. This story-song (a 'Ballad' in the literary and folk-song sense of the word) reveals the shock of a discovery and the tantalising wait for further news about a nephew to whom she had waved 'Good-by-ee' some six weeks earlier.

16. *Pub Medley* - 7.33 - MCPS Reversionary Rights/Warner Chappell Music Co. Ltd / Redwood Music Ltd. / Chappell Music Ltd.

Tom, improvising on fiddle, and **Tony** help me indulge my liking for pub piano and song medleys. *Love is the Sweetest Thing* and *Hey There, You with the Stars in your Eyes* are followed by Jerome Kern's *They didn't believe me*, in turn followed by the moving 'parody' of it by an unknown W.W.I soldier. The underlying bitterness is half-hidden by the understatement and irony, so typical of the songs of that war.

17. *The Constant Lovers* - 3.20 - Public Domain

Sweethearts: their love for each other remains constant, even after drowning, which is why the song is sometimes known as the Forsaken Mermaid: an example of English folk poetry at its best. **Paulette Sheard**, with her resonant alto voice is a recent and most welcome addition to the musicians who perform regularly at the Beacon folk music club, Tunbridge Wells. I'm glad to be able to listen to both this orthodox 'report' and the hilarious version (all 9 minutes of it!) by the late, lamented Sussex singer Gordon Hall on CBCD 095 Country Branch Records. W.Sussex.

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18. *The Limerick Rake* - 4.43 - Public Domain

Re-recorded with permission from Discurio music, Melbourne, of a track from a Score Label 1968 LP record, *A Rake and a Rambling Man*. **Declan Affley** was a key figure in the folk music revival in Melbourne and Sydney in the 60s and 70s, where we teamed up on occasions. The last line of each verse is in Gaelic: "Agus fagaimid siud mar ata se" meaning 'I like it that way' "Milking a cow by twisting its horns" refers to whisky making. There is a quote on concertina of a distinctly un-Irish 16th century air at one point....**M.B.** Concertina

19. *Chicken* - 4.49 - Copyright Control

Talented youth, potentially professional musicians, before five of this nine-piece band went into other professions. The original recording was caught, accidentally, in the second of their two-only gigs, at the Lullingstone Jazz festival, Kent in 1997. This band of college students was graced by the presence of two experienced trombonists, **Jim Clarke and Graham Mann**. A Jaco Pastorius/Pee Wee Ellis number arranged by pianist **Tom Ball, with Mark New (solo) & Mike O'Mara, Trumpets, Owen Rogers (solo) & Alex Tyler, Saxophones, Chris Anderson, Bass, Paul May, Drums.**

This CD is dedicated to Margaret (née) Perry of Bath, Piano Teacher.

Rusthall Records Mixed Programming Series

MBRRCD01	Bombers and Other Modern Story Songs	June 2005
MBRRCD02	Just On The Threshold	May 2006
MBRRCD03	The Magic Bedroom	November 2006
MBRRCD04	The Holy & The Horrible	June 2007
MBRRCD05	Nothing Obvious	Winter 2007 / 08
MBRRCD06	One Mile From Home	Spring 2008
MBRRCD07	English Popular Song	t.b.a.

Sample clips, notes, ordering, etc:

www.mikeball.org.uk

Whole tracks (4 only but a changing content):

www.myspace.com/bullatagate

E-mail:

michaelball38@btinternet.com

Also...

BAGRRCD01 Pulse Therapy (RR Modern Jazz Trio/Quartet /Quintet Series) May 2006

Trio Web Site: www.tomball.co.uk

E-mail: tomball@doctors.org.uk

jazzwonderboy@hotmail.com

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

The decision to see our first RR CD, Bombers, as the first of a series, rather than a 'once-and-for-all', grew from the striking thought that for years we had been making music at venues within one mile from our house- with an extraordinarily large number of talented amateurs for such a tiny area, the village suburb of Rusthall being a 'neighbourhood extraordinaire' to that degree. The folk music and songwriting club at the Beacon Bar and Restaurant, the Parish Church Services and Concerts, the local pubs, the vehicle repair garage if work is slack, at

homes including our own, in all, providing a diversity of artistic enterprise and self-entertainment amounting to a rich musical, literary, choral and (through the availability of Cranmer's Prayer Book occasionally) liturgical culture close at hand. It was time to mark this happy situation, hence the seven Titles listed at the end of the sleeve notes. In addition to the 36-strong choir on CD 2, over 30 of the named performers are in the 'one mile from home' category having made music within this Parish, the village suburb of Rusthall, in my presence.

Tom Ball has begun his own series of Modern Jazz recordings, also under the Rusthall Records label, but our joint productions feature both the range of personnel mentioned above and a wide range of genres / styles of broadly popular melody and song, and 'nothing obvious'.

This is the 'Mixed Programming' approach explained and perhaps justified in the note to MBRRCD01 'Bombers'.

Summarising:

- i) amateurs especially, although having their specialisations of genre / repertoire, do not feel confined by them (this being particularly true for audiences in the continent of Europe and North America) but by studying and respecting the different techniques and interpretive demands can achieve acceptable results. So at the 'Folk' club, where although classic folk-song, acoustic music and new writing are the basis, floor-singers are welcome to what music-making they will, which in the last year has meant Community sing-song, commercial 'Pop', Church Anthem, C&W, Blues, Art song, much comic song, recitations, with the electric keyboard taking its place among the more usual acoustic instruments. So too the Anglican tradition of anthems and hymns, chanted psalms and canticles, versicles and responses, is supplemented by church concerts when members of choir and congregation display their diverse tastes within the secular repertoire;
- ii) like the pre-1968 policy of BBC Radio, where you would be surprised by the appearance of programmes outside the norm on your favourite Station, the content of these CDs has something of the surprise factor, I hope.

M.R.B. 29th May 2006