

North Staffs Accordion Club

Newsletter

January/February 2021

No 492



HI EVERYONE. WE SEND OUR THANKS TO PHIL HODGES FOR THE LOVELY CHRISTMAS CARD DESIGN. ALSO WE START THE YEAR WITH TWO NEW MEMBERS, BOTH NAMED BARRY. THERE'S BARRY GRAHAM FROM WREXHAM AND BARRY SMITH FROM THE BLACK COUNTRY. WELCOME TO YOU BOTH. LILY

CHAIRMAN'S NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Happy New Year to you all. We have just gone through a historic year of health turmoil and are embarking on one that should be that 'light at the end of the tunnel'. The good news is that as far as we are aware all of our members have evaded the deadly covid-19. At the last count over a third of those attending our Zoom sessions had received the golden chalice in the form of the coronavirus vaccine, and by the time you read this we hope the number will have grown. The 'light at the end of the tunnel' for us will be to be able to meet up in person for a live club night. Let us hope it will be sooner rather than later.

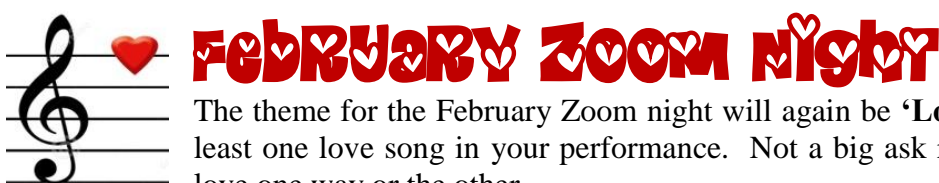
2020 started off as normal with our January and February club nights taking place at Wolstanton Golf Club. The March one, and subsequent live club nights had to be cancelled due to the coronavirus lockdown. By April, however, we were back in business with virtual band rehearsals, 'Playing for Pleasure', and club nights. As a bonus, with the exception of our Christmas 'party' we have had a '20 minute' guest appearance every month from June to January featuring Stefan Andrusyschyn, Julie Best, Helen Rich, Barry Graham (who has since joined the club), Richard Adey, Bert Santilly and Barry Smith (who has also joined the club). We are very grateful to all of these guests who have performed free of charge. From the feedback we have had, they have enjoyed their visits.

The biggest regret is that some of the members have been unable to join in the virtual events as they have no access to the internet or for some other reason. Unfortunately, the beginners' section has been one casualty in this regard.

On behalf of the committee I would like to thank you all for your support of the club. On behalf of band members, a special thanks to Tony Britton for the running of the weekly rehearsals, and my personal thanks to the committee members for their ongoing work throughout 2020.

It is difficult to look ahead with any degree of certainty but you can rest assured that we are keeping our fingers on the pulse.

Very best wishes, **Steve Hughes**. Keep safe.



The theme for the February Zoom night will again be 'Love Songs'. Please try to include at least one love song in your performance. Not a big ask really as nearly all songs are about love one way or the other.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

Well, what a night the Christmas party turned out to be – even with the limitations of Zoom. We all tuned in decked in our finest Christmas attire and got off to a prompt start.



Compere Steve Hughes introduced the evening. Everyone had to begin their spot with a joke and all music and words had been sent out by email so no excuse for not singing.



First we had a video of the band playing *O Holy Night* – with all parts individually recorded and compiled by Tony - which is available on YouTube. Next came John Plumb (*top right*) with *In the Bleak Midwinter* with an extra covid related verse and some amusing contributions from his ‘male voice choir’ dolls (*a bit difficult to distinguish in the photo*). Then Betty and Ken played *Silver Bells* followed by Moira playing *The Bagpiper’s Carol* on her Northumbrian pipes.



John Hurst followed with *Dear Señor Santa Claus* and first time player, Ann Fieldhouse, was next with *While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night*. Then Richard Millward played *We Will Rock You*, Greta Moseley gave us *White Christmas*, Geoff Capewell



played *Frosty the Snowman*, Paul Hobbs played *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* and Mike Richards played *Winter Wonderland*. Finally, leading us into the buffet, Vivienne and Peter Cowie (*left*) gave an amusing version of *Twelve Days of Christmas* with new amusing topical words sung by Peter.



Ann Millward (*bottom right*) opened the second half with an amusing monologue explaining how the fairy came to be on top of the Christmas tree, and was followed by Barry Graham (*above right*) with a wonderful version of *Sleigh Ride*. Tony Britton (*top left*) was next playing *Mary’s Boy Child*, and then two more first time players, Barry Tunnicliffe (*in fez*) playing *Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire* and John Cordon playing *O Little Town of Bethlehem*. Miriam Umpleby then played

Sweet Chiming Christmas Bells on the glockenspiel.



There was a delightful cameo reappearance by Peter Cowie (*left*) with a hilarious horse racing commentary incorporating topical themes and humorous names of riders and horses.



Finally Steve Hughes played *Rocking Around the Christmas Tree*, Rosie Galley played *Calypso Carol*, John Jones, *Jingle Bell Rock*, Steve Houghton, *See Amid the Winter Snow*, Ken Hall with *Rudolf the Red Nose Reindeer* and Stuart Simpkins playing *I Saw Mummy Kissing Santa*

Claus.

Wow! What a great party. Everyone made a fabulous effort to make it a special party night and there was plenty of laughter from the jokes, some good and some dreadful!

JANUARY CLUB NIGHT 2021

Our first club night of 2021 took place on Tuesday 19th January in coronavirus lockdown conditions as a virtual event on Zoom but with a healthy 27 people present, all in their gallery pigeon-holes, accordions at the ready. Compere Steve Hughes welcomed everyone and in particular our guest for the evening, Barry

Smith (*below*), from the Black Country Accordion Club. Notwithstanding the drawbacks of the sometimes low quality of Zoom audio, it is very convenient for the guest to play from their own home without having to travel, and it also lowers the carbon footprint of the running of the club. The low quality seems to be related to a small number of individuals and we attribute it to internet connection issues.



We started, as normal, with a playalong with muted players joining the excellent audible lead by Paul Hobbs in selections, this month chosen by Miriam Umpleby, from our song-book, 250 All-Time Hits.

The theme for the evening was '1960's music' and, as the person drawn first from the playing order 'lottery', Paul was again in the spotlight with renditions of *A World of Our Own* (1965), and *For the Good Times* (1969)

Steve Houghton, accompanied by wife, Cathryn, played *Leaving on a Jet Plane* (1966), Cathryn accompanying Steve's accordion on guitar and in song. Steve then played *Tijuana Taxi* (1965) solo.

They were followed by:

Norman Brown – *I Love You Because* and *When Two Worlds Collide*

Moira Hague - *Scottish Soldier* and *Heights of Dargai* on Northumbrian pipes

Ken Hall – *You are My Sunshine* and *Deep in the Heart of Texas*

Greta Moseley – *Love Me with All of Your Heart* (1963) and *Sound of Silence*

Miriam Umpleby – playing her own arranged medley of songs from **Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat** (1967)

Tony Britton – *Sound of Silence* (1964) with a backing track including harmony from Paul Simon's original track

Mike Richards – *Bye Bye Love* and *House of the Rising Sun* (1964) with backing tracks and the latter in song

Our guest, Barry Smith, started off his first spot with a composition of his own. *The Hei Marc Waltz* (written for, and named after, his children, Heidi and Marcus) followed by *Isle of Innisfree*, *Casablanca*, *Putting on the Style* and *Does Your Chewing Gum Lose its Flavour!*

After a five-minute break Geoff Capewell set off with *The Young Ones* (1961) and *Bachelor Boy* (1963)

Betty Nixon – With her first attempt at playing with a backing track played *And Then He Kissed Me* (1963) which concluded with a real-life kiss from Ken Hall, and after shouts of 'encore', another! The performance was somewhat spoilt by noise interference on the line.

Steve Hughes (*right*) – almost unrecognisable in fez and with amazing backdrop played and sang the funny *Old Bazaar in Cairo* (1967)

Richard Millward (*below*) playing with an Australian beach backdrop *Bachelor Boy* (1963) and *Apache* (1960)



John Corden - *It's Now or Never* (1960), *Those Were the Days* (1968)

Barry Graham – *Whiter Shade of Pale* (1967) and *What a Wonderful World* (1967)

John Jones - Medley, *Are You Lonesome Tonight*, *I Can't Stop Loving You*, *Halfway to Paradise* (1961) and *My Way* (1969)

Viv & Pete Cowie – *Right Said Fred* (1962).
Accordion backing by Viv, vocals from Peter together

with dramatisation in the form of special effects from hammer, electric drill and various items from, we suspect, the garage and kitchen.

Ann Millward – (again on a virtual Australian beach) *Diana* and *Happy Birthday Sweet 16* (1961)

BARRY SMITH – *A Song for Sid*, another of his compositions, this time in memory of one of the Black Country Accordion Club members deceased. This was followed by *The Fields of Athenry*, a very dramatic rendition of the *Dam Busters' March*, *You'll Never Walk Alone* and *Highland Cathedral*.

Thus ended our first club night of 2021 with members hanging around for a chat (at which it was revealed that nine of those there had had the 'jab'). We look forward to the time when we all have, although Steve Houghton's online prediction was November 2022!

THE MUSICIAN'S WAY

Book Review

To achieve great things, two things are needed: a plan, and not quite enough time.

Leonard Bernstein, composer and conductor.

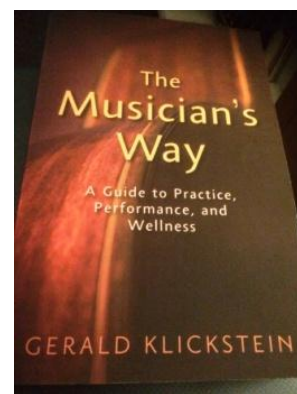
You must play for the love of music. Perfect technique is not as important as making music from the heart.

Mstislav Rostropovich, cellist and conductor.

People have often said to me, "You are so relaxed when you play. Relaxed, my elbow. It's practice"

Benny Goodman, clarinettist and bandleader.

Lockdown has allowed more time for reading and having seen rave reviews I was drawn to obtain a copy of **'The Musician's Way'** by Gerald Klickstein, Professor of Music at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. At first sight this book is rather daunting in terms of size and price – around £20. Having justified the purchase by way of a Christmas treat I was eager to dive in when it arrived and was surprised to find it written in short easy to read sections in a conversational style, far from the dry textbook I had envisaged. It was written to aid university level music students and is a guidebook for music practitioners at any stage of their development.



The book is written in 3 parts.

Part 1, **Artful Practice**, defines the many aspects of practice. Everything from planning, selecting material, habits of excellence, artistic interpretation and building technique are covered, illustrated with case studies and problem solving solutions.

Part 2, **Fearless Performance**, explores causes of performance anxiety in depth and looks at ways of recognising symptoms and developing practical strategies to enable confident performance.

Part 3 explores **Lifelong Creativity** including avoiding injury, appreciating criticism and boosting creativity.

I am already part way through a second reading and have found that the book also serves as a handy go-to reference so that any particular topic of interest can be picked out and read independently, making it a useful resource for everyone. In my view every musician should have this on their wish list!

Gerald Klickstein's vast experience illustrated by interesting case studies, his relaxed writing style and inclusion of a myriad of quotations from illustrious musicians makes this a compelling read.

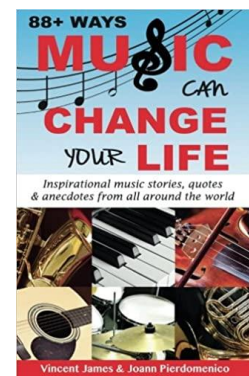
Viv Cowie

OUR ARTICLE GOES INTO PRINT ACROSS THE POND

by **Steve Hughes**

Last October I heard through the Musical U organisation that the publishers of a book **'88+ Ways Music Can Change Your Life'** were seeking material for a new edition. With John Jones, and through him Caroline's, permission I submitted an article that we published in our November/December 2020 newsletter 'Wonderful Reunion after 13 (should have been 11) Years'. I got a reply from the publishers, 88 Ways Music, Brookhaven, Pennsylvania, USA, stating that they would be pleased to include it in the book and they had a publication date of the 24th December (!).

Bang on schedule I got confirmation that the book, entitled **'88 MORE Ways Music Can Change Your Life'** had been published with a link to the Amazon page where it was available for sale. They certainly get a move on that side of the pond! There was a complimentary paperback copy for John and a Kindle version for me. The book has some moving accounts of how music has helped people with physical or mental disabilities and other wide-ranging experiences.



HIS DARKEST HOUR

Phil Hodges, the drummer in our club band is also an accomplished artist with an interest in military history. One of his recent projects, created as a gift for Prime Minister Boris Johnson, was a painting of his hero, Winston Churchill. The picture was transported to No 10 Downing Street and was gratefully accepted by the prime minister who wrote the following in a letter to Phil, dated the 22nd December 2020, and now proudly framed:



Dear Mr Hodges

Thank you so very much for sending me your painting of Sir Winston Churchill which you created for me.

It is a wonderful piece of artwork which displays a great likeness of Sir Winston, and I feel incredibly proud to accept your kind gift.

Your kindness is much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

B Johnson



Well done Phil. Your painting will no doubt be admired by the political leaders of the world when they visit No 10 Downing Street.

Phil has a website – philhodgesart.com - where you can see many more wonderful examples of his paintings.

THE LAST 'ACCORDION PROFILE' PRINTED

After over 23 years of publication the magazine devoted to the accordion movement, the 'Accordion Profile', has gone through the printer's machines for the last time. Editor Heather Smith has decided to stop publishing as of the January issue delivered this month. Heather's latest visit to our club was as a guest at our June club night, 2017, at the Goldenhill venue. She wrote the following in her last editorial:

"For the last 8/9 months I have found it very difficult to continue to publish the Accordion Profile every month, but have been heartened by encouraging messages from several subscribers, although I have now reached the decision that this will be my last issue.

It's been a long journey for the Accordion Profile with the first issue being published August 1997 by Co-Editors Tom Duncan and myself. Tom retired a few years later and so I continued as sole Editor. I also continued to organise Accordion Festivals until 2018.

I would like to thank all Subscribers, Advertisers and Contributors over the years, who have made all of this possible.

Wishing you all a Happy, Healthy 2021 with lots of 'Squeezin'....and enjoying to play and listen to 'Live Music'.

Take care and stay safe. Heather. "

We wish her well.

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