



London International Orchestra at the Free Church

The spirit of Sir Thomas Beecham was summoned to the Free Church when the London International Orchestra devoted the whole of its Easter concert on March 30 to a series of popular classics – in many cases the kind of light music ‘lollipops’ that so delighted Sir Thomas and his admiring audiences.

Arguably, these did not cohere as an orthodox programme, but that misses the point. The conductor, Paul Wynne Griffiths’ objective for the evening was to tickle the ear and entrance the audience with works that live in the memory, but are today surprisingly little played, interspersed with some relative rarities to sustain interest and provide contrast.

Amongst these was the opening *Russian Easter Festival Overture* by Rimsky-Korsakov. This, the longest work of the

evening, is a superbly orchestrated piece based on Russian orthodox Christian chorales, which provided an admirable springboard for all sections of the orchestra. It was followed by one of Johann Strauss’s elegant waltzes, *Voices of Spring*, and the gently romantic *Walk to the Paradise Garden*, by Frederick Delius, a composer much admired and championed by Sir Thomas, but now, and sadly, rather out of fashion. The first half was completed by a rumbustious delivery of the *Sorcerer’s Apprentice* by Dukas, recalling memories of the celebrated Disney film, *Fantasia*.

A relative rarity opened the second half, the *Jubilee Overture* of Weber, which, in its closing pages, features distinctive echoes of the British National Anthem. Weber died in London, so this tribute, whether or not intended by the composer, was appropriate.

Dvořák’s well-known *Carnival Overture* followed, given another spirited and lively rendition. Eric Coates, who lived in Willfield Way from 1925 to 1931 and contributed as much to the cause of light music as any composer, was represented with his *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, instantly recognisable (but without the seagulls) as the signature tune of *Desert Island Discs*. The English theme continued with Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance March No 4*, less frequently played than his celebrated March No 1, but with equally glorious tunes evoking the spirit of Britain’s imperial Edwardian heyday.

A splendidly varied concert, energetically delivered by an enthusiastic orchestra clearly enjoying itself, was brought to a vibrant climax with Chabrier’s *España*. The audience will have left the Free Church uplifted by an exhilarating evening’s music, happily reconnected with familiar tunes from their past, but which they may not have heard for quite some time.

DAVID BARKER



A CELEBRATION OF SHAKESPEARE

The next concert performed by the London International Orchestra at the Free Church on Saturday May 14 will be celebrating 400 years of Shakespeare.

The LIO will be conducted by Paul Wynne Griffiths (by kind permission of the Royal Opera House) and its leader will be Adrian Levine.

The programme comprises

- Oberon – Overture, C. Weber;
- A Midsummer Night’s Dream – Nocturne, F. Mendelssohn;
- The Merry Wives of Windsor – Overture, O. Nicolai;
- The Tempest – Fantasy-Overture (Op 18), P. Tchaikovsky;
- Richard III – Prelude, W. Walton;
- Sir John in Love (Greensleeves), R. Vaughan Williams;
- Romeo and Juliet – Overture Fantastic, P. Tchaikovsky.

Tickets are available via their website www.lio.org.uk and on the door (unreserved seating) Adults: £10. Under 16’s: £5. Students: £3.

The scourge of the screen

Whether it’s texting, tweeting, checking emails and missed calls, or immersing ourselves in the latest round of Candy Crush, it’s all too easy to get sucked into the screen in front of us.

Being permanently contactable and having the whole world at our fingertips has a downside.

Unaware that we are hunching our shoulders, oblivious to our surroundings, we tune out our bodies ignoring any warning signs of discomfort until something starts to hurt. We are so focussed on what we’re doing that we end up holding our neck and upper back in awkward positions, putting tremendous strain on our spine. The resulting injuries can be chronic and debilitating.

We can no longer blame our sedentary lifestyle. We can do as much damage to ourselves on the move as we can sitting at a desk devoted as we are to our smart phones, tablets and laptops. A stiff neck, headaches, tendonitis, a slipped disc, persistent shoulder pain and a sore back can be among the unwelcome consequences. Often we get to the end of the day feeling uncomfortable and tense, drained of energy.

The Alexander Technique can help us do things differently, by learning how to reduce the daily stress and strain on our back and joints. By becoming much more conscious of how

we’re doing things, we learn to use no more than the necessary amount of effort and muscular tension. This can also help us become more resilient to pressure.

The results of a new study published in *The Annals of Internal Medicine* in November show that following a series of Alexander Technique lessons patients with chronic neck pain experienced a significant long-term decrease in pain.

So when your computer is slow to load, there’s no point glaring at it. Just take the opportunity to enjoy a pause, allow your shoulders to drop and stop craning your neck as you peer at the screen.

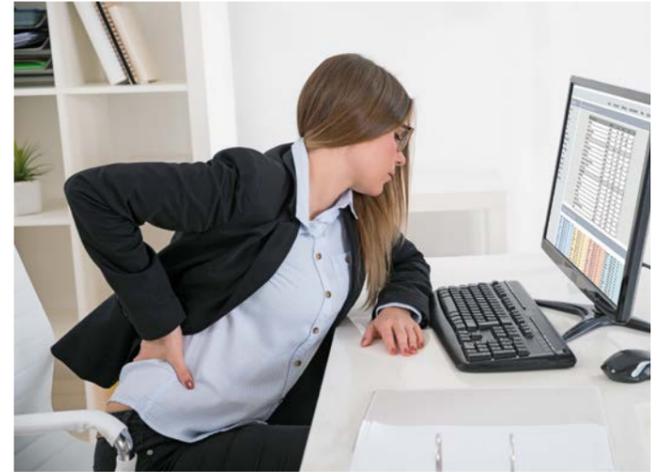
Notice how you hold your phone. Lift it up closer to eye

level so you don’t have to stoop down when the temptation to check if you’ve got any new texts proves irresistible.

Alexander, who was born in 1869, developed his technique long before the proliferation of electronic devices. But understanding how to alleviate a tired, achy back and reduce the risk of injury is invaluable. Often it’s the things we don’t realise we are doing which are at the root of the problem.

Nor is technology necessarily to blame. It may well have been possible to suffer from a repetitive strain injury in the days of sitting in a shadowy candle-lit monastery, quill in hand, squinting at a sheet of parchment.

ELIZABETH ABRAHAMS



Men’s fitness in Northway

The Free Church Hall in Northway is host to new group fitness sessions for men twice weekly on Tuesdays from 8 to 9pm and on Saturdays from 5.30 to 6.30pm. The sessions are based on the Fitness4x4 approach and the group workouts are claimed to

dramatically improve your fitness within 6 weeks.

Men’s participation in physical fitness training is usually limited to solo exercise options such as running, cycling or gym training. Apart from team sports men rarely get together for group

sessions although these have better outcomes.

Benefitting mind, body and spirit through physical exertion, the sessions cost £6 per person. If you want to find out more call Rajko on 8349 3311 or email him at rajko_r@hotmail.com.



Do you struggle with back, neck or shoulder pain, a repetitive strain injury, a slipped disc or sciatica?

Find out how the Alexander Technique can help you:

- recover from illness, injury, surgery or chronic pain,
- stop feeling tense, tired and uncomfortable,
- improve your posture and feel more at ease whether you are working at a computer, giving a presentation or playing an instrument.

Please do get in touch to find out more

Elizabeth Abrahams

Phone: 07787 904 315 to book an appointment

Web: the-alexander-technique.co.uk

Appointments at Temple Fortune Health Centre

The Horticultural Society goes social

The oldest society on the Suburb has at last embraced modern technology and you can now become a friend of the Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society on Facebook, follow it on Twitter or find it on Instagram.

Social media has expanded rapidly over the last decade and there are now more people on Facebook than living in China. Social media has demonstrated its amazing capacity to motivate and quickly gather together large groups of people as shown by the way brilliant clean-up parties were organised shortly after the London riots.

Horticulture has found a home there too, with millions of gardeners discussing their own gardens and tapping into the wealth of expert knowledge available through these networks. So now, in order to reach as wide an audience as possible, the Hampstead Garden Suburb Horticultural Society has a presence too.

If you are a Facebook user, you can ‘like’ the Horticultural Society’s organisation page, or register your interest to attend any of its upcoming shows, visits or events. Alternatively, you can head to Twitter and

follow @HGSHortSoc to stay up-to-date with all of the ‘horticultural happenings’ in and around the Suburb at any time. You can also find it on Instagram, @HGSHortSoc, where you will be able to see fantastic pictures from inside some of the best gardens in the Suburb.

All of these social networks are free and simple to use. You will need to set up a profile, so head to Facebook.com, Twitter.com or Instagram.com to find out more about how you can join in with the Horticultural Society conversation.

JAMES ROBBINS