

Summertown bulletin September 7

Hello, it's Steven with a second bulletin. This time I'm going to start with a bridge hand, then move on to music and finish with a poem. Here's the bridge hand:

<p>♠T862 ♥AK ♦AK ♣QJ954</p> <p>♠K5 ♥T74 ♦Q975 ♣AT76</p>	<p>North opens 1 club, East overcalls 1 spade, and South eventually plays in 3 no trumps.</p> <p>West leads the Jack of spades, and East plays an encouraging 7.</p> <p>Should you win this trick with the King (which looks obvious), or not?</p>
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The answer is that you should DUCK the first trick. The defence can take the first three tricks in spades and clear the suit, but now when you finesse in clubs (as you have to sooner or later), you are safe. If the club finesse loses, West has no spades left, so you just make 3 no trumps. However, if you win the first trick, and take a losing club finesse, West has a spade left and the contract goes off. The full hand could be as follows (of course, if East has the King of clubs you can't go wrong, but why take that risk?)

<p>♠T862 ♥AK ♦AK ♣QJ954</p> <p>♠J3 ♥98652 ♦T43 ♣K83</p>	<p>♠AQ974 ♥QJ3 ♦J862 ♣2</p>
<p>♠K5 ♥T74 ♦Q975 ♣AT76</p>	

I'm now moving on to music. I hated music classes at school, and can't read music, but now I love listening to it, especially piano music. When lockdown began I was really pleased that we had a smart TV with YouTube on it – I was amazed how much music I could find there. So I'm going to tell you about two great pianists, both with a lot of material on YouTube.

The first pianist is called Arturo Benedetti Michelangeli (what a name!), who was born in Italy in 1920 and died in 1995. He was a remarkable and frustrating artist – he loved playing the piano, but didn't enjoy giving concerts and seemed to loathe audiences! Allegedly he cancelled more concerts than he actually played. He was an absolute perfectionist, playing a very small repertoire (a lot of Debussy with some Ravel, Chopin, Beethoven and Brahms). He was notoriously difficult – his English agent wrote his obituary, full of praise for the artist, but his only kind comment about the man was that he was 'not totally without charm'.

Michelangeli made few commercial recordings, but some of those he did (e.g. the Debussy *Images* and Ravel piano concerto) are still regarded as classics. A Michelangeli concert was a rare event. Steph and I saw him play twice. For someone who played so seldom there is a surprising amount of material on YouTube – try the Ravel concerto, Beethoven's *Emperor*, or solo music by Chopin or Debussy.

My second pianist is the great jazz pianist Keith Jarrett, born in 1945 and still playing. Jarrett has one thing in common with Michelangeli – he is extremely difficult, and will stop playing if people cough too much or try to take photos. But unlike Michelangeli, who constantly practised a small repertoire, Jarrett's solo concerts are almost entirely improvised. Jarrett's *The Koln Concert* is the best-selling piano record of all time and was entirely improvised. Inevitably, with improvised material, not everything is inspired, but when it is inspired it's remarkable. The last time we saw Jarrett play, at London's Festival Hall, he came back after the interval and played a piece of stunning beauty. After it finished he walked to the microphone and said 'You know, at the interval I thought this concert was going OK, and then I come out and play that – God knows where it comes from'.

Jarrett has made a great many recordings – solo, with his trio, with other groups, and some of classical music such as the Bach preludes and fugues. There are a few solo recordings on YouTube and a lot with the trio. The poem below, with which I'll finish, describes a trio concert.

Live in Tokyo

The Keith Jarrett Trio

They've been playing *Prism* for years, never
the same, barely the opening theme.
Eight minutes exploring around it,
sinking exhausted, Keith's piano
repeating a tiny phrase, teasing,
to open a joyous broad chorus,
gospel stomp, ragged New Orleans,
never at rest, building, collapsing,
pulsing and jaggging, lost in wild orbit.
Gary grins, seraphic, stolidly plucking
the same few notes, while banshee Keith
wails the phrases his fingers embellish,
and Jack's content to keep time, junking
technique, driving the song to its end.

Seize these moments, when you reach
a place you couldn't know existed;
a place where the music plays you, each note
spilt through your fingers unthought,
surprising and right;
where this instant is all that there is
and the flame burns bright.

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Steven Bliss