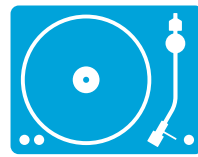


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DETAILS TO GET INVOLVED INSIDE!



WHO IS THE REAL 'ELISE'?



DESERT ISLAND DISCS

Curated by Holly Mia Garside

Edited by Charlie Moore

THE SEMIBREVE



Musicals without live music?

If I were to name one industry which has suffered the most over the last year's flurry of unexpected closures and strict distancing measures, I would have to say theatre. Theatre, already considered a somewhat dying art, saw a complete ban on performances in the march of 2020, and has barely had an opportunity to recover since. While attempts have been made to take it online, or to hold performances outdoors, the cost of running a theatre or theatre company can barely be covered. As the majority of the arts council's funding was invested in larger companies and theatres, many local theatres and amateur groups have been forced to close.

The Phantom of the Opera is Andrew Lloyd Webber's 1986 hit musical concerning a Soprano's obsession with a mysterious genius living in the labyrinth below the Paris Opera House. His adaptation of the 1910 novel of the same name has achieved immense success, winning Olivier and Tony awards, and being the first production to achieve over 10,000 performances on Broadway, making it the longest-running show in Broadway history.

The Phantom of the Opera is also the third longest running show on the West End, after *Les Misérables* and *Mousetrap*, so when many heard the news of *Phantom's* closing, they were understandably disappointed.

In the June of 2020, Cameron Mackintosh announced that he and Lloyd Webber had made the decision to permanently close the show. This meant that the 33 year run would be officially coming to an end. However, many speculated how 'permanent' this move would be, as Mackintosh had done a similar thing with *Les Misérables* on the West End, in order to replace it with the smaller touring show. When a production runs continuously, performers from the original cast are often paid royalties for every subsequent performance in that run, whether they are performing or not. By closing the show, Mackintosh has effectively reset this, and we have since learned that the show will be returning to the West End. Like we have seen with *Les Misérables* however, it will be the smaller, touring version of the show which returns to the London stage, with limited cast and set, and perhaps most notably, a reduced orchestra.

Musical fact

The longest piece of music is being performed in the city of Halberstadt in Germany: John Cage's composition for organ 'ORGAN2/

ASLSP - As SLOW as Possible' lasting 639 years!

'All 27 members were released from their contracts while Her Majesty's Theatre was undergoing refurbishment, with hopes they might be rehired. Now, while 14 musicians can re-audition for the show's return on 21 July, 13 of the jobs no longer exist.'

- Maddy Shaw Roberts – Classic FM

For many, a big part of *Phantom* is its large orchestration. The musical itself is based upon an opera singer, and so a large pit orchestra seems fit to accompany. Where before the pandemic the show had a 27 piece orchestra, it will return with only 14, meaning the unexpected job losses of 13 musicians. There will be **NO** live Brass, Percussion Oboe or Harp on the new show, and so it will return with synthesised sounds played on a keyboard, or as pre-recorded tracks.

'The modern instrumentation... will give this timeless score the freshness of a new musical.'

- Phantom of the Opera press release

Phantom did boast one of the largest orchestras on the West End, but like with many other shows, it is being reduced. The pit at Her Majesty's Theatre on the West End has even seen an expansion over lockdown, leaving enough room for the original orchestra to fit socially-distanced. Unfortunately, that orchestra may never return. British-based Percussion education provider PercWorks say: 'This is an extremely sad and worrying time for the West End and the industry as this move has left many of the musicians in extreme financial hardship and has raised concerns about the future of orchestras in the West End.' The move has been made somewhat on the sly, with only Classic FM and iNews picking up on the move. Lloyd Webber has been hailed as theatre's saving grace headed out of Lockdowns, with his new *Cinderella* premiering on the 14th July. His older productions, however, evidently don't seem to be getting the same publicity.

'We are sad and disappointed by the move.'

- Horace Trubridge, general secretary of The Musicians' Union

Phantom's Percussionist Matt Dickinson took to Twitter after losing his job on the show:

@mcdperc_matt

I sacrificed so much, willingly, to be a part of this wonderful show and yet I will leave with nothing more than the shirt on my back: no severance to speak of and my livelihood and that of my family in absolute tatters.



'This has been a rumour in our industry for a while, but here it is confirmed in plain sight. It is incredibly disappointing that theatre megaproducers set this kind of example.'

- British Composer Thomas Hewitt Jones (@thewittjones)

In a joint statement, Cameron Mackintosh Ltd and the Really Useful Group said the new production will be "using the acclaimed orchestration for 14 musicians that was created for the international productions of the show".

"These orchestrations are just as thrilling and rich as the original but would not have been possible with the technology available in 1986. The new Phantom orchestra will remain one of the largest in the West End – the orchestration featuring a contemporary line-up of top-flight soloists with modern instrumentation which will give this timeless score the freshness of a new musical to ensure that the music of the night will soar for decades more," they added.

The musicians at *Phantom* have called for fans to make a noise on social media, to raise awareness of this and many other shows being reduced. While things for the industry may be looking down at the moment we can hope for a thriving theatre scene in the near future.

Charlie Moore
L3

The Mystery surrounding Für Elise



It's fair to say that Beethoven's fame has stretched far beyond his home town of Bonn, with most people knowing him for his three most famous melodies: the opening to his 5th Symphony, his *Ode to Joy*, and his bagatelle *Für Elise*.

Bagatelle No. 25 in A minor, informally known as *Für Elise*, is undoubtedly one of Beethoven's most widely known works. Despite its huge success after his death, Beethoven was never happy with the piece, going back to it years after its first conception and trying (and failing) to turn it into a work he was satisfied with. In fact, it was never published during the composer's lifetime and only found around 41 years after its probable creation in the personal belongings of one of his friends.

But why did this friend have the only original manuscript in the first place? Why, of all people, was she the only one with this soon-to-be classic of the romantic period in her possession? In fact, this woman happens to be one of the three suspected ladies whom the piece was dedicated to; 'Elise'.

The identity of Elise is somewhat of a musical mystery that musicologists have been studying for decades. We can never be fully sure as to the identity of Elise, as the composer of the piece died long before its discovery, but experts have narrowed it down to three potential women: Therese Malfatti, Elisabeth Röckel and Elise Barenfeld.

Today I'll throw all the evidence onto the imaginary drawing board and you can make your own mind up as to the subject of Beethoven's beloved bagatelle.



SUSPECT #1 - THERESE MALFATTI

A close friend and student of Beethoven's, Austrian musician Therese Malfatti was the only person who owned a copy of *Für Elise* when it was first found after her death. Musicologist Max Unger argued that the original transcriber of the piece may have misread Beethoven's notoriously messy handwriting when transcribing the informal title of the piece: he believes he misread *Für Therese* to be *Für Elise*.

Furthermore, it is rumoured that Beethoven proposed to her in 1810. Sadly, she turned him down, although this proves a strong attraction at least on his part. Of all the dedicatees, Therese probably has the most evidence in her favour.



SUSPECT #2 - ELISABETH RÖCKEL

Opera singer Elisabeth Röckel (known as Elise to friends!) was a close friend of Beethoven and sister to one of the stars of his opera *Fidelio*. Beethoven and Röckel would meet frequently and many sources claim that he fell in love with the beautiful young girl and had the intention of marrying her. However, Röckel was soon engaged to another and left Vienna for Weimar where she remained until her death in 1883. The German musicologist Klaus Martin Kopitz suggested that Beethoven wrote *Für Elise* during Röckel's departure from Vienna, almost like a farewell piece dedicated to her. The two remained close until Beethoven's death and Röckel visited him days before his passing, taking a lock of his hair. The only thing I personally find strange about this theory is; why did Malfatti have the only original manuscript if it was dedicated to Röckel?

SUSPECT #3 - ELISE BARENSFELD

Elise Barenfeld was a German soprano and referred to as a child prodigy. Elise, although having the least evidence of the three, was the only one with the name Elise that was transcribed from the original manuscript. Canadian musicologist Rita Steblin pointed out that Therese Malfatti lived across from Barenfeld and believes Elise might have received piano lessons from her neighbour when she was thirteen. She goes on to argue that Beethoven may have dedicated the piece to her to win the favour of her piano teacher Malfatti, the composer's love interest. This makes sense: *Für Elise* is a relatively easy piece and would be perfect to teach the intermediate player Barenfeld. The majority of the work is fairly simple with slightly challenging aspects that display the player's musical flair: the perfect



piece for a girl of Barenfeld's age and standard.

So who do you think was the dedicatee of the serendipitously beloved bagatelle? Was it the sweetheart Therese Malfatti? The soprano Elisabeth Röckel? The student Elise Barenfeld? Despite the fact that we may never know for sure, one thing is for certain: beginner students will be begging teachers to learn the celebrated work for many years to come.

Holly Mia Garside
10C

Desert Island Discs

~Mrs Neal~



On this edition of the Semibreve, we thought we'd introduce a new recurring segment - Desert Island Discs. Inspired by the popular radio show, our aim is to get one teacher involved a month to list the eight discs they would choose to bring to a deserted island and give a brief description of what it meant to them.

For the inaugural edition of this segment, we invited Mrs Neal to list some of her favourite tracks and explain what they mean to her: let's hand over to her!

1. *Super Trouper* by Abba – this was the very first single I bought when I was about 7 years old. I'd saved my pocket money and my Mum took me to Woolworths in Small Heath one Saturday to buy it. I remember playing it constantly on our record player in the living room and dancing around with my friend Charnjit who lived a few doors down the road! ☺

2. *I Owe You Nothing* by BROS – this song reminds me so much of being in Year 8 and totally carefree. We would crowd round my friend, Helen's, cassette walkman (look it up!) at lunchtimes and sing it at the top of our voices, usually getting told off by Rita the dinner lady!

3. *Twist in my Sobriety* – Tanita Tikaram – Despite my penchant for cheesy pop, in Year 9, my best friend Bernie and I persuaded her brother (who was at Camp Hill Boys!) to let us tag along with him and his friends to a Tanita Tikaram gig. It was the first time I'd seen an artist play live and I loved it. I remember copying out the lyrics to this song from Bernie's tape cassette so that I could learn them ahead of the gig! Every time I hear this song, it takes me back to the excitement of that first gig – we thought we were so cool! ☺

4. *Blue Savannah* – Erasure – this remains one of my favourite ever songs. It reminds me of the summer of Year 11 when I was revising for GCSEs in the front room at my Mum and Dad's house. I would put my Erasure album on in between subjects! It also reminds me of days out with friends after exams. We got the bus to Drayton Manor and sang it on the top deck; we got the train to Stratford and sang it on the rowing boats down the river – and we even went to see Erasure in concert at the NEC which was amazing.

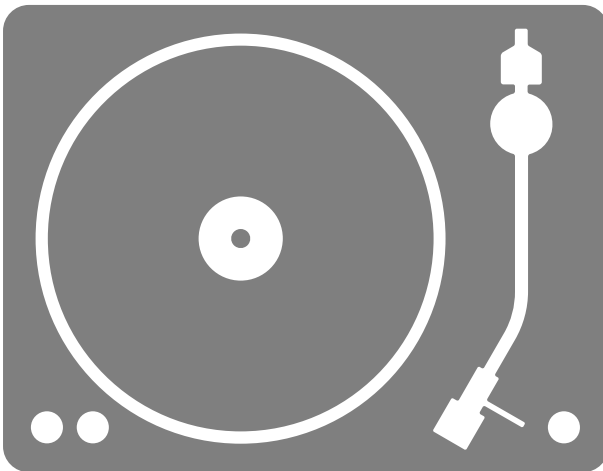
5. *Express Yourself* – Madonna – Even though this song came out a few years before I went to university, it became the soundtrack to my student years. It was often playing on our student 'landing' in Halls in first year, and my friends and I carried on playing it in our 2nd and 3rd year houses. The lyrics are all about having self-respect and not accepting second-best so it's good reaffirmation, and a real friendship anthem! Whenever I get together with my uni friends now, 'Express Yourself' usually gets played when we're getting ready to go out!

6. *Somewhere Only We Know* – Keane – This song reminds me of being in New York with my husband in 2005. We'd been sight-seeing and shopping all day and then met up with my cousin, Simon, who lives and works in the city. We went out for a great Japanese

meal and then he took us to a packed Irish bar where a band (not Keane!) were playing this. I'd always wanted to visit New York and every time I hear this song, I remember that memorable trip and how much I enjoyed soaking up the busy, exciting vibe of that huge city!

7. *Dublin in the rare old times* – The Dubliners – My family is Irish and have always loved to sing. Whenever we are together, it is inevitable that there will be a 'sing-song!' My dear Grandad Paddy would often sing this song and there's a line in it about how the speaker lost his love, Peggy, to a student... 'when he took her off to Birmingham, he took away my soul.' My Grandad would always look over at me and wink as he sang 'Birmingham' and it felt like he was singing that song just for me. He died many years ago now but whenever I hear it, I am transported back to those nights of being squashed into my Granny's tiny living room in Dublin with aunties, uncles and cousins and the singing going on into the wee-small hours. It always made me feel safe and with a great sense of belonging.

Crazy – Patsy Cline – I got my love of Patsy Cline from my Dad. He had all her LPs (again, look it up!) and when my Mum was working late-shifts as a nurse, we would listen to Patsy Cline and sometimes, he would go to get us chips! Those were the best nights: the waft of chip-shop chips, the unravelling of the paper – and Patsy Cline's velvet voice from the record-player in the lounge. When I was older, I learned how to play it on the piano and we would have a lovely time singing this together.



GET IN TOUCH!

Do you have:

- A musical story to tell?
- A performance to share?
- A song, piece or album you love?

We want to hear from you!

A great opportunity to share and demonstrate your communication and organisation skills!

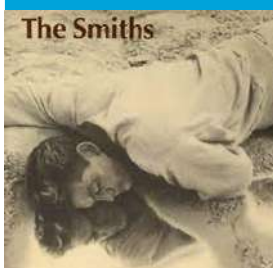
Contact Charlie at

15moore502@camphillboys.bham.sch.uk

or Holly at 17garsideh557@kechg.org.uk

What we're listening to:

This Charming Man - The Smiths



I often don't pay attention to the specific characteristics of songs I enjoy, I don't tend to go into too much analysis. At the moment, I've been trying to get into The Smiths, and this song, notably one of the most well know, stood out to me, and seemed like a good place to start. It showcases Morrissey's incredible vocal abilities, and overall, it just sounds good!

Yusuf Khalid L6