

▶ what's written, but it's a shame they don't get an opportunity to improvise or find out what that means.

"The big problem for me at the Guildhall was that theory lessons were all at 9am, and as I was playing with my amateur band every night (and later on with a professional band) I never once made a theory lesson in three years, so I never got an LGSM.

"Monty Sunshine and I started the band I have now at the end of 1952, when we were both students and had amateur bands. I was at the Guildhall and he was at Camberwell Art School, which meant we weren't doing anything very much in the daytime. We had to form a professional band as we were never going to get any better playing once or twice a week. We needed to play every day to begin to find out what we were doing wrong, and put it right. Various things happened, with Ken Colyer coming into the band – he became the leader. It was wonderful. We had six resident gigs so we played six nights a week in different parts of London."

In 1959, with *Petite Fleur* riding high in the charts, the Chris Barber band made its American debut.

"When we arrived with the band and went to the Metropole on 7th Avenue, Red Allen and J C Higginbottom and all those musicians were pleased as punch to see us.

'We've got your record of *Petite Fleur*, – wonderful, we need hit records in jazz. Great band.' In England, the equivalent musicians wouldn't have spoken to me.

I was a commercialiser. I was a prettyfier, as George Melly described me. I said, if prettying means playing in tune, I know I do, and George doesn't! He called my band over-rehearsed. We *never* rehearsed! We happened to be musicians who had the knack of improvising without making too many mistakes."

In 1985 Chris Barber joined forces with composer Richard Hill to write *Concerto for Jazz Trombone and Orchestra*, which he premiered in East Berlin with the Grosse Rundfunk Orchestra of the DDR conducted by Robert Hanell. Why it has yet to be performed in its entirety in Britain is hard to fathom.

"It's because here none of the people who put up money for symphony orchestras will have us do it. How many others like it are there, for heaven's sake? Artie Shaw's *Concerto for Clarinet* – are there any others? Nobody's bothered. I've always believed that jazz and orchestral music should be able to work together. Our concerto is a straightforward piece of music in three movements, but we always get a laugh by saying, instead of Allegro, Andante

and Presto, it's Ragtime, Blues and Stomp!

"The first movement is a simple ragtime-type theme, developed. The fast movement, the Stomp, is sort of Charleston era Hot Jazz. The Blues movement was a lot of work because we took great pains to work into it a development from blues as first instrumentally recorded in about 1920, developing harmonically through to 1940. The early blues had four bars of tonic, two bars sub-dominant, two bars tonic, and that was it. Not a passing chord anywhere.

"We have no recordings of classical music before 1900, so we don't know how it sounded then. Jazz only began in about 1900, so there are recordings almost from the beginning. It's quite interesting the development that took place, the kind of passing chords that were used. So we deliberately set out to use certain passing chords, and then more and more so you can hear the character changing. I like playing it very much as I know how I want to play it, and the orchestral part is great. I wouldn't mind playing somebody else's jazz trombone concerto, except there ain't one!"

Chris Barber's band has a full engagement book and he could work 365 days a year if he wanted to.

"I can't for the life of me think why it took me so long to find out the sensible way to work. We now play for

about 21 days and then have 10 days off. We have a fortnight off at Christmas and Easter, and in summer seven weeks. That pattern was very useful when we had children of school age, but we don't now. So we may end up having three weeks on and two weeks off all the time, which is great because if means instead of an odd day off to collapse in bed and not get anything done, you've got two weeks to get sorted out, do some decorating, go and buy things you need, choose a carpet and so on."

So does he practise in those weeks off?

"I never practise. I'm the world's laziest musician. As my violin teacher said, I'd play like an angel if only I'd practise. It's still true. I do tend to practise if I've really got to. Having not done my concerto for, say, two years, and having to walk into a place and play it, I practise that a few times. Apart from that, I pick it up and go straight in – but I know how to start carefully!"

"Luckily, being the bandleader, and lazy, if I don't want to play a high note, I can leave it out. The sort of thing we play is a style. You haven't got to play the things that hurt the lip. I do play between times if I get a chance to go and sit in somewhere, but I've never practised exercises and things like that. I frequently start a concert by getting

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The launching of *Musica Britannica*

Liveryman Denis Stevens writes Leaping through a copy of *The Strad* (price six pence) one lazy monsoon afternoon, I read a review of an unusual book: *The Notation of Polyphonic Music 900-1600*, by Willi Apel. Writing to the publishers, the Medieval Academy of America, I requested a copy for which I offered to pay cost and carriage.

Situated somewhere in Burma, I had no idea how I would transfer the money to Cambridge (Mass), but in wartime life was one long hope. Some three months later, when the book miraculously arrived, a With Compliments slip was inside from the Academy's secretary. It was my first taste of Uncle Sam's generosity.

The sticky months following saw me carefully transcribing keyboard and lute tablatures by the light of a hurricane lamp. These I copied out in RAF office ink, and brought them back to Oxford where I had been studying music with Sir Hugh Allen and Dr Thomas Armstrong.

But in 1947 Allen, killed in a road accident, was no more, and his place was taken by J A Westrup – to me, an unknown quantity

Smitten for ever by Gilbert and Sullivan

Liveryman Chris Morgan-Grey writes Like most children brought up between the wars, the early musical influences in my life were delivered via "steam radio" – The Ovalteenies, *In Town Tonight*, the Palm Court Orchestra with Albert Sandler, and *Henry Hall's Guest Night*. Paul Robeson and Flotsam and Jetsam were names I used to conjure with when I went to prep school in 1936, and sang as a treble in the school choir.

Moving on to senior school, the music got more complicated, with services by Stanford, participation in schools choir festivals at Gloucester Cathedral, Dr Sumption playing the organ, and involvement with Sir Sydney Nicholson's Royal School of English Church Music ... finally lying on the floor of the music master's room on a Saturday night,