

UNDERSTANDING CLASSICAL MUSIC

Report by Ian Royston – March 2025

I regret to have to report the death of the Group's convenor, Bill Heyes who passed away on Friday 4th April after a short illness. Bill possessed both enthusiasm for and an encyclopaedic knowledge of Classical Music and led the Group from its formation right up to the end of 2024. Bill had already suggested a programme for 2025 which the Group intends to follow. He will be sadly missed.

In March we continued with Howard Goodall's BBC Series on The History of Music, the second episode being entitled 'The Age of Invention'. The period 1650 – 1750 was the one in which the very rules of classical music were established and those rules codified. Advances in science and technology, particularly in mathematics and the measurement of time were reflected in much greater precision of the musical form. The establishment of the even-tempered scale has attuned all western ears for more than three centuries. History does not record if J S Bach was a good mathematician yet the complexity of many of his fugues cannot be explained without it. Einstein was said to be an admirer.

The period also saw a massive upgrade in music from the small, private chamber ensemble to the full orchestra with a myriad of instruments all capable of playing in tune with one another.

In the second part of the meeting, we saw Simon Callow visiting that most musical city, Vienna and explored the patronage of the Habsburgs in developing the classical form.

You do not need to be an expert on classical music to enjoy our sessions, even less so have any proficiency of any instrument. Just an ability to listen, enjoy and learn about classical music of all flavours.

The meetings are held on the fourth Friday at Startforth Morritt Memorial Community Centre starting at 10:00.