

## Striking the Right Note

A boy in a flat cap pushes his ancient bike up a steep cobbled street. On the front of the bike is a basket loaded with bread and in the background a brass band plays the opening bars of what was often described as “the Hovis tune”, i.e. Dvorak’s New World Symphony. No doubt designed to suggest a time when life was simpler and more wholesome, the brass band cleverly suggests a close knit community. The notion of freshly baked bread has always been a winner. I enjoy making bread myself and it is one of those things that has a touch of magic –as, with the help of the yeast, the dough grows and while baking produces a fragrance that everyone seems to like.

A motor bike and sidecar are driving along a country road when the two separate due to a faulty connection between them. This happens just as they are approaching a fork in the road, so they carry on down separate tracks. The driver is at first very concerned at the loss of his passenger but then takes out a pack of cigars and on lighting one, feels instantly fine and totally relaxed. The answer to a calm and happy life is apparently a Hamlet cigar! If only it were that simple! The music that conveys this message so well is Bach’s Air on a G String.

Humourist Frank Muir is seen apparently fishing beside a river and eating from a bar of chocolate. There follow various brief scenes of people doing things that need energy – tossing the caber, blowing up an air bed, punting, horse riding, canoeing etc. The message is that this particular chocolate bar will “keep you going”. The lines of the jingle have all been set to the tune of “The Dance of the Mirlitons” from Tchaikovsky’s “Nutcracker”.

Groups of people dressed from head to toe in red, white or blue gradually form the shapes of eyes, nose, mouth and ears. They move in a sort of dance to make a complete face which we can see as the camera hovers high above different sorts of terrain. They start to move and mix as the camera, this time at ground level, shows us happy

reunions, hugs and smiles. We are told that British Airways brings many people together. During this curious piece of choreography a soprano duet is playing. It is “The Flower Duet” from the opera “Lakme” written by Leo Delibes in 1883 and set in what was then British India. There is a wonderful spoof of this piece on YouTube where two superb operatic sopranos sing the duet, taking on the role of disenchanted air stewardesses, all the while smiling and tolerating their passengers and their sometimes challenging behaviour. It is hilarious.

I can't help but wonder what the composers would think about the way that their music has been used in these adverts – amused? horrified? puzzled? pleased that the music is still played? We'll never know.

Jan Rees    May 2021