

Smith's Academy Informer

Founded in 1985 by John and Margery Styles

A quarterly journal with information about all Westbrook projects, tours and recordings.

No. 83

April 2009

The Music Goes On...And On...And On...

It has been a season of sadness and reflection at Smith's Academy. In March the first anniversary of **Margery Styles'** death was marked by the release of the album *Fine 'n Yellow*. Dedicated to the memory of Margery and her husband John, the CD, funded by a bequest in Margery's will, has been published in a private edition and sent to family, friends, Informees and kindred spirits.

In December came the shocking news of the death of **Adrian Mitchell**, poet, playwright, friend and long-time collaborator, especially with regard to the **William Blake** project. The performance of *Glad Day* at St. Paul's Covent Garden, the Actor's Church, on May 14th is dedicated to Adrian's memory.

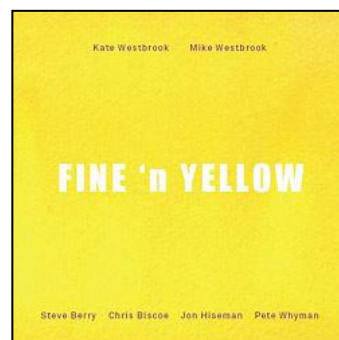
More recently the jazz community suffered the loss of one of its most distinguished figures, trumpeter **Ian Carr**, composer, bandleader, educator and true man of jazz. Ian was also a valued writer and commentator, and we at Smith's Academy have good reason to be grateful for his generous support of our work.

A glance at the diary will show that our students are starting to get out and about again, after a long dark winter. First off the mark is the **Kate Westbrook, Mike Westbrook Duo**, with a new album and a trip to Switzerland. Following December's successful revival at Toynbee Hall, **Glad Day**, the Choral Version, is to be heard in London and Wavendon. We look forward to the premiere of **Michael Finnissy's** new work, with Kate Westbrook as one of the two soloists, at Wilton's Music Hall. **The Village Band** is getting back in harness in the South West, preparing among other things, for the long-awaited repeat of **English Soup**. Meanwhile the re-surfacing of **Off Abbey Road** gathers momentum over the summer, including as return to Willisau, the Swiss Festival at which the *Enja* album was recorded over twenty years ago.

There is sadness at Smith's Academy. Dear, familiar faces are absent from our gatherings, as time continues to take its toll among friends, Informees, fellow musicians and contemporaries. We cannot afford to lose such people. Yet there is work to be done, and we know that the best testimony we can make to their memory, and the one that they themselves would wish, is to do our utmost to ensure that, in the words of the concluding song on *Fine 'n Yellow* "The Music Goes On..and On...and On..."

The Dean

Record News



Fine 'n Yellow the album dedicated to the memory of **John and Margery Styles**, commissioned by the Margery Styles estate, was completed in March,

published in a limited edition and circulated in time for the first anniversary of Margery's death. With text by **Kate Westbrook**, music by **Mike Westbrook**, the album was produced by **Jon Hiseman** and recorded at his Temple Music Studios, scene of so many Westbrook recordings. The musicians involved are **Steve Berry** on bass, **Chris Biscoe** and **Pete Whyman**, saxophones and clarinets, Jon himself on drums, Kate on vocals and Mike, piano and keyboards.

For full information and programme notes on *Fine 'n Yellow* please see:

<http://tinyurl.com/chldft>

Pending a possible commercial release of *Fine 'n Yellow* later in the year, copies of the first edition CD are available for sale. For purchase details see:

<http://tinyurl.com/cl8s8u>



a l l s o r t s a new album by the **Kate Westbrook Mike Westbrook Duo**, draws together songs recorded over a twenty year period with **Jon Hiseman** in his

Sutton studio. Of the fifteen tracks, all but one are previously unissued performances.

They include songs by **Harold Arlen, Leiber and Stoller, Kurt Weill, Cole Porter, Friedrich Hollaender, Billy Strayhorn** and others, as well as Blake settings and other Westbrook originals.

For a detailed album note, please see: <http://tinyurl.com/d4mfnu>

Released by **Steve Plews'** asc label (asc cd 112) the **a l l s o r t s** album is available for sale exclusively online from the Westbrook website. For purchase details please see: <http://tinyurl.com/cqfvov>

Westbrook Records

In addition to **Fine 'n Yellow** and **a l l s o r t s** a selection of other Westbrook albums is now available online from Westbrook Records at westbrookjazz. For full catalogue and information about how to buy the CDs please see: <http://tinyurl.com/chh6ad>

Adrian Mitchell 1932-2008



On December 6th Adrian Mitchell came with his wife Celia, daughter Sasha, granddaughter Lola and Mike Kustow to Toynbee Hall for Glad Day. The mood in the bar afterwards was full of joy and affection. As always after a Blake gig there

was that sense of having been through a

deep emotional journey, and come through on the other side. Glad Day owes its origin to Adrian's Tyger, staged by the National Theatre in the West End in 1971, for which I wrote the music (a life and career changing moment for which I am eternally indebted to Adrian). As with our version, Tyger begins with 'London Song', and ends with 'The Fields', 'I See thy Form' and Blake's exhortation "England, Awake! Awake!" In between, the show proceeds through what Adrian called 'a cranky panto'- from comic sketches, lampoons of the Arts establishment and risqué songs that had to be smuggled past Lord Olivier, to political protest and tragedy. The first act culminates with an account of slavery and torture in Surinam and ends with 'Let The Slave'.

Act two begins with a spoof history of English Poetry, including a pistol packin', word-sliding Willy Shakespeare, and an Elvis-like Bad Lord Byron fronting The Romantic Revival. Music-Hall gags jostle with savage images of oppression. In a scene set in Belfast, English troops in riot gear turn their guns on the audience. Finally the theatre fills with Blake's transforming vision.

Soon after the run of Tyger, Phil Minton, Kate and I started performing the Blake songs with the Brass Band. Adrian often came to concerts and at one point suggested the addition of 'Long John Brown'. When he wrote the TV version of Tyger called Glad Day, for Thames, our band participated, with Jonathan Pryce as Blake, and Zoe Wanamaker as his wife, Kate. With a characteristic mix of strong images, passion and slapstick, Adrian was as ever pushing at the boundaries of acceptable taste. In one scene Mr and Mrs Blake and the musicians cavort naked in the Garden of Eden.

Other collaborations with Adrian followed. Sometime along the way I wrote songs for, and the band toured with, Adrian's re-telling of Robinson Crusoe from Man Friday's standpoint. One day during the early '70s, when Kate and I were particularly broke, Adrian phoned with the good news that Peter O'Toole had bought the film rights to Man Friday. The bad news was that O'Toole had cut all the songs. Visions of Hollywood-style riches rapidly faded. You can't win them all.

Adrian, like us, suffered many bruising encounters with the mainstream Arts establishment. But he kept coming back for more. I am proud that he enlisted my musical assistance on many of his schemes, one was

Mowgli's Jungle, a children's show based on Kipling's Jungle Book, in which Adrian couldn't resist another dig at the English. On a grander scale was White Suit Blues, based on the writings of Mark Twain and his "adventures in the afterlife". One of my favourite sequences is the fence-painting scene that evokes Mark Twain's childhood in Hannibal, Missouri. This was a joy to write music for. The show is full of good jokes at the expense of anything from Jane Austen to the Beach Boys, and of course the English. But the dominant theme is that of loss and bereavement, for Mark Twain suffered the cruel deaths of his wife and three of his children, and unleashed a bitter and withering tirade against the God that let such things happen.

Adrian campaigned ceaselessly for justice and for peace. He was acutely aware of the cruelty and suffering in the world. His response was to work with ever more energy and commitment. Hope and despair, anger and tenderness, were channelled into his writing. His passion came through strongly in his readings, for Adrian was a brilliant stand-up poet. - something I first became aware of in the Jazz and Poetry rallies of the 1960s.

He believed in making poetry work for its living. When we spoke on the phone from time to time he was always off somewhere, full of plans and enthusiasm, especially when the project involved children. Increasingly, it seems, writing for and working with kids was his greatest joy.

Adrian loved William Blake, and his own life and work embodied many Blakean virtues. It is hard to reconcile Adrian's utter rejection of Christianity with the knowledge that Blake was a believing Christian, albeit a dissenting one.

God or no God, Adrian gives us a happy ending to White Suit Blues. Mark Twain is joined by Huck and Jim and his lost family on a raft drifting down the wide Mississippi. Adrian's instruction for the music was "swinging, anti-spiritual but in Gospel style." But I think he knew that it's not possible to use the Lord's music against Him. God or no God, he wanted the show to go out on one of those uplifting Pop anthems, and that's what I tried to write. Through the magic of theatre, music and poetry he could perhaps suspend his disbelief and allow us, in the words of that final song, to go on "Flowin' down the river. Flowin' on for ever."

A fortnight after that evening last December at Toynbee Hall, when Adrian seemed to have shaken off recent illness, and was in great form, came the shocking news that he had died. One of the leading lights of my generation has gone out; it's going to be a darker place without him. Rest in Peace.

Mike Westbrook

The performance of Glad Day at St. Paul's, Covent Garden on May 14th is dedicated to the memory of Adrian Mitchell.

Other Roads

A chance encounter enlivened a rather dull drive round west London the other week, on reaching the end of a CD, I tuned to Radio 3 in the hope of some aural stimulation and was treated to I See Thy Form from The Westbrook Blake. The director, actor and producer **Peter Kosminsky** (of Britz fame) was revealing his Private Passions to **Michael Berkeley** and spoke with enthusiasm about the Westbrooks, **Phil Minton**, and his wedding in Salisbury at which Phil performed.

But it's another Radio 3 broadcast I intended to write about. In SAI 82 we reported on Mike Westbrook's appearance on Radio 3's Jazz Library. The Listener Feedback programme gives the opportunity to hear things that weren't included in the original broadcasts, and suggested additions to the Westbrook library included Love, Dream & Variations (1976) and Marching Song (1969). As the former is not currently available we were treated to Memorial, the conclusion of Marching Song, where brass band pomp is juxtaposed with the screaming souls of the fallen. The Westbrooks have addressed the subject of war since with greater depth and subtlety, such as in the setting **Siegfried Sassoon's** Blighters (London Bridge is Broken Down) which was included in the original programme. Nevertheless there is a directness and power in this early work that the intervening years haven't diminished.

At the dawn of the 70s jazz in Britain was developing in new directions. Westbrook along with other luminaries **Neil Ardley** and **Graham Collier**, was at the forefront of this movement. For the first time the music was finding its own voice rather than imitating the American model. Some recent CD releases are shedding more light on this seminal era.

A concert by Neil Ardley's New Jazz Orchestra Camden 1970 (Dusk CD105) has been issued for the first time. Propelled by **Jon Hiseman's** powerhouse drumming this 17-piece band exhibits a stellar line-up of players tackling colourful and intricate scores and revelling in the new contexts for improvising that this music encouraged. The inclusion in its ranks of Hiseman's bluesy Colosseum provided a new twist to the swing era 'band within a band' tradition.

In a smaller group context Graham Collier was also exploring the relationships between composition and improvisation, and it's good to see Down Another Road available again. Its reissue (available as an import CD or as a download) reaffirms Collier's role in creating music that speaks to the head and the heart and, like Westbrook's groups, his bands nurtured talents that went on to make major impacts. The title track takes the blues changes through a series of time signatures while managing to sound completely natural. Indeed, with **John Marshall's** drumming, it really rocks. Smith's Academy students will have no difficulty in recognising **Harry Beckett** – he was playing in Westbrook's Metropolis orchestra around this time, and more recently has worked with **Chris Biscoe**. The young **Stan Sultzman** is heard laying the foundations of his cool, elegant style that has graced numerous groups from **Karen Street** to **Gwilym Simcock**. **Karl Jenkins** is here too, soloing on oboe and comping on piano, before he went on to join Nucleus, Soft Machine, then topping the classical music charts as one of our most successful composers.

Jerry Hat Trick

Up 'n' Coming

Forthcoming events at a glance

Kate Westbrook Mike Westbrook Duo

Allsorts album launch

April 30 Lucerne, Musik Forum

May 1 –5 Lucerne, Rose d'Or

May 6 Zurich, Cabaret Voltaire

GLAD DAY the choral version

Phil Minton, Kate Westbrook, Karen Street, Billy Thompson, Steve Berry, Mike Westbrook, Chamber Choir.

May 14 London, St. Paul's, Covent Garden

June 28 Wavendon, Music in the Garden

Kate Westbrook with Ixion

premiere of Michael Finnissy's the Transgressive Gospel

June 12 London, Wilton's Music Hall

The Village Band

Mike Brewer, Kate Westbrook, Sam Smith, Stan Willis, Gary Bayley, Mike Westbrook.

May 23 Dawlish, St. Gregory's Church

June 3 Torquay, Speakeasy Jazz

July 23 Teignmouth, Carlton Theatre "English Soup"

Aug 1 Ealing Jazz Festival

OFF ABBEY ROAD

John Winfield, Kate Westbrook, Brian Godding, Andy Grappy, Richard Newby, Mike Westbrook, Pete Whyman, Alan Wakeman.

August 16 London, Canary Wharf

August 27 Willisau Festival

October 7 Cambridge Junction 2 Theatre

Full details on Mike's Diary Page:

<http://tinyurl.com/cpc8ku>

& Kate's Diary page:

<http://tinyurl.com/cal8m2>

Smith's Academy Informer is now published quarterly as a free online only version and is also emailed directly to subscribers in Adobe Acrobat PDF format also for free. It can also be downloaded in the same format from westbrookjazz.

<http://www.westbrookjazz.co.uk/sai/sai.shtml>

Contributions are welcome and should be emailed to the Editor: **Martin King**, email: platterback@yahoo.co.uk

Westbrook website: www.westbrookjazz.co.uk

email: admin@westbrookjazz.co.uk