

THE THIRD AGE TRUST



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

U3A Jazz Appreciation Network

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Newsletter 1/17

Hi Music lovers,

Time for my last Newsletter. You may remember that in my previous Newsletter I asked for possible successors to step forward. I have been filling this role for about seven years now and I feel that someone else should have a go. An old boss of mine reckoned that nobody should be in the same job for more than three years. You spent year one identifying the problems and year two in dealing with them. By year three, you'd run out of ideas. I accept that business practice does not always read across into voluntary work – but there is something in what he said.

Well, a volunteer has stepped forward. He is Mike Rance, who leads the very successful Fleet U3A jazz appreciation group. He also runs the local jazz club, and is thus eminently well qualified to take on the role of U3A National Jazz Adviser. So, please, go to your address books and note that:-

The U3A National Subject Adviser for Jazz, from now on is MIKE RANCE – contact email: michaelrance71@gmail.com .

Jazz-wise, there is good news and bad news. The good news is that I do keep hearing about new jazz appreciation groups. I am delighted to hear of more 'playing' groups and I am particularly delighted at the success of Janet Webb's 'virtual' Blues group. The 'virtual group' could be the way forward for those isolated jazz lovers who would like to exchange ideas and indulge in those 'have you heard this?' conversations that we all enjoy. The beauty of jazz is its infinite variety; even those of us who have been listening since the age of 10 can come across hitherto undiscovered gems.

The bad news is the number of jazz appreciation groups that are folding because no new leader can be found. I have had a number of messages about this recently; the present convenor feels it's time for a change but no-one else will take on the task, and so the group collapses. I am not privy to why this happens – I just get the message – but I am guessing that maybe the leader has done everything. He (she)'s chosen the topics, chosen and played the music, possibly provided the venue. I'm not sure that that's a good model. I prefer a model where the group, collectively, agrees the year's programme, members volunteer to present topics (ideally of their own suggestion) and (if it's a home-based group) provide the venue. That way

they're using their own audio equipment. This model only works, of course, with those small, home-based groups with 10 or 12 members. The bigger ones, like Mike Rance's at Fleet or Mike Stevens's at Epsom & Ewell are, as the late lamented BBC breakfast presenter Ray Moore used to say, 'a horse of a different feather'.

Another sermon I love to preach is 'support live music'. Again, the bigger groups can and do bring musicians to their meetings. There's nothing stopping smaller U3A groups going out to attend gigs in their town's theatre or local pub. If you want to know what's on, sign up to <https://jazzinlondon.live/> if you're in London and the South East. Outside London, subscribe to the listings magazine <http://www.thejazzguide.co.uk/> . It may be great listening to recordings of the masters of the past but do try to get out and hear what jazz musicians are doing now.

On the subject of keeping up with what's going on, don't forget that splendid on-line jazz magazine www.sandybrownjazz.co.uk. I know I've persuaded a number of you to subscribe (it's an internet 'subscribe' – i.e. it's free). Once a month into your inbox pops a magazine full of articles, record reviews and quizzes, truly a cornucopia of jazz-related topics. The editor, Ian Maund, is presently looking for one or two people to assist with record reviews. The recordings are of modern and contemporary jazz and no...sorry...you don't get paid. But you do get to hear musicians you would not otherwise come across. If you are interested, contact Ian by email - ian@sandybrownjazz.co.uk

Earlier, I mentioned 'playing' groups. Well, here's another. I got this email only a week or so ago. It's from Jean Clift of Sevenoaks U3A. She says :-

We are a small band - Drums, Double Bass, Piano, Saxophone and Singer. We meet weekly for practice and have the occasional gig. I am the piano player. We would be interested in making contact with other bands, and it would be a great day out if there was an opportunity for a jam session!

Do get in touch with Jean - jeanclift@btinternet.com

Well, that's my lot. Do keep on listening to, exploring and enjoying jazz. And remember that it is constantly developing, altering, mutating. As the great trombonist J J Johnson said: "Jazz is restless. It won't stay put and it never will."

All the best

Mike Whitaker