Family Tribute

Jane Clark Dodgson memorial

St Mary's Barnes, 2pm, 20th October 2026

Jane Osborn Dodgson, née Clark

"I want to play the trumpet!" Jane announced, aged just 3 years old to her mother, Ruth Clark, who dutifully went straight out and bought Jane a plastic toy trumpet from Woolworths. This determined expression and dynamic activity is perhaps what those alongside dear Jane over her extensive working life, will remember most. The ever-diligent tenacity, supported by a dignified duty and obligation to 'the cause', which for her was indeed the world music and all that it offers us.

Childhood fun came in recollections of bikes and boats with her younger brother Simon; with whom she cycled to France for an adventurous teenage holiday, and learnt how to row in true Swallows and Amazon-style in a Welsh harbour over the long summer holiday weeks, 'just messing about on the river'. Jane's fondness for the land of Suffolk, home growing up, was often told in stories of the postman, games out in the street played with the local children, and making friends with robins wherever she was.

As a young and forthright woman, Jane travelled to Paris to study the harpsichord under a stern Russian lady. There, she also learned to speak French a skill that later supported honeymooning and plentiful holidaying in France, and eventually became a great help in her research and writing on the Baroque composer, Francois Couperin. An enduring memory of student life in Paris, was soaking up the Parisian atmosphere before class with a hot coffee and sumptuous croissant in a café over the way from her 'digs', people-watching to her heart's content.

Pragmatism, a quality that Jane perhaps most revered, guided her to take the sage advice of a tutor at The Guildhall and on completion of her Performance Diploma (late 1940s), she was prompted to focus on teaching for career stability. "You're only as good as your last concert", was a phrase Jane often recounted when encouraging others to put their heart and soul into the next project, and with a healthy dose of "couragio!" as a topping.

Whilst studying, Jane landed a job playing the piano for a Spanish folk dancing troupe, a job she adored. Destiny thus played its hand, as it was these happy times that led her to understand where Domenico Scarlatti's famous compositions took their ground and inspiration from; the sounds, rhythms and atmosphere of Andalusian folk music. This paved the way for her arduous work as a music historian, overturning one of the biggest secrets of royal history from the Baroque period – that Lord Burlington of Chiswick House was in fact a clandestine Jacobite, bringing the art history world of that time to its knees. She fought on the field of academia while, in her own estimation never before knowing what a footnote was. Many who know the Jane of this work would agree that she, above all, didn't suffer fools gladly!

Before meeting Stephen Dodgson, Jane “loathed modern music”. However, in 1959 just three months after their first tea at her mother’s home in Suffolk, the couple were engaged, seemingly destined for a life of music and deep companionship. As one family member puts it, “they were married to each other and to music, and to all their shared loves… gardening, history, travelling, people, film and theatre, quirky jokes, hearty laughter and French crockery!”

Known as Jane Clark on the harpsichord scene, she maintained the pioneering manner her blue-stocking mother had modelled, and was one of the first teachers of Morley College’s Harpsichord course in the 1950s. Jane was instrumental in this field. Her love of the 17th century French composer Francois Couperin, led to a building request for a Goujon replica double-manual harpsichord made by the Felberg-Whale Workshop in the 1970s. Due to her commission, the building of these instruments fundamentally changed to a historically-informed approach, lasting to this day.

It was, however, Jane’s founding of Janiculum her chamber music group in 1982 that perhaps gave her musical heart its most affectionate note. Singers and musicians of this era still remark on just how much they loved performing in those concerts, and the wonderful music that she dug deep to retrieve and retell for their exposés in grand houses, palatial manors and even palaces around the UK. Jane’s elegance, resourcefulness and energy to bring together “these amazing concerts”, not to mention “the delicious lunches”, was an ongoing success story. Noteably, their album *Handel’s Rivals***,** won a ‘Best of the Year’ award from International Record Review.

In 2002, almost from inception, Jane becoming a long-standing committee member of the British Harpsichord Society at which point she was already 74! Her work on Couperin, was also published for the first time that year, and now in its 3rd edition has become a scholarly handbook and inspiration for many a Couperin student and musician.

And to our local neighbourhood and dear Barnes community – some of whom have known #4 Scarth Rd’s owners and inhabitants for nigh on 40-50 years.

Locally, Jane and Stepehen will be most lovingly remembered for the soup-kitchens for neighbourhood women, veg-patch competitions, bread-making, wine-tasting, balls flying backwards and forwards across garden walls, choruses of loud hand-clapping, jocular laughter and croquet in the garden. In essence the authentic neighbourhood community spirit that they sustained for their duration at #4 Scarth Road; and the variety of grateful lodgers, both friends and family, who for over 50 years have found bed and bread in its bear-hugging arms.

And as we all know, Jane did indeed “make friends with” contemporary classical music. She is most recently remembered for honouring Stephen’s prolific musical output. As the initiator and driving force behind the charitable trust that now celebrates, shares and records his work, perhaps only an April-born Aries would have had the drive to *begin* this project aged 87.

It is with diligence, humour, pragmatism and, ‘en fin’ no-fuss poignance that our dear Jane remains in heart and mind. Her own true faith grounded deeply in the church of music, and its capacity to unite people in harmony and the rhythm of peace. Thus, drawing to a close in Jane's own departing words, uttered so very recently as she valiantly moved toward that final moment... "Music and go!"