

4th January 2011 – Ronald Corp 60th Birthday
Full Works concert on Classic FM

And you know, 2011 is starting to feel like an old friend already. Now it's back to business as usual after the New Year celebrations. I'm Jane Jones but I am determined to keep the party spirit alive tonight by celebrating... a birthday! Composer and conductor, writer and educator, Ronald Corp is 60 today and knowing tonight's *Full Works* concert is dedicated to him, many of Ron's friends and colleagues from the New London Orchestra have been in touch to share in our good wishes and congratulations. Ronald Corp has introduced thousands to music, particularly youngsters through the choirs he founded and through his many songs and compositions and he continues to inspire a generation of singers. [However] it's as a conductor that he is best known, thanks to his tireless championing of little known nineteenth and twentieth century works, and that's what I want to concentrate on tonight, after this glittering party piece from Lehár.

Lehár: *The Gold and Silver Waltz* with The New London Orchestra

Finishing up with a drum-roll for the birthday boy, Ronald Corp who is 60 today. And there, Ron with the orchestra he founded: the New London Orchestra playing the music which helped make Lehár famous, *The Gold and Silver Waltz*. Now, since their first concert in January of 1988, Ronald and his orchestra have gone on to pioneer the music of less well-known composers. They have developed exciting education projects, particularly in London's East End and recorded a host of well-received CD's featuring light music classics, and I'll dip into that collection tonight beginning with this serenade. It comes from Eric Coates and it's a 1930s composition called *By the Sleepy Lagoon*, made famous as the theme tune for the long-running radio series *Desert Island Discs*.

Coates: *By the Sleepy Lagoon* with the New London Orchestra

By the Sleepy Lagoon. The music of Eric Coates with the New London Orchestra conducted by Ronald Corp, and more from Ronald's New London Orchestra to come on Classic FM... During his successful musical career Ronald has been invited to work with many leading orchestras, and on this next recording he conducts the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra in the music of another highly successful conductor and composer, Gabriel Pierné. As a student at the Paris Conservatoire in the 1880s, Pierné won just about every prize going including the highly coveted *Prix de Rome*. His prize gave him the chance to study in Italy for four years and he adored his stay in Rome which is where he composed this piano concerto.

Pierné: Piano Concerto No.1 with BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

Well I mark down that one as a bit of a discovery. It's the music of Gabriel Pierné and it's the Piano Concerto in C minor featuring pianist Stephen Coombs with Ronald Corp conducting the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. And given the success of Pierné's music in his lifetime, the neglect suffered by his music since his death, I have to say, seems a little baffling, but then that makes him the perfect choice for Ronald Corp's mission to breathe new life into forgotten works, just like that one. Still to come on tonight's *Full Works* concert on Classic FM, a glow-worm and a haunted ballroom...

And I'm Jane Jones, celebrating the 60th Birthday of conductor and composer Ronald Corp tonight. He has become best known for his recordings of light music from the last 100 years or so. So let's hear his New London Orchestra with music from a man who was at the heart of the musical life of the times in both Paris and Berlin, at the Folies Bergère and the Apollo Theatre, Paul Lincke. Here's the piece that became a famous showpiece for the ballerina, Anna Pavlova.

Paul Lincke: *The Glow-Worm Idyll* with the New London Orchestra

Well, it was originally part of an operetta composed for the Berlin Apollo. The *Glow-Worm Idyll* was later orchestrated as a stand-alone concert piece and it was then that it acquired its second title of the 'Gavotte Pavlova'. Let's stay with the dance theme with Ronald Corp and his New London Orchestra – but I'm not sure if you'd really want to, as we are in a haunted ballroom...

Geoffrey Toye: *The Haunted Ballroom* with the NLO

And that's music composed for another ballerina, this time Ninette de Valois, and it was composed by the Winchester-born composer and conductor, Geoffrey Toye. He composed music for two ballets choreographed by Dame Ninette with the Waltz from one of them, *The Haunted Ballroom*, which was the one I've just played, and it became a big hit. As well as breathing new life into these light music classics, Ron Corp has also been involved with film and TV music in his long career. For the Johnny Depp film, *Chocolat*, he was asked to arrange the music of Eric Satie and this is the result.

Eric Satie: *Trois Gymnopédies* arranged by Ronald Corp with NLO

For those who find Satie's piano pieces too stark, maybe too minimalist, that's the perfect way to enjoy his music. Orchestrated by Ronald Corp, who conducted his New London Orchestra with

Satie's *Three Gymnopédies*. Before I pick some less familiar names from the light music genre in which the orchestra excels, let's hear a seasonal favourite in this from a name you'll know. The skaters are off on the ice, testing the frozen water, gliding effortlessly until the sleigh arrives and you listen out for the bells...

Émile Waldteufel: *Les Patineurs*

Celebrating his birthday today and a landmark one at that, the conductor Ronald Corp, 60 today, so – Happy Birthday, Ron! He was dancing around to that one, I hope! *Les Patineurs*, The Skaters Waltz, by Émile Waldteufel, no doubt inspired by the terrible Parisian winters of the 1870s when the Seine froze completely...

And I'm Jane Jones celebrating Ron Corp's 60th Birthday tonight with music which he has hoped to popularise: light music classics from across Europe. These were the hits of their day, many of them making the transfer from opera to ballroom and becoming popular dance favourites. Some composers were inspired by the dance masters of old, including Oscar Fetrás who was crazy about the music of Johann Strauss. In real life, Fetrás was the conductor, Otto Fester, who took his love of all-things-Strauss to such an extent he even dressed like his idol! This is his big hit: *Moonlight on the Alster*.

Oscar Fetrás: *Moonlight on the Alster*

Moonlight on the Alster by Oscar Fetrás, played by the New London Orchestra with Ronald Corp. And it's back to Britain for this next piece on Classic FM although it owes a great deal to the Parisian style of the French capital before the First World War. It's a composition by the Derby-born musician and conductor, Percy Fletcher, who also orchestrated some of the most successful and long-running London theatre shows of the early 20th Century. This is one of two orchestral sketches – a swirling, exhilarating waltz.

Percy Fletcher: *Bal Masqué*

Percy Fletcher's *Bal Masqué* with the New London Orchestra conducted by Ronald Corp who has spent much of his musical life working with young musicians. He founded the New London Children's Choir in 1991, for instance, with the aim of introducing children to the challenges and the fun of singing music of all sorts. So it's no surprise that Ron should be drawn to the music of Prokofiev composed for children. By the time he came up with his *Summer Day Suite*, Prokofiev had decided to settle in Soviet Russia and he had two children of his own. In the mid-1930s he composed pieces simple enough for children to play, and then in 1941 decided

to orchestrate some of those pieces, giving the works an over-all new title in the process. This is it, *Summer Day*:

Sergei Prokofiev: *Summer Day Suite*

Prokofiev's idyllic music for children, the *Summer Day Suite*, with the New London Orchestra conducted by Ronald Corp. Now this next piece comes from Italy, and it's a 'semi-waltz' which took more than sixty years to find fame in 50s Britain...

Becucci: *My Treasure! (Tesoro mio!)*

It's a piece which became known as 'Waltzing the Hours Away'. *My Treasure!* played by the New London Orchestra with conductor, founder and Artistic Director, Ronald Corp, who turns sixty today and who has revitalised interest in this repertoire that previously remained unplayed, unrecorded and unregarded for decades, even if some of the tunes themselves are firmly lodged in the public consciousness – tunes like this:

Victor Herbert: *March of the Toys*

It is Victor Herbert's *March of the Toys* played by the New London Orchestra and it rounds off birthday celebrations for Ronald Corp. Happy Birthday, Ron, from all of us here at Classic FM!