

PROMOTION

One day, a long time ago, the phone rang.

"Is that - John Barnett?"

"Yes" said I, still a lowly quasi-student in the 1950s.

"This is Ursula" said the voice at the other end of the line.

Ursula Jones ran the English Chamber Orchestra and was important!

"Charlie (Mackerras) is doing some odd arrangement of Handel's Water Music for Decca and we need lots of Oboes. Are you free next Thursday?"

"Yes" said I without even looking at my diary.

"Good" she said, "Then come along to St Giles Church Willesden. OK?"

"But,- But,- what time?" said I.

"Oh" she said "about midnight".

Well, I had been used to late night trysts - but midnight?

It seems that that was the only possible time on that date one could obtain the services of TWENTY FOUR Oboes! (Of reasonable standing you understand.)

What a *séance* it was!

There on the front desk were my twin idols!

Terence (Terry) MacDonagh and Sidney (Jock) Sutcliffe.

Terry was as usual ultra serious and already practising the twiddly bits.

Jock, whose sides were always on the point of splitting with laughter was, in the presence of Terry, merely smiling!

"You'd better sit there" said Ursula, pointing to the twenty-first seat!

Well I was, in the presence of such an august company, more than satisfied.

There were as well, some others allowed into the *séance*.

Horns, Bassoons, Tympani, Trumpets - Librarians etc.

But the Oboes were the elite! What an incredible sound!

Well, we put that lot in the can and everybody felt quite satisfied. I mean it was money in the bank and anyway, nobody in their right mind expected such an arrangement to catch on. Who on earth had ever heard of twenty four Oboes playing anything?"

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"Is that John?" Said Ursula some months later.

"Yes" said I. "Is that Ursula?" I enquired.

"Yes" she said.

"We're at it again, this time for the BBC" she said.

"Can you come over to Maida Vale next week?" "Love to" said I.

When I got there Ursula said "I'm afraid so-and-so isn't coming. You'd better sit there" she said, pointing to an immensely important position which caused me to quake with fright.

I had been upped to nineteenth! Since then my Ego has never looked back.