

Twelve River RIPPLES

Members' Poems



When forests make music

the opening score is a sigh in the windless.
Serene on a poodle-pooffe cloudlet
she ushers her passion-wand baton.
Little owls cluster soprano on oboes.
Large ones hoot double reeded bassoons.
String instruments are trees, beech: cello, bass.
Oaks pluck heart-render from violins, violas.
Sycamores, hornbeam, alders, elm
mood swing from creaking boughs.
Ashes with dieback sing from hospital wards.
Birds play brass to piccolo. Mice keep time.
Woodlice wonder, hedgehogs, adder. Badger.
Birches rustle majors, blink silvery leaves.
Triangles splash in the forest lake.
The sun rifts harp through branches
and dark horizons rumble distant drums.
Minors are seldom heard of.
Kol Nidrei on Sundays.

Jacques Groen

Members' Poems cont.

And all that's Jazz

And all that's Jazz
Takes you
Places
Unexpected spaces
Moving moods
To tranquility or apogee
Unknown avenues
Ancient Oaks
Tenors, altos alternating
Sfumato shading
Black keys being blue
Be-bop being
Sometimes comprehending
A haunting horn on a summer's night
A snare's rich ricochet
A walking fretless bass
Scat scattered
Gently swinging
Cornets, not for eating
Quavers quivering
Lonely bars
In three four time
And all that's
Jazz

Hugh Lake

Members' Poems cont.

My Father's Bass

It was always in the corner of the family room,
a tall, voluptuous figure of shiny brown
topped with the curled tail of a seahorse,
leaning lazily against the wall,
cocky and familiar as a family member,
patiently waiting for my father's hands
to pull it into his arms.

The two of them stood side by side like brothers,
twins joined together
for jazz and big band music practice.

Sometimes my father coaxed me
small and timid into the living room
as smoky and bright as a spotlighted stage,
guitars and lap steel guitar joining the bass,
his musician friends seated, smiling at me.

A quiet man, my father let the bass's deep voice
speak for him, the notes thumping
like an adrenaline-fuelled heartbeat,
his brown fingers thick and full of jazz
as they moved agilely along the strings
like a sculptor's hands working in clay,
creating invisible masterpieces that hung on the air
of those safe childhood evenings.

I hear my father when I hear jazz.
I listen for the bass and he's there.
It's as if his heart is still beating somewhere,
telling me he's still with me
if I will only just listen.

Kathryn de Leon

For a Ripple of Laughter

What's hip

There is a man in New Cross Gate, who's redefined what's hip.
To gaze over his stylish shades, he rests them on his upper lip.

I've never seen him wear them on his nose, where they're supposed
to sit. He wears them on his upper lip, everywhere he goes.

People do a double-take, noticing his cool black glasses
riding on his upper lip, like handlebar moustaches.

But his gaze is steadfast, challenging, as if to say
"If you weren't so anxious to conform, you too would try them this way.

I'm not trying to start a trend, I merely assert my right
to wear them between my nose and mouth - a snug fit, nice and tight".

So imagine my surprise, today, when queuing to buy a loaf of bread
I found his specs inspecting me, from the curly hair at the back of his head.

I didn't dare to ask him, why he'd made a change so unexpected
from forward-looking from his lip, to retrospectively dejected.

The lenses now were dusty - it was clear to me, that vanity
was not behind this radical change. I worried for his sanity.

It was Rachel who enlightened me. "He's a single Dad, she said.
The kid's just learnt to walk, so he's obliged to have eyes in the back of his head".

Now Rachel, she's a single Mum, so I guess she ought to know
but New Cross Gate's a sadder place, without his shades beneath his nose.

We can but hope, in years to come, when the kid's no more a nipper,
one sunny day, he'll walk out again, a proud hip upper-lipper.

Phil Baker