

Interview – Paul Wisdom

Summary

MW introduces. Asks PW if he plays any instruments other than duet concertina. PW states he has played the guitar in the past, with a fondness for the 12-string, and has dabbled with the mandolin. He particularly likes concertinas, having adopted it in recent years, saying they are portable. They are useful to play with morris dancing, as PW does, as you can play for the dancing and go to a session afterwards and only take one instrument with you. They are very practical. PW says he has only need of one, at which MW mentions that he now builds concertinas. PW says he is fascinated with their sound and design. He has built two or three and tries to achieve a reasonable standard. The one he has was a more affordable concertina and he has used it a lot – it is “due for an overhaul”. PW says he wanted to build the next one both to say that he’d built it and so he could take his current one in for repair and tweaking and also have a working instrument. He is finding building and tuning concertinas takes a lot of time and effort. Describes it as a work in progress. He is quite pleased with his most recent one so far. MW says PW has been involved in folk music in Norfolk and Suffolk for a number of years, PW agrees. PW says it started with an “epiphany” as a youngster. When he was at school in the 1970s, there were lots of concept albums around (Black Sabbath, Pink Floyd, Free). His friends at school were keen on those, he sort-of liked it but not as much. PW was given a guitar one day, which had cost £2 and had nylon strings. He learned to play it and tried to learn simple tunes and practise and was able to sing over it. He never progressed as much as he would have liked because he didn’t practise the licks and riffs but was more interested in it as a tool for accompaniment. He learned some finger picking and chords. The music he was drawn to was more suited to that sort of playing. The “epiphany moment” was due to albums by the band Renaissance (singer Annie Haslam) – *Song for All Seasons* was one. The music appealed to PW, heavily influenced by classical music, high quality production and playing. He says he could understand the music for the first time. Has erred toward the folk- side of music since then and away from rock. Took a guitar when travelling to USA and New Zealand when he was young, busking there provided a bit of an income. He played traditional tunes as the format was straightforward, he could practise while travelling and he liked the melodies. Some people, he says, think folk music is quite simplistic but he emphasised that what is not being played is as important as what is. MW says that PW does a lot of playing, especially now he is a morris dancer. PW describes himself as a “morris tart”, as he dances with several sides. Says he likes the dancing and the music. It is quite easy to play in the typical keys of morris tunes (G/D) and also to play in other keys in the sessions afterwards as the duet concertina is chromatic. The duet is not quite so good in terms of volume when compared with melodeons etc. but it is quite adaptable. PW perseveres with it because it is just one instrument in a small case that can be carried around. MW wraps up, PW thanks and wishes MW and EATMT well. He thinks that it is important that the music of this area continues. MW thanks.