



MAGIC LANTERN SOCIETY VIRTUAL SPRING MEETING

17 April 2021

Once again the Magic Lantern Society was only able to meet virtually for our Spring Meeting. However 63 people managed to join us, with Kathleen Campbell in New Zealand the furthest east and Ron Easterday in Washington State, USA, the furthest west (with honourable mentions for two members in California). One member managed to join us from a moving train! As for previous online meetings, a wonderful programme of pre-recorded items (all still available via the MLS website) was available shortly in advance of the 'live meeting' in the late afternoon (UK time). These were:

- *Catoetje* by Henk Boelmans Kranenburg. A song with a history about ... butter. Mainly 18th-century slides from the Magic Lantern Museum in Scheveningen, The Netherlands
- *One Man, Three Projectors* by Nicholas Hiley. Three cinema projectors from 1900, 1905 and 1910 on which cinema slides were shown – a rare treat as the projectors are too big to bring to normal meetings.
- *A Host of Angels* by Peter Gillies. Some beautiful slides, many dissolving pairs, featuring a rich array of angels.
- *The Volunteer Organist* by Andrew Gill. An exquisite version of this well-known set with the appropriate song accompaniment.
- *Some of My Favourite Finds* by Richard Rigby. Richard shows four folding or 'collapsible' lanterns – 1894 Walter Stocks, two 1897 W. Butcher Primus range and a 'mystery' lantern (W.C. Hughes, 1920s?)
- *The Loss of the Titanic* by Andrew Gill. A Bamforth gem from Andrew's collection, made and sold to raise funds for those affected by the tragedy, accompanied by the song 'Be British', as originally designed.

The 'live' meeting started with Martin Gilbert's stunning slide sequence *You Raise Me Up*, with brass band accompaniment, in tribute to recently-



Andrew Gill's *The Volunteer Organist*

deceased MLS members (see also p. 8), those lost in the pandemic and the late Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh.

Our Chair, Jeremy Brooker, suitably spring-like with floral background, then discussed the issues around the term 'pre-cinema' and showed an extraordinary panoramic slide of Polish artist Jan Styka's epic painting *Martyrdom of Christians in Nero's Circus* first exhibited in 1899.

THE MAGIC LANTERN is edited, designed and produced by Mary Ann Auckland and Gwen Sebus, assisted by Richard Crangle and George Auckland.

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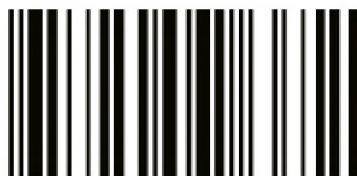
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Lester Smith then showed us his Kinora, a late model by the British Mutoscope & Biograph Company Ltd, and a reel of photographic images (about 640 per reel) that can be viewed through it. We saw three animated Kinora reels – Edison's *Fire in a Stable*,

the fire brigade attending a fire and the traffic (horses and carts, bicycles and buses) around Marble Arch. Lester's magic mirror was reluctant to perform so was kept for another day.

Next we had a fascinating conversation between Nicholas Hiley and Stephen Herbert. This ranged from their early experiences of magic lanterns (*top tip* – always explore sheds and attics) to projection experiences and the question of why there were so many models of magic lantern (in Stephen's view each had its own 'selling point' which may or may not have been useful). One topic they discussed was the importance of live performance. Giving collections to museums will preserve the objects but they may never be used again. We need to pass on the passion as well as the objects.

Darren King then showed us some of his porcelain lithophanes, a passion inspired over 30 years ago by his relation Mike Smith. Following a brief history from their probable invention by the Baron Paul de Bourgoing in 1826 to modern versions, Darren showed us some beautiful examples from his collection, mainly European but some English. Usually based on portraits and paintings, these included Napoleon, the Princes in the Tower, rural scenes and some angels. One rare example was a bathing machine night light.

Next Dick Moore presented the song set *Broken-Hearted Clown* composed in 1937 by London-based writers Art Noel and Don Pelosi. Dick's own set was sent to Dundee and used in the Queen's Cinema there, now demolished. However, an even sadder story was that of the Scottish singer on his record, Mary O'Rourke (1913-1964), who was persuaded by her impresario uncle to be 'Master Joe Peterson' for her whole professional life and died an alcoholic.

The meeting finished with an enchanting show from Austria – the LAO One Candle Theatre (an Austrian candle lit by Austrian matches!) with Felix Cikanek and Elli Jegel. After showing us the lantern Felix projected a slide that told the story of two children achieving totally ecologically-sound flight by using an air pump.

Jeremy thanked Martin Gilbert, Frog Morris, Richard Crangle, Monique Wezenberg and George Auckland for their front-of-house and behind-the-scenes work in running the meeting.



Dick Moore's *Broken-Hearted Clown*



Felix Cikanek and Elli Jegel – LAO One Candle Theatre