Ministère de la culture et de la communication

Concours réservé « loi Sauvadet » pour l'accès au corps de conservateur du patrimoine, spécialités « archéologie », « monuments historiques et inventaire » et « musées », organisé au titre de l'année 2015

SESSION 2015

Épreuve orale d'admission n°2 : épreuve d'anglais

3 octobre 2016

La seconde épreuve d'admission consiste en une conversation dans une langue vivante étrangère à partir d'un texte.
La langue vivante étrangère faisant l'objet de cette épreuve est choisie par le candidat lors de l'inscription parmi les langues suivantes: allemand, anglais, arabe, chinois, espagnol, italien, japonais, russe, portugais, polonais.
(Préparation de l'épreuve : 30 minutes ; durée de l'épreuve : 30 minutes ; coefficient 1).

Avertissement :

- avant de commencer, vérifiez que le sujet qui vous a été remis comporte toutes les questions ; signalez aux surveillants tout de suite les anomalies éventuelles (page manquante, page illisible...).

Ce document comporte 2 pages au total.

SUJET n°3

Their humble servant

George Martin, record producer, died on March 8th, aged 90

THE first thing that struck George Martin, when the four young men strolled into his studio at EMI on Abbey Road in 1962, was that they looked quite clean. That came as a relief. Their demo tape, frankly, had not impressed him: badly balanced, and obviously recorded in a back room somewhere. Some sort of raw energy in it, hard to define, was all that had led him to bring them down from Liverpool.

The Beatles, on their side, were equally surprised. They knew him as the producer behind the Goons, Peter Sellers's crazy spoofs, and Flanders & Swann of "Mud, mud, glorious mud". This posh-looking man (though, in fact, the son of a carpenter), with tailored clothes and the clipped voice of a kind headmaster, was not what they expected. But a liking for silly jokes bound them instantly. And Mr Martin soon found that, though he might perch on his high stool with "the boys" obediently gathered round to sing, it was they who were the masters, and he the servant.

This arrangement did not trouble him. As the young and eccentric head of the struggling Parlophone label, he had stumbled on genius, and now his job was gently to encourage and record it. He himself, he stressed, had no brilliance. He was a Jack-of-all-trades, "averagely good" at a number of things, who happened to have perfect pitch and a decent pair of ears. As a child he had taught himself the piano, but was never that good. At the Guildhall he learned the oboe, at which he was workmanlike. For Parlophone he began on the rather despised light-music-and-classical side. He was in love with sound but, though devoted to Bach and in awe of Ravel's orchestration, he found pop music offered him more chances to experiment and create. Arranging and recording it was like painting with an infinite palette of colours.

His time with the Beatles, which lasted from their first single, "Love Me Do" (1962) to their last album, "Abbey Road" (1969), tested his ingenuity to the limit. He began, in mono, by tidying up the beginnings and ends of songs; in five years, on "Sergeant Pepper", he was employing in stereo almost every instrument of the orchestra, and dubbing one four-track machine on another not once, but twice. For "Strawberry Fields Forever" he spliced together two takes at different tempi in different keys; for "Tomorrow Never Knows" he brought in eight loops of sounds played backwards; soon he was getting the engineer to cut a tape in bits, toss them in the air and reassemble them. Technology could barely keep pace with the whims of his charges.

Nor, sometimes, could he. It was up to him to interpret the boys' mumbles and "dooby-doops"—"something like this, George"—as instrumental sections, whether a string quartet ("Yesterday"), a Lowrey organ ("Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"), or a piccolo trumpet ("Penny Lane"). On "A Day in the Life" he brought in a 41-piece orchestra in black tie to make a *glissando* that went, as John wanted, "from nothing to the end of the world".

He refused to claim much credit for all this. Talk of him as the "fifth Beatle" he thought ridiculous. So were suggestions that he should share the composition honours on the record labels with Lennon and McCartney. After a while, the words "Produced by George Martin" appeared there, a first for the industry, but he went no further. Because, when all was said, he only arranged: he could never have found those notes, or written those songs.

Where he defended himself more forcefully was over his pay. Though the Beatles were soon earning millions for EMI, he was stuck on £3,000 a year, and when he failed to secure more than one-fifth of 1% of the royalties he left, in 1965, to set up his own Air Studios in London and the Caribbean. The Beatles stayed with EMI but demanded that he should still record them, because he was their friend. So he remained, firmly, despite ups and downs caused by drugs and pushy girlfriends. Tactfully, he said nothing about either, and the result of their giggly dope-taking was, to his unfogged mind, music that melted into new shapes like the paintings of Salvador Dalí. Only twice did he impose himself: at the start, insisting that they replace Pete Best as their drummer, and at the end, when he agreed to record "Abbey Road" if they stopped fighting.

Slightly out of tune

Their chief effect on him was to make him, too, famous and in great demand. Fame he didn't want; he was happy to be their interpreter, and the platinum and gold records were consigned to the loo. Demand he welcomed. In the early 1960s he took on Gerry and the Pacemakers and Cilla Black; in 1963, records produced by him were at number one for 37 weeks out of the 52. Later, when Air was set up, he recorded Shirley Bassey, Celine Dion, Elton John and Jeff Beck. He stopped, in the late 1990s, only because his hearing was beginning to decay.

There was no George Martin sound to put beside the lushness of Burt Bacharach or the massed grandiosity of Phil Spector. At most, a few likings marked him out. For the natural vibrato and slight out-of-tuneness of the human voice; for the quirky resonances of different instruments; for the indefinable "something" of the old four-track machine and the U47 valve-operated microphone; for wit and freshness, and for the unimpeded flowering of talent under his unseen hands. ■