

Following the Thread

Avon Song

Patchwork of Life

Fading Memories

MotorKhana - Carnival Waltz

Penny Post Blues

Ephemera

Avon Song

It has been a great pleasure to be part of this year's Fringe February. My task was to put together a piece that reflects the beautiful exhibition by Bath Textile Artists, inspired by objects and pictures from the Don Little Collection housed by Chippenham Museum.

In early February I spent a morning, viewing the exhibition, and had three weeks to write and prepare for the performance of a piece of music which I hope does justice to the art works. I have experimented, for the first time, with a loop recorder to build harmonies and layers of texture into the music; another enjoyable and interesting challenge!

A map of Chippenham, from the collection, shows the River Avon looping and threading its way through the town. I've called my piece **Following the Thread** and it begins and ends with a short section of music entitled **Avon Song**. In it you will hear seagulls as they wheel high above the town and join their voices with those of the river.

I then organised the art works into five groups, each represented by its own section of music.

Patchwork of Life is a patchwork of musical themes: a medieval carol "**Down in Yon Forest**" hints at the ancient forest of Chippenham with its two prominent medieval families, represented by the Chippenham crest and depicted on the delightful set of ceramic ornaments collected by Don Little; an old folk song, "**The Barley Mow**" takes up the themes of jugs, drinking and community life; representing new Chippenham I have written two new themes: one that might put you in mind of a TV Soap such as *Hollyoaks*, and another something young children might hear on CBBC.

Fading Memories is a lament for all caught up in war. The cello uses the harmonics of the G string to play *The Last Post*. Each phrase is answered by a corresponding and contrasting one, deeper in the cello's register, using double stops and low plucked notes to represent painful emotions that have to be put aside in order to survive a crisis. Such feelings form an important part of our collective memory - they are potent and should not be neglected.

MotorKhana is about movement and mechanisms: The Railway; the Westinghouse Signal and Brake Factory; the athletics field and sporting events. It also contains a **Carnival Waltz**, complete with vintage car horn.

The section of pictures about the postal system caused me the most difficulty until I hit upon the idea of writing a **Penny Post Blues**. I thought about what Don Little might write in a holiday postcard, to send to his family in Chippenham, and this song emerged!

Finally, for **Ephemera** I imagined a slow dream-like sequence. I used the speech rhythms of the names *Don Little* and *Chippenham* to create a simple melody. Ephemera celebrates the hundreds of little things that Don cherished and collected, so that we too may know and cherish the history of the town he loved so much.

Cressida Nash Chippenham, February 2021