

Our Recorder Group ... and a possible u3a "National Anthem"?

Over half of our 28-strong Recorder Group serenaded members at the 20th Anniversary July meeting. Members helped enthusiastically with sound effects for the "Wellerman" Shanty, and appreciated the playing of Parry's "Jerusalem", which has of course been the "National Anthem" for Women's Institute groups nationwide for the past century, [linking back to the Suffrage Movement](#). This stirring song unites WI members... why does the u3a movement not have anything comparable?

At our 20th Anniversary meeting our Recorder Group also played the great Mancini hit "Moon River". Could this be a worthy contender for a u3a "National Song"? It is stuffed full of meanings and metaphors relevant to the aims, ethos and experiences of being a u3a member ... If you are intrigued by this possibility, read on!

["Moon River"](#), first heard sung by Audrey Hepburn in 1961 in the film "Breakfast at Tiffany's", just pre-dates the 1972 formation of the "University of the Third Age" by Prof. Pierre Vellas, which has since metamorphosed into the "u3a" we now know.

- The lyrics, by Johnny Mercer, reflect his longing to expand his horizons – very much an aim of the u3a movement
- The lyrics hold many [key meanings](#) and metaphors for many of us, within an overall design to be a gentle, romantic and somewhat melancholic reflection on connecting with others whilst wandering through life... Does this strike a chord with you?
- The "Moon River" is a metaphor for our unpredictable life journey, which can be both a "dream maker" and "heart breaker".
- "crossing it in style" – how many of us at least hope to retain some elegance, style whilst facing the huge challenges of life?
- "Wider than a mile" refers again to the vast challenges that can often face us

- “Two drifters off to see the world” to me suggests the sense of desire to find adventure, new interests, lifelong friendships and partners, again very much within the u3a ethos
- “Wherever you’re going, I’m going your way”... we are swept along by the current of life, with little control over where the river carries us
- “My Huckleberry friend” relates back to the nostalgia and innocence of our childhood, to a time of simpler and carefree friendships

“Moon River” has gained a host of awards “Record of the year”, “Song of the year” “Best Original song” and more. By happy coincidence, sales of the sheet music, around 1 million, are roughly equal to the number of UK citizens that have (or had) held u3a membership. That said, the Chinese, with their larger population, currently have over [seven million](#) active members! Then again, their rivers dwarf ours!

I’d suggest we all have another listen to this lovely gentle, romantic and reflective song and think what the lyrics mean to each of us. For recorder group players, this can only mean we play the piece even better!

Rik Ludlow

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