

The Archers: join the virtual orchestra

By Jessica Duchen

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BBC Terry Molloy and Rachel Atkins of 'The Archers'

Play an instrument? Love The Archers? Then this is for you: the BBC's Light Fantastic Festival, featuring "light music", is inviting everyone who strums to take part in a special online recording of that famous theme tune. You record your part in the comfort of your own home; then everybody is brought together via cyberspace to form a virtual orchestra. Admittedly, The Archers is something you either love or you don't, and I've been gently rapped over the

knuckles for suggesting they might instead have picked Eric Coates's "Sleepy Lagoon", aka Desert Island Discs (I quite fancied doing the seagull noises). It's The Archers' 60th anniversary, and that's a good enough excuse to stick with it.

The music for The Archers is entitled "Barwick Green" – not Ambridge at all – and it was written by Arthur Wood (1875-1953), who would no doubt be a very happy chappy if he knew that his composition was still ringing out from radios up and down the country after 60 years. Or that so many people would refuse to answer the telephone during any half-hour slot that it frames.

To take part, log on to the BBC Radio 3 website and watch the BBC Concert Orchestra's expert rendition of the piece. Then take in the conductor Gavin Sutherland's explanation. Next, look on the site for the right part for your instrument, download it and get practising. When you're happy with your prowess, record it to your computer, using Sutherland's online-conducting video to keep in time. Finally, upload it. Then along come those clever people who'll gather up everyone's contributions and put them together to make a new recording of "Barwick Green". The deadline is 13 June.

Light Fantastic (www.bbc.co.uk/radio3/classical/lightfantastic/wood_barwickgreen.shtml) is at the Southbank Centre, London SE1 (0844 847 9910) from 24 to 27 June