

Inside view

Comment on recent news and developments, by Keith Clarke

Please Do Not Adjust Your Set

Noel Coward has always been near the top of my list of great philosophers, and during this endless dark episode a line from *Shadow Play* keeps popping up. You can put your own cut-glass accent on it: 'Grab it while you can – grab every scrap of happiness while you can'. So with Coward in mind, at a time when good-news stories are pretty thin on the ground, let's hear 88 hearty cheers for pianist Margaret Fingerhut.

Last year she set out on an unorthodox piano recital tour, playing a recital programme at 32 venues across the UK to raise money and awareness for refugees. The plan was to net £1,000 for each of the keys of the grand piano. As a descendant of refugees she had become increasingly concerned about hostility towards refugees, and wanted to try and do something about it.

The 32 recitals served their purpose, but the target was just out of reach. Then came lockdown, so not much chance of putting on a few more concerts. Not one to be thwarted,

Fingerhut organised a grand finale by way of a livestream. It was a brave venture and a hard drive meltdown on the afternoon of the concert did not do much for anyone's blood pressure. But with a late start, and just time to prepare a 'Please Do Not Adjust Your Set' card, she took to cyberspace with singer/songwriter Sam Slatcher, Syrian viola player Raghad Haddad, violinist Peter Fisher and the Kurdish composer and oud player Arian Hu, all playing their hearts out for what they called 'Let Us Be Together', which is also the title of a song by Sam Slatcher that they all played at the end.

The happy ending was that with donations for the livestream, the elusive target of £88,000 was reached – 'all the more desperately needed since the government's announcement that they would only increase their allowance by a derisory 26p per day,' says Fingerhut.