

# JAZZ & BLUES MUSIC

## RAGTIME

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### BATS IN THE BELFRY

CT8 United Kingdom 1935

#### **BATS IN THE BELFRY**

JZ – Ragtime – Instrumental

**Comp:** Austin CROOM-JOHNSON & Billy MAYERL

**Perf:** Billy **MAYERL** (harpsichord)

Austin **CROOM-JOHNSON** (piano)

**Prod. Co:** Columbia Graphophone Co. Ltd.; London

**Matrix:** CA 15199

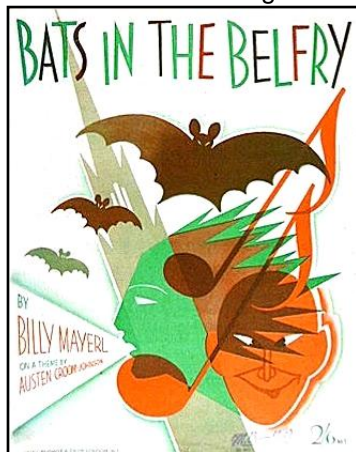
**Time:** 3:12

1. Original **78:** Columbia FB 1115

**Flip Sd:** Greens Tulips  
10" 78rpm

2. Reissue on Compilation **CD:** BILLY MAYERL – ORIGINAL RECORDINGS – VOL. 2 (1934-1946) (2003)  
Naxos (?) (Tk 4)

**Notes:** The title here works on two levels, both shown on the Art-Deco style illustration used for the sheet music. On the first degree it talks of bats living in the church belfry but on the second degree level it is the common expression indicating someone who is a little crazy in the head, not all there.



The music is very difficult to classify, Billy Mayerl was "a kind of English Scott Joplin of the novelty rag." Neither an art music composer nor a jazz musician his piano pieces "include novelties deriving from ragtime (like this one) as well as pieces of a more lyrical cast." (Dickinson 1990) Some qualify his music as Light music.

Johnson wrote the opening theme and Mayerl did the rest. Both men recorded the piece as duets on piano and harpsichord. (Lane 1994) Mayerl played the "harpsichord, an instrument he considered to be admirably suited to rhythmic treatment." (Dickinson 1990)

Billy Mayerl's music is very much of its time. He was extremely popular in the 1930s and in a time when more people played the piano, everyone wanted to play like he did. He was a student at London's Trinity College of Music when as a teenager he claimed to have invented his own style of

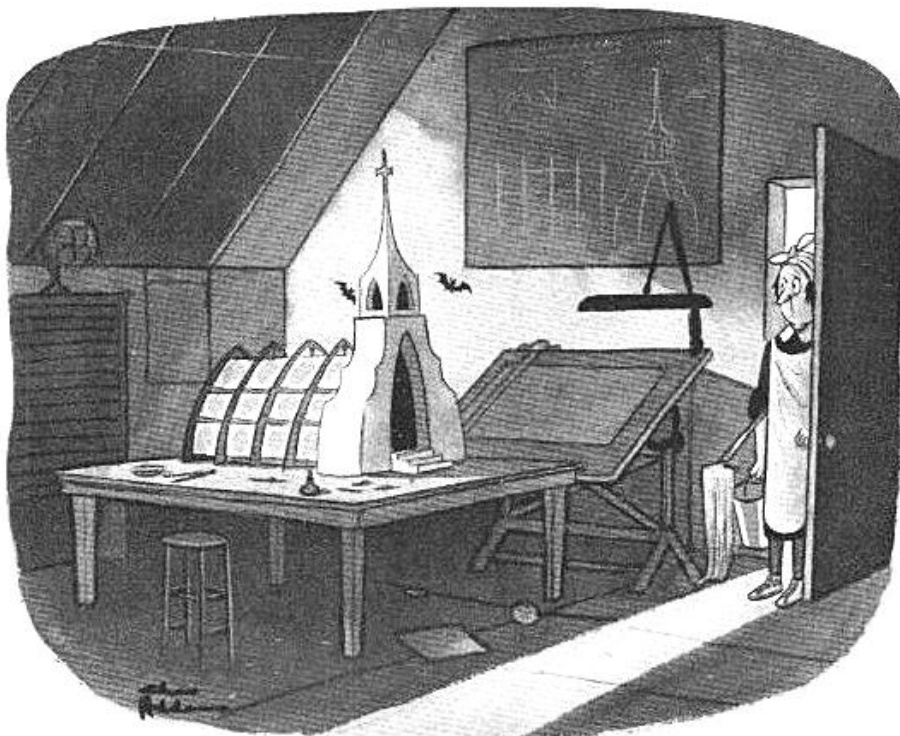
syncopated jazz music. He became famous through BBC radio broadcasts which in those days were of course live. A prolific composer of light music mainly for the piano, he was an extraordinary pianist with strong technique, as is evident from his recordings of which there are fortunately many.

"He wrote *Bats in the Belfry* based on an idea by Austen Croom-Johnson. I like it for his imaginative use of syncopation. You can hear a restored audio recording of the composers playing a duet version of this on ade425mxy channel. It is interesting to note they don't play it as written but place many of the written syncopations on the beat." (Pianosteve n.d.)

**Ref:** Billy Mayerl, Bio, [Wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billy_Mayerl)



Billy Mayerl – Original Recordings – Vol. 2 (1934-1946), [Apple](#)  
 Dickinson, Peter, Liner Notes for CD "Bats In the Belfry," Chandos Records, p. 4  
 Dyson, Phillip 2002, Centennial of Billy Mayerl, [musicweb-international](#)  
 Hearth, Michael n.d., The Music, The Billy Mayerl Society, pdf Document, p. 4, [google.fr](#)  
 Lane, Philip, Liner Notes for CD "British Light Music," Marco Polo, p. 5  
 Pianosteve n.d.; Billy Mayerl 1935 Bats in the Belfry, Comments, [foofind](#)  
 Pianosteve 2014, (Not by Billy Mayerl), Bats in the Belfry (2:46), [YouTube](#) (◀COMPLETE AUDIO SAMPLE)  
 Ragtime, Definition, [Wikipedia](#)



Charles Addams – *The New Yorker* - 1959

CT9 United Kingdom 1990

## BATS IN THE BELFRY

JZ – Ragtime – Instrumental

**Comp:** Austin CROOM-JOHNSON & Billy MAYERL

**Perf:** Eric **PARKIN** (piano)

**Prod:** Tim Oldham

**Prod. Co:** Chandos Records Ltd.; Colchester, Essex

**Rec. Location:** St. Jude's Church; Central Square, London NW11

**Rec. Date:** Nov. 23 & 24 1989

**Liner Notes:** (8-page booklet) Peter Dickinson

**Time:** 1:53

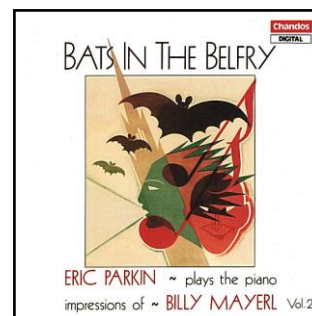
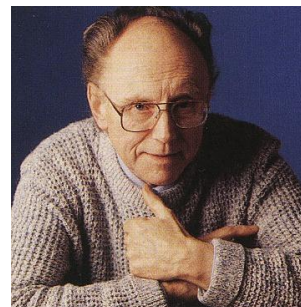
1. **CD:** BATS IN THE BELFRY – IMPRESSIONS OF BILLY MAYERL – VOL.2

Chandos CHAN 8848 (Tk 10)

2. Reissue on Compilation **CD:** THE PIANO MUSIC OF BILLY MAYERL (2005)

Chandos 10324 (3XCDs) (Disc 2 – Tk 8)

**Notes:** Another lively performance of the piece. The photo of Eric Parkin is by Hanya Chlala.



The CD cover design here is based on original sheet music Art-Deco style cover.

**Ref:** Bats in the Belfry CD, [Amazon](#)

Bats in the Belfry – Eric Parkin Plays the Piano Impressions of Billy Mayerl –  
Vol. 2 CD, [rateyourmusic](#)

Eric Parkin, Piano, Bio, [bach-cantatas](#)

Eric Parkin, The Piano Music of Billy Mayerl CD, [Allmusic](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)

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**CT10** Germany 1994

## **BATS IN THE BELFRY**

Light – Ragtime – Instrumental

**Comp:** Austin CROOM-JOHNSON & Billy MAYERL

**Arr:** George Windeatt

**Rts:** EMI Music Ltd.

**Perf:** Andrew **BALL** (piano)

**Orch:** Slovak Radio Symphony Orchestra, Bratislava

**Cond:** Gary Carpenter

**Prod:** Murray Khouri

**Prod. Co:** HNH International Ltd.

**Liner Notes:** (8-page booklet) Philip Lane

**Time:** 2:47

CD: BRITISH LIGHT MUSIC – BILLY MAYERL (1994)

Marco Polo 8.223514 (Tk 14)

**Notes:** A full symphony orchestral treatment of Mayerl and Croom-Johnson's composition.

Hard to call this jazz, more properly it's British Light music as the album title says, but the ragtime piano is there.

**Ref:** Andrew Ball, Piano, Bio, [hampshire](#)

British Light Music – Billy Mayerl CD, [Amazon](#) (◀AUDIO SAMPLE)



[caveinspiredmusic.com](http://caveinspiredmusic.com)