

# MARCH 2024 – IN REVIEW

## Friendly Street Poets –

I have joined an association called [Friendly Street Poets](#). The main events of the association are the monthly open-microphone meetings. If you wish to recite a poem or poems you've written, then you are given three minutes at the microphone. I joined during February, and on Monday, 4<sup>th</sup> March, I attended my first recital. I read my poem "[The Raven and the Crow](#)", a little ditty imagining a raven and a crow debating whether 'zero' was a valid number. This was still an issue in Europe as late as the sixteenth century. Mathematics in the West had been firmly grounded in counting things and measuring things – 'zero' meant that there was nothing there, so was zero a valid number!?

## Counting "Carbs" –

Part of the vicious cycle associated with my peripheral neuropathy has been a steady weight gain. In late 2023, I was prescribed the much talked about drug semaglutide, better known by one of its brand names, "Ozempic". Ozempic was hard to find, and, since prescription for weight loss is "off-label", it was expensive.

After several months of using Ozempic, I found that there was an obvious effect on my weight: it started to exponentially increase!!! Well, that phenomenon it appears is usually due to "insulin resistance". A fasting blood test revealed elevated insulin levels and elevated glucose levels, and so sure enough I am insulin resistant. Critically, the glycated haemoglobin was within normal range. This gives an indication of how much sugar has been in the blood over the previous few months, and the reading is used to diagnose diabetes.

Although I am therefore not diabetic, they do give me the label 'pre-diabetic' and encourage me to lose weight. I am now condemned to a "low-carb" diet. I haven't dare ask, but I suspect it's a life sentence. I have lost 5kg in four weeks, but that I suspect was "low hanging fruit" and I think my weight is plateauing at 106kg, way above my "goal weight" of 90kg. I find the diet to be horrid. 🤢

## An Evening with the Adelaide Symphony Orchestra –

The ASO concert on Saturday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, "Horizons", had a program of marked contrasts. The concert started with a pleasant Felix Mendelssohn piece, '*Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*', and then the magnificent First Violin Concerto of Max Bruch (soloist Emily Sun, conductor Shiyeon Sung).

During the interval, first Chris Reid and then Denise Martin, two senior administration people from my days at Flinders University, came up to say hello. Two lovely and very competent people from my time at the asylum.

After the interval, the program changed gear very much into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sofia Gubaidulina (born 1931) was a Soviet composer, who wrote '*Märchenpoem (Fairytale Poem)*' in 1971. Her works became known in the West from the 1980s, but I wish she had stayed lost in the Russian steppes. I found the piece to be irritating noise.

The French composer Claude Debussy (1862–1918) is regarded as one of the first “impressionist” composers, although I hear that he did not like this term. However, one can see the reason for this epithet in his 1905 composition ‘*La mer (The Sea)*’, a three-movement piece that does evoke the different moods of the sea.

### **Late Heat Wave –**

In South Australia, autumn officially begins on 1<sup>st</sup> March. Despite the summer having been an extra day longer due to the Leap Year, Adelaide had had a fairly mild summer. There had been remarkable weather events on both the east and the west of the continent, but here in the south we just sat in the middle.

Late in the day on Tuesday, 5<sup>th</sup> March, our two-year-old ducted, inverter air conditioning system suddenly stopped working. It was quickly determined that the circuit breaker in the electrical box in the garage had tripped. Every time we turned it back on, the circuit breaker flipped off again. This was alarming, since it suggested a serious electrical issue with the machine and not just an in-built sensor shutting down due to an overheated unit, say.

A couple of days later, the temperature steadily rose and by the weekend we sweltered in daily maxima over 40 degrees! 🤯 The air conditioner was well and truly still under warranty, but the manufacturer could only arrange a qualified local technician for Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> March. 😬 Surprise, surprise, the technician found a toasted electrical motherboard and a spare part was ordered. On Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> March, the new part had finally arrived (from somewhere in central Asia it would seem), was installed, and everything worked fine again. Twenty days from problem to fix!! And by then the weather was mild again. The repairs were covered under warranty, but we had the expense of the hire of two portable air conditioner units for three weeks!

### **Wicked Little Letters –**

Easter Day was the last day of March, and Nam and I treated ourselves to a trip to the cinema to see “Wicked Little Letters”, starring Olivia Colman and Jessie Buckley. It was a delightful black comedy, but if you are upset by the use of profanities than maybe this one is not for you!