

2009

- 50 years ago, on **January 1, 1959** President Fulgencio Battista y Zaldivar of Cuba resigned and fled to the Dominican Republic. The Cuban General Staff ordered a cease fire throughout the country. Rebels entered Santiago.
- 50 years ago, on **January 2, 1959**, the first Soviet space probe, *Daydream*, was launched toward the moon. It was the first man-made object to escape the gravity of Earth.
- 50 years ago, on **January 3, 1959**, Alaska became the 49th state of the United States.
- 50 years ago, on **January 5, 1959**, two new works of John Cage (46) were performed for the first time, in Rome: *Aria* for solo voice, and *Fontana Mix* for tape.
- 50 years ago, on **January 8, 1959**, Charles de Gaulle took office as the first president of the Fifth French Republic.
- 100 years ago, on **January 9, 1909**, Ernest Shackleton and his expedition reached to within 160 km of the South Pole and established a furthest south at 88° 23'S.
- 100 years ago, on **January 9, 1909**, the first flight in a heavier-than-air craft in the British Empire took place when Douglas McCurdy flew nine meters above Bras d'Or Lake at Baddeck, Nova Scotia at 65 kph. 150 townspeople, including all the school children, witnessed the event.
- 100 years ago, on **January 9, 1909**, Maurice Ravel's (33) piano work *Gaspard de la nuit* was performed for the first time, at the Salle Erard, Paris.
- 250 years ago, on **January 15, 1759**, the British Museum opened to the public in Montague House, London.
- 100 years ago, on **January 15, 1909**, three members of the Shackleton expedition, Douglas Mawson, Edgeworth David and Alistair Mackay, became the first humans to stand at the South Magnetic Pole.
- 150 years ago, on **January 22, 1859**, Piano Concerto no.1 by Johannes Brahms (25) was performed for the first time, in the Royal Theater, Hanover, the composer at the piano.
- 100 years ago, on **January 25, 1909**, *Elektra* op.58, an opera by Richard Strauss (44) to words of Hofmannsthal, was performed for the first time, at the Dresden Court Opera.
- 50 years ago, on **January 25, 1959**, Pope John XXIII announced a call for the Second Vatican Council.
- 200 years ago, on **February 3, 1809** Felix Mendelssohn was born in Hamburg, the second of four children born to Abraham Mendelssohn, a banker, himself the son of the enlightenment philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, and Lea Solomon, daughter of the Prussian court jeweler and granddaughter of Daniel Itzig, a financial advisor to King Friedrich II of Prussia and one of the most affluent citizens of Berlin.
- 100 years ago, on **February 6, 1909**, *Scherzo fantastique* op.3 for orchestra by Igor Stravinsky (26) was performed for the first time, in St. Petersburg.
- 200 years ago, on **February 8, 1809**, fearful of an attack by Napoléon, Emperor Franz of Austria and the Imperial Council decided to resume war against France.
- 100 years ago, on **February 9, 1909**, the fourth book of the piano suite *Iberia* by Isaac Albéniz (48) was performed for the first time, at the Salon d'Automne, Paris.
- 200 years ago, on **February 11, 1809**, Robert Fulton received a patent for his steamboat.
- 150 years ago, on **February 14, 1859**, Oregon became the 33rd state of the United States.

150 years ago, on **February 16, 1859**, following the recommendation of a commission he appointed in 1858, the French Minister of the Interior proclaimed that the universal pitch, called “diapason normal”, would be 870 vps at 15° C. (A435).

150 years ago, on **February 17, 1859**, after several title changes and struggles with censors, *Un ballo in maschera*, a melodramma by Giuseppe Verdi (45) to words of Somma after Scribe, was performed for the first time, at Teatro Apollo, Rome.

50 years ago, on **February 17, 1959**, *Vanguard II*, the first weather satellite, was launched by the US from Cape Canaveral.

200 years ago, on **February 20, 1809**, after two months of siege and battle, the Spanish defenders of Zaragoza surrender to the French. Approximately 54,000 people died in the siege and fighting.

50 years ago, on **February 20, 1959**, the Columbia-Princeton Electronic Music Center came into existence with the beginning of a grant of \$175,000 to the two universities. The directors were Otto Luening (58) and Vladimir Ussachevsky (47) at Columbia, and Milton Babbitt (42) and Roger Sessions (62) at Princeton.

100 years ago, on **February 22, 1909**, *In the Fen Country* for orchestra by Ralph Vaughan Williams (36) was performed for the first time, in Queen’s Hall, London.

50 years ago, on **February 23, 1959**, the European Court of Human Rights convened for the first time, in Strasbourg.

250 years ago, on **February 28, 1759**, Pope Clement XIII granted permission for the Bible to be translated into the languages of all Catholic countries.

50 years ago, on **March 1, 1959**, Archbishop Makarios returned to Cyprus after three years of exile imposed by the British.

50 years ago, on **March 2, 1959**, Miles Davis recorded the first of two sessions for *Kind of Blue*.

200 years ago, on **March 4, 1809**, James Madison replaced Thomas Jefferson as President of the United States.

100 years ago, on **March 4, 1909**, William Howard Taft replaced Theodore Roosevelt as President of the United States.

200 years ago, on **March 7, 1809**, Johann Georg Albrechtsberger died in Vienna, aged 73 years, one month and four days.

50 years ago, on **March 9, 1959**, the Barbie Doll was first exhibited in New York.

150 years ago, on **March 12, 1859**, the prelude to *Tristan und Isolde* by Richard Wagner (45) was performed for the first time, in Prague, conducted by Hans von Bülow.

50 years ago, on **March 17, 1959**, Tibetans revolted against Chinese rule as the Dalai Lama escaped Lhasa.

150 years ago, on **March 19, 1859**, *Faust*, an opéra dialogué by Charles Gounod (40) to words of Barbier and Carré after Goethe, was performed for the first time, at the Théâtre-Lyrique, Paris.

150 years ago, on **March 28, 1859**, *Serenade in D* op.11 by Johannes Brahms (25) was performed for the first time, in the version for small orchestra, in the Wörmerscher Saal, Hamburg.

50 years ago, on **March 28, 1959**, Prime Minister Chou En-lai of China ordered the dissolution of the Tibetan government and its replacement by a committee headed by the Panchen Lama.

100 years ago, on **March 31, 1909**, Gustav Mahler (48) conducted the New York Philharmonic Orchestra for the first time, in Carnegie Hall.

100 years ago, on **April 2, 1909**, a scheduled performance of Richard Strauss’ (44) opera *Salome* in Boston was banned by Mayor Hibbard.

150 years ago, on **April 4, 1859**, Daniel D. Emmet, together with Bryant’s Minstrels, performed his newly composed song “Dixie” for the first time, at Mechanics Hall, New York City.

100 years ago, on **April 6, 1909**, Robert Peary, Matthew Henson, Coqueeh, Ootah, Eginwah and Seegloo and several dogs were the first living beings in recorded history to reach the North Pole. (Many people now believe that Peary did not reach the Pole)

100 years ago, on **April 9, 1909**, the first wireless transmission of the human voice took place when Enrico Caruso's singing was broadcast from the Metropolitan Opera House, New York, to the home of Lee de Forest. Mr. de Forest invented the Audion, a three-element vacuum tube which made radio possible.

250 years ago, on **April 14, 1759**, George Frideric Handel died at his home in Brook Street, London, aged 74 years, one month and 22 days.

250 years ago, on **April 20, 1759**, the mortal remains of George Frideric Handel were laid to rest in the south transept of Westminster Abbey.

150 years ago, on **April 20, 1859**, Volume I of *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens was published.

250 years ago, on **April 21, 1759**, the French defenders of Guadeloupe surrender to the invading British.

200 years ago, on **April 23, 1809**, after four days of furious fighting with the French, Austrian forces retreated north of the Danube at Ratisbon (Regensburg).

150 years ago, on **April 25, 1859**, the official groundbreaking for the Suez Canal took place in Port Said.

100 years ago, on **April 25, 1909**, Young Turk troops arrived in Adana and resumed the massacre of Armenians. 2,000 Armenians were killed.

50 years ago, on **April 25, 1959** The St. Lawrence Seaway is opened to shipping, joining the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean.

100 years ago, on **April 27, 1909**, Sultan Abdulhamid II of the Ottoman Empire was overthrown by unanimous vote of both houses of Parliament and succeeded by his brother Mehmed V.

150 years ago, on **April 29, 1859**, Austrian forces crossed the River Ticino and invaded Sardinian territory.

100 years ago, on **May 1, 1909**, *The Isle of the Dead*, a symphonic poem by Sergei Rakhmaninov (36), was performed for the first time, in Moscow, conducted by the composer.

150 years ago, on **May 3, 1859**, in response to the Austrian attack on its ally Sardinia, France declared war on Austria.

200 years ago, on **May 4, 1809**, the Austrian royal family evacuated Vienna, including Beethoven's (38) patron Archduke Rudolph. The composer penned the first movement of the piano sonata op.81a "Les adieux" at the occasion.

200 years ago, on **May 12, 1809**, French forces outside Vienna began to bombard the city. It lasted all night. Directly in the line of fire is the house of Ludwig van Beethoven (38). Fortunately, the composer escaped the shelling, either to the house of his brother Caspar Carl or that of the poet Ignaz Franz Castelli. Four shells exploded near the home of Franz Joseph Haydn (77), one blowing open the door to his bedroom. He was shocked but physically unhurt. The building housing the Imperial and Royal City Seminary was hit by a shell. Fortunately, none of the students, including Franz Schubert (12), are injured.

200 years ago, on **May 13, 1809**, French troops occupied Vienna.

200 years ago, on **May 17, 1809**, Emperor Napoléon signed a decree in Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna annexing the Papal States, abolishing the temporal power of the Papacy and ordering the imprisonment of Pope Pius VII at Savona.

100 years ago, on **May 18, 1909**, Isaac Manuel Francisco Albéniz died at Cambô-les-Bains of Bright's Disease, aged 48 years, eleven months and 19 days.

50 years ago, on **May 21, 1959**, *Gypsy*, a musical by Arthur Laurents, Jule Styne and Stephen Sondheim, opened at the Broadway Theater, New York.

50 years ago, on **May 28, 1959**, two monkeys, Able and Baker, become the first Earth beings to travel into space and return alive. They are sent 500 km up from Cape Canaveral and are recovered 90 minutes later off Antigua.

200 years ago, on **May 31, 1809**, Franz Joseph Haydn died at his house in Gumpendorf, Vienna, aged 77 years and two months.

200 years ago, on **June 1, 1809**, the earthly remains of Franz Joseph Haydn were taken in an oaken coffin to Gumpendorff Church, carried around the church three times, blessed and then taken to Hundsturm Cemetery where they were laid to rest.

150 years ago, on **June 4, 1859**, a joint Franco-Sardinian force defeated the Austrians at Magenta, opening the road to Milan. The victory so cheers the French that Parisian dressmakers applied the name of the battle to a new shade of red.

200 years ago, on **June 8, 1809**, the first ocean-going steamboat, the *Phoenix*, left New York for Philadelphia.

150 years ago, on **June 8, 1859**, Emperor Napoleon III and King Vittorio Emanuele entered Milan amidst great cheering and excitement, while French and Sardinian forces captured Parma from the Austrians.

200 years ago, on **June 11, 1809**, Pope Pius VII excommunicated Emperor Napoléon.

50 years ago, on **June 11, 1959**, the first hovercraft designed by Christopher Cockerell was tested by Saunders-Roe, Ltd. near the Isle of Wight.

50 years ago, on **June 11, 1959**, Postmaster General Arthur E. Summerfield banned *Lady Chatterley's Lover* from the United States Mail saying it "is an obscene and filthy work."

150 years ago, on **June 17, 1859**, Parma and Piacenza came under the administration of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

150 years ago, on **June 24, 1859**, in the largest battle in Europe since the Battle of Leipzig in 1813, French and Sardinian forces fought the Austrians to an inconclusive result at Solferino, 30 km west of Verona. Many of the 40,000 casualties died due to poor medical treatment. The battle was witnessed by Swiss businessman Henri Dunant who was spurred to action by the horrific scene. He went on to found the International Committee of the Red Cross.

50 years ago, on **June 26, 1959**, Queen Elizabeth II and President Dwight Eisenhower dedicated the St. Lawrence Seaway at St. Lambert, Quebec.

150 years ago, on **July 5, 1859**, Capt. N.C. Brooks, aboard the Hawaiian bark *Gambia*, discovered the Midway Islands in the name of the United States.

200 years ago, on **July 6, 1809**, in retaliation for the excommunication of June 11, French troops arrested Pope Pius VII and conveyed him to Grenoble.

200 years ago, on **July 6, 1809**, after two days of fighting at Wagram, the Austrians were forced to retreat but the French were too exhausted to immediately pursue. The cost of the battle was 70,000 casualties or approximately one-quarter of both of the opposing armies.

150 years ago, on **July 11, 1859**, the Emperors of France and Austria met at Villafranca di Verona and concluded an armistice behind the backs of the Sardinians. Austria ceded Parma and Lombardy to France, to be transferred to Sardinia. Tuscany and Modena were restored to Austria. Venice remained in Austrian hands.

50 years ago, on **July 15, 1959**, Ernest Bloch died in Good Samaritan Hospital, Portland, Oregon, of cancer, nine days before his 79th birthday.

50 years ago, on **July 17, 1959**, Mary Leakey finds *Zinjanthropus* in Olduvai Gorge. It is dated at 1.75 million years old and rewrites man's prehistory.

250 years ago, on **July 19, 1759**, fire destroyed hundreds of houses in Stockholm. 400 km away, at a dinner party in Gothenburg, Emanuel Swedenborg described the conflagration in detail to those attending, simultaneous with its occurrence.

- 50 years ago, on **July 21, 1959**, a federal judge in New York reversed the ban on *Lady Chatterly's Lover* from the US Mail. He held that it is not obscene and constructing a rule to ban it would also mean the banning of a considerable part of the world's literature.
- 50 years ago, on **July 22, 1959**, *Missa brevis* op.63 for boys' chorus and organ by Benjamin Britten (45) was performed for the first time, in Westminster Cathedral.
- 50 years ago, on **July 24, 1959**, the "Kitchen Debate" between Soviet General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev and US Vice-President Richard Nixon took place in Sokolniki Park, Moscow at the American National Exhibition. Before videotape cameras the two debated the accomplishments of the two countries and systems.
- 100 years ago, on **July 25, 1909**, Louis Blériot became the first human to cross the English Channel in an airplane. The frenchman flew from Calais to Dover in 37 minutes.
- 200 years ago, on **July 27, 1809**, French forces attacked the British at Talavera, 105 km southwest of Madrid. After a furious see-saw battle, the French retreated towards the capital. Because of this victory, the British commander, Arthur Wellesley, was created Viscount Wellington.
- 250 years ago, on **August 1, 1759**, an allied army (United Kingdom-Prussia-Hanover-Hesse) decisively defeated the French at Minden, 60 km west of Hanover, and regained all territory they lost last year.
- 250 years ago, on **August 8, 1759**, Karl Heinrich Graun died in Berlin, aged approximately 55 years.
- 250 years ago, on **August 12, 1759**, Russian and Imperial troops crushed the Prussians at Kunersdorf (Kunowice, Poland), east of Frankfurt-an-der-Oder, allowing Dresden to fall into Austrian hands.
- 50 years ago, on **August 21, 1959**, Hawaii became the 50th state of the United States in a ceremony at the White House.
- 50 years ago, on **August 25, 1959**, *Zyklus* no.9 for solo percussionist by Karlheinz Stockhausen (31) was performed for the first time, in Darmstadt.
- 150 years ago, on **August 27, 1859**, Edwin L. Drake of Castleton, Vermont struck oil at a depth of 21 meters near Titusville, Pennsylvania, 130 km north of Pittsburgh. This will become the first financially productive oil well and begins the commercial exploitation of petroleum.
- 50 years ago, on **August 28, 1959**, Bohuslav Martinu died of stomach cancer in Liestal, Switzerland, aged 68 years, eight months and 20 days.
- 250 years ago, on **September 3, 1759**, a Portuguese royal edict implicated Jesuits in the attempted regicide of 1758. They were outlawed and expelled.
- 250 years ago, on **September 4, 1759**, Austrian forces entered Dresden.
- 150 years ago, on **September 4, 1859**, Giuseppe Verdi (45) was elected by the town of Busseto to the Assembly in Parma.
- 250 years ago, on **September 12, 1759**, during the night, 4,600 British troops landed at L'Anse au Foulon, just up river from Quebec. They exploited a lightly defended road and moved their entire force up the Heights of Abraham (175 ft) near Quebec placing them on the plain adjacent to the city.
- 250 years ago, on **September 13, 1759**, British forces defeated the French on the Plains of Abraham, near Quebec. Both of the opposing commanders, General James Wolfe and Louis Joseph, Marquis de Montcalm, were killed in the fighting, within minutes of each other.
- 50 years ago, on **September 14, 1959**, the Soviet space probe *Luna 2* crashed into the Moon east of the Sea of Serenity. It was the first man-made object to reach another celestial body.
- 50 years ago, on **September 15, 1959**, General Secretary Nikita Khrushchev landed at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, beginning the first visit of a Soviet leader to the United States.
- 50 years ago, on **September 16, 1959**, on French and Algerian television and radio, President Charles de Gaulle explains his plan for ending the conflict in Algeria. He offers Algerians a plebiscite

with three choices, integration into France, internal autonomy with France the sovereign power, or independence..

- 250 years ago, on **September 18, 1759**, after a siege of three months, the French garrison of Quebec surrendered to the British.
- 200 years ago, on **September 18, 1809**, the Covent Garden Opera House, London reopened after the devastating fire of 1808.
- 150 years ago, on **September 20, 1859**, the electric stove was patented by George B. Simpson of Washington, D.C.
- 200 years ago, on **September 21, 1809**, British Foreign Minister George Canning and Secretary for War Lord Castlereagh took part in a duel on Putney Heath. Canning was upset that Castlereagh took troops he intended for Portugal and used them in the Walcheren operation. Canning was hit in the thigh.
- 50 years ago, on **September 22, 1959**, Josef Matthias Hauer died in Vienna, aged 76 years, six months and three days.
- 50 years ago, on **September 25, 1959**, Prime Minister Solomon West Ridgeway Dias Bandaranaike of Ceylon was shot by Talduwe Somarama Thero, a Buddhist monk, in Colombo. He died the following day.
- 50 years ago, on **October 2, 1959**, *Refrain* no.11 for three players by Karlheinz Stockhausen (31) was performed for the first time, in Berlin as part of the first ever all-Stockhausen concert.
- 200 years ago, on **October 4, 1809**, Spencer Perceval replaced William Henry Cavendish, Duke of Portland as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.
- 50 years ago, on **October 4, 1959**, Cello Concerto no.1 op.107 by Dmitri Shostakovich (53) was performed for the first time, in the Leningrad Philharmonic Bolshoy Hall.
- 250 years ago, on **October 6, 1759**, in the Pragmatic Sanction, King Carlos III of Spain abdicated his Sicilian throne to his eight-year-old third son, who assumed his position as King Ferdinando III of Naples and King Ferdinando IV of Sicily under regency. Treaties forbade the union of Spain and Naples.
- 50 years ago, on **October 6, 1959**, a committee of the US House of Representatives opened hearings into charges of fraud in televised quiz shows.
- 100 years ago, on **October 7, 1909**, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's (†1) opera *The Golden Cockerel*, to words of Belsky after Pushkin, was performed for the first time, at the Solodovnikov Theater, Moscow.
- 200 years ago, on **October 8, 1809**, Clemens Wenzel Lothar, Count Metternich-Winneburg Portella succeeded Johann Philipp Karl, Count Stadion-Warthausen as Lord Chamberlain, Minister of State and Minister of Foreign Affairs to Emperor Franz I of Austria.
- 200 years ago, on **October 14, 1809**, a treaty of peace was signed at the Schönbrunn Palace, Vienna. Austria gave up Trieste and Illyria to France, Galicia to Saxony and Russia and Salzburg and the Inn District to Bavaria. Austrian lands in Poland were handed over to the Duchy of Warsaw and Austria was required to pay an indemnity of 85,000,000 francs. Southern Tirol was transferred to the Kingdom of Italy. Austria also joined the continental system against Britain.
- 150 years ago, on **October 16, 1859**, John Brown and 21 other opponents of slavery seized the United States armory at Harper's Ferry, Virginia (West Virginia), 80 km northwest of Washington.
- 150 years ago, on **October 18, 1859**, United States Marines under Lt. Col. Robert E. Lee subdued John Brown's band at Harper's Ferry, killing eleven.
- 50 years ago, on **October 21, 1959**, the Samuel R. Guggenheim Museum opened in New York in a building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.

150 years ago, on **October 22, 1859**, Ludwig (Louis) Spohr died after a short illness, in Kassel, aged 75 years, six months and 17 days.

100 years ago, on **October 26, 1909**, Prince Ito Hirobumi, the Japanese resident-general in Korea, was shot to death in Harbin, by An Chung-gun, a member of a Korean independence movement.

150 years ago, on **October 27, 1859**, German physicist Gustav Robert Kirchhoff announced the invention of the spectroscope. This allows the chemical composition of a substance to be known through its emission and absorption of light.

50 years ago, on **October 27, 1959**, the Moscow newspapers *Pravda* and *Izvestia* printed the first publicly available photograph of the other side of the Moon, taken by *Lunik III* on October 7.

50 years ago, on **November 14, 1959**, a record depth of 5,600 meters is reached by Andreas Rechnitzer and Jacques Piccard in the bathyscaphe *Trieste* in the Mariana Trench off Guam.

100 years ago, on **November 15, 1909**, *On Wenlock Edge* for tenor, piano and string quartet by Ralph Vaughan Williams (37) was performed for the first time, in Aeolian Hall, London.

50 years ago, on **November 16, 1959**, *The Sound of Music* by Rogers and Hammerstein opened in the Lunt-Fontanne Theater, New York.

50 years ago, on **November 17, 1959**, Heitor Villa-Lobos died at his apartment on Rua Araújo Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, of uremia, aged 72 years, eight months and twelve days.

250 years ago, on **November 20, 1759**, in a raging gale, British naval forces defeated the French off Quiberon, Brittany.

250 years ago, on **November 21, 1759**, a Prussian corps of 15,000 men surrendered to Imperial forces at Maxen on the Elbe.

150 years ago, on **November 22, 1859**, Cecil James Sharp was born in London.

150 years ago, on **November 24, 1859**, John Murray published the first 500 copies of *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* by Charles Darwin, in London.

100 years ago, on **November 26, 1909**, incidental music to Aristophanes' play *The Wasps* by Ralph Vaughan Williams (37) was performed for the first time, at the University of Cambridge.

100 years ago, on **November 28, 1909**, the Piano Concerto no.3 by Sergei Rakhmaninov (36) was performed for the first time, in New York, with Walter Damrosch on the podium and the composer at the piano.

150 years ago, on **November 30, 1859**, Lombardy was officially annexed by the Kingdom of Sardinia.

50 years ago, on **December 1, 1959**, twelve nations signed a treaty in Washington designed to protect the ecological safety of Antarctica. The continent was set aside as a military-free scientific area.

50 years ago, on **December 1, 1959**, the first photograph of Earth taken from space was snapped by a camera mounted on a Thor missile launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida. The camera was recovered until the following February.

150 years ago, on **December 2, 1859**, John Brown and five others were hanged at Charleston, Virginia (Charles Town, West Virginia) for their part in the raid on Harper's Ferry on October 16-18.

200 years ago, on **December 16, 1809**, by act of the French Senate, Emperor Napoléon was divorced from Empress Josephine.

250 years ago, on **December 31, 1759**, Arthur Guinness signed a 9,000 year lease for an abandoned brewery in Dublin. He shortly began brewing.