

The Pierrots & Concert Parties evolve

During the war, many people maintained their morale by listening to the wireless, where a new form of sketch comedy was emerging

fusing concert party material with an irreverent spirit of nonsense. First amongst these was 'ITMA' ("It's That Man Again"): ITMA's star was Tommy Handley, a product of pre-war seaside concert party.



ITMA was famous for catch-phrases and hilarious caricatures, paving the airwaves for 'The Goons', whose first series was transmitted in 1951. Their satirical surrealism was both subversive and very British – a totally modern and technically advanced version of the concert parties' sketch format. The creative artists of 'The Goons' had all begun in concert party whilst serving in the armed forces: Spike Milligan was a former signaller, Harry Secombe had formed a Royal Artillery concert party, Michael Bentine was from the Peruvian RAF and Peter Sellers performed in both ENSA & the RAF Gang Shows.



It was 'ITMA' and 'The Goons', with their roots in concert party and the armed forces, that eventually led to 'Monty Python's Flying Circus', 'The Fast Show' and contemporary sketch-based shows like 'Little Britain'.