

Music Society 2004-05



VINEHALL SCHOOL MUSIC SOCIETY Sixteenth Season 2004-2005

The Sixteenth season of concerts started, as usual, much earlier in the preceding November of 2003 when the bookings were made. It always seems such a long time ahead to be planning but it is necessary to secure the best musicians. The August before the start of the season is always busy, as I await (with a degree of trepidation) the booking forms, as I never know whether demand will be high or low. Fortunately, bookings were strong and some concerts sold out very quickly.

We started the season with London Winds, led by the superb clarinettist, Michael Collins. They played works by Strauss, Mozart's Clarinet Quintet and Beethoven's beautiful Septet. It was a delightful start to the season and the audience were impressed by the depth with which the ensemble approached these popular evergreens. The young cellist, Thomas Carroll was inspiring to watch, and I have booked his trio to perform in the next season.

The second concert was by the young German Kuss Quartet. I had seen them perform at Wigmore Hall where they had delighted a packed audience and I felt they would go down well at Vinehall. They played works by Haydn, Schubert, Webern, and finished with an electrifying performance of Beethoven's String Quartet in E minor op. 59 Nr. 2 (Razumovsky). This talented ensemble played with enormous commitment and I am sure they will visit us again in due course.

In November we welcomed the leading British pianist, Stephen Hough. He has established himself as one of the most popular of young pianists and we were treated to a sensitive performance of Schubert's G major Sonata, D894 and then a selection of works with a Spanish flavour by Granados, Albeniz, Debussy, Ravel, Godowsky and Moszkowski's flamboyant Caprice Espagnol. I was impressed by the pianist's skill in bringing the heat, dust, smells and sounds of Spain to a chilly November's evening in East Sussex. Stephen Hough has recently won a Classical Brit Award for his revelatory recordings of the Rachmaninov piano concertos; a must for any CD collector.

In February for our Sunday afternoon concert we welcomed the Russian duo of Leonid Gorokhov (cello) and Nikolai Demidenko (piano). They performed works by Schnittke, Brahms and Schubert's Fantaisie, transcribed for cello by Gorokhov. They performed with enormous expertise and unity and Schubert's beautiful Fantaisie was captured perfectly. I am sure that we will want to secure Demidenko as a solo performer in due course, as he is a titan of the keyboard, playing in the tradition of the great Russian pianists, such as Richter and Gilels.

The March concert was at least blessed by light! The previous year had witnessed a power black out and I still dread this happening every time there is a performance in the theatre. The four-man singing group Cantabile performed a selection of songs entitled 'From Madrigal to McCartney'. They are one of the most talented a capella groups one could hope to find, and combine wit, skill and musicality in equal measures. They were the perfect antidote to the miserable conditions of an English March and lifted everyone's spirits. I feel they could have included one or two more 'serious' items, but it is hard to please everybody and on balance, the audience were extremely enthusiastic.

The May concert was given by the outstanding Dante Quartet, with James Boyd as the additional viola player. This combination allowed the ensemble to perform string quintets by Mozart and Bruckner. Both works are outstanding examples of writing for this combination of instruments and the deep sonorities of the Bruckner were brought out to great effect by the musicians. Many of the audience were converted to a work which is heard far too infrequently.

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The final concert was by the Skampa Quartet from The Czech Republic and the Irish pianist Finghin Collins. The Skampa had played before at Vinehall and they are one of the best quartets we have ever had. They perform with such conviction and passion and Finghin Collins was the perfect partner for piano quintets by Shostakovich and then Dvorak. It is always a special event to hear Czech performers playing Dvorak and many people have phoned and written to say how much they enjoyed the evening. Fortunately, the event was made even more perfect by the warm sunshine and the Pimm's!

As usual, I am deeply grateful to all those who have assisted me this season including the Everist family for their help with the programmes, Mrs Elsie Smith and Miss May Johnson who have organised the refreshments, Mrs Heather Howorth and the bursarial department who have provided administrative help throughout the season. I am also very grateful to our chefs, who have provided delicious suppers for our performers and Andy Rennie who has helped set up the Pre-Prep hall. Many thanks must also go to all our sponsors, whose help is enormously valuable.

We look forward to welcoming you to the new season, and if you are uncertain about whether a particular concert will suit you or your children, then Mrs. Harmer or me will be happy to advise. There should be something to appeal to all tastes and ages!

A. G. W.