

Music Society . Season Report

Seventeenth Season 2005-2006

The Seventeenth season of concerts has provided some wonderful musical moments and I am pleased to report that attendances have been excellent and our audiences as keen as ever to come to Vinehall for chamber music of the highest quality.

We started the season with London Concertante, who played works by Arensky, Debussy and Mozart. It is always good to get a larger group of musicians performing at Vinehall, and over twenty players along with the harpist Lucy Wakeford and the flautist Julian Sperry delighted the audience with their performance of Mozart's Concerto for Flute and Harp. They finished with a lively account of Mozart's 40th Symphony.

The second concert was by one of the giants of the keyboard, Radu Lupu. His performance of works by Schumann, including the Sonata No 1 was keenly anticipated. He did not disappoint the enthusiastic audience who had waited two years for his performance, as he had unfortunately cancelled his original date, owing to ill-health. He also suffers from a bad back and we did all we could to ensure that he was as comfortable as possible, with a selection of chairs to support him.

In November we welcomed one of the most talented young quartets in the country. The Sacconi Quartet has a packed schedule and has won many competitions. Their performance of quartets by Haydn, Mozart and Schumann was always thoughtful and demonstrated a depth of understanding that will continue to mature and develop.

In February for our Sunday afternoon concert we welcomed the piano trio, 'Dimension'. The cellist, Thomas Carroll, had joined London Winds in the preceding season and when he mentioned that he was part of a piano trio, it seemed obvious to book them. They performed works by Suk, Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky. The music of Shostakovich has been heard extensively in this his anniversary year and the Piano Trio No. 2 is full of depth and represents the composer's creative efforts during the hardships of war. The Tchaikovsky trio is a tour de force and was performed with enormous energy and commitment.

The March concert was an evening of songs by Clara Schumann and her husband Robert. The amount of Schumann we have had this season again reflects an anniversary year and it has given the audience an opportunity to hear a wide selection of his chamber output. Wolfgang Holzmair is one of the world's leading baritones and he was accompanied by Roger Vignoles. Unfortunately, this lovely evening of sublime songs was not as well attended as such a talented pair of performers deserved, and it shows that a music society like ours has to constantly push to maintain full audiences.



The May concert was given by the outstanding British violinist Anthony Marwood and the Serbian pianist Aleksandar Madzar. Anthony started with a Bach sonata which was playing at its most sublime. The sonatas by Fauré and Schumann which followed were played with enormous expression and the audience response was huge. I have received more letters, calls and messages about this concert than nearly any other.

The final concert was by the Emperor Quartet and the pianist Leon McCawley. They had all played before at Vinehall and it was lovely to welcome back such committed performers. They started with Mozart's own arrangement of his Piano Concerto No. 12 and this was followed by Shostakovich's enigmatic Third Quartet. The second half was occupied with Brahms's stirring Piano Quintet. Fortunately, the event was made even more perfect by the warm sunshine and plentiful Pimm's. The heat was such that we left the theatre doors open and the birds sang along – especially with the Shostakovich and Brahms!

As usual, I am indebted to all those who have given practical assistance, 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 Mrs. Perry, our chefs, who have provided delicious suppers for our performers and Andy Rennie who has helped set up the Pre-Prep hall for each concert. Many thanks must also go to all our sponsors, whose help is enormously valuable. This season I would particularly like to thank Mrs. Sue Glossop who has been our page-turner. This tricky (and unpopular!) job has been undertaken with her usual calm and I am deeply grateful.

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. If in doubt, come!

AGW