

Music Society . Season Report

Nineteenth Season 2007-2008

The Nineteenth 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 the London Concertante, who played works by Mendelssohn, Beethoven and Mozart, including his well-known Clarinet Concerto. It was lovely to have a full stage of performers and was an ideal concert for both children and adults.

The second concert was by the young Serbian pianist Aleksandar Madzar. He performed works by Chopin, Debussy and Beethoven. He performed Beethoven's incredible Diabelli Variations with a deep and committed intensity that caused the audience to be rapt with concentration. It was a really memorable performance and one which Aleksandar admitted afterwards over a large glass of red wine was 'quite satisfactory'. This was very encouraging as he is notoriously self-critical! His encore of Bach was also of a very high order.

In November we welcomed three of the leading soloists of France, Phillippe Cassard, (Piano) Anne Gastinel (Cello) and David Grimal (Violin). Their programme of Haydn, and Schubert was beautifully performed and it is always instructive to hear a French ensemble playing Ravel. They do it so much more perfectly! Their interpretation of the Schubert E Flat trio brought great applause from the audience.

In February for our Sunday afternoon concert we welcomed back the young Irish pianist Finghin Collin with some of his musical friends for a performance of works by Mahler, Mozart and Schubert. The Mahler work was his early Piano Quartet and his only surviving chamber composition. It was dark and deep and full of melody and one regretted that Mahler had not written much more chamber music in his life. The Schubert 'Trout' Quintet is probably the composer's most popular work and as such requires a performance that lifts the work out of the merely familiar onto a higher musical plane. This the player certainly achieved in a high-octane performance, led brilliantly by Finghin Collins and the wonderful international violinist Isabelle van Keulen.

The March concert was by Matthew Trusler (violin) and Alexander Taylor (piano). They performed works by Prokofiev, Brahms, Grieg and Gershwin. Matthew performed at Vinehall a few years ago, and I invited him back as I wanted to see whether he had fulfilled the promise which I hoped he could achieve. This was clearly borne out by his performances and the audience especially enjoyed his Prokofiev and of course, the Gershwin Porgy and Bess Suite and encores. His relationship with his accompanist was so strong and natural that they really were a musical team who lifted each other's performances. Matthew was slightly anxious as his wife was shortly to give birth. She has since had a daughter, Lily.

The May concert was given by the outstanding young British quartet, the Carducci Quartet who performed works by Haydn, Vaughan Williams and Beethoven. Vaughan Williams has been in the public eye this year, as it has been the centenary of his birth. Much of his symphonic output is well-known but his chamber compositions have received less attention. It was interesting how many times I was asked in the interval whether the Carducci Quartet had recorded his second Quartet. Unfortunately they had not, but their performance certainly awakened interest in this thoughtful work. Their performance of the 3rd Rasumovsky Quartet by Beethoven was full of drama. Indeed, this was added to when the first violin knocked his music off the stand just as they were starting the final coda! Fortunately, harmony was rapidly restored. Live music is never without interest!

The final concert was by the Classical Opera Company who performed an A to Z of Mozart's operas. It was the perfect music for a summer's evening. The rain held off and plentiful Pimms assisted the mood. We heard some familiar and some less well-known Mozart and it was beautifully performed by the young and very talented singers. As usual we left the theatre doors open and the birds sang along they seem to enjoy the Mozart from within!

I am indebted to all those who have given practical assistance, including the Everist and Clarke families 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 our Vinehall pupil Claire Mcfadyen who was our new page-turner. She coped remarkably well and I am sure to ask her again!

We look forward to welcoming you to the new Twentieth Anniversary season. It is hard to believe that the concerts have been going strong for so long. Our audiences gain immense pleasure from hearing and seeing enormously talented musicians performing locally. If you don't know a lot about music, it really doesn't matter - so don't be put off!

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