

## Music Society . Season Report

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### Twentieth Anniversary Season 2008-2009

The Twentieth Anniversary 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. Many concertgoers have now been attending for the full twenty years!

We started the season with the Allegri String Quartet, who played works by Haydn, Mozart and Brahms. The Allegri opened our very first season in 1989 and the quartet was joined by their leader for many years, Peter Carter. This time he played second viola in the string quintets. It was a wonderful start to the season with heartfelt playing of the highest order.

The second concert was by the London Conchord Ensemble. Their wind-based programme featured Janacek's *Mladi* and works by Beethoven, Mozart and Dvorak's *Wind Serenade*. Their encore of a Dvorak Slavonic dance was especially vivid.

In November we welcomed The Schubert Ensemble of London. This leading ensemble performed a programme of a piano quartet by Mendelssohn, a piano quintet by Fauré and finally the players reverted to a piano trio for Beethoven's great 'Archduke' trio. The audience had strong views as usual, and it was interesting hear that the Fauré (a much more unfamiliar work) drew as much attention as the Beethoven.

In February for our Sunday afternoon concert we welcomed the young German pianist Martin Helmchen. He performed works by Bach and Messiaen as well the tremendously demanding *Symphonic Variations* by Schumann. He is a pianist with a great future ahead of him, and his South Bank recital debut shortly after was very well-received by the critics. For many people, the performance of the Messiaen was a surprising highlight - the deep chords being balanced by writing of the greatest delicacy at the top end of the keyboard.

The March concert was by Natalie Clein (Cello) and Kathryn Stott (piano). They performed works by Chopin, Brahms, da Falla, and Piazzolla's *Grand Tango*. Natalie Clein is an enormously popular player and has been since winning the BBC Young Musician Competition aged 16. Accompanied by Kathryn Stott, who is a soloist of equal distinction, their concert was not surprisingly sold out months in advance. The two glamorous performers drew the first 'woof whistles' from a Vinehall audience in twenty year!

The May concert should have been given by the St Petersburg Quartet but owing to the 'credit crunch' their sponsorship was withdrawn and they had regrettably to cancel. Fortunately we were able to secure the services of the Wihan Quartet. The quartet is one of the leading Czech quartets and they gave a magnificent performance of Beethoven's quartet op. 127 and then Dvorak's quartet Op. 105. It is always a pleasure to hear a Czech quartet playing Dvorak. Their encore was a breathtakingly dramatic performance of the finale of Dvorak's 'American' quartet and it drew cheers from the audience.

The final concert was by the Principal Players of the Hanover Band directed from a beautiful harpsichord by Arthur Andrew. They performed a Baroque programme including works by Bach, Telemann and Schmelzter and finished with a rousing performance of Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 5*. It was the perfect music for a summer's evening. The rain held off and plentiful Pimms assisted the mood. Interesting, Arthur Andrew said that Vinehall was the best small venue they had performed in. This was because all the players could hear each other. We tend to take these things for granted!

I am indebted to all those who have given practical assistance, including Colin and Judy Everist 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. Jackie 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. Helen Ridout who was our new page-turner. I am sure to ask her again!

We look forward to welcoming you to the 21st Season and there are some real treats lying ahead for our audience. I am pleased to say that the number of families attending has risen this year 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. Our audiences gain immense pleasure from hearing and seeing enormously talented musicians performing locally and I am pleased to say that our artists love performing here. Their praise for the Vinehall audience is always strong and they love the delicious suppers we provide!

AGW