

Summer Concert 2008

Our Summer Concert took place in Christ Church on Sunday 22nd June on a beautiful evening and before a large audience. Since we are new to Wimbledon, it was the first Summer Concert my wife and I have attended. I knew that Christ Church had a fine musical tradition under the leadership of Ron Cayless, the Director of Music, but I left the church totally exhilarated by the music.

The local talent was enriched by an influx of nine music students from Oxford and Cambridge, together with others from the Royal College of Music, the Royal Academy of Music and the Purcell School. The evening was also enriched by David Gammie, Assistant Organist at the Church of the Sacred Heart, and the Bown family, Stefan, Mary Ann, Nick and Rosalind. I feel that must pay tribute to Mary Ann, whose excellent organisation did so much to aid the smooth running of the evening.

We began with Bach's Prelude and Fugue in C minor, played by Tom Kimber, Organ Scholar at King's College Cambridge. It is a well-known work, but a real treat to hear it performed with such finesse. This was followed by Cynthia Aird, a member of Christ Church musical team, who distilled a lifetime of musical expertise in her performance of Liszt's Liebesträume No.3 in A flat major. We could hear a wealth of experience in her interpretation. Next it was the turn of the enhanced Christ Church Choir. They sang three works: 'On the banks of Allan water' (Traditional Scottish Air), 'All ye who music love' (Balthazar Donato – 1548-1603) and Stanford's Magnificat in G with Suzy Martines in good voice as soprano soloist. The balance, tone and timing were of a high order. Following this, two Royal Academy students, Charles Cole - violin & Kausikan Rajeshkumar - piano, gave us a virtuoso performance of the first movement of Prokofiev's Violin Concerto in D minor, Op.94a.

The first part of the evening ended with a performance of Handel's Organ Concerto Op.4 in F major with David Gammie as soloist and Ron Cayless directing the orchestra. I thought that this was a very challenging work to perform because of the timing between the organ and the orchestra, but it was a challenge ably met and resulted in a feast of play between the organ and the orchestra.

We needed the interval to wind down and prepare for the second part of the concert and much appreciated the refreshments organised by Margaret Metters and her team.

The second half began with three lively vocal trios of increasing complexity, 'The lark in the clear air', Nun's Chorus from "Casanova" and "The Silver Swan", sung with bravura by Rosalind Bown, Cynthia Aird and Monica Cooper, accompanied on the piano by Tom Kimber. With these songs ringing in our ears we were treated to Kausikan Rajeshkumar playing Liszt's Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase on the piano. This was a case of fireworks and was a tremendous 'tour de force'. Many of us felt inhibited from applause in church, but this playing brought the house down and it will be interesting to follow his career. Naomi Scott, music scholar at Clare College Cambridge, then gave an exquisite and moving performance of Puccini's 'O mio babbino caro', ably accompanied by Tom Kimber on the piano.

The concert ended with a performance of Mozart's Symphony No.25 in G minor (K183), with Stefan Bown leading the orchestra and his son Nick conducting. The orchestra consisted of local players and music students. As with the Bach, which opened the concert, this was, I thought, a brave choice since it is such a well-known work and we are bound to compare it with recordings and other professional performances, but this was tremendous playing. The opening Allegro Con Brio is well known to all who have seen the film Amadeus. This work is exacting, as Mozart demands such high standards of tone, balance and timing. This performance was real treat and a fitting climax to a tremendous evening.

We ended with audience participation singing 'Happy Birthday' to Richard Lane, our Vicar. Richard will, I hope, accept the concert as a birthday tribute reflecting our affection and regard for him. We came away exhilarated and very much looking forward to next concert.

Bruce Burnham