

Serenade

JACK WOOLFORD

CONNAUGHT HALL, DOVER — 21 SEPTEMBER 1991

OUR third sponsored concert was up to standard: which is praise indeed, recalling our earlier ventures with Primavera! The Kent Concert Orchestra, its conductor Paul Neville and the soloist Marie-Noëlle Kendall were all that could be demanded or desired. Moreover the Connaught Hall itself had just been splendidly redecorated: what more could one ask?

I will confess to some anticipatory trepidation. There could only be one rehearsal, and that on the day of the concert itself. Auditory visions of less than perfect ensemble, of the odd fluffed entry, of some lack of balance between sections, of less than perfect rapport between orchestra and soloist! I was happily and joyously wrong. Such unalloyed delight is rare indeed.

Only one rehearsal: but a rehearsal of professionals, well balanced in and between their violin, viola, cello and bass sections and accustomed to playing together. Only one rehearsal: but a conductor who had in advance planned every detail of phrasing and dynamics and who communicated with every gesture, not only to the players but to the audience as well, the precise shape and weight he required in every bar.

Only one rehearsal: but a – beautiful – soloist who lived up to every excellence promised and to every word of praise in her curriculum vitae. Her partnership with the orchestra was as well-matched as her every solo passage was brilliantly executed. Like the conductor and the orchestra, she, too, established warm relations with her audience: we were all quite spontaneously at home with one another. The ambiance was infectiously friendly.

The programme, Paul Neville's, was remarkably well-chosen. What better overture to a concert than Handel's "Entrance of the Queen of Sheba", with two live oboes to give their piquant but melodious bite to triumphant arrival? What better contrast than Purcell's "Chacony" in G minor to follow? Mention of Britten as the arranger led me to expect the theme of the "Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra" but it was not a disappointment to hear another splendid essay in similar style. As to Mozart, he does not need the celebration of the bicentenary of his death to make any of his piano concertos acceptable and K. 271 in E Flat (with its horns as well as oboes to contrast and blend with the strings) has a particularly romantic-by-anticipation youthfulness to make it a perfect choice for a young pianist. The only pity was that the Connaught platform will not bear the weight of a grand piano at the front and so for some of us Miss Kendall was regrettably invisible. Concert pianists should be seen as well as heard. It is integral to the performance, especially to see beautiful hands moving over the keyboard: though the sound alone was ravishing in itself.

Reviews

After the interval we returned from Austria to England, first to Boyce whose F Major Symphony is so resolutely and rightly English in the Purcell/Arne traditions as to make "the land without music" a senseless gibe and then to Elgar's Serenade for Strings, so English too, but so eloquently contrasted by its late romantic warmth and wistfulness. And so to the elegantly fitting conclusion, the Mozart No. 29 in A, another masterpiece of youthful exuberance.

Thus did orchestra, conductor and pianist combine to give us a perfect Serenade but it is to our Secretary Leo Wright, prime mover behind the Primavera concerts, that we are also basically indebted. He it was who negotiated with Paul Neville, who procured Miss Kendall's services and who persuaded the Dover District Council to make available the piano from Deal. We must hope that he will be equally patient, persistent and skilful in organising a return date. We cannot have too much of so good a thing.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the Society could not have guaranteed the three concerts without the financial support of well-wishers. No call has ever been made on central funds and on this third occasion we are particularly grateful to the following for their support:

DOVER ARTS AND CRAFTS EXHIBITION at the DOVER MUSEUM

16 September — 20 October, 1991

JEAN JONES *

A MASS of colour greeted the eye from work on display by members of the Dover Art Society. On closer examination the work proved to be varied and interesting both in subject matter and in media. It was notoriously difficult to hang a mixed exhibition with so many different styles to accommodate, but this exhibition worked well. Paintings were grouped carefully and sensitively, making good use of the excellent new gallery space.

The three dimensional work looked particularly seductive in contemporary display cases. Terry Warren's wood sculpture and laminated wooden jewellery were both unusual and attractive, whilst Valerie Snow displayed not only pottery, but porcelain of great delicacy.

Amongst a wealth of talent the following artists deserve particular mention. Margaret Hudson's love of pattern was evident in her richly decorated works. The variety in the paintings of Jane Nicholas showed that she is equally at home with watercolour, gouache and pastel. A strong atmospheric acrylic called 'The Bridge' by Alan Quartermain was particularly eye-catching. A strikingly unusual view of Jubilee Way in a storm by H. Wells contrasted with T. R. Summerfield's evocative seascapes displayed a skilful use of watercolour and his view of Dymchurch Wall was both unusual and dramatic. The Chairman of the Association, Eric Buckman, submitted a