

Celebration Concert
The Brandenburg Chamber Orchestra
Connaught Hall : Monday 24th May

Jack Woolford

THE DOVER SOCIETY was very well represented at this brilliant start to the Second Dover Festival, taking it as a compliment that the precedent set by their successful Primavera and Kent Chamber Orchestra concerts were followed, and even capped, by the Festival organisers: The Brandenburg Orchestra has full woodwind and brass sections in addition to strings. This was made possible by the munificent sponsorship of GOPAK Ltd which Dover District Council's Donna Sowerby happily secured.

The programme, which perhaps surprisingly, even regrettably, did not include a Brandenburg Concerto, was safely popular, every note of which every professional player must have played a score, if not a hundred, times. This, however, did not show. Every piece was played as though freshly minted, by an orchestra every member of which was conspicuously enjoying the task. A pity that Connaught Hall seating (and platform) cannot be raked: apart from the strings, all we could see was the tympanist: but his wind and brass colleagues were audibly, if not visibly, as euphoric as he!

Although popular (in the best sense), the programme was adroitly constructed, starting with classical Mozart, leaping forward to romantic Mendelssohn and further on to equally romantic Fauré but joyously returning to classical early Beethoven.

Mozart's Eine Kleine Nachtmusik is for strings only, so that we could savour in detail the precise balance and disciplined enthusiasm of violins, cellos and double basses, the more so as the repeats were observed and excessive vibrato was properly absent. We could also be amazed and then dazzled by conductor Martin Handley's alternately towering and crouching, athletic, almost balletic, extraction of every nuance of phrasing and dynamics.

Accompanied by the full orchestra, Gina McCormack, in an elegant green gown, gave us an exquisitely youthful, at once technically flawless and passionate, performance of the Mendelssohn violin concerto, which however often heard, astounds with its revolutionary freshness, lyricism and virtuosity. When one hears it recorded or broadcast, the technicians may have made the violin more dominant and although it was permissible to wonder if the soloist was sometimes a little overbalanced by the

24th May - 5th June

wind, what we heard was rapturously played and tumultuously applauded. Miss McCormack should have been presented with a bouquet!

The Fauré Pavane whose haunting sorrow was movingly created by the solo clarinettist, was as sinuously moulded by Martin Handley as the Mendelssohn. The violently contrasted middle string section emphasised the brilliance of the unnamed Leader of the orchestra (in fact John Georgiadis of LPO fame!).

The climax was Beethoven's 1st Symphony which anticipated much of his revolutionary majesty despite its obviously Haydnesque derivation. It was played with properly enthusiastic verve and gusto, not to say brio, a festive prelude to what should be a fine Festival.

Grumps? The preliminary programming might profitably have been more specific and the programme might have named the players and the leader. The Connaught Hall could have been fuller, both in the reserved and unreserved seats: the Dover Festival is for Dorsetians rather than tourists though the enhancement of image is relevant to popularity. Dover District Council's White Cliffs Country project is well-conceived and its publicity has greatly improved for this second year. One can only breathlessly anticipate the glories of the third!

SAX APPEAL

IRIS PETERS

WE ARRIVED at Dover Town Hall in good time for the Festival of Dover 'Sax Appeal' Jazz Concert to the cosy arrangement of chairs and tables scattered around, each with a red table cloth (albeit paper) creating a pleasant atmosphere.

Unfortunately the Group were delayed by traffic on the M20 – and no doubt also on the Folkestone Road! – giving us a late start.

Meanwhile to entertain us James Overton (DDC Tourism) gave us an impromptu and amusing account of how, when and what to do with each raffle prize if we were fortunate enough to win. It was quite a feat to fill-in half an hour with witty waffle! Having arrived the Group lost no time in 'doing what comes naturally' – jazzing it up.

My favourite in the first half was 'Rio', composed by Victor Feldman, featuring a flute solo by Pete Long (baritone sax). I could almost visualise the Rio carnival.

Through to the second half and 'Longshore Drift' composed by Derek Nash, who was the leader and composed most of the numbers; we drifted nicely along with the tide to be jolted into the lively number 'Wasps'. We then had a change of tempo with the blues 'Sniffy'. This was the general tenor of the evening with some apparent impromptu juggling by Simon Hale and Lawrence Cottle. Each member of the group gave excellent solos and their energy and enthusiasm was so contagious as to inspire Nash into his own enthusiastic and brilliant performances.

'Sax Appeal' certainly gave us all a splendid evening of jazz to remember.

24th May – 5th June
