



Rapturous reception for Nash Ensemble recital

The 2014-2015 Marlborough College Concert Series opened with a magnificent performance by the Nash Ensemble celebrating its 50th year and, to judge only by the captivated attention of the audience including 35 music students from the College, the original members of the Ensemble should have been hugely proud of the legacy that they have left.

This was ensemble playing at its best and what came through so strikingly was not simply the hours of work that must have gone into the performance but rather the time spent on interpretation. It was a wonderfully contrasting programme which provided all the colours, the emotions, the sensitivities and at times the bravado of chamber music which could only have been properly interpreted by playing of the highest quality, as we witnessed.

From the gentle opening bars of Mahler's Piano Quartet in A minor to the final ecstatic bars of Elgar's Piano Quintet in the same key, via Felix Mendelssohn's Piano Trio in D Minor there was an intensity in the performance that drew the audience in to share the restless emotions of the young Mahler, the contrasting lyricism and lightness of Mendelssohn's trio to the haunting, mystical quality of Elgar's quintet.

The excellent and wonderfully collaborative string playing in all departments was particularly enhanced by the underpinning of superb piano

[Page 2, Column 1]

Season 73 continues ...

Sunday, 09-Nov-14, at 7:30pm
John Lill (piano)

Sunday, 11-Jan-15, at 3:00pm
Grimethorpe Colliery Band

Sunday, 01-Feb-15, at 3:00pm
Southbank Sinfonia

Contact the Box Office for tickets –
phone – 01672 892566.

John Lill



Music from the 'Romantic' era

This month John Lill will perform solo works for piano from late 18th and 19th century Vienna

Unanimously described as the leading pianist of his generation, John Lill's rare talent began to emerge in 1953, when he gave his first public recital at the age of nine.

At 18, he performed Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No.3 under the direction of Sir Adrian Boult; and soon after, made a much-acclaimed London debut with Beethoven's 'Emperor' concerto.

Last year, his 70th birthday celebrations took him across the world with international tour dates at the Benaroya Hall in Seattle, the National Concert Hall, Dublin, and the Grand Hall of Saint Petersburg Philharmonia.

In Moscow, he performed a full cycle of Beethoven piano concerti with the National Philharmonic of Russia. While in the UK, he toured with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and made guest appearances with the Hallé, the Bournemouth Symphony, and the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

This November, John will give a recital in Marlborough charting the development of the 'Romantic' music tradition, through a series of solo works for piano,

all of which with the exception of a piece by Prokofiev were composed in Vienna between the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The opening piece is Mozart's **Piano Sonata No. 18 in D major** (K.576). Composed in 1789, it was part of a body of work commissioned by Friedrich Wilhelm II, King of Prussia comprising three string quartets (the 'Prussian Quartets') and a series of six sonatas for the King's daughter, Princess Friedrike. Only one sonata was completed, which Mozart published at his own expense, having received only a partial fee from the King.

The second item and principal work of the first half is **Faschingschwank aus Wien**, "Carnival Jest from Vienna" (Op.26) by Robert Schumann. Written 50 years later, it is a lengthy piece in five movements for solo piano.

The first (*allegro*) is the longest section and ideally suited to demonstrate the virtuosic talent of the pianist. Listen out for a musical reference to

[Page 2, Column 2]

Nash Ensemble

interpretation by Simon Crawford-Phillips.

While the Memorial Hall has many limitations, as a listening venue for music of the quality that we heard on Sunday night from the Nash Ensemble, it could hardly be improved upon. It is not just the clear acoustics, but the tiered seating around the apron stage that induces an intimacy with the performers and an involvement in the performance that is hard to match and certainly not found in major venues even in London.

On the day that people were marching in London to draw the attention of politicians to the impact of climate change, here we were in a small market town in Wiltshire not having to travel to distant cities to hear classical music of the highest standard.

We are grateful to the Artistic Director at Marlborough College, the indefatigable Philip Dukes playing viola with the Nash Ensemble and the Marlborough College Concert Series Committee for providing us with these local opportunities, and if the rest of the season of concerts reaches the same heights of performance that was shared with us on Sunday, we shall be more than (musically) satisfied.

Nick Maurice

John Lill

"La Marseillaise."

The second movement (*romanze*), very brief, strikes a somber tone, while the third (*scherzino*) is jostling and light, in contrast to the fourth (*intermezzo*), which restores the solemnity. The closing movement (*finale*), also quite lengthy draws to a dramatic climax.

Then before the interval, we transfer to Saint Petersburg in 1912, when Prokofiev composed the **Toccata in D minor** (Op.11), a showpiece favoured by many virtuoso pianists. Short and frenetic, it is typical of early works by Prokofiev, in which the composer came to prominence through a series of virtuosic, often dissonant works for piano. The work debuted four years later, in December 1916.

After the interval, we return to Vienna, when the programme resumes with **Three Intermezzi** (Op.117), by Johannes Brahms – another piece favoured by piano soloists. From the composer's late period, Brahms described them as "three lullabies to my sorrows."

Collectively, they strike a somewhat introspective tone – the first pair possibly inspired by the old English poem "Lady Ann Bothwell's Lament" by Herder, and the third by "Victor Galbraith," a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

And finally, to conclude the recital,

John will perform the **Piano Sonata No. 23 in F minor** (Op.57), the 'Appassionata,' by Beethoven. Composed between 1804 and 1806, it is an early work from the composer's 'Middle' period. It was published in February 1807, with a dedication to Count Franz von Brunswick.

The 'Appassionata,' which at the time Beethoven considered to be his best from the genre is noted as a work of considerable contrasts.

The scholar and music biographer Eric Blom suggests that the dedication of the sonata may in fact be attributed to Beethoven's affections towards the Count's two sisters – Therese von Brunswick and the widowed Josephine von Deyma.

He further speculates that the tempestuous mood of the sonata potentially reflects the composer's struggle to resolve his spiritual feelings for the first, and physical attraction to the second sister.

One other curiosity is that the sonata was not originally published as 'Appassionata,' but only acquired this reference after the composer's death, when a publisher sought to promote a four-hand transcription of the work.

We are thrilled John has found time in his demanding schedule to join our concert series, and look forward to welcoming him to our stage this month. ■

Colliery Band will bring bold and brassy start to the New Year!

Grimethorpe Colliery Band was formed in 1917 as a leisure activity for colliery workers. It was initially financed by the colliery, a sister company, and a well-fare fund established by the miners.

The musicians, most of whom worked at the colliery, perfected their skills through competition, winning 19 of the 42 contests they entered between 1932 and 1945. During this period, they never came lower than fifth!

A turning point for the band came with the appointment of Elgar Howarth as professional conductor and music adviser, in 1972, and his inspiration to commission new works by avant-garde composers, such as Hans Werner Henze and Sir Harrison Birtwistle.

Something of a defining moment

arose in 1992, when the government announced a programme of pit closures just five days before the band was due to contest the National Brass Band Championships at the Royal Albert

paralleled the pit's story told through a fictional colliery band from Grimley, who went on to win a national competition days after facing closure.

The band recorded the soundtrack, and some of the members appeared as on-screen extras. Written and directed by Mark Herman, the film was a bigger hit than anyone could have imagined, giving the band international exposure.

Since then, Grimethorpe Colliery Band has performed throughout Europe, with Millennium tours extending as far as Hong Kong, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

They will appear in Marlborough when the concert series resumes in 2015, with a programme to be announced in the New Year. We look forward to it with much eagerness. ■



Grimethorpe Colliery Band

Hall, London.

Three years later, the film 'Brassed Off,' starring Ewan McGregor, Pete Postlethwaite and Tara Fitzgerald