

Artistic Director's Report

During the last year it has been a great pleasure, after the inevitable restrictions which came into place in March 2020, to be able to present an Autumn series of concerts and then our annual Festival in April 2022.

We began in October 2021 with a concert of chamber music in St Mary's church, featuring four soloists from our Festival Chamber Orchestra, Deborah Goodyer (oboe) Neville Graham (clarinet) Tamsin Rowlinson (bassoon) Richard Wainwright with myself at the piano. The four wind players performed some delightful solo pieces ranging from Telemann to Schumann and 20th century English composers. The five of us then came together to play Mozart's great Quintet for Piano and Wind instruments, one of his greatest chamber music works. We performed in the middle of the nave, with the audience seated on both sides and there was a lovely feeling of intimacy about the concert. We actually gave two performances (afternoon and evening) which enabled us to spread out the audience in view of the need for social distancing. We were delighted that so many of our regular supporters were able to come.

The next concert, in November 2021 was once again given twice. The programme featured baroque works, including Bach's Suite No 2, in which our flautist, Jennifer Stinton, was on sparkling form, and Brandenburg Concerto No 5 in which she was joined by our leader, Charlotte Edwards. We performed these works with single string players on each part, treating them as chamber music which can be just as effective for these particular works as the customary orchestral format.

In January and February 2022 we gave two fully orchestral concerts – Italian Concertos for the New Year in January and a lovely programme of Mozart and Haydn in St James' church Gerrards Cross, which attracted a very good audience. The orchestra gave fine accounts of Mozart's Symphony No 29 and Haydn's Symphony No 43 ("Mercury"), a rarely heard and remarkable work. They also gave me great support in Mozart's 12th Piano Concerto and we were joined by soprano Nia Coleman for some lovely Arias and songs by Mozart.

By then we were able to plan our annual Festival with confidence having had to cancel those planned in April 2020 and 2021. It was a pleasure to be able to include the very gifted musicians of the Concert Band from Chiltern Music Academy – an organization which is doing fantastic work in providing musical opportunities and training for young musicians in our area. They gave us a terrific concert to open the festival. The wonderful jazz singer, Clare Teal, gave us a great evening at the King's Church, and the following evening South Bucks Choral Society performed Mendelssohn's Elijah in St Mary's Church. Elijah has long been a favourite work with the Society and it was a joy to perform it again with a fine team of soloists and a capacity audience.

The Kleio Quartet gave us a beautiful concert of works by Haydn, Schubert and Beethoven for our Chenies Manor House concert. As always, it was a joy to spend an evening in that lovely setting and to hear music in the beautiful church opposite the Manor House.

Amersham Concert Brass conducted by Malcolm Peach delighted a large audience with their rich sound and their exuberant performance of a wide-ranging programme.

The following evening, we ended the Festival with an orchestral concert. The very gifted violinist Nazrin Rashidova has been a welcome guest on several occasions and she gave us a most beautiful and lyrical account of Beethoven's great Violin Concerto. The orchestra played two of my favourite movements from Mozart's "Haffner" Serenade then we ended the concert with Beethoven's First Symphony. Our musicians were in fine form and gave a virtuosic account of that delightful work.

That concert also gave me the opportunity to express the thanks we all owe to Jane Partridge for the marvellous job she has done as Chairman. She has done so much to enhance the Festival in many ways and we are deeply grateful for all her hard work and enthusiasm. As you know, we are delighted that Jonathan Pegler, until recently the Treasurer of the Festival, is taking over as Chairman. He already has an in-depth knowledge of the Festival and we will certainly be in very good hands.

May I thank all the Friends of the Amersham Festival most warmly for your ongoing support. We look forward to welcoming you to the coming Autumn series of orchestral concerts.

Iain Ledingham