

Amersham Festival Chamber Orchestra Concert

St Mary's Church, Old Amersham

Friday 10th January 2014

It was once again a very very cold, windy and wet night as we made our way to St. Mary's Church, Old Amersham, for the 3rd in the Autumn and Winter Concerts of the Amersham Festival Chamber Orchestra, under their charismatic Conductor Iain Ledingham.

On this occasion we were all looking forward to a wonderful concert consisting of, not one, but two premier performances of the composer Peter Lea Cox – who goes under his composition name of Lecosaldi. He took this name when, as a RAM Student, he was endowed with that nickname after been heard to improvise in the manner of Vivaldi, and he chooses to use it when composing in the baroque style. And the icing on the cake was that he was in the audience for these performances, how fantastic was that!

The concert opened with Corelli's Concerto Grosso in C Major, Opus 6 No 10, with soloists from the orchestra – Charlotte Edwards (Leader/1st Violin), Majorie King (Violin) and Anne-Isabel Meyer (cello). The Orchestra and soloists, under their extremely musical conductor Iain Ledingham gave a marvellous performance and did the work justice. It was an uplifting start to what turned out to be a cracking concert in every way.

Next came the first of the premier performances from Lecosaldi, you could tell from the atmosphere amongst audience, that we all felt such a privilege to be at this performance, and were totally enthralled by both the music and the performance from the soloists and the orchestra. The applause was resounding, especially when the composer stepped up to take his just applause from orchestra, soloists and audience.

What could top that we all thought? Then came the next piece which was G. Sammartini's RECORDER CONCERTO in F Major with the soloist Charlotte Barbour-Condini – who, of course, made history when she became the first

recorder player to win the BBC Young Musician Woodwind Final, and went on to reach the Final of the BBC Young Musician 2012, which also corresponded with her 16th birthday on 13th May.

She was magnificent. Myself and the whole audience were totally enthralled – how can anybody get such a wonderful sound out of the recorder? Well I certainly couldn't as a child trying to learn the instrument (it is still in my drawer) I should have tried harder, not that it would have made any difference. We all rapturously applauded her the moment the last note was played.

And so into the interval and her performance was all we could talk about.

In the second half once again we were privileged to another premier performance from Lescosaldi, his Adagio in A Minor for Violoncello, Strings and Continuo – could the evening get any better – it just did and the applause was once again resounding from both orchestra, Iain and the audience, which got louder still as he stepped up, once again, to take his well deserved applause.

We all calmed down a little for the next piece - Corelli's, Christmas Concerto Grosso, Opus 6 No 8 which was composed for the night of the Nativity, and would have been performed in churches on Christmas Eve. The Orchestra, Iain and soloists – Charlotte Edwards and Keith Lewis (violins), and Anne-Isabel Meyer (cello) were the soloists – took us through the work to end with the celebrated 'Pastorale' which ends the Concerto's delightful varied patchwork of movements, and would have been played during the blessing of the crib.

Next we heard the delightful piece by Rossini – his string Sonata in G Major, written when he was only 12 years old. It is full of high spirits in the opening and closing movements, while the Andantino - in the remote key of E flat major - is surprisingly thoughtful and poignant at times.

At this point I think myself and the rest of the audience were nearly out of emotion – BUT NO – the last piece was Antonio Vivaldi's RECORDER CONCERTO in C Major, with Charlotte Barbour-Condini once again playing the solo recorder. This remarkable work was composed for the sopranino recorder and exploits its potential for virtuosity to the full. Opening at a steady pace

only to erupt into cascades of demisemiquavers for the soloist, it takes us through the more solemn parts to end with an ebullient dance-like melody full of swirling trills.

Needless to say, once again the audience burst into rapturous applause the moment Charlotte stopped playing.

We were spellbound by this virtuoso performance by someone so accomplished, and young – what a fantastic opportunity to have been able to attend this concert when she is just on the cusp of a great career. It is something we will all cherish in the years to come when we read how she has risen to greatness, as she surely must.

At the end of the concert Charlotte spoke to some members of the audience who were recorder students, attending with their teachers. How generous is that – once she heard they were in the audience she insisted on talking to them, no doubt giving them the benefit of all her knowledge and hard work.

Well, I am a bit speechless (not like me at all) but it was such a wonderful evening – it would not be difficult to imagine this concert with its orchestra, conductor and soloists performing at the more prestigious venues around the country – but not at the price we paid for the concert.

I cannot recommend too loudly these concerts by the Amersham Festival Chamber Orchestra under the charismatic and very musical baton of Iain Ledingham, who incidentally was the founder of the South Bucks Choral Society and the Amersham Festival Chamber Orchestra, as well as coaching many of today's young singers.

Their next orchestral concert is on Friday 7th February 2014 with a concert of Music for String Orchestra at St. Mary's Church Old Amersham. Ticket sales – Box Office 01494 876465. This promises to be a superb concert, so do try get a ticket and go, you will not be disappointed – these are not amateur musicians - The Amersham Festival Chamber Orchestra is made up of freelance professional musicians active in various chamber and symphony orchestras in London and also in chamber groups and ensembles.

ENJOY!!

Kay Johnson 12th January 2014