



Kempf on top form for Marlborough recital

Sunday, 6 October 2013, 7:30pm
Memorial Hall, Marlborough College

24 years ago, the College purchased a beautiful new Steinway Concert Grand, which has graced the Memorial Hall stage ever since, providing listeners with hours of pleasure in the process.

Perhaps not surprisingly after such use, the piano has come to the end of its life in this context, and following a recent fundraising campaign a new Steinway will be purchased at the beginning of 2014.

So we said goodbye to an old friend, but one couldn't have imagined a better way to say farewell than a recital from the excellent British pianist Freddy Kempf, the last such recital on this piano.

Kempf is a true master and he extracted every possible colour and character from the piano, in an at times breath-taking display of technical and musical wizardry.

His programme was dramatic, powerful and intoxicating – one was constantly engaged and treated to a roller coaster ride of emotional and personal conviction, sealed with a lyricism and espressivo quality that was truly captivating.

His choice of programme featured some heavyweights of the piano repertoire: Schumann Etudes Opus 13 and Mussorgsky's Pictures at an Exhibition to name but two, allowing Kempf to show he is a marathon runner, seemingly possessing endless reserves of energy to deliver such works without a hint of fatigue.

Despite Kempf's consummate skill, however, one could not escape the fact that the tone of the piano (particularly in the upper register) is very much on the wane, so roll on 2014, and the arrival of a new friend who we hope will grace the stage with equal distinction for another 25 years – perhaps even longer.

Philip Dukes FGSM Hon ARAM
(Artistic Director)

Celebrating the life of court composer John Dowland

Internationally acclaimed viol consort 'Fretwork' with guests Elizabeth Kenny (lute) and Ian Bostridge (tenor) will present an afternoon of music and songs from Renaissance England

Since their founding in 1986, Fretwork have established themselves as one of the foremost viol consorts of our time.

Their experience of the core repertoire of great English consort music, from Taverner to Purcell is unsurpassed. And their disc recordings of works by Lawes, Purcell, Byrd and Dowland are unrivalled.

Another of their preoccupations is the music of JS Bach. Following the release of their much acclaimed disc 'The Art of Fugue,' the ensemble has arranged many of Bach's keyboard works for viola, including 'The Well Tempered Clavier,' 'Clavierübung' and in 2011 'The Goldberg Variations.'

commissions reads like a "who's who" of 20th century British composers, from Michael Nyman to Orlando Gough, from Sir John Tavener to Sally Beamish, and others.

International commissions have included pieces by Tan Dun, the Chinese conductor /composer most widely known for the 'Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon' film score, Danish composer Poul Ruders, and Australian Peter Sculthorpe.

Fretwork are recently home from an Autumn tour of North America celebrating the 450th anniversary of John Dowland's birth. Ian Bostridge and



Photo © Chris Dawes

But don't think for a moment that Fretwork are a period ensemble specialising in the music of the 17th century and earlier. They are also at the vanguard of contemporary music for viola.

Pioneers of new music, their list of

Elizabeth Kenny join them at the start of 2014, in what will be a resumption of their 'John Dowland' programme performed this Summer during the BBC Proms series.

[Page 2, Column 2]

Sacconis sparkle on opening night

To begin the 72nd season, the Marlborough College Concert Series presented the Sacconi String Quartet in a varied programme of music by Haydn, Benjamin Britten and Beethoven.

The Sacconis are a young quartet on the rise, and on this performance it's easy to see why.



Brimming with sparkle, energy and fizz, this was a performance of real class and flare, with a freshness that comes with the flourish of youth and the audience clearly enjoyed themselves.

The Haydn Quartet that opened proceedings was precise, neat and nimble; a perfect curtain raiser to Britten's 2nd String Quartet which followed.

2013 is the 100th anniversary of the composer's birth, so it was a fitting inclusion and following an informative introduction from viola player Robin Ashwell, we were treated to a spirited and atmospheric performance of this marvellous work.

There was the necessary vigour and robust attack, alongside some breath-taking colours, and ensemble was judged to perfection, making for an altogether memorable performance.

There was only one work in the second half, but what a work! Beethoven's late quartet Opus 132 is a truly immense piece – timeless in its ability to sound utterly original on each hearing, and the Sacconi's rendition was both persuasive and polished.

Late Beethoven presents significant musical and technical challenges for the players: optimum control, precision in phrasing, unification of intonation and significant stamina, to name but a few, but again, the Sacconi Quartet didn't disappoint – on the contrary, they warmed to the task in hand, delivering a truly special performance.

A fitting start to the 2013 /2014 season.

Philip Dukes FGSM Hon ARAM
(Artistic Director)

Fretwork [from Page 1, Column 3]

Following their recital in Marlborough, they will tour the UK, Arnhem and Madrid with the same programme.

English Renaissance composer, singer and lutenist **John Dowland** (1563-1626) is best known for melancholy lute songs such as 'Flow my tears', 'I saw my Lady weep' and 'In darkness let me dwell.'

Lute songs were the popular music of the day, generally performed by a singer accompanying himself on a lute, occasionally with support from a bass viol.

Flow My Tears, which begins with a 'falling tear' motif of four notes was originally composed in 1596 as an instrumental work entitled 'Lachrimae pavane.' It became something of a signature piece for Dowland, and was later published as part of a collection of seven pavans.

Each pavan is individually named leading music scholars to speculate on the meaning. Does the sequence suggest a narrative, for example?

Lachrimae was dedicated to Anne of Denmark, the child bride of King James VI of Scotland, (James I of England, following the unification of the Scottish and English crowns, in 1603).

Elizabeth Kenny is one of Europe's leading lute players. She is a principal player and initiator of seventeenth century projects with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, as well as a founder member of Concordia viol consort.



She retains strong international ties, including with William Christie's Les Arts Florissants, Caen, France.

Her research interests have led to critically acclaimed recordings of Lawes, Purcell and Dowland – musical collaborations she draws together as 'Theatre of the Ayre.' As Director of the ensemble, she delights in bringing together dramatically-minded singers

The seven lachrimae (seven tears) are:

- Lachrimae Antiquae (old tears)
- Lachrimae Antiquae Novae (old tears renewed)
- Lachrimae Gementes (sighing tears)
- Lachrimae Tristes (sad tears)
- Lachrimae Coactae (forced tears)
- Lachrimae Amantis (a lover's tears)
- Lachrimae Veræ (true tears)

all of which will be performed in our programme.

Also on the programme is a selection of galliards – a music and dance form popular throughout Europe during the 16th century. Galliards consist of formal patterns of steps occupying one or more measures of music. Typically, a measure has five steps – right, left, right, left, and a cadence – the latter being a leap, a jump or a hop.

Very little is known of Dowland's early life, but it is generally thought he was born in London and moved to Paris in 1580, taking up service to the English Ambassadors at the French court. While living in France, he converted to Roman Catholicism before returning to England four years later, and marrying soon after.

Following an unsuccessful application to the court of Queen Elizabeth I, he again found favour abroad as a musician and composer at the court of King Christian IV of Denmark. ■

and players to perform 17th century music.

Next month Theatre of the Ayre will present a programme of sacred and secular music by Marc-Antoine Charpentier at Wigmore Hall, London.

Since making debut appearances at Wigmore Hall, the Purcell Room and the Aldeburgh Festival during the early /mid 1990s, Ian Bostridge has risen to major prominence as one of the foremost tenors of our time.

In opera, he regularly guests with the Royal Opera House, English National Opera and the Bavarian State Opera, while his international recital career takes him to the major concert halls of Europe and North America.

On the concert platform, he has sung with the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, London Symphony, and many other leading orchestras. Festival performances have included Salzburg, Edinburgh, Munich, Vienna, Aldeburgh and at the Schubertiade.

Much of the Autumn, Ian has been performing songs by Benjamin Britten ('Our Hunting Fathers,' 'Curlw River,' and 'Les illuminations') in London, Germany and Holland. ■