



'Emperor' Concerto marks the arrival of a new Steinway piano

Sunday, 2 February 2014, 3.00pm
Memorial Hall, Marlborough College

So it's here! Our precious and thrilling new Concert D Steinway Grand Piano which, in the final concert of the 2013 /2014 MCCS season saw its inaugural performance in the Memorial Hall, where it will grace the stage for many years to come.



Photo © Lisa-Marie Mazzucco

What better a work to bless its arrival than Beethoven's masterpiece, 'The Emperor' Concerto, played here exquisitely by soloist Alessio Bax. The Southbank Sinfonia was in fine form too under Musical Director Simon Over, to the delight of a sell-out audience.

Proceedings began with the sparkling overture to the Marriage of Figaro and after a few words of thanks from the Master to the many donors who had supported the new Steinway Fund, we settled back to listen to this most incredible instrument.

The tone is even, the bass has depth and its sound is ideally suited to the acoustics and size of the Memorial Hall.

The second half featured Schubert's colossus, the Great C major Symphony which allowed the Southbank Sinfonia to flourish accordingly.

I extend my personal and heartfelt thanks to all who made the Steinway project come to fruition. It will surely give hours of pleasure to many in years to come, and in so doing help to preserve the wonderful tradition of music at Marlborough.

Philip Dukes FGSM Hon ARAM
(Artistic Director)

A Grand Introduction

The making and history of our Steinway piano

According to Steinway and Sons, 98% of the world's active concert pianists today, choose Steinway pianos when performing.

Undoubtedly, this has much to do with reputation, and it is certainly warranted.

It is a reputation founded on a management ideal to make only the finest pianos without compromise to quality – building to a standard, not to a price. And that is why, during a century and a half of production, the Steinway 'marque' has come to represent the benchmark against which all other grand pianos are measured.

A Steinway piano has more than 12,000 individual components, and each incorporates no fewer than 125 patented features and processes.

It takes nearly a year to build a Steinway, and nothing is hurried.

Photo © Steinway and Sons

Even the carefully selected woods chosen for the rims, top, soundboards, and actions are cured in their yard, kilns, and conditioning rooms until they stabilise at a prescribed level of moisture content.

Gradually the instrument is assembled. Then comes the 'voicing process' – the mystique by which an instrument

becomes a Steinway. Every subtle nuance is drawn out by their craftsmen – balancing and adjusting each of the keys, shaping, hardening and softening every hammer – until that uniquely characteristic Steinway acoustic is achieved.

Our Steinway piano is a Model D Grand. At just short of nine feet in length, it is a full size concert grand – perfectly suited to the Memorial Hall.

Two years ago, the piano was the centrepiece of the Leeds Piano Competition (2012). It has made numerous festival appearances, including at the City of London Festival, in Brighton,

Petworth, and Tetbury, and at the Oxford Lieder Festival.

Among the many soloists who have



performed on our Steinway are – English virtuosi Imogen Cooper, Peter Donohoe, and Charles Owen, British born, naturalised Australian Stephen Hough, and Australian virtuoso Piers Lane, along with Frenchmen Pascal Rogé and Bernard d'Ascoli.

The piano has travelled widely within the UK, appearing at St George's (Bristol), Glyndeboune Opera House, Sheldonian Theatre (Oxford), Middle Temple Hall, and somewhat intriguingly at the National Gallery of Art. ■

'Live broadcast' is a first for the Memorial Hall

**Sunday, 3 November 2013, 7:30pm
Memorial Hall, Marlborough College**

For the third concert of the MCCS, we were delighted to welcome the BBC National Orchestra of Wales.

The event was given additional profile as it was scheduled to be broadcast live on Radio 3 – a first for Marlborough. There was indeed an extra sense of anticipation from a packed Memorial Hall audience, with the most enthusiastic ticket-holders having taken their seats as early as 6.20 pm!



BBC National Orchestra of Wales

Photo © Belina Skovbro

The concert began with Stravinsky's *Dumbarton Oaks*, and while this was a little overshadowed by the stature of the repertoire which was to follow, its whimsical character provided an interesting curtain-raiser to the concert and showed the orchestra's skill in its clarity of playing, variety of timbres, textures and excellent interplay between solo woodwind and upper strings under the direction of principal guest conductor, Jac van Steen.

The highlight of the evening for many was a performance of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* in which Benny Kim (violin) and Philip Dukes (viola) took to the stage as soloists.

The elegance of the 18th century idiom was immediately captured from the orchestral introduction, and from the outset the clarity of passage work and expressive cantabile from both soloists was persuasively projected.

This set the tone for a performance of the highest calibre with arguably the slow movement cadenza being the highlight of the evening: moments of real pathos and atmosphere were created from the most intimate string playing between the soloists.

After the interval the concert continued with Stravinsky's *Pulcinella* in its original form, including vocal soloists Elizabeth Atherton (soprano), Benjamin Hulett (tenor) and Matthew Brook (bass) for several movements.

The audience were genuinely on the edge of their seats throughout the entire performance and clearly admired the virtuosity and impeccable ensemble between the wind, ripieno, and concert-anti string players and the brilliance of

Stravinsky's orchestration. This was reflected in the warm and generous applause that closed the concert.

This was a fantastic event in every sense, and I was personally delighted to hear the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in such fine form and to review the concert having spent six years in the first violin section in my formative years.

The audience played its part also, though would not have been aware of the introduction to the concert on the radio and the excellent interval talk and presentation given by Philip Dukes about music at Marlborough.

Bravo indeed to Philip for his organisation and superb playing on this very special evening for Marlborough College!

**Adrian Eales
Head of Orchestral Studies
(Marlborough College)**

Fretwork and guests reveal Dowland's song writing prowess

**Sunday, 12 January 2014, 3.00pm
Memorial Hall, Marlborough College**

The New Year concert of the MCCS was given by the excellent group 'Fretwork' who are no strangers to the series, nor indeed to the College, given two of the members for this concert were Old Marlburians.

They were joined by soloists Elizabeth Kenny (lute) and the renowned English tenor, Ian Bostridge – a first-rate collaboration which made for a varied performance despite a programme which featured exclusively the music of John Dowland.

As founder member Richard Boothby writes, "Such is the massively successful contribution to English music by Dowland that he should be judged as one of the truly great songwriters alongside Purcell, Britten and Lennon and McCartney ...". Having heard this extensive musical tribute to him, one is inclined to agree.

The programme was beautifully crafted and deliciously subtle, drawing the listener into a magical world of times long gone. There's a no nonsense approach by Fretwork: they let the music do the talking and the playing is sublimely accomplished, perfectly balanced, well articulated and intonation spot on (not an easy thing to achieve with unpredictable gut strings and a damp day!).

What was also rather special about this concert was the way Ian Bostridge was incorporated into proceedings. Rather than the big soloist standing up front, he assumed a well-integrated role sitting within the group and in so doing preserved the great intimacy of chamber music at its very best.

Altogether, very palatable and refreshing, and a very special way to start the New Year.

**Philip Dukes FGSM Hon ARAM
(Artistic Director)**

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