

Music



Arnold Camerata at the Sherwell Centre Plymouth (review)

09th April 2010

It's taken months of planning, but the opening recital in the three-night Essentially English Chamber Music Festival was well worth all the hard work in preparation.

Introduced by Peninsula Arts Director, Simon Ible, it was immediately apparent that, while these young performers, under their Artistic Director, Richard Waters, are still at various stages in their music-college training, they are already fully-fledged players, and more than capable of turning in performances of which many established professional ensembles would be proud.

Vaughan Williams's sumptuous Piano Quintet got the programme off to a fine start and, apart from a slight concern in terms of dynamic balance, was a strong, mature reading from all concerned.

Malcolm Arnold's, *pictured right*, quirky Wind Quintet showed a deft skill in programming, with a performance arguably the evening's highlight, and with a noticeably greater sense of visual communication than earlier.

Chris Lyons's specially-commissioned Chamber Symphony was always going to be something you either loved or loathed.

While full of interesting textures and sonorities, the composer's somewhat convoluted attempt to explain his thought processes seemed no less vague than the music itself, especially in terms of any intended literary associations.

Hannah Lawrance's assured performance of Malcolm Arnold's Fantasy for Clarinet was finely complemented by the delightful sounds of Bax's In Memoriam, distinguished by harpist, Marged Hall's telling contribution, bringing this first evening to a most impressive close.

PHILIP R BUTTALL



[See [below](#) for Philip's review at Saltash Wesley Methodist Church]

Music



Arnold Camerata at Saltash Wesley Methodist Church (review)

10th April 2010

Saltash Wesley Methodist Church provided the perfect venue for the second event in the Essentially English Chamber Music Festival by the Arnold Camerata.

The somewhat more intimate setting proved ideal for this particular programme, which featured small, rather than large ensembles.

Bax's Elegiac Trio, with its clear Celtic origins, seemed an apposite choice to open their first concert on Cornish soil, where the glorious tone of Chloë Vincent's flute was finely complimented by Steve Doman's viola-playing, and all ably supported by harpist, Marged Hall.

Britten's Temporal Variations certainly blew the cobwebs away, with a masterful demonstration of breath control and tonal contrast from oboist, Lydia Griffiths, with an equally strong contribution from Erdem Misirliogu (piano).

Richard Waters's immensely confident viola-playing really brought Rebecca Clarke's Passacaglia to life, with a mature and expressive performance rare in someone still at the learning stage.

Malcolm Arnold's, *pictured right*, Piano Trio was the ideal work to dispel the more sombre echoes of the Clarke, drawing an especially assured lead from Cassandra Hamilton (violin), and good interaction with cellist, Mark Lindley, again with stalwart support from the piano.

Chloë Vincent gave a quite scintillating account of York Bowen's Flute Sonata, leaving Beethoven's early String Quartet in F, led by William Melvin, to conclude another thoroughly enjoyable programme, and where all the players had once again taken the trouble to look the part, too.

PHILIP R BUTTALL



[See [below](#) for Philip's review at Tavistock Parish Church]

Music



Arnold Camerata at Tavistock Church (review)

11th April 2010

While the Essentially English Chamber Music Festival was all about introducing local audiences to the wealth of somewhat rarely-heard indigenous music, it was also very much a learning experience for these highly-talented young instrumentalists.

Arriving at the venue only to discover that the piano was significantly sharp could have fazed any group of seasoned professionals, and especially wind players whose options here are virtually nil.

But a few phone calls later, and a last-minute visit by a nearby friendly piano-tuner, and the first item could go ahead as planned.

In fact there was never even the slightest hint in Gordon Jacob's Sextet for Piano and Winds that rehearsal time had been severely compromised, such was their assured and confident performance.

Both here and in the next two works, Arnold's mixed Quintet, and Horovitz's Oboe Quartet, the supreme quality of these fine players was self-evident, but Stanford's inspired Nonet, which closed the programme and the event itself, was a pure joy to hear, and arguably one of the festival's undoubted highlights.

This also provided an ideal opportunity to commend the often unsung supporting players – bassoonist, Ben Excell, Katy Furmanska (double bass) and Edward Griffiths (horn) – who, along with the other members of the Arnold Camerata, Artistic Director, Richard Waters, and not forgetting the backstage crew, had produced such a wonderful musical feast over the last three evenings.

PHILIP R BUTTALL

