

Music



The English Concert in Dartington (review)

14th March 2009

Bach's first biographer described Goldberg as a very skilful keyboard player, but having no particular talent for composition.

Even if not quite of the calibre of Bach or some of his more illustrious contemporaries, Goldberg's substantial D minor Harpsichord Concerto can still be an effective work in the right hands.

Mahan Esfahani's performance as part of The English Concert at Dartington's Great Hall was always technically assured, but lacked projection and never really dominated the ensemble as a true concerto soloist should, which here was more a question of imposing a strong musical personality rather than one of mere dynamic balance.

However, Bach's Fourth Brandenburg Concerto witnessed a complete transformation.

Joined by recorder virtuosi, Pamela Thorby and Ian Wilson, there was now so much more interaction between the players, as well as some quite exceptional violin playing from director, Nadja Zwiener.

Bach's Fifth Brandenburg Concerto maintained the momentum, inspired by the addition of superb flautist, Lisa Beznosiuk.

Mahan Esfahani despatched the prodigiously difficult harpsichord part with consummate ease, as if somewhat more comfortable in this triple-concerto configuration, now essentially fronted by the solo flute and violin.

The evening's undoubted highlight was Telemann's E minor Concerto for Flute and Recorder, where the stunning performance by Lisa Beznosiuk and Pamela Thorby was perfectly complemented by the fine playing from The English Concert - nowhere more so than in the scintillating finale, with its riotous Gypsy overtones.

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