

Artistic Directors Report

The last year has seen many very enjoyable musical events, both in our Winter Series of Concerts and in the Festival in April 2023. I remember with particular pleasure our opening concert in the winter series featuring Grieg's Holberg Suite, Holst's St Paul's Suite and two wonderful C major symphonies by Mozart. The juxtaposition of classical symphonies with later works which pay tribute to music of the 17th/18th century was delightful. We had two lovely baroque programmes after that, including Handel's Water Music Suite in F – splendidly festive music, and Bach's Violin Concerto in E major, beautifully played by Charlotte Edwards. We celebrated the New Year with a fine mixture of Italian Concertos and other works including Vivaldi's delightful Concerto for Two Cellos. It was good to return to St James Church, Gerrards Cross for a classical programme, in which our brilliant flautist, Jennifer Stinton excelled in a virtuosic concerto by J.S.Bach's most successful son, Carl Philip Emmanuel Bach, along with Symphonies by Haydn and Mozart.

Our April Festival offered a wide range of music. We started with an exciting and very impressive concert by Amersham A Cappella singing many splendid songs, all unaccompanied and from memory, under the direction of their very talented conductor Helen Lappert. They were followed the next weekend by the Pasadena Roof Orchestra on a very welcome return visit. These superb musicians performed to a full house and gave us a great evening. Other highlights included Nathaniel Mander's memorable harpsichord recital at Chenies Manor House. He treated us to a colourful selection of music by Handel, Bach, Couperin, Duphy and Scarlatti, all introduced in a most interesting and entertaining way.

Our Festival Chamber Orchestra were in fine form in a programme of music mostly inspired by Scotland – Mendelssohn's Hebrides Overture and the marvellous Scottish Symphony, along with an iconic and very tuneful rarity, The Land of the Mountain and the Flood by Hamish MacCunn. There was one English work as well – Vaughan Williams much loved "The Lark Ascending" featuring our distinguished leader, Charlotte Edwards. The orchestra also gave fine support to South Bucks Choral Society in Schubert's very fine Mass in E flat, Zadok the Priest, Mendelssohn's "Hear my prayer" as well as contributing a lovely account of the Unfinished Symphony.

It was a pleasure to feature some very talented young musicians from our local area. Young players from Amersham Music Centre entertained us in a wide range of different ensembles, displaying the excellent standard these young players are already reaching. We also had a memorable concert in St Mary's Church, given by five young musicians – Bucks Young Musicians Concert for Ukraine. These musicians showed considerable virtuosity on a range of instruments, ending with an impressive account of the first movement of Chopin's Piano Concerto No 2, played with great aplomb on two pianos. The concert also raised a substantial sum for Ukraine.

Throughout the 2023 Festival we had excellent audiences and we would like to thank the Friends of the Festival for their generous support and encouragement. We look forward to seeing you soon in the current winter series and in April 2024.

Iain Ledingham (Artistic Director)

