



East Finchley Arts Festival 2012



Festival Mozart: The London Mozart Players. Photo by Marian Harris.

Mozart and a modern masterpiece

Review by Ken Carter

Once again - and why not? - the East Finchley Arts Festival kicked off on Saturday 6 October with the London Mozart Players and new music from Geoffrey Hanson, the festival's musical director. As conductor, he warmly and carefully eased Corelli's *Christmas Concerto* towards the young Elgar's *Serenade for Strings*, played lightly and sprightly, as it should be.

Then Sebastian Comberti introduced Boccherini's graphic depiction of 18th-century Madrid night sounds: the Ave Maria bell, soldiers' drums, street singers and the Night Watch; all this on the strings, making vivid, resonating and unexpected sounds.

Geoffrey Hanson's *Odyssey for 'Cello and Strings'* was larger and more driven, lyrical and accessible. Comberti was moving and authoritative on the cello. I should welcome a CD of Geoffrey Hanson's arts festival gifts over the years. His craftsmanship bears re-hearing.

Astonishing young talent

Review by Ken Carter

On Sunday 7 October at the Young Artists' Recital No. 1, soprano Eleanor Janes astonished us with the firmness of her technical skills: no fudging, no faltering, no winsome tremolandi. Each note, at whatever speed and however intricately she was singing, was a bull's eye. I felt strain, though - strain from achieving such ringing perfection ... a string of technical exercises. I especially enjoyed *On This Island* by Benjamin Britten. Here, both she and her exuberant accompanist, Rianka Bouwmeester, were focused and at home.

In the second half, Matthew Higham, principal flute with the Barbican Youth Orchestra, astounded me with his virtuosity. He flipped prestos of runs and arpeggios into the audience as if they were nothing. Breath was no problem, whether he was scampering puckishly or sustaining semibreves of sombre declaration. Matthew is to play next, we heard, at the Carnegie Hall. Lucky New Yorkers! He will be giving them a world of emotions, resonantly felt and ably played.

Pop-up perfection

Arts festival review by Ken Carter

Pop-Up Opera came to the Arts Festival on Tuesday 9 October in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*. This was a riot and a triumph.

The light-hearted opera was treated as a farce, emphatically sung in the original Italian, with absolute command of the many tricky technical demands made of the singers. The plot, though involved, was absolutely clear, through actions, stage business, flicks of costume change, lyrical melody and, on a nearby screen, occasional fragments of English text. Warm credit to Darren Royston for directing such a fast-moving, hilarious and sunny entertainment. Continuous delight came from the assured, Italianate, flowing and warmly romantic singing of Cliff Zammit Stephens, Raúl Baglietto, Alexander Learmonth, Penelope Manser and Clementine Lovell. May the ensemble thrive - and return to East Finchley.



Festival Paprika - Paprika's infectious rhythms were a festival hit. Photo by Marian Harris.

Paprika are hot stuff

Review by Betti Blatman
East Finchley Arts Festival at All Saints' Church had a full house on 11 October to enjoy Paprika, who hail from Romania, Serbia and the UK. The evening was ignited by the violinist Bogdan Vacarescu, whose electrifying performance continued whilst his feet stomped rhythmically.

Throughout the evening, the audience enthusiastically expressed their delight by clapping and swaying to the infectious rhythms of the band's repertoire of traditional Eastern European, Balkan, Gypsy and classical music.

Once again, I was mesmerised by the violinist's tantalising performance of my favourite *Skylark* and it was quite breathtaking to watch his incredible speed and technical mastery.

The evening ended with an encore of *Czardas* by Vittorio Monti, which was greatly appreciated by the entire audience who will undoubtedly want to see Paprika again (check www.paprikamusic.com for future events).



Festival opera - Pop-Up Opera take their bows for performing Donizetti. Photo by Marian Harris.

Writers and their work

Review by Daphne Chamberlain

East Finchley Writers Group are now veterans of the Arts Festival. It is a wonderful opportunity to showcase their work to all festival-goers, as well as to satisfy the curiosity of friends and relations.

As usual, this year's programme had something for everyone, including short stories, poems, extracts from novels, travel writing, and even a piece of bilingual flash fiction. What's that? A very, very short piece, read both in the author's native Spanish and in English.

It doesn't matter whether you are a published author or a complete beginner (and we heard some of each). When you are reading aloud, you must grab your listeners' attention,

and the group grabbed well. Some of the readings were very memorable. Who could forget the door-to-door salesman who sold misery? It was a nice selection too, with nothing too long.

I will be reviewing their latest anthology next month. East Finchley Writers meet on Wednesdays at the Old White Lion. For more details, contact Carola on 020 8883 5808.

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