



Strange and beautiful sounds at the Arts Festival

Reviews by Ken Carter

On the first night of the East Finchley Arts Festival, strange sounds reverberated throughout All Saints Church in Durham Road.

Seven cellists, collectively The Massive Violins, were playing pop songs, with their invigorating house-style of plucking, syncopation, thumping, staccato, pizzicato and lush lyricism. And there was singing too.

It was a suitably energetic start to the festival's 20th

anniversary year, which also brought us an exhibition of paintings and photos by local artists, poetry readings at the Black Gull Bookshop, a film showing at the Phoenix and a chance for everyone to sing a Mozart masterpiece.

On the second evening pianist Masayuki Tayama per-

formed Beethoven and Mozart in outstanding style. His Rachmaninov was barnstorming and wildly acclaimed, the Chopin encores likewise.

Utterly majestic later in the week was Rimantas Vingras in Bach's *A Major Keyboard Concerto*. The Orfeas String Quartet was exquisite but distant in Mozart's *Dissonance*, while their Borodin quartet movement sang sweetly. Festival director Geoffrey Hanson's *Five Nocturnes for Tenor & Chamber Ensemble* were delightful, and delightfully conducted by Geoffrey Simon. His recording of Hanson's music is imminent.

Hanson's music was also given a brilliant account later by The London Ripieno Singers and the strings of the London Mozart Players, regular and welcome visitors.

Friday brought folk music from the Askew Sisters. Emily offers the violin, Hazel the melodeon, the concertina and, not least, her voice, which is captivating, soft and true.

On the final Saturday, amateur singers from across the area formed an ad hoc chorus and spent the afternoon rehearsing Mozart's *Requiem* before giving a splendid public performance in the evening with Mark Denza accompanying on organ and David Lardi conducting.

The last day of the festival gave us Pop-up Opera's uproarious take on *The Barber of Seville*. A little slow to start, it gathered pace and bravura. Flora McIntosh's Rosina was winsome; Tom Stoddart's Figaro had thrusting authority and Tom Asher's Basilio/Fiorello was mellifluous.

A fitting flourish to bring another wonderfully successful arts festival to a close.



Pop-up Opera - Barber of Seville. Photo Mike Coles



The Massive Violins Photo Mike Coles



Manorside and Martin School Choirs Photo Mike Coles



The Askew Sisters Photo Mike Coles



The Pantaloons in Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde Photo Mike Coles



The Orfeas Ensemble Photo Mike Coles



Festival Artistic Director Geoffrey Hanson Photo Mike Coles

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