

Wigmore Hall

Maisie Lewis Young Artists Concert, 4 April 2005

The spring concert was a varied and enjoyable combination of lieder and string quartets, with a high standard of performance displayed throughout.

First on stage was the young Sacconi Quartet, formed while studying at the Royal College of Music where they won several prizes. In Haydn's *Opus 20 no 6* the players soon captured the audience's attention with their qualities of freshness, liveliness, delicacy and refinement of tone, as well as robustness and vigour when required. Second on stage were the baritone William Berger and pianist John Reid. A graduate of the Royal Academy's opera course, and currently a member of the ENO's Young Singers Programme, Berger immediately engaged the audience with a confident stance and smile before addressing the serious business of a group of songs from Wolf's *Moerike Lieder*. Possessed of a strong voice with a wide dynamic range, he presented vividly the character of each song. Two highlights of the evening were the truly thrilling menace which he brought to *Der Feuerreiter* and

the droll, rasping tone colour of the mocking critic in *Abscheid*. In these songs he received intelligent and strong support from John Reid who was not afraid to unleash the piano's power without swamping the singer.

After the interval Berger continued with two songs by Butterworth and Dvorak's *Ciganské Melodie*, sung in Czech. Perhaps not the richest of baritones, Berger's voice lies more towards the tenor range as indicated by his firm, ringing top notes and occasional difficulties with low notes. Nevertheless, he has a good voice which he uses effectively. With his commanding stage presence, he should be in demand.

The other highlight of the evening was the Sacconi's impassioned performance of Janacek's Quartet no 2 (*Intimate Letters*). The swiftly changing moods and fragmentary nature of the work, fierce and lyrical by turns, were conveyed with spell-binding intensity. A strength of their playing is the quality of the inner voices, the second violin in particular being outstanding. However, their intimate

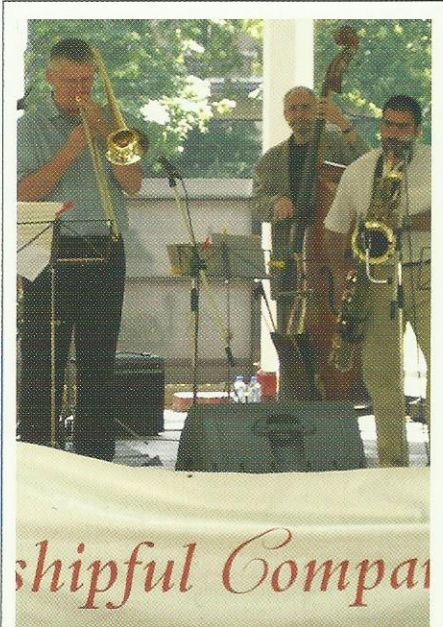
rapport with the leader seemed to be at the expense of the less extrovert cellist; perhaps an exchange of places between cello and viola might help.

Liveryman Alan Paul

PS: I am reminded of a story told to me by Sigi Nissel:

"A string quartet is like a fine bottle of wine, with the name of the first violin often providing the name on the label, while the cello provides the bass line which is the structure of the bottle, but the second violin and the viola, they are the wine!"

As second fiddle, he would say that wouldn't he?!



Mark Nightingale, trombone: Simon Woolf, bass: Andy Panayi, saxophone

Jazz in the Garden

For five days during the City of London Festival, the Company organised a series of lunchtime gigs in Finsbury Circus. On Wednesday 29 June, the Andy Panayi Quartet were the featured group; Andy was our second Jazz Bronze Medallist in 1994 and was recently admitted to the Company as a Freeman.



borne fruit already, as any listener at our last Pizza on the Park evening will know. I hope that you will join me in wishing the Jazz Awards Panel well as they seek out the British jazz greats of the twenty-first century.

The Jazz Awards Panel comprises: Bill Ashton – MD of the National Youth Jazz Orchestra and Company medal winner: Tim Garland* – saxophonist, composer, educator and Company medal winner: Tina May* – singer, educator and Company medal winner: Guy Barker – trumpeter and educator: Alec Dankworth – doublebassist and educator: Andy Panayi – saxophonist and Company medal winner: Scott Stroman – Head of Jazz faculty, GSMD.

* Jazz Committee member.



The Sacconi Quartet

An Auspicious Octet

We hear that... a forthcoming concert links the Sacconi Quartet, whose recent Maisie Lewis Young Artists' performance is reviewed here, with the Chilingirian Quartet, which gave the very first Maisie Lewis Young Artists' performance back in 1970, exactly thirty-five years ago. On 29 October these two ensembles play together at Beaconsfield Music Club in a programme which includes Mendelssohn's Octet.

The tremendous contribution to Chamber Music made by Levon Chilingirian, founder of the senior Quartet, was also publicly acknowledged ten years ago when he was awarded the Company's Walter Willson Cobbett Medal. We wish both Quartets, and their audience, a very enjoyable evening.