

MUSICIANS COMPANY CONCERTS

*Maisie Lewis Young Artists
Wigmore Hall 8th July 1997*

One of the most impressive and admirable aspects of the ancient and traditional City Livery Companies is their relevance and practicality in the 1990's.

Recently, the concerts have been held at the Wigmore Hall, and that on 8th July was the second in a series of three. There can surely be few more useful prizes than to be given a Wigmore Hall Recital!

The two artists were exceptionally well chosen; although widely differing in age - all the performers were outstandingly accomplished on their instruments, gave a genuine 'performance' and are all ready to embark on a professional career.

The Marais Ensemble began the varied programme. The members of this wind ensemble first met at Cambridge and the Royal Academy of Music and played together in the European Union Youth Orchestra. As professional musicians they often meet in the Academy of St. Martin's and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, and have already had concert experience.

From the moment they appeared on the platform they aroused interest - their appearance and manner were full of vitality and professionalism. The opening bars of the Roussel 'Divertissement' were efficient and accurate; intonation and rhythm were consistently good and the ensemble was excellent.

The Ligetti 'Sechs Bagatelles' were also impressive technically. However, it was after the interval and three violin works later that their Poulenc 'Sextet' showed them at their best. Here, their considerable technical achievements served the music, and one began to hear real Chamber Music - there was subtlety and shaping of the musical phrases, dynamic contrasts and nuances of colour, which showed a real



*Liveryman Elizabeth Lloyd-Davies,
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Photo: Pikeriver Films

musicality and awareness of the wit and eloquence of Poulenc's superb music.

Lorna McGhee, flute, Ruth Scott, oboe, Lynsey Marsh, clarinet, Sarah Burnett, bassoon, Francis Markus, horn and Christopher Hughes, piano, gave a memorable performance of this fine work, which one hopes we will hear again during their future career.

So-Ock Kim also arrested the audience's attention from the second she appeared on the platform. She had a quiet serenity about her, which almost prepared the audience for the long opening bars of the Chausson Poème. Before she had played a note, she used her exceptional technical mastery of the violin and bow to wave an air of mystical mystery, and showed a maturity of control and constraint which made it hard to believe she was fifteen years of age. I remember being at a Master Class when Isaac Stern

spent an hour on that first note of the Chausson Poème So-Ock Kim used her bow and vibrato to make it seem as if swirling mists wafted to and fro - she gave a performance which totally captivated the audience.

The Ravel 'Tzigane' was a complete contrast - and again captured the essence of the music - for once the Hungarian rhythms danced and sang - rather than attacked in the ferocious manner so often used by well known violinists.

In Beethoven's 'Sonata in C minor' Op. 39 No.2, the pianist Tom Blach came into his own - from a sensitive accompanist to a worthy partner - from the first bars. These two young musicians intelligently conveyed Beethoven's musical intentions with demanding dynamics, rhythmic and cantabile contrasts.

However, Beethoven's violin and piano sonatas are particularly testing - technically and musically, and although the first two movements were in many ways beautifully judged, the Sonata as a whole lacked its panache and forcefulness - resonant sound needed in the Scherzo and Finale to make this a totally convincing interpretation. However, at fifteen, there is time to grow and develop musically and technically. So Ock Kim is a violinist to watch - she has a beautiful tone as well as an enviable technique and sensitive musicianship.

The Jury found some truly outstanding young musicians - who hopefully will have found their prize-winning recital at the Wigmore Hall a useful and enjoyable experience.

DATE FOR THE DIARY

The next Concert will take place at the Wigmore Hall on Monday 13th October followed by supper. The young artists will be Yukko Nishino, violin and Alexander Taylor, piano.

THE 1997 EUROPEAN BRASS BAND CHAMPIONSHIP

Our football teams may have found the going tough in Europe earlier this year, but when it comes to Brass Bands, it has been quite a different story. There were twelve bands from eleven different countries plus last year's winner which also came from England.

The results demonstrated the superiority of the British contingents. The winners for the second consecutive year were Yorkshire Building Society Band conducted by David King with 190 points. Second were the CWS (Glasgow) Band (Scotland) with Howard Snell, a Musicians' Company Silver Medallist, also awarded 190 points. Third were Grimethorpe Colliery (England) with Peter Parkes, another Silver Medallist awarded 188 points. Fourth were Tredegar Town Band (Wales) with Nicholas Childs with 187 points. Fifth prize went to Brass Band Midden Brabant (Belgium) with Benny Wiame who was awarded 183 points. Since 1978 when it started, British bands have failed to win on only three occasions.

For this concert there were two test pieces: "Salamander" by John McCabe was the first, which all the bands had to play. Commissioned by Michael Webber of English Heritage to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Historic Buildings and Monuments of England, it was first performed at Kenwood Lakeside, London, in June 1994 by the combined Grimethorpe Colliery and David Urquhart Travel Yorkshire Imperial Metal Bands. Later that year in September, it was chosen as the test piece for the British Open in Manchester.

The second piece was a choice from a list of twelve old test pieces from the period 1920-1940, often referred to as the 'Golden Age'. This year's winners and runners-up chose "Pageantry", first performed at Belle Vue in 1934 when the winners were Brighouse and Rastrick under the baton of the great William Halliwell. The third placed band chose 'An Epic Symphony' first performed in 1926 at the National in Crystal Palace when St Hilda's Colliery were the winners. It is interesting to note that with this piece, Peter Parkes, conducting Black Dyke, won the Open in 1976 and again in 1986 (two movements). The fourth placed band played 'Freedom'. This was the test piece at the 1922 National when it was won by the seated Horwich Railway Mechanics Institute Band. It was the first time that the bands played sitting down with the conductor sitting at the front known as 'concert formation'. Previously, they had played standing with the conductor in the centre. The other two pieces chosen were 'A Moorside Suite' by Holst and 'The Severn Suite Op 87' by Elgar (edited by Liveryman Bram Gay).

NOTE

The British Open was to be held on Saturday 6th of September for the first time in Symphony Hall, Birmingham, but was postponed until Saturday 17th January 1998 out of respect for Diana, Princess of Wales. It was the first postponement in its 145 year history, having taken place continuously through both World Wars.