

Concert Review.

ISCA MAGIC WORKS AGAIN.

Music Director of the ISCA ensemble, Roger Hendy, worked his magic again with his orchestra and a repeat visit by solo violinist Emmanuel Bach in Sidmouth Parish Church. The concert last Saturday evening was an opportunity for this rising star to shine, and within the orchestra Roger had also recruited young players to gain experience in performance which they all did commendably well. The concert attracted a full house.



The concert opened with Sibelius' Valse Triste, a piece written to accompany the play Kuolema (Death). The strings were rich and mournful in the delicate opening, the eerie dance rhythms reinforced as the full orchestra took the piece to its tragic conclusion. The pianissimo playing was exceptionally fine and wonderfully crafted.

From its first writing Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto has presented a mountain for all to climb, but Emmanuel Bach showed no fear as he launched authoritatively into the challenge with the orchestra confidently backing him up. He sensibly took a measured pace and had the audience spellbound in his cadenza before the first movement closed triumphantly to a spontaneous outbreak of applause. The second was an absorbing movement, Emmanuel finding the right soulfulness in the melody. Moving straight into the finale where the vigorous gypsy dance was confidently executed, the wise choice of pace enabled soloist and orchestra to form a tight and measured ensemble and work up the frenzy bringing the piece successfully to its whirlwind ending.

Players and audience all drew breath during the interval before the orchestra presented its final work, Beethoven's Eroica symphony. The ensemble got off to a bright and fulsome start, catching the triumphal mood of the first movement. The funeral march was suitably sombre, woodwind here making an expressive contribution as they had throughout the performance. The scherzo was bright and brisk, with the horns adding rusticity to the hunting theme. The pizzicato opening to the finale was nicely tight, and the whole movement was very well managed particularly the crescendo build up to the driven ending.

S.S.