

Musicians from The North East of Scotland Music School

Lunchbreak Concert Series

Christopher Smith: Oboe,
Isla Cartney: Clarinet,
Ngoni Masiyakurima: Piano,
Imogene Newland: Piano Accompaniments

Aberdeen Salvation Army Citadel
Thursday 5th October 2017

Reviewed by Alan Cooper

The North East of Scotland Music School (NESMS) sent four of its top young performers to the Lunchbreak concert on Thursday 5th October. These included three talented instrumental soloists, two of them, an oboist and a clarinettist accompanied by another superb young musician, Imogene Newland who showed considerable skill as an accompanist. This special talent is a particularly demanding musical skill all of its own. An accompanist is often overshadowed by the soloist he or she supports, a soloist who commands much of the audience's attention. However a good or not so good accompanist can make or break a performance. I thought Imogene Newland was one of the really good ones. Musicians like her will always be in great demand. The third soloist, Ngoni Masiyakurima was a pianist and therefore did not require to be accompanied.

I was impressed first of all by the way the soloists introduced both themselves and the music they were about to play. I think this is very important. It ensures an immediate link between the performer and the audience. Our NESMS performers accomplished it with both warmth and clarity.

Our first performer was oboist Christopher Smith. He was to play Vincenzo Bellini's Oboe Concerto. It opens with a powerfully dramatic statement for orchestra, or in this case, piano, played with considerable aplomb by Imogene Newland. I was concerned that she might drown out the soloist, but no, as soon as Christopher came in, Imogene drew back her accompaniment with considerable skill to match his playing. Throughout the concerto she built up her power for sections where the orchestra (piano) is meant to dominate before drawing back again just as required. This is of course exactly what a good conductor would do. Well done Imogene!

Christopher made his oboe sing out unwaveringly with perfect clarity. His playing, well breathed and artistically phrased soared above the piano and dominated the performance just as it should. There was a satisfying air of confidence in his playing. The opening movement flowed smoothly while the second section was sprightly, jaunty and full of pep. An enjoyable start to the concert.

What delighted me about Isla Cartney's clarinet playing was her sensitive and intelligent exploitation of a variety of loud and soft voices on her instrument. Her soft, sometimes very soft playing was particularly impressive – it was always clean, clear and steadfast. Both Gerald Finzi's 'Prelude and Romance' from his Five Bagatelles Op. 23 and the third and sixth sections of Thomas Dunhill's Phantasy Suite Op. 91 contrasted smooth quieter slow moving melodies with louder faster moving music. Isla captured the full spirit of both and once again Imogene mirrored her playing really well. It was a delight to both see and hear such reciprocity between two young musicians.

In his performance of Schubert's Impromptu Op. 90 no. 3 in G flat, Ngoni Masiyakurima captured the free flowing romantic élan of the music particularly well. He made the melodic content sing out beautifully and the continuous rippling left hand accompaniment was both steady and attractively fluid.

Ngoni's second piece was George Gershwin's "The Man I Love", the composer's arrangement for piano solo of one of his popular songs. I thought Ngoni captured the style of the music nicely. It was a bit short however. Better though to leave me feeling, 'I want more, please' rather than with some performances, but certainly not today, muttering, 'Thanks, I've had enough!'.