**Concerts in the West**

**Boyd and Lane**

**3-5 October 2019**

**Wellhayes Vinyard (Somerset) Bridport Arts Centre (Dorset)**

**Ilminster Arts Centre (Somerset), Crewkerne Dance House (Somerset)**

A review of the Crewkerne concert

The opening notes of Mendelssohn’s second Cello Sonata in D major immediately create a world of *bravura,* virtuosity and passion. This work is definitely no ‘warm-up piece’ for the main fayre of a concert programme. As the first work of the evening both performers must straightway take a dive into very technically demanding music requiring enormous confidence. Nathanial Boyd (cello) and Simon Lane (piano) met the challenge with alacrity in their performance at the Dance House, Crewkerne, the fourth and final concert in the three-day tour promoted by Concerts in the West.

The Mendelssohn sonata is not in anyway merely a work of technical ‘fireworks’. The slow *Adagio* movement with its long series of piano ‘spread chords’ is possibly unique and when played with care and understanding, allowing time and space to be part of the execution, then the passage is captivating. Simon Lane and the Pleyel piano with its characteristic action and tone were a successful combination for the task. Eventually the cello enters, in a manner suggestive of recitative and treated with suitable care and warm sonorities by Nathanial Boyd and his early 18th century Italian instrument.

One of the features for the audience was the obvious friendship of two musicians who carry a shared sense of humour into their performances. Beethoven in his C major Sonata Opus 102 gives opportunities for Boyd and Lane to exploit this. Originally written for a contemporary cellist, Joseph Linke, whose artistry was much admired, Beethoven invites the players to a quasi-fantasia in which they share a dialogue in the openings of the first and second movements. In the cheerful final movement the partnership is given plenty of scope for amusing the audience. These included a number of unexpected piano and cello ‘snatches’ and games of tag. At several points some listeners simply giggled favourably at the Beethoven humour and the accompanying facial and body expressions of Boyd and Lane.

Chopin and Auguste Franchomme gave the first performance of the former’s only cello sonata in 1858 at a concert in Paris’s Salle Pleyel, so it was very appropriate that a 1928 grand piano from the Pleyel stable was available for Simon Lane. Chopin spent a good deal of time and energy working with his friend on developing suitable material for the work. While there are many of the characteristics of his solo piano style, Chopin explored the expressive breadth of the two instruments and engaged a width of structural devices not normally associated with his compositions. This work gave Boyd and Lane the opportunity to demonstrate their unity of ensemble and interpretative approach.

Astor Piazzolla’s *Le Grand Tango* was no ‘soft’ finale for Boyd and Lane, both being asked to keep a tight hold on the rhythmical reins of this modern fusion of the Argentinian tango, jazz and ‘classical’ strands. Written in 1982 this piece was a constant delight for its listeners and completed an exhaustive expose´ of two extremely accomplished musicians.

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