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JUBILEE QUARTET

6-9 October 2022

Minehead Methodist Church, Bridport Arts Centre, Ilminster Arts Centre

The Dance House, Crewkerne, St Laurence Church, Upwey

Twenty-four hours before the start of their five-concert tour with Concerts in the West, the Jubilee Quartet found it necessary to find a replacement for Tereza Privratska who was suddenly indisposed. They were fortunate to acquire the very experienced Cecily Ward. The quartet is first and foremost to be congratulated on their maturity and ability to integrate and emerge as a successful partnership in three days so that by the Upwey concert there was a strong sense of understanding and unity of purpose within the team.

This last concert of the tour began with three of Dvorak’s *Cypresses*, love songs based on poems by the Czech poet Gustav Moravsky. Those chosen by the quartet gave an early opportunity for the individual players to establish some key credentials. First up was the viola playing of Lorena Cantó Woltèche. Her liquid tone was both attractive and velvety. Next to be highlighted was the sensitive and finely judged gossamer underlay of Toby White’s cello accompaniment in the second of the pieces. Each performer then was able to flourish and open out in the third of Dvorak’s wonderful *Cypresses* whichproved to be a good choice for setting out Jubilee’s stall.

It was good to hear ‘live’ the quartet’s playing of Haydn. Their well-received debut disc of Haydn quartets published in 2019 correctly established their reputation for performing his music. Hearing their performance of the G major quartet of Op 77 quickly confirmed Jubilee’s accolade as fine exponents. As one member of the Upwey audience remarked: ‘I didn’t know Haydn could be such fun. I was smiling throughout, even in the *Adagio!’* Jubilee captured the Haydn playfulness in the opening *Allegro,* an enormous and well-judged dynamic range in the *Scherzo,* and the brilliance and humming energy in the final *Allegro.* Cecily Ward was in ‘buzzing’ form and the quartet played with superb ensemble.

Before embarking on Anton Webern’s *Langsamer Satz,* the quartet introduced us to the pedigree of their instruments. This was done with good humour and gave the audience a human connector to the expertise in their midst.

*Langsamer Satz* provided an insight into the roots of Webern’s style before the days of his atonal period of composition. This is a piece strong in passion and strong in the devices of counterpoint and the organic development of melodic material that Mahler espoused. This was a piece that gave each instrument points of prominence. Julia Loucks’ fine expressive and tender violin playing was notable and memorable.

Written while Schubert was a sixteen-year-old teenager, the Quartet in E-flat major D87 gave the Jubilee Quartet the chance to confirm their successful integration of their last-minute violinist replacement. Evidence came early with a cleanly played and unified first movement. The quartet’s *Scherzo* with its donkey-braying material was sheer delight. Then the *Adagio* demonstrated how the Jubilee players had arrived at a point of clear feeling, listening, and understanding, crowned by beautifully nuanced *pianissimos* epitomised by the last few bars. Finally, the *Allegro* was played with clarity, decisiveness, and confidence led by Cecily Ward’s fleet-footed playing and a collective appreciation of Schubert’s teenage humour.

The encore? One of Henry Purcell’s *Fantasias.* An inspired choice!

Andrew Maddocks 2022