CONCERTS IN THE WEST 2014

3, 4, 5 July in Lyme Regis and Bridport (Dorset), Ilminster (Somerset) and Hatherleigh (Devon)

By general consent this group of concerts given by **The Busch Ensemble** made the greatest impression of any in the Concerts in the West’s series, created nine years ago by its artistic director Catherine Hodgson.

The Ensemble – Mathieu van Bellen *violin*, Jonathan Bloxham *cello*, and Omri Epstein *piano -* barely in their second flush of youth, are leaders in their field. They are continually refining their interpretations, and although based in London bring a wealth of diverse cultural backgrounds to their playing.

The Ensemble’s starting point is the great German violinist, Adolf Busch (1891-1952), who as leader of the Busch Quartet was the first to record all the late Beethoven Quartets. What makes this trio very special is that Mathieu plays the ex-Adolf Busch Guadagnini violin of 1783.

And what these fine musicians brought to each work selected, over four events, from early Beethoven, late Haydn and Schubert, mature Mendelssohn and Dvořák, was an intensity of sound, a singing tone, dynamic contrast and an innate understanding of style.

In Haydn’s E flat trio – one of six he wrote in London – one was struck by Omri’s refined playing of the composer’s miraculous use of chromaticism, and in Schubert’s B flat trio, Mathieu and Jonathan’s understated highlighting of the sublime singing phrases. Whether in the grand moments of Dvořák’s F minor trio or the naïvity of Beethoven’s E flat Variations, these much-travelled players brought a fine blend of sonorities and an instinctive sense of ensemble that one finds in mature chamber groups.

Over the years we have come to expect excellence from all Concerts in the West events, but the Busch Ensemble’s performances were exceptional.

ANTHONY PITHER, July 2014