

EDOA Musical Evening in Whetstone

On 17th September, nine members of the EDOA responded to an invitation from Colin and Jane Wharton to join them at home for an evening of music making. On arrival we were given a very warm welcome and ushered into the front room of the house, a room used to accommodate three large keyboard instruments. The biggest footprint belongs to a Steinway Model B Grand Piano, resplendent in its shiny black livery. Next to it stands an imposing 3 manual and pedal Viscount 'Grand Opera' organ of about 50 stops but, thankfully, with no auxiliary speakers. Behind the Steinway, occupying the window bay, is a Yamaha Digital Grand Piano built, successfully one gathers, to feel and sound like the real thing. These are Colin's pride and joy, but mention must be made of another significant presence in the room, namely a collection of Jane's fine paintings that adorn its walls. Her atelier is located elsewhere on the property.

Greetings concluded, Colin introduced us to his instruments starting with the Steinway on which he played a number of pieces. First we heard the sublime *Nocturne No.3, "Liebenstraum"* by Liszt followed by two of '3 Sketches' by Frank Bridge, "*Rosemary*" and "*Valse Capricieuse*". Next Colin played Schubert's "*Impromptu in G Major*" and, lastly, "*Ragamuffin*", No. 2 of "*London Pieces*" by Ireland.

Robin Coxon then seated himself at the Viscount and played three entertaining and interesting pieces. The first was "*Serenade*" by Derek Bourgeois, born 1941 and now living in semi-retirement in Wool, Dorset. He wrote this piece for his wedding in 1965. Next came "*Cloches*" by Marcel Fournier (1899-1963) for many years organist in Orléans and professor at the Conservatoire. Lastly, Robin played "*Mantra XXVIII*" by Andrew Newcombe, a piece written in 2004 and given a world premier recording in 2007 by Phillip Gearing on a 1907 Norman & Beard organ at St Luke's Church, Toowoomba, Queensland. Born in 1970 in Melbourne, Andrew Newcombe pursued a varied academic and musical career, including the composition of many secular and sacred works, before moving to the UK in 1996. After training for ordination in Oxford, he became a priest in 2006 and is currently curate at two churches in north London, St Alphege, Edmonton and St Matthew, Ponders End.

Jack Beeson was next on the Viscount playing the pretty "*Dance for the Flutes*" by Tim Attride, organist and director of music at All Saints Church, Birchington, Kent, a catchy tune that lent itself to a second, re-registered version entitled "*Joy Ride*". Jack then moved to the Steinway on which he played a lusty piece called "*Plaudit*" taken from one of his improvisations on the organ at Aberdeen Road URC Church. Lastly, he put the Yamaha through its paces with Bach's "*Partita No 1 in B*", together with an improvisation.

Simon Williams, keen to get to grips with the unfamiliar Viscount, struck a more serious note with Bach's "*Prelude and Fugue in D Major*". He then moved to the Steinway on which he played the elegant "*Intermezzo in B minor, op 119*", by Brahms. To conclude the solo turns, Rosemary Knight gave us "*Grand Choeur in G*" by Théodore Salomé (1834-96) who was choir organist at La Trinité during Guilmant's time as Titulaire and also a professor at the Paris Conservatoire.

The evening was an enjoyable social as well as musical occasion and we were grateful to both Colin and Jane for their unstinting hospitality. To round off the evening, the nonplaying members were finally given their chance to make a contribution to the merriment by joining in a rousing rendition of "*Jerusalem*" to a full-blown accompaniment from Simon on the organ, Margaret Carr on the Yamaha and Colin on the Steinway – not once, but twice! With that we rapidly made our exit before someone served an ASBO on Colin for disturbing the peace of the neighbourhood.

Michael Coffey