

Cathedral Lunchtime Concerts



Packed Lunch

Venue Number 91. St Mary's Cathedral, Palmerston Place, EH12 5AW. 1-31 August 13:10 (45 minutes). Suitability: U.

The lunchtime concerts at St Mary's take place every day of the festival and the programme changes day by day. The setting is glorious, the imposing 19th century cathedral is lit sensitively, tapestries illuminated around the nave. Behind the stage the choir stalls are dimly lit and cast a soft light onto a decorated crucifix which hangs above the stage.

The concert on August 1st was given by the pianist Güray Ba?ol and he began with Scarlatti's Piano Sonata in F minor. Undulating scales and unassuming melodies were played with a confident attitude and steady hand. The touch occasionally felt a little heavy but the gorgeous tone more than made up for the odd technical slip.

The Beethoven Sonata No.12 came next and Ba?ol's continued to impress. Although the acoustic muddied several runs and some quicker, daintier moments, the first movement was played firmly and Ba?ol demonstrated excellent emotional understanding and technical efficiency in his handling of the piece.

The acoustic presented a few more problems in the scherzo with dynamics and precision sadly becoming blurred, yet Ba?ol just managed to keep control of the piece and, in the end, impressed with brilliant technical skills, none of the runs troubling him in the slightest.

The famous Marcia Funebre followed and once more acoustic problems

dogged Ba?ol. Again his handling of the sensitive writing was impressive and the sound of the piano rang poignantly in the majestic nave of the cathedral. Solemn and controlled, the Marcia Funebre was the highlight of the hour. After a spicy and dexterous Allegro came Fazil Say's Kumru ('Dove'). It was during this piece that Ba?ol finally mastered the acoustic and the effect was simply lovely. Say's piece contains several pretty melodies and Ba?ol executed them beautifully.

The final piece was Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsody and unfortunately the spectre of the unkind acoustic returned to haunt the poor pianist. However, the trend established earlier in the concert continued, and as much as the space muddied the sounds, so Ba?ol fought back, managing to produce a charming piece of music.

A sweet concept which delivered on the first day, I would gladly recommend the St Mary's Cathedral lunchtime concerts to everyone at the Fringe.

[David Knowles]