

St. Mary's Hemel Hempstead

Lunch Time Concert Tuesday 11th November 2008

Simon Pusey's musical activities have gone well beyond his basic role of organist and choirmaster at St. Mary's Hemel Hempstead, to directing the town's choir for their many excellent concerts at St. John's Church, performing himself as singer and violinist, and creating an impressive network of outstanding artists to feed his lunchtime concerts at the parish church – a dedicated all round musician whose work enriches the cultural life of the local community. And on 11th November he presented Takami Weaver, a brilliant pianist who should enjoy a national reputation as well as the local one in which she presently flourishes. Takami's recital was impeccable, and the warm reception her music enjoyed was acknowledged with characteristic modesty.

Her programme displayed her versatility as a sensitive musical interpreter. Beethoven's Sonata Opus 31 no.2 – 'The Tempest' – had moments of calm alternating with outbursts of passion, but passion always within strong intellectual control. Then there was Bartok, whose favourite dictum was 'I cannot conceive of music that expresses absolutely nothing,' and you felt the force of that listening to the Six Dances In Bulgarian Rhythm, expressing a uniquely fiery, toe-tapping, Central European temper. What a contrast as we went from that to the calming but seductive chords of Chopin's Berceuse in D flat, every note caressed by Takami. And an easy transition was effected from this mood to the gently rippling cadences of Debussy's 'Reflets dans l'Eau.' The composer was obsessed by water, witness the eerie concept of 'La Cathedrale Engloutie' and the many moods of the sea in 'La Mer', from the glitter of waves in a still sea at sunrise to the titanic 'Dialogue of the Wind and the Waves' as a storm brews. As with Bartok, for Debussy music had to express something that could be experienced with all the senses, and to this end he stretched the technical capacities of the piano and the orchestra to their limits. Takami Weaver rose to this challenge with great élan, gracefully surfing the finger-cracking arpeggios of 'Ondine' as a grand climax to her recital.