

Proms at St Jude's 1993

It is beyond doubt that St Jude's is a thrilling place in which to make music; its spacious interior and the basilica-like architectural design make for an impressive and radiant sound. Most people realise that this versatile building accommodates much music-making during the year but most of it (apart from sung services) is behind the closed doors of the professional recording session. It was therefore with "the powers that be"'s great pleasure that the church doors could be thrown open to the fine weather at the end of June and beginning of July and St Jude's own foreshadowing of the promenade concerts held in the Royal Albert Hall.

Preparations had started some months before and were in essence the brainchild of Susie Gregson. Her unswerving support of the North London Hospice and all the work it does provided a highly motivating *raison d'être* for a week of musical events. What better venue than St Jude's and especially since the church organ - long in need of sympathetic restoration to assure its continuance into the next century and to double its present 104 years - was the subject of a considerable fundraising appeal for £80,000?

Highgate School Chapel Choir opened the week with a concert of music fitting for such a building as St Jude's. The boy trebles' voices pierced the resonant acoustic of the dome very cleanly in the Anglican repertoire they offered. Works by Purcell, Byrd, Vaughan Williams and Howells were sung with great accomplishment by younger and older boys alike. Perhaps the highlight of their concert was a performance of The Five Mystical Songs by Vaughan Williams with baritone soloist Leandros Taliotis.

Without a shadow of doubt we were very fortunate on the second evening to have the distinguished violinist Erich

Gruenberg to perform the Violin Concerto in D by Beethoven. He was soloist to the London Medical Orchestra conducted by Michael Axtell who had started the programme with an overture by Nicolai (The Merry Wives of Windsor) and Dvorak's Czech Suite. The Beethoven concerto's rhetorical and dramatic outpourings were eloquently brought to life by Mr Gruenberg's playing and the performance allowed a wide audience to hear orchestral textures that are only usually heard these days on recordings from St Jude's.

The following evening was my turn! In preparing the programme for my solo organ recital I was very aware of the immense variety of colour that the Father Willis organ at St Jude's can offer. I decided upon an eclectic mix of musical styles and periods. The warm and gentle sounds of Herbert Howells' Psalm Prelude could be contrasted with the richness of Bach and Rheinberger. The trumpets and trombones were also to feature, particularly in Walton's Crown Imperial and the finale from the 1st Organ Symphony by Louis Vierne.

A solo song recital was on offer on the fourth evening and it provided an international flavour as the performers came all the way from the United States. With David Morse as accompanist, Anne O'Reilly sang a programme of Romantic songs by Schumann, Schubert and Brahms. The music provided a wealth of vivid emotions from naive simplicity to overt drama and angst-ridden yearning. In contrast to Schubert and Brahms the Pie Jesu from Duruflé's Requiem achieved a moving stillness towards the close of the recital.

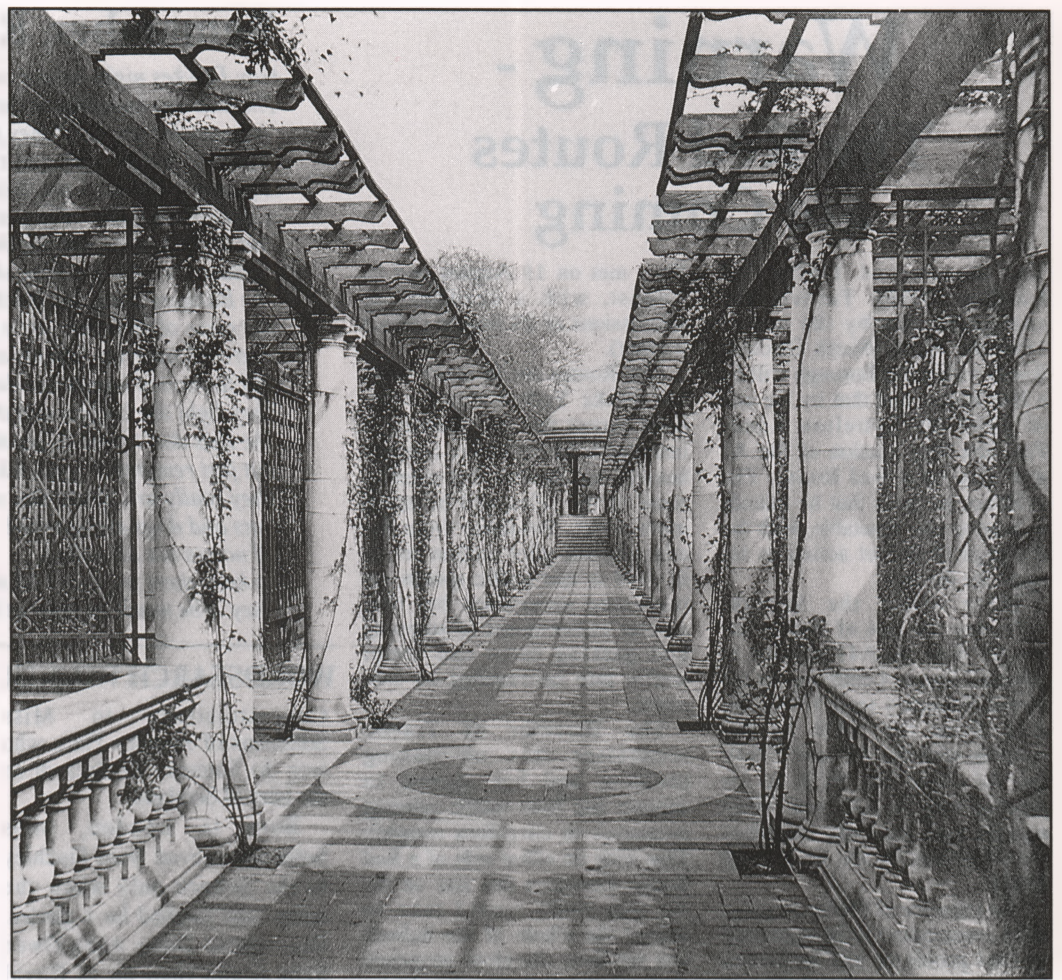
"An Evening of Summer Flowers" presented by Susan Rinberg and Alison Lockhart-Sigurdur provided something that little bit different in a festival. With musical interludes

from the Henrietta Barnett School String Quartet, flower arranging demonstrations from the simplest to the most exotic displays gave onlookers an insight into an ancient art that always appears simple in the hands of an accomplished expert.

Finchley Children's Music Group (which includes several members of own church choir including Grace Davidson who sang as a soloist in one of the numbers) performed a supreme recital on the penultimate evening of the festival. Under their conductor, Murray Stewart, they sang a very diverse programme with great skill in their handling of the building's vibrant acoustic through some very demanding choral repertoire. Their pianist, Elizabeth Shepherd, played two solos that well deserved the applause they received.

It was left to Jules Ruban and Friends to conclude our week of events at St Jude's on the final Saturday evening. Jules is unsurpassed in his jazz piano styles. I think it would be fair to say that he provides one of the few remaining opportunities to hear the eloquent virtuosity of the old jazz masters of the early part of this century. He treated us to some of the great songs and improvisational styles of early American jazz.

So just as Jules and Friends were starting to swing late into the Saturday night, we had to draw our festival to a close and thank all those involved in the organisation of this uplifting event. Many people were involved and too numerous to mention, but special thanks should be made to several guiding lights: Richard Clegg, John Enderby, Dr Chris Donovan and Susie Gregson. £2,400 was raised to be shared equally between the North London Hospice and the St Jude's Organ Appeal - congratulations and thank you. AMcC



The Pergola at Hampstead Heath

A Pergola is a covered walk formed by growing plants over a trellis. In this instance, the plants are trained up stone columns and along timbers criss-crossing overhead. Built between 1905 and 1925, in the Italianate style, the Pergola was originally designed as part of The Hill (now Inverforth House) fronting on to North End Way. Lord Leverhulme bought the house in 1904. The garden was designed by Thomas Mawson. The whole concept resulted in a much acclaimed classic landscape. At over 800 feet the Pergola is as long as the Canary Wharf Tower is tall. It is now a Grade II listed structure of architectural/historic interest.

The Pergola was acquired by the Corporation of London in 1989 with the rest of Hampstead Heath. Whilst the structure was in a particularly dilapidated condition at the time, as a result of many years' neglect, the Corporation recognised its importance and potential splendour and embarked upon an ambitious, two stage project, first to make the structure safe, and secondly, to restore it to its former glory. The Corporation has worked closely with English Heritage to ensure that its restoration is appropriate.

The Pergola has been opened to the public on a series of open days during the summer, but will now be closed for the further

work of phase two until 1995. The entire cost of the project, £1.4 million, is being met by the Corporation.

Stop Press: For all those who love and know the Heath, as well as for casual visitors: the new Official Guide to Hampstead Heath which takes readers through the history of the Heath from prehistoric times through Tudor times and the first census to the present day, and gives details of a eight-lane running track, wildflower areas, Great Crested Grebes, 28 ponds and many other treasures, is now available (price £1.50) from the Golders Hill staff yards and from headquarters, Archway Road, tel: 081 348 9908. SH

Anyone straying into the Lady Chapel at dusk during the Proms might well have thought it peopled by the headless ghosts of Victorian and Edwardian brides. In fact in was a fascinating exhibition of wedding dresses loaned and arranged for St Jude's by Frances Musker well known for her costumes for the Garden Suburb Theatre.

Diary note: The 1994 Summer Proms at St Jude's will commence on Sunday July 3.



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