

The 19th Proms - better than ever!

Musically speaking, this year's Proms at St Jude's excelled at bringing to the Suburb a veritable feast of flavours. Whether you liked opera, solo instrumentalists, jazz, Broadway songs or classical singing, tub-thumping orchestras, chamber trios or quartets – it was all there and in high quality.

Not to mention a plethora of guided walks around the Suburb and the East End, giving a rich insight into the world of Dame Henrietta Barnett.

The London International Orchestra offered a kaleidoscope of operatic favourites to open the nine-day festival, with Soprano Laura Mitchell and tenor Jesus Leon on top form, especially in their rendition of extracts from La Boheme.

The following evening, Stacey Kent and her band performed enchanting numbers from their impressive French, Portuguese and English repertoire.

Soprano Dame Felicity Lott and baritone Sir Thomas Allen played to a packed house and gave what was expected. However,

unexpected to many, it was Alessandro Taverna, the less well known performer, who really brought the house down with the magic of his piano playing later in the week.

The Wihan Quartet and guest cellist Raphael Wallfisch played Dvořák and Schubert with distinction, also treating the Proms audience to a world premiere of Ronald Corp's String Quartet No. 3. The Greenwich Trio showed the skill of three relatively young performers, while Maria Friedman brought all her experience to the fore, entertaining the Friday night crowd to a whirlwind of songs from Sondheim to Purcell and the Beatles to Gilbert O'Sullivan.

Meanwhile, free lunchtime recitals, sponsored by the RA, and concerts captivated audiences from the very young to the very old, a highlight being the violin and piano recital from Roisin Walters and Viktor Sugeng.

In the final weekend, the Proms really got into gear, with big orchestral sounds: Nicholas Chalmers conducted a magnificent

choral evening with pianos and percussion, culminating in an exciting Carmina Burana on Saturday, then Simon Over conducted the Southbank Sinfonia on the Last Night. Suburb pianist Masa Tayama held the audience spellbound with his Liszt piano concerto and Edgar Bailey's virtuosity was evident in his performing of Saint-Saens.

In the true spirit of Proms, it was not just the musicians that made every concert memorable but also the energy and exuberance of all who were working hard to turn the often quiet centre of the Suburb into a place teeming with life. From catering staff to stewards, from box office to bunting fixers, it was clear that everyone was enjoying themselves.

That Proms is about more than culture was evident too from the generous donations that were contributed on the night in response to heartfelt appeals from representatives of the two beneficiary charities, North London Hospice and Toynbee Hall.



Flag waving on the traditional Last Night

Those shaking the buckets on the last night were delighted to have broken records for collections and then overwhelmed when a kind individual offered to double the money raised that evening. Totals are still being tallied, but it looks as though

the 2011 Proms will come near to matching the £60,000 donated to its two charitable causes in 2010.

Next year will be the Proms' 20th anniversary and the Festival is running a week later – from 23rd June to 1st July – to fit with the timing of the London

2012 Festival. Those who wish to benefit from priority booking and other benefits in 2012 by becoming a Friend of the Proms can do so at 2011 rates until 31 December – just go online at www.promsatstjudes.org.uk.

RON FINLAY



Pupils from Annemount and the Garden Suburb School enjoy singing Carmen with William Carslake and the Nonesuch Orchestra in one of the Residents Association sponsored free lunchtime Proms



David Littaur escorts the Mayor Lisa Rutter into the Proms



Eloise Gibbins helped with programme sales



Lucy Roberts tempting Friends and other VIPs in the intervals

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The Proms committee: Simon Tesh, David Littaur, Helen Roose, David Crossley, Ron Finlay, Naimh O'Donnell-Keenan, Peter Jenkins, Jennifer Radice, Yvonne Baker, Thomas Radice, John Wheeler, Susie Gregson MBE



Susie Gregson with Richard Orme, one of the Proms original very young helpers still volunteering

Legal challenge to increased residents' parking charges

As mentioned on page 2, an East Finchley resident is bringing a legal challenge against Barnet Council's recent increases to the cost of parking permits and visitor permits for residents who live in the borough's Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs). Under the increases, which took effect in April, the cost of a parking permit for a household's first car increased from £40 to £100 and the cost of each visitor voucher increased from £1 to £4.

David Attfield, who is bringing the legal challenge, believes the increases are unlawful because they are intended to raise additional money not for the administration of the parking service (which was in substantial surplus) but in order to subsidise other services across the borough, such as road repairs. He is being supported by a newly formed campaign group,

Barnet CPZ Action which is seeking to raise awareness of the increases and to raise necessary funds to support the legal action.

The campaigners point out that the charges in Barnet now far exceed those on comparable boroughs. The £4 flat rate for a visitor permit in particular is unprecedented, being several times what residents in other outer London boroughs pay. The cost even compares poorly with Camden where visitor parking for most residents will be much cheaper because the charges are based by the hour and because Camden offers reduced priced vouchers for the elderly. The campaigners point out that an elderly person in Barnet who regularly receives short visits from family members could easily spend £800 a year on parking even if they don't

own a car. Young families are another group particularly badly hit, with the cost of parking for play dates and children's parties now amounting to hundreds of pounds a year for some residents. The problem is particularly acute in CPZs which operate over long hours but residents can be badly hit in all of the borough's CPZs, for example if they having building work done or depend on daily child care.

The legal proceedings were launched in April and are still at an early stage. However David Attfield has recently received a boost in that a well regarded firm of solicitors (Anthony Gold) and both Leading and Junior Counsel (Martin Westgate QC and Lindsay Johnson) have agreed to act on a 'no win, no fee' basis, reflecting the strength of the legal case. As a result, the campaigners are

fundraising primarily to ensure that David Attfield is not exposed to paying Barnet's legal costs (estimated at £50,000) should he lose. The campaigners have raised over half the money they need, but still face a substantial shortfall which will need to be filled before the case comes to trail (probably in the autumn).

You can read more about the CPZ charges and the legal challenge to them at www.barnetcpz.blogspot.com. It is also possible to make a donation online. Donations can also be sent by cheque and made payable to 'Barnet CPZ Action' to 88 Summerlee Avenue, East Finchley London N2 9QH. The campaigners hope to return the bulk of the donated money should the action succeed in Court and Barnet be ordered to pay the legal costs.