

# Proms at St Jude's 2016 review

The Last Night of the Proms at St Jude's was rescued in dramatic fashion after the scheduled tenor was forced to drop out at the last minute.

Rising Royal Opera House star David Junghoon Kim was substituted at short notice and won a massive standing ovation after his selection of arias including *Nessun Dorma* and *O Sole Mio*. The dynamic young singer was even persuaded to have a shot at *Rule Britannia* and *Land of Hope and Glory* – even though he had never previously performed them. The packed audience loved it, singing along and waving flags as never before, as the 24th season of Proms reached its powerful finale. It was a tumultuous end to nine days of magic, which even a mixed bag of weather could do little to dampen.

Musical highlights included Nevill Holt Opera, making their third consecutive visit to St Jude's. They dazzled a full house with Donizetti's delightful and very funny *Elixir of Love*.

The London International Orchestra was also enthusiastically received with a stirring Russian evening. Young Ukrainian soloist Sasha Grynyuk gave an outstanding interpretation of Rachmaninov's *Piano Concerto No 2* and London International Orchestra conductor Howard Williams brought proceedings to an end with an explosive choral version of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*.

Piano performers featured strongly at other concerts, including the award-winning Benjamin Grosvenor, a former BBC Young Musician of the Year, and perennial favourite Martin Roscoe, who performed a superb Beethoven *Pastoral Sonata*.

Jazz fans enjoyed a stomping, toe-tapping good time as internationally acclaimed singer Claire Martin teamed up with actor-singer-songwriter Joe Stilgoe for an evening of old and new hits.

Joe, son of broadcaster and composer Sir Richard Stilgoe,

was particularly well received with two of his own haunting compositions.

Other evening concert highlights were the Gould Piano Trio with Brahms's wonderful *Piano Trio No 1*, the Counterpoise ensemble, who were a huge hit with American favourites by Copland and Gershwin, and prodigies Benjamin Grosvenor and Hyeyoon Park, simply outstanding in Brahms's *Violin Sonata No 3*.

There really was something for everyone this year – a trombone and piano recital by Peter Moore and Robert Thompson, a free harp concert, a programme of violin and organ works and the wonderful Tallis Scholars whose liturgical music has been described by the Observer as "as near to extra-terrestrial as you can get sitting in a concert hall".

Children also joined in with Terry Deary (of *Horrible Histories* fame) giving a guided narrative of Georgian London, as the Eboracum Baroque performed excerpts from Handel and his contemporaries. New this year was a lively music-making session, Tiddy Prom, for under-fours. And in the spirit of the Hollywood film *Pitch Perfect*, local schools performed a *cappella* with ensemble Apollo5, having trained with them over previous weeks.

The two-day LitFest, now in its fifth year, continued to captivate book lovers. David Aaronovitch and Joan Bakewell both drew huge audiences as they talked about their respective autobiographies.

There were enthusiastic turnouts, too for *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* author Mark Haddon, Paul McCartney biographer Philip Norman, Radio 4 presenter Claudia Hammond, novelist Helen Dunmore and author Kate Summerscale.

Human-rights lawyer Philippe Sands told how his search for the origins of genocide and crimes against humanity became a personal quest for the truth about his own family.

And he also had some very relevant comments to make about the shock result of the EU referendum 48 hours earlier. His robust arguments brought thunderous applause from the Sunday-morning audience.

West End Lane Books provided a first-rate pop-up bookshop supplying copies of all the authors' works and the LitFest Cafe was another success story with its usual delicious cakes and scones plus a range of appealing lunches, all home-made by its talented team of volunteers.

Daily-guided heritage walks – for some of which an umbrella was obligatory – included a journey around Kenwood House, an exploration of the works of famous local architects and a walk through the history of King's Cross.

Others took a fresh look at the work of the Garden Suburb Trust and ways of preserving the Heath's unspoilt aspect.

Proms raises money for Toynbee Hall and North London Hospice. Representatives of both charities attended all the evening concerts and were able to tell audiences about the inspiring work they do.

Proms spokesman Ron Finlay said: "Proms this year was an outstanding event – probably one of our best ever."

"The weather could have been kinder for would-be picnickers but everyone I've spoken to said they'd enjoyed themselves tremendously. There was, as usual, a great sense of community and bonhomie.

"I would like to thank everyone involved: our generous sponsors and advertisers, all those who make the venues available, our loyal Friends, and our huge and wonderful team of volunteers who strive endlessly to ensure that Proms happens.

"But mostly I would like to express my appreciation to the Suburb audience who turn up to support us year after year and with their amazing generosity."

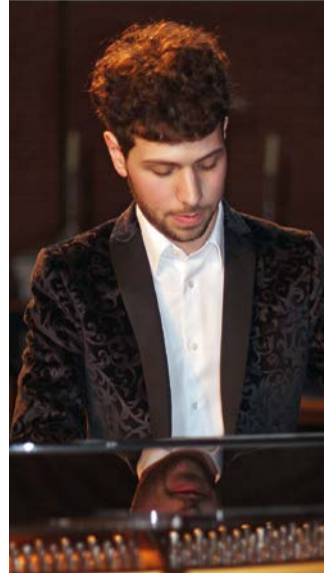
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