

REVIEW OF CONCERT 23RD FEBRUARY 2011

Last week's concerts in Ardrishaig and Campbeltown can simply be described as a glorious musical experience. Phil Gault has a big voice always under control with great range, diction and dynamics, accompanied by his wife Claire Haslin whose outstanding expertise as a solo player, accompanist and experienced repetiteur were in great demand and never fell short.

The opening group of Vaughan Williams Songs of Travel was Phil at top volume. He could fill any space and certainly in Campbeltown he needed more space but what a range of power, emotion, soft sensitivity in *Youth and Love* and *Whither Must I Wander*. It was a huge musical unity of voice, piano and words, not simply a group of songs.

With Schubert you did hear the songs and what beautiful songs. I have no German but Phil's opera skills and the softer, sweeter, smoother piano told the story so clearly. There was love, wonder, expectation, fear, horror and grief entrancing as well as entertaining the audience.

The Ravel was lighter but no less skilled. The singer became the animals and the piano highlighted the details. Delightful compositions and a delightful performance. Don Quichotte was in a much more modern style with a big range and less familiar harmonies. The *Chanson a Boire* was particularly Spanish and very powerful.

The Welsh Songs took us from the very sentimental, to the glories of *David of the WhiteRock* where the singer cries out for a harp, to the beautiful *Ar lan y mor* where Claire provided the harp accompaniment on the piano, to the full Welsh male voice choir in *Colon Lan*, and it was not a small choir.

The final group by Barber had simpler clearer images, love young and mature separated by a James Joyce tale of a liaison in a *Solitary Hotel* with a lovely jazz accompaniment. Typical of Joyce it was dramatic but not quite clear what happened. *Green lowland of Pianos* displayed the lovely piano playing of Claire and clear echoes of Britten in style.

The whole evening was a delight of two very skilled performers presenting a wonderful range of outstanding songs.

John Kerr
Kintyre Music Club