

The final concert of the Mid Argyll Arts Association 2022/23 season was on Saturday and what a wonderful evening it was. After attending the concert it is very clear just why Gordon Cree and Cheryl Forbes are so much in demand. The evening was a smorgasbord of music, interspersed with humorous tales from their varied careers with interesting and little known facts on the music performed.

When the duo arrived, they had many bags, cases and boxes but no accompanying pianist. Unusual, however one was not required. Gordon accompanied Cheryl for a couple of her songs but most of the time they used backing tracks, all of which were created and produced by Gordon. There is a real skill involved in not only singing along with backing tracks but in the production of them to include all the dynamic and tempo changes required. This was clearly demonstrated with Cheryl performing two of the most famous arias from opera - "Ombra mai fu" (Handel) and "Habanera" from "Carmen" (Bizet). If you closed your eyes, you could have been transported to any opera house in the world.

"When I was a lad" (Gilbert & Sullivan) was an excellent introduction to Gordon Cree as the First Lord of the Admiralty on HMS Pinafore. He was equally at home with "The Hippopotamus Song" (Flanders & Swann), a song forever associated with Ian Wallace, the entertainer and opera singer. This allowed for some participation which the Ardrishaig audience were delighted with. Such was the quality of their vocals that the audience were invited to participate in Cheryl's "Tribute to Dame Vera Lynn" later in the evening.

An unaccompanied version of the folk song "Blow the Wind Southerly" was beautifully portrayed by Cheryl before she followed this with the Ivor Novello classic, "I can give you the Starlight" complete with backing tracks by Gordon.

A humorous Scottish ballad about a young Glasgow boy and his girlfriend from the West End was enjoyed by the audience with much smiling and quiet laughter. It is a song based on the poem "West End Perk" by James Bridie, which you may wish to enjoy again.

Silent movies was the next topic with Gordon paying tribute to Ena Baga (1906 – 2004) British pianist and theatre organist. He explained her skilful style of improvisation before performing one of her compositions for piano.

Cheryl returned with songs including "Summertime" (Gershwin) and "I dreamed a dream" from "Les Miserable" both introduced with lots of interesting and lesser-known information.

After the interval Gordon entertained us with some humorous anecdotes from his early career. This included a topical one about the trumpeter Joan Hind, Ken Dodd and The Gaiety Theatre - it is not being related here! After this he followed on by a performance on trumpet showing his versatility and that he is certainly not only a baritone. Gordon's musical prowess continued with his extremely skilled performance of "The Flight of the Bumble Bee" (Rimsky-Korsakov) on xylophone.

Another selection of individual songs brought the concert to the final number. This was an "improvised" duet sung with "the moon" as the theme. A real showstopper and brilliant end to an exciting and entertaining evening.

The Chair of MAAA thanked everyone for their support this year and took time to thank our sponsors - Chamber Music Scotland, Creative Scotland and Argyll & Bute Council. Our 2023/24 Season will open with Daniel Lehardt (piano) and Benjamin Baker (violin) on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September.

