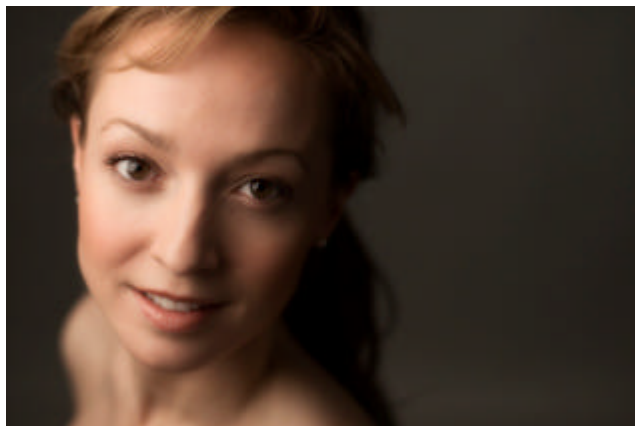


Music at St Andrew's Concert Review

Clara Mouriz - Mezzo Soprano and Joseph Middleton - Piano



When we arrived at St Andrew's on Saturday 6 December, we were eagerly anticipating a concert to be given by the world-renowned soprano Joan Rodgers. It was a big disappointment to find she was indisposed, and congratulations are due to all those who found a replacement at such short notice.

And what a replacement! On to the platform came a charming young Spanish singer in a full orange-flame skirt and black top. After a few bars of very Spanish rhythms on the piano, played by

Joseph Middleton, Clara Mouriz burst into song and we knew we would be in for a wonderful evening.

The first group consisted of seven popular songs by Manuel de Falla (1876-1946). Each song was a complete cameo in itself – aided by the singer's facial expression and the pianist's intricate rhythms and repeated notes - so characteristic of a guitar. I thoroughly enjoyed this group.

Following this, we heard five popular Greek melodies by Maurice Ravel (contemporary of de Falla) sung in French. {At this point, I should mention that the whole programme was sung in either Spanish or French, and therefore we were very grateful to have all the translations to follow.} After this, we heard the 'Vocalise-Etude' in the form of a Habanera. Unaccompanied, without words, this well-known piece really showed the amazing technique of the singer – from a huge range of pitch to a huge range of volume, but all the time with a real sense of phrasing and musicality.

Space does not permit comments on every item, but I must mention the charming arrangements by Britten of two French folksongs – delightfully sung and imaginatively played – and new to me. Also a group by Turina composed in 1918 of four very Spanish songs, preceded by a piano solo – showing the excellent playing we enjoyed from Joseph Middleton. The final section consisted of five songs by an unknown composer to me: Montsalvatge. My dictionary tells me he was a Spaniard born in 1911, but these songs were composed in 1945 and had a Negro theme – which were unusual and at times haunting.

To sum up: I was very impressed by the way the two performers gave us one performance. The ensemble was absolutely excellent. Joseph Middleton is a very good accompanist as well as a very good pianist. (Not always the same thing!) As for Clara Mouriz – I found her charming to look at, as well as to listen to (again, this is not always the case!) Her cameo of each song – every single one different – came over to the audience brilliantly and one could feel the appreciation and enjoyment around you.

Thank you, St Andrew's, for a wonderful evening.

Deidre Knight

