

Music at St Andrew's Concert Review

Emma Johnson Saturday 28 November 2009

What a treat a packed church had on Saturday 28 November! 'Britain's favourite clarinettist' (*The Times*) thrilled a sell-out audience with a stunning recital. No wonder people travel miles to hear Emma perform. Her faultless recital was captivating from beginning to end!

The music she played ranged from an arrangement of Tartini (who was composing before the clarinet was even invented) to music by the English composer Bliss. Most striking was the way in which Emma Johnson communicates through the music. Every piece tells a story – it is almost as if she is talking to you through the music.

Every aspect of the concert was superb. Emma gave clear and concise introductions to the pieces she played which made the audience feel part of her performance. She then played everything from memory. The opening *Concertino* by Tartini (arranged for clarinet by Gordon Jacob) was stylishly played with subtle accompaniment from Joseph Middleton. This was followed by the magnificent *Sonata* by Brahms. A towering piece of the clarinet repertoire



was made to sound effortless in the hands of a master performer like Emma Johnson.

After the interval Bernstein's *Sonata* was a complete contrast. With its 'jazzy' influences the music danced around the church to everyone's delight. In contrast the *Pastoral* by Bliss was a gentle, reflective work allowing Emma to demonstrate the cantabile quality of the clarinet to full

effect.

Finally came the Weber *Grand duo Concertant*. This is a virtuoso piece both for clarinet and piano. The 'conversation' developed between the two instruments was magnificently presented by both Emma and Joseph. The musical understanding between the two performers was evident bringing out the virtuosity and musicianship of both in equal measure.

The audience were treated to not one but two encores and everyone present knew they had experienced a very special concert. Thanks go, once again, to all who helped in any way to make this St Andrewside concert so special.

Ian Smith

