

Music at St Andrew's Concert Review

Gamelan Lila Cita

Saturday 8 March 2008



Gamelan? What's a Gamelan? Well, those who attended the concert at St Andrew's Church now know, if they didn't before. It is, in fact, an Indonesian orchestra made up of gongs and other metal instruments – oh, and a drum to lead the ensemble. There are two sorts of Gamelan orchestra, one from Java and one from Bali and they play very different styles of music. The Gamelan Lila Cita is from neither! It is the foremost Gamelan orchestra in Great Britain and travels widely delighting audiences with its haunting, hypnotic and truly delightful sound.

Taking its style from Balinese Gamelan orchestras, Gamelan Lila Cita performed a wonderful programme to a good and very appreciative audience. The evening was greatly enhanced by the director of the orchestra, Andy Channing, talking about the Gamelan and explaining the music. The pieces played by a Gamelan orchestra are, initially, a little unusual to our ears, especially as the tuning of the instruments does not follow the conventional 'western' tuning. Once explained the complex heterophony so expertly performed by the

players in the orchestra became very relaxing and almost hypnotic.

Not only does the Gamelan sound beautiful but also it looks beautiful. The instruments are decorated with traditional designs and in traditional colours and the performers all dress in traditional costume to enhance the atmosphere of the evening. One additional feature of the evening was that the audience were invited to come close and listen to the performance from any position that they wished. This enabled everyone who want to do so to see the skill and complexity of the playing as well as hear the wonderful music.

This was an evening that will be remembered for many years to come. If you were not there then you missed a treat. Listening to a live Gamelan orchestra is an experience that everyone should have at some point in their lives. If you get the chance to hear Gamelan Lila Cita in the future, take it – you will not be disappointed. Well done to St Andrew's Church for their innovative programming!

Ian G Smith