

Music at St Andrew's Concert Review

Ruth Palmer - Violinist and Joseph Middleton - Piano



A large audience filled St Andrew's Church on 10 May 2008 for a stunning recital given by the violinist Ruth Palmer, accompanied by Joseph Middleton. Last year Ruth won the *Young British Classical Performer 2007* award at the Classical BRITs. There was no doubt at this concert that here was a major talent.

Shostakovich's Sonata for Violin and Piano formed the pièce de résistance. This work, as Ruth explained to the audience, was composed for the great violinist David Oistrach for his 60th birthday after the composer had already written a violin concerto for him for what he had thought was Oistrach's 60th birthday, but was actually his 59th. Ruth has recently travelled to Russia to retrace the story of the relationship between these two great Russian artists, and the record of her visit was released as a DVD together with recordings of these two great works. Ruth's understanding of the sonata is therefore total, and her playing at this concert was completely committed. The desolation of

the opening slow movement, the energetic middle movement with its macabre references to various dances, and the neo-Classicism of the final variation movement were expressed with great understanding and a flawless technique.

Earlier in the programme we had heard a no less committed performance of Beethoven's Sonata for violin and piano in C minor. The demonic quality of the short motives with which Beethoven builds up his structure were evident from the start, with the violinist ably supported by Joseph's clarity in the piano textures. The heroic quality of the Fifth Symphony was never far away. Ruth had opened her recital with the Ciaccona from Bach's Partita in d minor for unaccompanied violin. Forget about period instruments: this was a performance with warmth of tone and a thorough understanding of the structure of this extended movement. The concert concluded with Four songs from Gershwin's Porgy and Bess in an arrangement by Heifetz. Ruth relished the virtuoso opportunities of this transcription and sent us all home on a high.

David Williams

