

ST. MICHAEL'S AT SIX ; SUNDAY 23RD SEPTEMBER 2007

JULIE MARTIN-CARTER mezzo soprano
CLAIRE HASLIN piano

Putting on a themed show of gypsy folk dance music is usually guaranteed to be highly entertaining and with these two exhibits in flamenco costume it was clear we were never going to be disappointed.

The seven gypsy melodies by Dvorak show off every colour and nuance in the voice, and Julie Martin's natural operatic distinctions created the warm glow of a burning fire, always sensitive and finely subtle. The legato line and connecting phrases between voice and piano were admirable - Dvorak allows for this in passing melodies between each performer in ever an expressive way. Julie delivered fabulous rich sonorities with a sumptuous lower register any contralto would be proud to extol. The homely *Songs my mother taught me* had rich textures and how Claire Haslin played up the cantabile and deep pianistic bed of sound. Nice to hear polka rhythms dancing eloquently and looking back to Schubertian times.

You couldn't get a better contrast under the same theme as by performing the four Greek songs by Seiber. Suddenly, an icy chill came over the atmosphere and a reduced vibrato created the darkest aroma so very appropriate for these cameos. In *O my love how long* grief, sorrow and pain were shared by both singer and pianist. And then in *Have pity on me* loneliness and isolation were never very far away. Julie showed complete vocal mastery in *Each time, my love, you say farewell*; terrifying screeching matched the blackness coming from the bass of the piano. A fabulous drama was enacted in *O your eyes are dark and beautiful* and Claire made this dance with an expressive lilt while beholding the dangers of temptation.

De Falla's seven folk songs are as radiant for cello and piano as they are for the succulent and sensuous vocalisations Julie possesses. Here her operatic tones shone out in *Asturiana*, perfectly supported by Claire and for these pieces we were entertained further by the young dancer Rhian Anthony in her own choreographies - fine delicacies alongside singer and pianist.

Martin-Carter and Haslin have a fine chemistry together, clearly atoned for this gypsy theme with the voice and piano merging in un-mannered and rich passion. This was an exciting programme with fire and romantic flame in abundance.

Stuart Montgomery
23.9.07