

What an amazing start to the Festival! I am sure everyone at the opening concert enjoyed it as much as I did.

Today we are at Reynoldston for the second of the Conchord concerts and I am sure it will be equally as thrilling.

The Conchord Ensemble is a large group and we are very grateful for all those who are hosting them this year. Hosting the musicians can be great fun and a chance to get to know them a little better. If you would like to offer to host one or two musicians, for one or two nights next year, please do get in touch. There is no obligation nearer the time if you find you can't manage it, but we like to offer the opportunity to as many Friends as possible.

Valerie Beynon, one of the committee, who many of you will know, expertly organises the hosting each year. As with many jobs, one doesn't always appreciate how much work people put into it until they are not available. This year Valerie had organised the hosting, but then had an accident and has ended up in Heath Hospital, Cardiff, with a broken leg. Others on the committee are now having to pick up the task and we have realised what an amazing job she does each year! I am sure you would all like to join me in wishing Valerie a speedy recovery and a quick return to Gower. The Festival isn't the same without her!

With regards the concert of Wednesday, I have been asked to let you know that immediately outside the Glyn Vivian Art Gallery there are three parking spaces. You can't park there permanently, but the spaces can be used to drop anyone off who can't walk far.

Also the Mariner Street car park, which used to be opposite the station doesn't exist anymore, but I am told you should be able to find parking on the streets after 6 o'clock.

On Thursday we will be back at St Peter's church, Newton for our concert with Christian Li and Gordon Back. Christian is only 11, and when aged only 10, he became the youngest-ever joint First Prize-Winner of the Yehudi Menuhin International Violin Competition. The Gower Festival is Christian's first concert in his first 'European Tour'. He will be performing at Harrogate, Cheltenham and Valdres (Norway) and other venues in France, Germany, Switzerland and the UK.

Christian and Gordon will be performing Vitali's Chaconne in g minor; Chopin's Nocturne in c# minor, arranged for violin and piano; Dvorak's Sonatina in G for Violin and Piano; Saint-Saens' Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso, opus 28, arranged for violin and piano by Bizet; Li Zili's Harvest Song of the Fisherman and Bazzini's La Ronde des Lutins, Scherzo Fantastique for violin and piano, opus 25.

There are just 3 tickets left for this concert, though there may be some returns. As usual, if you require tickets please phone The Grand Theatre up until about midday, after that any tickets will be available on the door.

Now over, once again, to the Mumbling Maestro of Mumbles.....

"In order to compose, all you need to do is think up a tune that nobody else has thought of." - Robert Schumann

I was thinking about the sad passing of Andre Previn earlier this year. I had the pleasure of meeting him once and he was a very sharp and shrewd operator. You may remember him conducting the LSO at the Brangwyn (the only "live" performance of Tchaikovsky's 1st Symphony - 'Winter Dreams', I've heard) and those wonderful TV programmes he made with that Orchestra. Would that programmes like that were still being made.

Despite Previn's success on TV and his work in films (he won four 'Oscars' which demonstrates how brilliantly he adapted to and succeeded in the media), I remember him saying in an interview that great music, the outpourings of genius, shouldn't be available at just the flick of a switch. He didn't really think it was right that we're able to so easily access videos and recordings of the finest Orchestras and the greatest interpreters and switch them on and off on a whim wherever and whenever it suits. It cheapens the music's worth. Previn went on to say that in order to hear and properly appreciate the music of the great masters, we should go to the trouble of dressing up, travelling to a venue and attending a concert and doing all which that entails. Hearing music performed by professional musicians who've trained all their lives to get to the required standard is

more than worth the effort. Sitting and listening in the company of like minded people is also a good thing - share the experience. *(Thoughts?)*

We have some Bach in Tuesday's concert. I was doing some research on Bach and found a website where anybody can have free access to the original manuscripts of every one of his compositions. It's called *Bach Digital* and if you want to hear live performances of his work for free 24/7 then go to <http://allofbach.com/en/bwv/bwv-232> Check them out sometime I find the latter strangely addictive. They're fabulous resources, but should the lifetime work of one of the greatest musical geniuses ever, be so readily and freely available?

(Answers on a blank cheque please)

Now, I think I'll put the radio on - Click - pause while valves warm up - it's an old radio!!

Cue the voice of the DJ - manic and over enthusiastically speaking in a manufactured 'Mid-Atlantic' (Sargasso Sea) accent. Let's listen:

"I'm gonna lay some heavy culture on ya - stand by pop pickers - you should be quavering in your shoes (cue Music - *Sign of the Swinging Cymbal*). OK, this is how last year looked for us music lovers, it's the the run down of the 2018 classical chart. (music indiscreetly fades up and down again). Here we go; we've been crotchet crunching all the data in our computers and now the results of our world-wide survey of over 20,000 concerts and 10,000 Operas are in my hot hand. (dah dah dee dah).

Right you Classical Connoisseurs, starting with concerts, and the year's top three most performed composers. No change at the top, still the dynamic duo, Mozart the chart topper is closely followed by Beethoven but a new entry at number 3 - the chart's highest climber - up 24 places - it's Lenny Bernstein. Nice one Mr B! (Music fades up and down again).

Right on listeners, let's check out the three most performed works in 2018 and at number 3 - a slider, down one place - we have Wolfgang Amadeus and his Requiem (dah dee doo dah). Slamming into the chart with a double whammy at numbers one **AND** two - he's the biggest mover - it's Lenny again with "Candide" coming a close second to "The West Side Story Symphonic Dances" in pole position. (dah dah dah dee dee dah).

The busiest Orchestra sees the Royal Philharmonic topping this chart with a staggering 150 performances (dah dah dee dah) and as for conductors (dah dee dee dee). - well - Andris Nelsons, he's a busy boy, busy boy, putting on his tails 121 times - that means he was out wiggling his mighty baton one day in every three. (dah dah doo dah) - nice one Andris - keep up that furious wiggling (bah dah dee bah).

OK, let's check out some cool Opera now and a third of all the operas performed in 2018 were by these top geezers: Verdi, Puccini and Mozart. No changes or surprises there pop pickers. (dah dah dee dah) .

Let's finish with the top three most performed operas and *Carmen*, always a favourite but this time a slider - it's gone down one place - clocking in at number 3. (dah dum dee dum dah dee dum dum dah). *Tosca* is our biggest climber - up four places to reach number 2 - and topping the list again is non-mover *Traviata*. (cue music fade in and finish).

Tomorrow I'll be mostly mumbling about the very unusual marriage of a well-known composer.

Mumbling Maestro of Mumbles