

Another packed church. Another sublime concert. And still more to come.....

Today we are at Sketty to hear Ji Liu. There are just one or two tickets remaining in unreserved seating if you still require tickets, be quick as these tickets will go very quickly on the door this evening! Today's concert has been kindly sponsored by Margaret and Brian Clarkson.

On Friday we will be at Clyne Chapel to hear Oliver Wass (Harp) and Huw Wiggins (Saxophone). This concert begins at 2.30pm and will last approximately an hour. Parking is in the nearby Clyne Gardens car park, but please be careful that you park in that car park, and not the pub car park, as they are next door to each other! If the car park is full, there is some parking on the streets nearby. This concert is another sell-out, though there may be one or two returns on the door on Friday.

This concert is being sponsored by Robert Hart, and once again we are very grateful for this support. I hope you have enjoyed all the concerts you have been able to attend this year and that you have enjoyed the benefits of being a Friend of the Gower Festival. If you have any friends who enjoy the Festival too, or you think might, please do tell them about the Friends, the great concerts and all the benefits of being a Friend. We are happy to arrange a gift membership if you would like to give membership as a gift to someone. Membership forms are available at the entrance to each church whilst we have a concert there. Otherwise visit our website - www.gowerfestival.org - and you can either download a form or request that I send you one.

Don't forget to enter the quiz I know a lot of people are already puzzling over who the four musicians may be! The first all correct answers drawn out of the hat will win a very nice bottle of bubbly! It could be you!!!!

And now over to the Mumbling Maestro of Mumbles (doesn't he ever get tired of mumbling?)

"Nothing soothes me more after a long pianoforte recital than to sit and have my teeth drilled" - George Bernard Shaw

The famous conductor and pianist Ashkenazy is quoted as saying "Scriabin is only really understood in Russia where there are people who suffer from Scriabinmania" (well, in that case we'll warn the St. John's Ambulance team to stand by with the antidote to Scriabinmania - just in case any infected Russians come to the concert this week!)

Scriabin was a strange egg. He made much of the fact that he was born on Christmas Day - his family were members of the Russian Orthodox Church and they have their Christmas day on January 7th - and on that day in 1872 Alexander was born. His mother died when he was one and because his father was in the Foreign Service and away most of the time, he was brought up by an aunt, Lyubov. She was only twenty years older than him and over the years they became 'close'!! (read into that what you will). Apparently Scriabin was very effeminate in his ways and he grew up to be a short and spindly weakling. He had 'relationships' with men and women, the majority of whom were very very young, not particularly willing and the relationships were very short - less than five minutes on average. (again - read into that what you will). As he grew older his behaviour became more and more bizarre and it wasn't long before it started causing his ever decreasing circle of friends some real concern.

Scriabin started displaying symptoms of 'Messianic Megalomania' and his life and work grew increasingly dark. His seventh Sonata (the *White Mass*) was written to exorcise demons, while his Ninth (the *Black Mass*) was all about summoning them back. (now that's pretty whacky - especially if you're a demon - you don't know if you're coming or going). When he told the few friends he had left about these works there were uncomfortable silences and anxious glances. As time went on, he started to think he was more powerful than Jesus and in order to prove this he tried the old 'walking on water' routine. This was on Lake Geneva (it was spectacularly unsuccessful). And it doesn't end there! He was rescued by some fishermen and seeing this as a divine sign, he started preaching to them and persuading them to give up fishing and to follow him. (they resisted the temptation to throw him back). It was at this point that people really started to talk. In their diaries and memoirs Rimsky Korsakov, Prokofiev, Glazunov and Rachmaninov all mention these episodes and frankly brand him a nutcase!

His final work was to be a 'Mysterium,' which he planned would be performed in the foothills of the Himalayas over a period of seven days. Bells suspended from clouds would summon the spectators and perfumes appropriate to the music would pervade the air. At the end of the piece, the world would dissolve in bliss and humanity would be replaced by better, 'nobler' beings. As it happens, this never took place (I think we'd have heard about it if it had). Scriabin died when he was just 47 in 1915 and even that was whacky. He cut a small spot on his lip whilst shaving and the cut became infected which led to blood poisoning and death.

Tomorrow I shall be mostly mumbling about hands.

Mumbling Maestro of Mumbles