

**Carlisle Music Society, Leah Nicholson, piano, St. Cuthbert's Church, Thursday,  
22nd February**

This was a truly magical piano recital which held the audience spellbound throughout. Among the many memorable encounters along our musical journey were the vibrant rhythms of Prokofiev's sonata no.7, in stark contrast to the calm serenity of Beethoven's opus 110 and the solemn measures of Bach's sarabande from partita no.6. Next came two of Rachmaninov's *etudes tableaux*, opus 39 no. 5 and opus 33 no.1, passionate, stormy and ferociously difficult, followed by the romantic lyricism of Tchaikovsky's Meditation opus 72 no.5, its closing seamless trills played with wonderful sensitivity. A special highlight for me was Stravinsky's 'Firebird', transcribed by Guido Agosti, in which the vivid orchestral colours of the original score flowed from the Steinway grand piano under Leah's fingers in a manner little short of miraculous. Following this *tour de force* Leah spoke to the audience, paying tribute to her first teacher, Alicja Fiderkiewicz, expressing a particular joy to be returning to St. Cuthbert's, and thanking us all for coming. She responded to enthusiastic demands for an encore by playing Liszt's transcription of Schubert's song *Gretchen am Spinnrade*. At 16 years of age Leah has achieved total mastery of her instrument and possesses that rare combination of talent, dedication, capacity for hard work, and humility which promise a brilliant international career, and we wish her every success.

The next concert in this series will be on 22nd March and will feature a welcome return of flautist Alena Walentin (nee Lugovkina) and violinist Niklas Walentin, who will be accompanied by Viv McLean (piano).

**Martin Johnson**