

It is on rare occasions indeed that the quality of the music-making is matched by the generosity of spirit of the performers to such an extent that the whole evening is a real joy.

Led by the irrepressible Alena Walentin on flute, her husband Niklas on violin and accompanied at the piano by Viv McLean this concert offered a variety of flute, violin and piano repertoire of a light and entertaining character and two substantial works.

Alena was a smiling, engaging guide through the programme. She explained to the large and appreciative audience that early twentieth-century composer Mel Bonis, was really Melanie and her Trio made for relaxed easy-listening. Flute and violin took turns, blending effortlessly with the sympathetic piano accompaniment. Similarly, Cui's Five pieces for flute, violin and piano contained some delightful salon music miniatures and the same combination brought the concert to a close with the Four Sketches by Eugene Goossens (English Pastoral).

Earlier Alena introduced the Prokofiev Flute Sonata by playing the Bird's theme from "Peter and the Wolf". The sonata did not disappoint with Alena performing the delicate, free-flowing passages and toccata-like perpetual motion responses with aplomb.

The last word goes to husband Niklas who together with his excellent accompanist Viv McLean gave a gripping performance of the Cesar Franck Violin Sonata. From the magical opening chords, through the tempests and despair of the inner movements to the sheer joy of the finale with its well-known tuneful canon, Niklas produced rich tone inspiring those in the balcony to stamp their feet at the rousing conclusion.

Ian France