



St. Michael's at Six – Roderick Long and Stuart Montgomery **Review by Lewis Forbes**

Roderick Long (violin) and St. Michael's own Stuart Montgomery (piano) performed on 17 June to a large and enthusiastic audience.

First on the programme was Brahms' formidable *Sonata in D minor* (op. 108) – a symphonic work which places great technical demands on the players. It is said that even Brahms himself and violin virtuoso, Joseph Joachim, had difficulty with the ensemble when preparing for the premiere, but this evening's duo made it seem easy. Roderick Long's elegant singing tone in the opening *Allegro* was matched by Stuart Montgomery's sensitive accompaniment – which tumbled, rippled and really sparkled! The pair moved seamlessly between different moods before the gradual winding down at the end of the movement - really making the most of it. Next came the sumptuous *Adagio*, which was breezy, relaxed and soothing. The more lively third movement, characterised by unexpected harmonic shifts and rhythmic pizzicato, was followed by the final *Agitato*, which was edgy and exciting!

Stuart then treated the audience to three pieces from the Debussy solo piano repertoire (a speciality of his). In *Reflets dans l'eau*, he truly conjured images of shimmering water with the intricate multi-layered textures, and the typically Debussy harmonies (such as whole-tone and pentatonic scales) were blissful as ever. *La plus que lente* was a delicate waltz, and Stuart really showed his understanding of the style by giving the music a lot of breathing space. In his final solo piece, *Poissons d'or*, the emphasis was very much on fun, and Stuart really brought the playful "fish" to life.

Roderick returned to finish the concert with two pieces by Kreisler. In the first *Liebeslied*, which had a distinct Italian operatic flavour, the expansive violin line gracefully unfurled over the bouncy piano accompaniment. *Tempo di Minuetto* combined a faux-Baroque style with 20th century vitality, with Roderick Long in particular managing to inject great energy into this triumphant closing item.

This was the last *Six* concert before the short summer break, and it was a perfect match of a great programme and a great performance. I would like to echo Rev. James Aitken's remark that there is "no more pleasant way to spend a Sunday evening" than at a *St. Michael's at Six* concert.

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