

Opening success for Sheean Prash at St. Thomas'

Sheean Prash's opened this year's summer concert series at St. Thomas' Parish Church last Wednesday with a summer concert of American music. The programme was well received by a small but appreciative audience. John Cashen charismatically compered the concert keeping the audience enlightened and giving the quintet momentary time to catch their breath between pieces!

After a welcome from organist Hilary Sewell Sheean Prash began their programme of American programme with the instantly recognisable 'The Star Spangled Banner'. This was the first occasion that Sheean Prash had used their new stand banners and this was brought to the attention of the audience.

To continue the quintet turned to the music of John Williams, who is probably best known for writing the film scores of blockbusters such as Indiana Jones, Jaws and Star Wars; he is also known for composing the Olympic Fanfare and Theme for the Los Angeles Olympic Games of 1984 and this was the piece the group chose to perform next.

By means of a contrast the group then turned to the Henry Mancini evergreen 'Moon River' beautifully arranged for brass quintet by Scotsman Alan Fernie, who has been a regular visitor to the Island in recent years as a past adjudicator for the Manx Music Festival, and as guest tutor to the Ramsey Town Band.

The first soloist of the evening was Julie Harrison on trumpet performing an adaptation of Alan Morrison's arrangement of Georgia on my Mind by Hoagy Carmichael. Julie once again delighted the audience demonstrating what a fine ballad player and confident soloist she is.

John Cashen's introduction began: 'Well next up it is time for Something Stupid. He was of course referring to the Clarence Carson-Parks 1967 hit originally sang and recorded by the father and daughter duo of Frank and Nancy Sinatra. From Something Stupid the quintet then turned to the theme tune of the American animated series The Flintstones in an arrangement for brass quintet by Jan van Kraeydonck.

Well as the Irving Berlin song states; There's No Business Like Show Business and this is what the audience were treated to next. This was another fine arrangement from the pen of Scotsman Alan Fernie.

At this point in the concert it was time for some audience participation, to sing the congregational hymn. Sheean Prash had opted to stay with the American theme with their choice of: Amazing Grace by John Newton.

After the hymn the quintet chose a complete contrast with their next item, a patriotic march by the American March King himself: John Philip Sousa. The Washington Post was commissioned by the newspaper of the same name for their essay contest awards ceremony of 1889. It proved very popular and a British journalist reporting on the ceremony dubbed Sousa 'the March king'; a

title that was to stick with him from then on. This rousing arrangement complete with foot stamping was by former horn player with the Fine Arts Brass Ensemble Stephen Roberts.

For the second solo spot of the evening it was turn of Juan Wright on Trombone to play Richard Stacey's arrangement of Swing Low Sweet Chariot. In his introduction to this item John Cashen outlined the history of the tune right up to it being adopted as a rugby anthem and recorded by UB40!

What programme of American would be complete without some George Gershwin? Well Sheean Prash weren't about to disappoint with another charming arrangement by Alan Fernie serving as a vehicle to demonstrate the quintet's lyrical playing.

Well next it was off to the New Orleans for the Dixieland classic Basin Street Blues by Spencer Williams. This was a new arrangement for brass quintet by Zack Smith that featured Grant Taylor on Tuba.

For their finale Sheean Prash chose John Kander's New York, New York. Originally sung by Liza Minnelli for the 1977 Martin Scorsese film of the same name, two years later it was recorded by Frank Sinatra with whom it has been closely associated ever since. Arranged for brass quintet by former Tuba player with the Fodens band and Quintessence brass quintet Thomas Wyss, this proved a popular finale with the audience.

As an encore the quintet turned to an item recognisable to any Classic FM listeners. The Ashokan Farewell was originally composed for the conclusion of a music camp in Woodstock. The Celtic sound of the melody was explained by the composer Jay Unger in a subsequent interview when he divulged that the basis for his composition was a Scottish lament.

After a vote of thanks from Assistant Curate of St Thomas' Reverend Linda Brady, post concert refreshments were served in the church where over tea coffee and biscuits some very favourable comments about the concert were shared.

Juan Wright