

American pianist delights Sussex audience

The American born internationally acclaimed pianist Mark Swartzentruber delighted his audience at a Twelfth Night Piano Recital organised by Sussex Chorus in Cuckfield last Sunday.

Mark Swartzentruber plays with a directness and immediacy that enables him to interpret classical compositions in a vibrant and enchanting manner and make the work immediately accessible. This was particularly true of his rendering of Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata in C Major (Op 53), a lively resonant piece that had the audience spellbound.

The concert had begun with an equally enthralling sonata by Scarlatti in D Major (K 492), a work redolent of Spain, and ended with three of Debussy's Estampes, Pagodes, Soiree dans Grenade and Jardins sous la plouie. The programme was particularly chosen to complement the 1905 Blüthner piano used in the recital. The Blüthner piano is noted for its lightness of touch and warm resonance achieved through its own stringing system, a sound that appealed to Debussy who is known to have owned a similar piano at the time he composed the Estampes in Sussex in 1903. Mark Swartzentruber was thus able to reproduce brilliantly the effect that Debussy had originally intended.

No event organised by Sussex Chorus would be complete without a contribution from Neil Jenkins, and midway through the programme he and Penny Jenkins sang a selection of arias from the Mikado (Gilbert and Sullivan) and Bless the Bride (Herbert and Ellis), accompanied by Mark Swartzentruber.

This Twelfth Night recital was a truly magical ending to the Christmas season, and perhaps therefore we should not have been totally surprised to find that Plough Monday had arrived a little early when some of us returned to our cars parked in a nearby muddy field!

Brian Cutler