

## **Review of Concert on October 8<sup>th</sup> by Martin Škampa and Paul Rezek**

The sympathetic and beautiful setting of St Cyprian's Church, Baker Street, was the scene for a wonderful recital in aid of the Czech Historic Buildings, Gardens and Parks Restoration Fund, given most generously by Martin Škampa Cello, and Michel Rezek, Piano on 6 October 2008. The range of music for this combination, and the composers' response to the tonal contrasts and challenges of the instruments, was admirably displayed, the performers making clear their deep understanding of the music and the maturity of their musical relationship.

Their path through Classic, Romantic, 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Folk music gave an admirable sense of panorama and richly explored the possibilities of both instruments, opening with the early *Sonata in F major op 17* by Beethoven. Here, in the style of the period, the piano took centre stage and Michel Rezek gave a most authoritative reading. The progress to instrumental equality shown by Brahms in his *E minor Sonata* was splendidly expressed by Martin Škampa's expressive sense of line and his performance from memory gave immediacy to his reading of this important work. The Cellist again played without music in Debussy's *Sonata for Cello and Piano* and the composer's ground-breaking style was conveyed by an exciting change of mood and tone to which the sensitive acoustics of the Church gave further enhancement.

The second part of the programme showed the breadth, range, and vivid contrasts in Czech Music. Dvořák's love of his roots in Folk music was beautifully expressed in '*Silent Woods*' and the *Rondo op 94*. while the brilliant *Variations* by Martinů on a theme of Rossini was given a truly virtuoso performance by Martin Škampa. But the most important Czech work, or perhaps of the whole programme '*The Suita Balladica*' by Petr Eben, though new to us all, was clearly a work of weight and importance, with forceful rhythmic patterns and passages of great lyricism in slower sections. I look forward to another hearing of this and other works by Petr Eben.

This, a taxing programme for any two artists, had the audience enthralled and carried from beginning to end by beauty and sound and sincerity of interpretation. I do hope we are able to hear these two excellent musicians again before too long.

Averil Carmalt-Jones (385 words)

