

### 2.6.23 'You hum it and I'll play it: Woman with alto-tude'

Last night I performed eight pieces in the last concert for this season together with the Jersey Festival Choir, the seventh such performance since I joined them in October 2022.

In that time we have chorally celebrated Christmas, Liberation Day and the King's Coronation, Charity Soup Kitchens, Church Music and the island's Eisteddfod. I have sung the alto part in four-part harmonies by Mozart, Goodall, McCartney, Haydn and Verdi, in French, Italian and Latin. It was a challenge as like most people I choose to do things I do well and avoid those I find difficult. And, as my voice has dropped over the years I now sing the unfamiliar alto part which often does not follow the melody played by the accompanist. Each week I have pushed myself to relearn what sight-reading skills I had as a soloist in our school choir (a thousand years ago), and tried to improve as a singer, learning how to blend my voice with others to create joyful music.

Yesterday our choirmaster Will was kind enough to say he was glad I had joined. (I am glad he does not hear my solo attempts at home to keep up with my fellow choristers.)

The Georgetown Methodist church was a new venue for me and adds to my list of ecclesiastical Jersey buildings now visited. Like others of its type it was full of light and space with minimal decoration and reminded me of the Quaker Meeting House I used to attend in the UK: a place of peace and good works. Since joining the choir I have been spoilt by regularly hearing music of a high standard and last night's soloists included a clarinettist of playful disposition who gradually dismantled her instrument, playing each smaller section as she went, until she had a penny whistle sized section for the final searing note. It was the best kind of showing-off, a mistress of her art including her audience in playfulness and creativity. I confess to preferring the traditional to the avant-garde musically but her talent and skill were impressive and when she played Klezmer music my heart was full. I was transported back to my Toronto student days when we got free tickets to hear Giora Feidman play to a huge enthusiastic crowd. He played the audience too, standing alone in the darkness playing a series of heart-rending notes that set our hearts thumping, then he made us sing the notes back to him en masse before embarking on folk dances that made me want to spin and jump.

I adore church music but the music of the *volk* speaks to the soul.

Today I am weary but it is a good tiredness from doing good work. I know my fellow choristers gave of their best and made a joyful sound for others, and this act of giving is important in a world that feels increasingly lacking in kindness. The choir is a group of kindly folk who do something they love and share it, and what better thing can one do on a Wednesday evening? So, I will be returning at summer's end for whatever the next season brings, hoping to feel slightly more confident about my own musical skills and enjoying being a part of a force for good. Jersey is a place where music is celebrated and lockdown must have been hard for those musically inclined, but now the joy is clear - concerts are back!