

Hertfordshire's Five Gold Rings

Christmas Celebrations at Temple Court!



THE IDEA

North Hertfordshire Homes, Hertfordshire's Music Service and The Purcell School decided to launch 'Hertfordshire's Five Gold Rings' on Thursday December 8th at Temple Court, in Baldock which is a wonderfully spacious building offering comfortable, attractive sheltered accommodation for senior citizens.

It was agreed that a musical evening based around community carol singing would be an ideal programme for this special event. Community choirs and local musicians in the Baldock area were to be invited to take part, and Alison Cox offered to organise instrumental arrangements of well-known Christmas Carols with her Year 11 students, who learn community musical skills and outreach work as part of their programme at the Purcell School.



When the young musicians from Year 11 heard about this exciting project, they decided to form themselves into a small orchestra and arrange their favourite carols.

Most pupils worked alone, but some chose to do the exercise in pairs.

The young people were taught in class how to arrange a Christmas carol for a small orchestra. They learned to give interesting material to the different instruments and to bring out the melodies, and add descants. They tried to use different combinations of instruments in each verse. Alison Cox gave them a sheet of instructions to remind them what to do.

THE DAY OF THE CELEBRATIONS



The pupils all worked very hard indeed, and rehearsed the carol arrangements carefully when the scores and parts were ready! There were quite a few alterations and second thoughts when they heard their pieces played for the first time - but it was a wonderful learning experience for them!

After a few last-minute rehearsals in the morning, the Y11 group all helped pack the equipment into the instrument van - music, percussion, music stands, sandwiches, cellos and a harp! The hired coach arrived at the Purcell School, everyone piled in and a register was taken before setting off on the 45-minute journey from Bushey to Baldock.

The aim was to arrive at Temple Court at 3.p.m., to give the musicians time to set up the orchestra and to get ready to play. However, the traffic was heavy, and it was 3.25 before the coach finally pulled in to Temple Court's car park! This meant that everything had to be organised and set up very quickly indeed! In the middle of this, in spite of all the careful arrangements, Laura, one of the Y11 flautists realised to her horror that she had left all her well-organised flute music behind at the Purcell School! It was too late to go back and fetch it.

Alison Cox and Laura were both desperately worried about this, and had to think quickly. Laura was playing a very important part in no fewer than twelve of the fifteen carols! Luckily, the kind staff members of Temple Court allowed Laura and her friends to use their photocopier to copy the conductor's scores of the pieces she was playing in! This meant that she was able to play in the Christmas Celebrations after all. Everyone was so grateful to the Temple Court staff for helping the pupils solve this problem! Laura herself was the most grateful of all!



The team at North Hertfordshire Homes and Temple Court invited residents from two other residential homes to come and share the celebrations! Some of the elderly people sat near the orchestra, and others went up to the balcony and looked down on the performance from above.

Temple Court had been set up very carefully by the NHH staff and Nick Denham from Hertfordshire Music Service. Nick had taken the trouble to organise an attractive screen presentation showing images from the project and information about the partners!

Before the carols began, some of the young musicians performed solo items on their instruments, to give the audience something to listen to while they were arriving and settling down. These included solo pianists, violinists, cellists and harpists. There was a dazzling performance of 'Flight of the Bumble Bee' performed on a xylophone!



The Christmas Celebrations began, with an attractive arrangement of **Once in Royal David's City** arranged for orchestra by Jing-Mei Quan. The first verse was sung solo, accompanied by a glockenspiel. Then the orchestra entered and the audience and soloists sang everything else from verse 2 onwards.

Other carols featured in this half of the event included a 2-violin version of a lovely Polish carol, arranged by Polish violinist Filip Cwizewicz. There is a vibrant Polish community in Hertfordshire, with whom Hertfordshire's Five Gold Rings is hoping to work closely, to help promote their ideas and culture during 2012.

The first half of the performance continued, and audience members were able to sing along with the well-known carols and listen to less well-known ones.



After the first two or three carols had been sung/played, some more members of the audience arrived in a bus. To allow the new guests time to get seated and comfortable, the Christmas Celebration carols were paused. Alison Cox asked some of the young musicians if they could play solos to fill the gap for those waiting. Although they were not expecting to do this, Juliana Myslov, Martin Bartlett and Jumaane Richardson Robin **were able to play some extra items and keep the guests entertained during this time.**

Favourites included **The Coventry Carol, It came Upon the Midnight Clear, The First Nowell, On Christmas Night and I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas.** Lesser-known but very beautiful carols included **Tomorrow Shall be My Dancing Day** and **Of the Father's Heart Begotten.** All the carols had been arranged for orchestra by the year 11 pupils playing and singing at the event

Half way through the concert, there was a break for tea and cakes. During this time, some of the young musicians circulated round the audience, chatting to them and describing their lives as young musicians at The Purcell School!



Towards the end of the interval, there were more solos. Kristijan, one of the violinists, played his own version of the gypsy-inspired **Czardas**, mixed up with other bits of famous violin music from different well-known party pieces! People were delighted, and this performance nearly brought the house down!





The second half of *Christmas Celebrations* continued. For those members of the audience sitting in the balcony, there was an excellent view of all sections of the orchestra!



This is the advantage of an imaginative space like Temple Court! The audience sitting in the balcony were wonderfully supportive, singing away with heart and soul and showing their appreciation for the young musicians by applauding



The people sitting downstairs were equally appreciative, and many of these also sang with great energy and enjoyment! What a marvellous audience they were!



A small choir of four young vocalists led the audience in their singing. If only there had been a whole choir - the roof would certainly have been raised!

To everyone who made this special event possible.....

Kevin Thompson, Alison Steyn and Nicola Pearson from North Herts Homes
Nick Denham from Hertfordshire Music Service
The staff and residents from Temple Court
The other audience members who came to hear the performance
The Purcell School's Year 11 arrangers and performers

THANK YOU!

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