



Peter Uppard

In the very early years of the Festival an enthusiastic supporter, a young man called Peter Uppard, started by “doing humble things like shifting chairs and lighting candles”.

But he was an extraordinarily talented pianist (who made his BBC debut at age 13), and played the piano in Little Missenden ‘Young Musicians’ concerts in 1963, 64 and 65.

Peter then began to compose, and during the 70s three of his pieces were performed at the Festival. A major scholarship to the Royal Academy of Music led eventually to his becoming the Academy’s Emeritus Professor of Piano.

Peter’s consummate skill and intelligence as a pianist is reflected in this extract from a review by Bryce Morrison of his disc of pieces by Liszt and Fauré:

“Few virtuoso pianists find their technical wizardry the smallest use in penetrating the profound emotional depths and complexity of Fauré’s late piano music. Nor does it help them to convey the structural cohesion of Liszt’s greatest composition. Without virtuosity of listening the genius of these works can remain elusive. Not so in this recording by Peter Uppard which Sir Charles Mackerras described as ‘Magnificent’, a verdict echoed by the composer Joseph Horowitz, highlighting the remarkable clarity of thought with which Uppard reveals the compositional logic of Liszt’s monumental achievement. For all who in the past may have found this music perplexing these performances capture the architectural mastery of Liszt’s B minor Sonata and liberate the subtlest nuances of Fauré’s finest creations.”

At his Wigmore Hall début the *Times* critic wrote: "I would definitely declare pianist Peter Uppard to be a vintage claret worth watching."

But it was as a teacher he became most celebrated by the generations of students he coached. And he frequently appeared on the judging panels of major international piano Festivals.

This latter role brought him back into the orbit of the Little Missenden Festival. He'd been a judge for the prestigious Honens Laureate competition, and was so impressed by the winner, Pavel Kolesnikov, that he recommended him to us. Pavel appeared for us in 2014, and again in 2016 – performances greatly valued by us and by our audiences.

Peter also brought Fazioli pianos to our attention, and introduced us to Jaques Samuel, who hired one to us on an affordable basis in 2014. It's been our chosen piano since then.

Finally, early in 2017, he strongly recommended another pianist, Luka Okros, then an unknown name to us. Sadly, this was the last time we shall benefit from his prodigious experience - he died of a heart attack within a month, before we had a chance to tell him we were engaging Luka for 2018.

Peter was a most articulate and amusing companion as well as a spectacularly accomplished musician, and we miss him on both fronts.

Alan Hedges

Festival Chairman