

Saturday 3rd November

Playing Day with Tom Beets

The hall rapidly filled with enthusiastic recorder players from far and wide – many Somerset branch members and visitors from other branches, plus quite a few who, as yet, haven't joined the Society of recorder players.

Anticipating a busy day, everyone got to work on their allotted rôles – chairs out, coffee made (thank you Judy and Barbara), raffle at the ready, stand erected and recorders greased and ready for action.

Tom appeared in plenty of time, and very soon we all had music for the first of the two pieces which we were studying – the first movement of the Symphony number 2 by Deitrich Schnabel. This involved all instruments from the small sopranino to the large contra basses, and there was certainly plenty for everyone to occupy themselves. Tom took us through the opening section with great patience, and a lot of humour. We then looked at the end – at which point he suggested a play though – and we all proclaimed that we hadn't learnt the middle. However, Tom's inimitable style of conducting helped us to achieve a reasonable first play through of the whole piece. Tom also gave us some technical tips to enable us to produce a better sound from our instruments. Having worked on other sections. We had another 'performance' before it was time for lunch.

Suitably sated we then looked at a Paduan by Scheidt. This. Although written for 4 parts, worked very convincingly with people splitting into 4 and 8 foot versions. A beautiful opening section was followed by much busier music, before ending in a tranquil fashion. Again, Tom showed great patience and even greater humour, and had a wonderful way of praising the mistakes!! This work was considerably easier, and I feel that we accomplished a good musical result (considering that we only learnt it for about an hour).

Cake and tea – provided by Helen and Wendy, were very welcome at this point, and on returning we revisited the Schnabel, working on sections that needed polishing. Finally, a performance (of sorts!!) – and a very happy, large group of recorder players congratulated Tom for a wonderful day.

Yes, only 2 pieces, but we learnt them in a way that isn't possible when you have a number of pieces, and the contrast between the music was excellent. Many thanks to everyone who made this day possible, and particularly to Tom who was so inspiring.