Somerset Society of Recorder Players

Meeting 17 June 2023

Joyce Rudall conducted us in a carefully prepared programme, getting the balance right between different skill levels – always difficult.

We started with a Pavane by Susato. Joyce called this a warm-up piece but this was hardly fair. It was both simple and also deceptively beautiful. Our performance was transformed when Joyce explained that Susato was a trumpeter. Our final play-through sounded so much better when we played it in the trumpet style Susato intended.

By contrast, we next played an arrangement of He Shall Feed His Flock from Handel’s Messiah. Well-known melodies are always difficult in recorder arrangements, and some of us were challenged by the 12/8 rhythm and the key of E-flat, especially the descant and tenor with their double hole for the keynote (note to myself: must do more finger exercises); but what a beautiful arrangement of a well-loved piece.

Next came Glen Shannon’s Albion’s Elixir composed for recorders and providing a real challenge. Joyce was very patient in explaining things.

Ann Martin’s Journey to Skye was also written for recorders and a skilfully woven take on the Skye Boat Song. This was a combination of the familiar melody, or hints of it, and different recorders.

We celebrated the 400 anniversary of William Byrd’s death with a wonderful arrangement of an Ave Verum Corpus. What more can be said? It felt so right on recorders and – like all Byrd – sublime.

We finished with an arrangement of Moon River. It may be one of the most popular film melodies ever, but so what? We all knew how it went, but this was a recorder ensemble version and it’s always fun to end with a well-known piece!

Teas were provided by Felicity and Paul – thank you.

The concluding thanks to Joyce were so well-deserved.

Neil