



## DOWNSIDE SCHOOL

*The Downside School Concerto Competition*

*May 2019*

From Bach to Haydn, Strauss to Mendelssohn, last Sunday's Concerto Competition showcased some of the fine young musical talent we are lucky to have at Downside School.

It was a pleasure to welcome back Miss Gillian Oswell to adjudicate this year's competition, who has the unenviable job of choosing between five highly polished musical performances, each with its individual strengths and virtuosity.

Dominic (4F) played the Allegro from the Violin Concerto in A Minor by Bach. This was an elegant performance with beautifully shaped phrases and a sense of direction and musicality throughout.

Sam Meng (violin, U6) treated the audience to 'Winter' from *The Four Seasons* by Vivaldi. He delighted with a clearly articulated performance with a wide range of expressive qualities to match the moods of the various sections, and a warmth of tone alongside excellent basic technique.

Antonia (5F) played the Andante from Haydn's Trumpet Concerto in E Flat. It was a well-paced performance with a beautifully clear sound and even tone, and an appropriate sense of style.

Sophie (4F) gave an impressive performance of the violin solo in *Méditation* from *Thaïs* by Massenet, playing with poise and sensitivity, and maintaining beautifully sustained phrases from the very first notes to the final chords. In particular, her final high harmonics had a sweetness of tone and poignant quality.

Phaedra van Laar (L6) sang 'September' and 'Beim Schlafengehen' from *Four Last Songs* by Richard Strauss. Her beautiful pure voice and impressive technique produced a real sense of 'ebb and flow' of musical contours, and she captivated her audience with her excellent communication of the text.

Finally, Joanna Doliwa (L6) played the Allegro molto appassionato from Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor. From the onset she took command of the stage, with a real sense of 'performance'. Her playing was very expressive, with a range of musical shaping and changes of mood, superb technique and excellent communication with the audience.

The orchestra consisted of pupils from all years, with a few additional professional guests, mostly our own talented peripatetic teachers. Clearly directed and encouraged by Mr McNamara, and led by the talented Mr Hughes, they gave the soloists every possible

support and encouragement and are to be congratulated on the fine standard of their playing. It was lovely to see each soloist then resume his or her place within the orchestral ranks to give of his / her best in supporting the other competitors. The overwhelming feeling of the evening was of pupils relishing the opportunity to make such fabulous music together. Every note was an absolute treat for the audience.

The standard this year was arguably the highest ever; every performance was a worthy winner. Huge congratulations go to every player, both soloists and orchestra, for all the hard work and commitment that was necessary to produce such a thrilling evening of music. Thanks also goes to the individual teachers who are there throughout to encourage and develop the abundance of talent within the school.

However, in the end there had to be one winner. I think it was unanimous that the Concerto Cup went to Joanna. We look forward to hearing her play the full concerto in the next St Cecilia Concert; as Mr Hughes (her violin teacher) said, “you could hear far less impressive performances than hers in the top music academies”.