

La Folia presents

MAGNA SONGS

Intercut with JS Bach's The Art of Fugue.

La Folia quartet, tenor, guitar, harpsichord, dance and percussion.

19th September, Medieval Hall, Salisbury Close.

This incredible project, conceived as part of the 800 years anniversary celebrations of The Magna Carta reached its 9th stage tonight; a chamber concert presentation of the songs written by some of Salisbury and Wiltshire's most vulnerable and over-looked children in our society, from four special schools and first performed with them in Salisbury Cathedral in July. The creative team, managed by the indefatigable Sue Kent, posed the question;

"Could they find a way for them to express their sense of fairness and personal needs through music? How can the rest of society learn to listen in a new way?"

Over a period of many months, the team worked with the children and created the words and music of the songs heard tonight. The results cut straight to the heart of beauty and life. Using consummate professional performers, including tenor Mark Padmore and violinists Elizabeth Wilcock and Daphne Moody, alongside Anusha Subramanyan, an Indian dance movement therapist and percussionist Mayilvaganum Vijayarajah, led by Howard Moody playing harpsichord and various percussion instruments (including the cajon drum he was sitting on at the keyboard) the ensemble shared these powerful creations and outpourings with us. First was *"We need a system bigger than we are"* forcefully sung by Padmore from the minstrels gallery behind us whilst the dancer and ensemble supported the shape and feel of the melody line. This segued straight into the first Fugue with no break; the format of the whole evening.

"We need more songs

Please listen to me

We need lots of friends"

And we truly do need more songs in these dark and confusing days. We heard a myriad of instruments and techniques and, in two of the most moving moments of the whole evening, Padmore and the ensemble sang the arranged songs, directly followed by recordings of the children who'd written them singing. Incredible and humbling. The final piece, setting words by one of the Exeter House children to Bach's Chorale 'Wenn Wir in höchsten Nöten sein' is completely true to his feelings, yet I couldn't help thinking, so fitting for the plight of the Syrian Refugees fleeing into Europe, or indeed any desperate, human.

I am alone

Why doesn't anyone hear me?

We need lots of help

Nowhere to live

No food to eat

I want my family

I want my friends

Somebody help me.

The final music heard was Bach's last fugue, written on his death bed. Arranged for the string quartet and played magnificently. It stops abruptly, leaving the resonance ringing on in our hearts...exactly like the children's songs. We are privileged to have La Folia based in Salisbury and we must support them and help them with this amazing work.

Sarah Collins