Reviews

New musical work will long be remembered

WHAT an amazing evening! Local composer Emily Feldberg had taken words from many sources, both British and German, and set them to music to commemorate the centenary of the ending of World War One.

Singers and orchestral players from all over West Somerset had come together to give a performance of her new work, 'Fragments', which will be long remembered.

The first half of the programme, performed in The Avenue Methodist Church on November 10, was given by the Minehead Male Voice Choir, under its director, Jackie Butterworth, followed by the Minehead Street Choir, which is led by Nigel Neill, with his guitar, all singing songs with connections, sometimes very tenuous, with the war.

The Male Voice Choir sings from memory, and the energy and commitment was notable, especially in the rousing performance of Stout-Hearted Men, which began the evening, and World in Union, based on Gustav Holst's hymn I Vow to Thee my Country, which ended the choir's contribution.

The street choir is open to everyone interested in singing in a social setting. Several songs were well known to the audience, such as Tipperary and Goodbye-ee – what a pity we couldn't join in! They were obviously having such fun.

But the highlight of the evening came after the interval. Emily's new piece, Fragments, is a fascinating and tuneful work for baritone, choir and orchestra, together with soloists from the choir, and speakers.

Nigel Perrin conducted the Fragments Choir, made up of singers from our area, who had devoted many hours to learning the work, the Fragments Orchestra, led by Mary Eade, and the baritone Jamie Rock, an old friend who has appeared here many times.

In her programme note, Emily says: "What struck me in researching these texts was the similarity of the emotions felt by the British and German people, whether of grief, honour, bravery, humour, fear, cynicism or joy."

She illustrated this in her music very poignantly, and we were left, on this anniversary weekend, with feelings of sadness and horror at the waste of lives.

This piece is a remarkable accomplishment, both emotionally and technically. The music is accessible to everyone, and melodically and harmonically interesting, and the words often poignant.

There are three spoken interludes, which gave us the statistics and the progress of the war, and emphasised the waste and tragedy. They were admirably read by Jane Jones, Chris Lawson and Richard Hatton.

The musical sections range from the start of the war, It Will All Be Over By Christmas, to a 'Canary Girl' delighting in the money she was earning and what she could do with it – "Five quid a week!" – even though she knew she could be blown up, and three Tommies in the trenches sure that 'Notts County Can Beat Aston Villa'.

The male voice and street choirs each sang a verse here, to great effect. Emily uses repetition of key words to emphasise points – the movement called Lament was sung three times at different places, repeating 'Schmerz!' (pain) over and over. Jamie Rock sang 'Lament' the second time as a solo. As always, his voice was strong and melodious, with every word audible, and his commitment evident, even more so in the solo 'Vale'.

Nigel Perrin's experience and professionalism – he is a renowned conductor and was, of course, one of the original King's Singers –enabled him to draw the whole performance together. Our pleasure in the evening was enhanced by the way the chorus responded to him, obviously enjoying the lighter moments, whilst rising to the challenge of the darker ones.

Fragments starts and ends with the words "Lest We Forget". The slow and solemn final movement reflects the suffering of war, and remembers those killed. The repetition of the words "Lest We Forget:, sung by the soloist and dying away to nothing at the end, was intensely moving.

The work was greeted by a rapturous standing ovation – well deserved.

JML

This Was The News

From our columns over the years

150 years ago

November 14th 1868

■ Another important step towards the improvement of Minehead would be speedily taken – the lighting of streets and dwellings by gas, for which purpose a company had been formed. The estimated capital required was £1,800 to be raised in 360 shares of £5 each. When this became known, the whole amount was quickly taken up.

■ A temperance lecture was given in the court hall of Williton police station by Mr J Eddy, a travelling agent for the West of England Temperance League. Mr Gliddon occupied the chair.

■ Miss Elizabeth Boucher, of Jews House, Wiveliscombe, was married to Mr Joshua Keevil, of Pewsey, Wiltshire.

■ Twin daughters were born to the wife of Isaac Chilcott, of Stream.

100 years ago

November 16th 1918

■ The end of the Great War found West Somerset people more in the mood to remember Fallen sons than to indulge in celebration on Armistice Day. Church services were hurriedly arranged and in the evening there were impromptu firework displays, but the weather was dismally wet.

■ In St Decuman's churchyard, a volley was fired over the grave of Private William Trunks, of Watchet, who died of pneumonia after two years on the Western Front in the Labour Corps. The flu epidemic raging through Europe continued to claim many victims.

■ The West Somerset Foxhounds met at Kingsbrompton on November 11: "Armistice between hound and fox is unknown," wrote the hunting correspondent.

■ Mrs Barrons, of Minehead, had organised outings to Blue Anchor and Porlock Weir for the wounded soldiers in the Red Cross Hospital, Minehead.

■ A new organ was dedicated at Roadwater United Methodist Church and a recital was given by Mr A E Hirons, of Dunster.

50 years ago

November 16th 1968

■ "Fifty years after. Not a jubilee but a solemn anniversary ... of the end of the most terrible war in mankind's history," read a special report in the Free Press entitled 'Hallowed in the Land They Loved'. There were 70 or more veterans in the Remembrance parade, all paying "silent salute" to the friends they had lost.

■ There were reports of services and other forms of commemoration in 17 communities across the district. These included Monksilver where the Bishop of Bath and Wells, Dr Edward Henderson, made time to greet the village's oldest resident, Mr H E Davis, 92, after the service in the parish church.

■ A meeting of Bishops Lydeard Village Hall Management Council agreed that holding the carnival and flower show on the same day had proved too demanding. It was decided to hold next year's carnival on July 12 and the flower show in August.

25 years ago

November 19th 1993

■ The keys to Minehead's revamped lifeboat station were handed over by contractors at the end of a £156,000, five-month project to get the 92-year-old building shipshape again.

■ A stunning portrait of the Queen earned Minehead policeman and lifeboat crew member Steve Guscott a coveted photographic award sponsored by Amateur Photographer magazine, Dixons and Kodak. The judgeing panel included the Mirror Group's chief photographer, Mike Maloney, and the prize was presented by royal photographer Patrick Lichfield.

■ As the county council considered how to save £8 million on its education budget, a Friends of Minehead Community Education Centre was being formed as part of a campaign to protect the arts and adult education in West Somerset.

Packed hall enthralled by Those Who Served

A PACKED Porlock village hall was enthralled as Jeff Cox and the Dovery Manor Museum Players honoured the sacrifices made by local young men and women during World War One.

The dramatic evening, 'Those Who Served,' was the museum's contribution to the mark the centenary of the end of the war and formed the third part of a project launched earlier this year by Dovery Manor Museum with the aid of a Carriers for Causes scheme grant.

The first part of the project was to tell the story of each of the local men who died during the war: his background, his previous employment, his war service, and where he is buried or commemorated.

A roll of honour paying tribute to the lives of all these men is now lodged at the museum. A second volume at the museum lists the names, regiments, rank and number of all those men who served.

More than 350 local men from the three parishes fought in all the theatres of the war: in the trenches of France and Flanders, in the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, in the Middle East, and in India.

At home, scores of women performed vital tasks: more than 30 joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment, and worked in the temporary hospital in Minehead; others sent aid packages or helped to bring in the harvests.

From the left are are Justin Blundell, Nigel Greenwood, Christine Greenwood, Stephanie Blake and Jeff Cox. Photo: Barry Hitchcox

Jeff Cox and Christine Greenwood set the scene of a hot and sunny month in May 1914 with tourists still flocking to West Somerset despite the tensions in Europe.

The Free Press reported the dramatic landing on Minehead sands of the pioneer French aviator M Henri Salmet in his Bleriot monoplane.

Nigel Greenwood recounted the first days of the war in the area during August 1914. By the end of the month, a total of 21 men from Porlock and the Vale had volunteered.

Stephanie Blake convinced as a West Somerset Free Press reporter and Justin Blundell brought some of the men to life in an authentic World War One soldier's uniform.

There followed news of injured men and sadly, in January 1915, the first local man to be killed on the field of battle, a Selworthy man, Frederick John Prescott, who had been a gardener on the Holnicote estate. The Free Press reported that "Prescott was killed in action at Cuinchy, in Belgium on January 25, aged 25. He is the first native of Selworthy to lay down his life for King and Country".

The audience learned of Porlock's provision of one vital resource to help the war effort – sphagnum moss, which grows on Exmoor, and produced excellent absorbent, antiseptic dressings.

Additionally, Christine and Nigel described some of the tasks undertaken by the women and the men at home including farming, tanning and blacksmithing, all necessary for the nation's needs.

Eight local men received the Military Cross or the Military Medal. The last one to be awarded, in October 1918, was to Jim Rawle, who was fighting with the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry at Fresnoy. Jeff showed the audience Jim Rawle's actual Military Cross and to reveal his pride as Jim Rawle's grandson.

The players told of the celebrations on Peace Day, July 19, 1919, when Porlock villagers decked their houses with flags and greenery, the erection of a triumphal arch at the church gate and a church service, a lunch and sports events.

Jeff and Justin told of the honouring of the dead at the new War Memorial when, on July 21, 1921, commanding officer Major-General A W Peck paid tribute to the 220 men from Porlock and Doverhay: "From time immemorial, to die for one's country has been counted the most honourable death a man could die. These men died for their country, upholding a righteous case of right against might.

"Their proud memory will remain with us always and their names will live for ever more ... courage, self-sacrifice, devotion to duty, cheerful endurance of hardships, unselfishness and comradeship. Let us remember that these qualities are as necessary to the nation in peace as they were essential at war."

The audience was noticeably moved as Stephanie Blake then took up her flute to conclude the performance, and the haunting notes of The Last Post filled the hall.

The talk was illustrated throughout with slides of photographs and documents of the time.

Contributed

Drama club makes its own theatres

THE newly formed Watchet Children's Drama Club has been learning new skills rooted in ancient Chinese culture.

Members spent a day of designing and making their own shadow puppet theatres using cardboard boxes, garden canes, translucent paper and household lamps.

Working in groups, they created entertaining stories and performed them to a delighted audience.

"It was wonderful to introduce the children to another aspect of drama and performance", said Pete Stevenson, chairman of the club.

Judy Robinson, club secretary, said, "The joy on the children's faces as they performed their plays brought tears to my eyes."

The club meets at 4. 45pm on Thursdays at Knights Templar School, usually during term time, and all children aged five to13 are welcome to join. More details from Pete Stevenson, petethepoet@hotmail.co.uk 07896 867 799.

What's On When and Where

Christmas Fair
Saturday
November 24th
10am-2pm at
Avenue Methodist Hall
Jewellery, Bric-a-Brac, Books, Quality Clothing, Luxury Tombola, Refreshments
In aid of Brooke Charity
No: 1085760

Christmas Fayre
Stogumber
Village Hall
Saturday
24th November
10am – 3pm
Teas, Coffees, Light Lunches, Stalls, Father Christmas
Entrance Free

Royal British Legion Watchet
Nov. 17th 8:30 start
DJ Supersounds
Music from all eras
Dec. 8th
Andy Kennett
Rock & Roll Night
01984 631724
Like us on Facebook
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Christmas Fair & Coffee Morning
Sat 24th November
Winsford Village Hall
10.30am
Cake stall, Christmas stall, books, drawer, clothes, bric a brac
Lots of bargains!

CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR
Sun 2nd December
10.30am-2.30pm
At Wootton Courtenay Village Hall TA24 8RH
Stalls £12
Tel: 07780 922180
Supporting Air Ambulance

THEATRE LIVE ARTS & FILM

Friday 16th to Saturday 17th November. **High School Musical Jr and Magic of the Musicals.** Following on from this year's success of Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Cats", local award winning Fusion Young Performers present a show of two halves.
Starts 7.30pm. Saturday Matinee 2.30pm. Tickets up to £10.00 (Family Ticket 2 + 2) £25.00

Tuesday 20th November. **The Cause.** Marking the centenary year of the first votes for some women in 1918, this dynamic production, by Dreadnought South West, has an original musical score and film animation, projected for thrilling visual effect.
Starts 7.30pm Tickets up to £12.00

Friday 23rd November. **Carducci String Quartet.** Presented by Minehead and West Somerset Arts Society: Beethoven: String Quartet, Op 18 No 4, Mendelsshon: String Quartet, Op 80 and Dvorak: String Quartet No 12, The American.
Starts 7.30pm Tickets up to £10.00

Sunday 25th November. **Cool Yule Jazz.** Tony Waller – trumpet player with the Joe Loss Orchestra, the Tuxedo Jazz Orchestra and with the Gene Pitney Orchestra, brings his own band, featuring top musicians, to the Regal with fun packed music from the Prohibition Era (1920-1933).
Starts 7.30pm Tickets up to £16.00

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Royal British Legion Club Watchet
AGM
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2nd December
11am
Prompt start
All paid up members welcome

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TO CELEBRATE THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF OPENING OUR STUDIO AT 36 IRNHAM ROAD
ON SUNDAY 18TH NOVEMBER
ANYTIME BETWEEN 10.30 TO 12.30 OR 2.30 TO 5.00
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Exmoor Christmas Fair
Porlock Village Hall
Saturday 24th November 12 – 6pm
Sunday 25th November 10 – 4pm
Free Entry
A wonderful selection of handmade crafts
Demonstrations & Refreshments
Not to be missed!

Christmas Craft Fair
Sat 17th November
Carhampton Recreation Centre
10am-3pm
Crafts & Seasonal gifts
Refreshments available

Minehead and West Somerset Arts Society
Registered Charity 900009
Carducci String Quartet
In music by Beethoven, Mendelssohn and Dvořák
7.30pm Friday 23rd November 2018
Regal Theatre, Minehead
Tickets £10.00 (students £2) from
Regal Theatre box office (01643-706430) or at the door
www.mineheadartssociety.org.uk

To advertise your event ring 01984 632731 or email ads@wsfp.co.uk

Lynton Cinema
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Lynton Cinema came 5th in the survey of the 10 Best Independent Cinemas in the Country conducted by Saga Magazine
Dolby Digital Sound and Projection System Dead Loop Titles throughout the Theatre
Adult £5.00 Senior Citizens £4.50 Children £3.00
Friday, 16th November for 7 days at 8.00 p.m.
Matinee Monday 19th November at 2.30 p.m.
RORY KINNEAR MAXINE PEAKE PEARCE QUIGLEY
Mike Leigh's PETERLOO (12A) 154 mins
The story of the 1819 Peterloo Massacre where British forces attacked a peaceful pro-democracy rally in Manchester.
Friday 23rd November for 6 days at 8.00 p.m.
Matinee on Monday 26th November at 2.30 p.m.
RAMI MALEK LUCY BOYNTON GWILYM LEE BEN HARDY
Bryan Singer's BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY (12A) 134 mins
Bohemian Rhapsody is an biographical film about the British rock band Queen, focusing on lead singer Freddie Mercury's life and leading up to Queen's Live Aid performance at Wembley Stadium in 1985.
Thursday, 29th November for one day only at 2.30 p.m. and 8.00 p.m. All seats £5-00
JACQUES TATI IN THE CLASSIC COMEDY
MONSIEUR HULOT'S HOLIDAY (U) 88 mins
with NATHALIE PASCAUD and MICHELINE ROLLA
Monsieur Hulot comes to a beachside hotel for a vacation, where he accidentally but good-naturedly causes havoc.