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Somerset Art Weeks

9 - 24 September

SAW: But What Does it All Mean? Does art imitate life or does life imitate art?

We all sometimes question our existence and the make up of society and what better place to look for answers than through creativity?

This September will see a record number of artists taking part in Somerset Art Weeks, the seventh biennial visual arts festival which began in 1994.

Over 800 artists and craftspeople in over 360 venues will be showing their work in some wild and wonderful settings. Gardens, rivers, huts, radio stations and chapels all act as backdrops.

Wiveliscombe is known as an artistic hotspot and this coming September sees heightened activity and excitement. Watch out for the yellow signs, arm yourselves with a SAW 2006 Guide and track down the local venues.

This year more artists than ever before will be opening their studios, homes and places of work. Make sure you find The Chapel Gallery in South Street. It is just a short walk from the town centre; approx 150 yds down from the traffic lights on the left.

The Chapel Gallery is holding a group show with work by Patricia Board, Ann Gutt, Clare Sharp, Susie Vogel, Martin Pettinger, Lucy Howell, Diane Burnell and Karin Sharp, owner of the gallery.

"Take Three Artists" (Claire Rice, Patricia Perrin and Raamy Nadim) are at The Silver Street Centre.

Somerset Art Weeks offers an opportunity for art-lovers to discover and share in the working lives of the artists and makers of Somerset and to see and buy their work.

Harpist deserved a better turn-out

ELIZABETH-Jane Baldry's extensive research into the Victorian craze for fairy harp music has led to her being dubbed "Britain's unofficial fairy harpist".

She's also what used to be known as "a bit of a wag" - at her recital on 8th July at St. Andrew's Church she introduced each piece with highly entertaining anecdotes about the composer, the composition, harpistry in general and her own performing experiences, including the time when she overheard a member of an aristocratic audience enthusing about female harpists because "sometimes a foot emerges and that's very alluring."

Antonio de Cabezón's Pavane, written in the 1550's, provided a stately, serene beginning to the recital, the sumptuous chords of the opening passages immediately displaying both the quality of Elizabeth-Jane's tone and articulation and the rich acoustic of St. Andrew's.

It was followed by Handel's Passacaille, transcribed from his first set of harpsichord suites and forging a series of beguiling variations from the simplest of source materials. Francis-Joseph Naderman, whose Sonata in C Minor came next, has been dismissed as "flashy" but this piece was tasteful and carefully-considered, with some subtle echo effects.



What about that "fairy music" stuff, though? Elizabeth-Jane explains, "The Victorian fairy is not the insipid tinsel-winged creature we encounter in today's nursery. Our great great grandparents were genuinely nervous of fairies, and stories of alleged fairy abductions of babies and young girls were commonplace."

This sinister aspect of the fairy realm surfaced in Henriette Renie's rarely-performed Legende, which ended the first half of the recital. A young nobleman

rejects the seductive advances of a fairy queen, staying true to his wife, only to meet her ghost as he hurries home, when he is struck dead himself.

A loping melodic subject, mysterious scampering in the upper registers and drifting clouds of arpeggios set the magical scene perfectly. Ominous tolling on the lowest string pervaded the piece, which vividly illustrated the story.

The second half began with Valses Pastiches by Paul Lewis, Elizabeth-Jane's partner and muse.

Having dedicated the romantic Valse Sentimentale to Elizabeth-Jane he thought a more "masculine" waltz was called for, hence Valse Brave. Nothing "blokey" here though: it was more Fred Astaire than Gene Kelly.

Charles Oberthür, Munich-born but based in London from 1844 until his death in 1895, wrote prolifically for the harp and was represented by Conte de Féès, which seemed to have a Neapolitan tinge. Elizabeth-Jane observed that he was unfashionable because these days "charm is unacceptable."

If you find charm offensive, you would have been outraged by Elizabeth-Jane's own Fairy World Suite, the earliest movement of which was written during her teens, mourning the disappearance of favourite meadows under a housing development.

The programme ended, apart from "something jolly" for an encore (Elizabeth-Jane's description), with Alphonse Hasselmans's evocative La Source, a suitably fluid and rippling piece.

The quality of the music and performance deserved a much bigger turn-out, but Elizabeth-Jane evidently enjoyed playing here so one hopes there will be another chance to hear her at St. Andrews before too long.

Barry Witherden

Concert on newly restored organ in

ON Saturday 10th June, David Briggs, the internationally acclaimed organist, put the organ at St Michael's Church, Milverton, through its paces.

The organ had been out of commission for over a year during its restoration and David made this king of instruments sing as never before.

He opened with Bonnet's Variations de Concert, Opus 1 followed by Vierne's Andantino from Pieces de Fantaisie and Dupré's Filieue from Suite Breton. Then all the stops came out for the mighty Prelude and Fugue in C Major by J S Bach.

He then entertained the audience to two lyrical pieces, Dance of the Reed Pipes and Dance of the Sugar Plum

Fairy transcribed from Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite.

At this stage, the programme promised a surprise item - and what a surprise it was. David played a rousing version of Scott Joplin's Maple Street Rag. The first half ended with his own arrangement of the well-known Scherzo from The Sorcerer's Apprentice by Dukas.

After the interval, the audience was invited to suggest themes on which a symphony in four movements would be improvised. It was apparent, however, that this was quite contrived.

For example, one member of the audience asked for music from Freddie Mercury's Queen to be included -

but what we got were some variations on the National Anthem!

In all, however, it was a splendid concert.

David Briggs has built an international career as a concert organist, which has taken him to more than 20 countries. He is famed for his orchestral transcriptions and his art of improvisation. Now living in New York, he gives regular masterclasses at the Royal Northern College of Music and Cambridge University. He is also a prolific composer.

On Sunday, 18 June, the newly restored organ was re-dedicated by the Venerable John Reed, Archdeacon of Taunton at morning service.

Can you help, please?

THE Wiveliscombe 'amenity memorial' swimming pool was opened on the Rec on 27 August 1927 with a large gathering of townsfolk and local dignitaries.

In commemoration, a series of postcards were printed. We are putting out a plea for loan, for copying, of serial 'G'. If anyone can help, please contact Sue Farrington (623715) Many thanks.



Wiveliscombe Messenger

While compiling Wiveliscombe - A History, the Book Group have been donated copies of the Messenger.

To complete an additional set, we are seeking copies of the following editions: 2 (December 97/January 98), 3 (February/March 98), 5 (June/July 98), 42, 45, 48, 49, 51 and 52.

If anyone can help, please contact Sue Farrington (623715).

Likewise, please contact Sue if you are looking for editions for your own set.

We have some spares, and would be happy to supply them on a first come, first serve basis.

Damsel in distress

A 19th century sepia portrait of an attractive young lady was found lying in the road in the Golden Hill/Old Brewery Road area last autumn.

If anyone has been missing her, she can be claimed from Sue Farrington (623715).

OBITUARY

Daphne Kelly

ON Tuesday 30th May, a near capacity crowd came together in the Chapel in Silver Street to give God thanks for the life of a remarkable woman, Daphne Kelly.

All six of her children, in their own way, paid tribute to their mother. With equal affection two representatives of the next generation spoke highly of their grandmother and especially of her great love of life.

Daphne Tester grew up in London. In April 1955 Daphne, along with her husband Doctor George Kelly, moved to Wiveliscombe.

Widowed in 1974, Daphne was left to bring up six children on her own. Additionally, she cared for her own mother, who lived well beyond her hundredth birthday.

Yet, Daphne was never so preoccupied or busy that she had no time to care for others. She had a zest for life that in her last year took her to visit family in the UK, her son and daughter law in China, her sister in Canada and her brother in Paris.

A member of the Congregational Church in Silver Street, Daphne's faith in Jesus Christ found expression in so many practical ways.

In giving thanks for the life of this remarkable woman, we recognised that she served an extra-ordinary God and it was he who had shaped her character and made her the wonderful mother, grandmother, friend and neighbour that she was.

Alan Millar
Pastor
Evangelical
Congregational Church