

# Nautical theme for Mahler Players

By [Rob Polson](#), June 30, 2015

The Mahler Players, Nairn Community and Arts Centre, Friday 26/6/15. A review.

This event had a sea theme running through it. Nairn itself is by the sea with sandy beaches and the interior of the venue with its golden wooden panelling gave a dune like atmosphere to the concert.

The Mahler Players continued this sea theme as they opened their evening performance with *Sinfonietta OP. 1* by Benjamin Britten – who hailed from the fishing port of Lowestoft. This piece shows the brilliance of Britten who composed it when he was a mere eighteen years old in 1932. The Players gave a very deft, light and bright performance of the work.

As their name suggests the Players specialise in the work of Mahler and their second set of the performance was the *Rückert-Lieder*. These are a set of five poems by the German polymath Friedrich Rückert which Mahler set to music. For this part of the concert the Players were joined by the mezzo-soprano Laura Kelly McInroy whose voice soared like a bird over the sonic thermals provided by the orchestra. This section of the evening was brought to an end with a very soothing *Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen* (I am lost to the world).

After a short interval and continuing the theme of young talent the group performed *Pan's Caprice* a new work by Peter Longworth from Falkirk. This piece was specially commissioned and premièred by the Players in this current series of concerts. It is very interesting combining all sorts of elements and influences. The composer – who was in the audience – really seemed to appreciate how well the musicians had performed his work.

This was followed by a tribute to one of the most original minds currently fusing early and contemporary music – Arvo Pärt. Pärt an Estonian, who celebrates his 80th birthday this year, composes for both voice and sound. This evening the players performed a musical piece *Fratres*, which almost felt as if it had blown across the sea from Estonia. Pärt sees silence as being of particular importance in music and it was really interesting to see this compositional element in play in a real life setting, rather than just experiencing it by listening to a CD.

The evening closed with the baritone Douglas Nairne joining the Players in *Kindertotenlieder*. Again this work was a collaboration between Mahler and Rückert and concerned the grief felt after Rückert lost his two of his children to scarlet fever. Mr Nairne gave an impassioned performance conveying the extreme sense of loss. I often wonder how people in the past coped with these sorts of losses – a local example – the Cromarty stonemason and geologist Hugh Miller carving the headstone for the grave of one of his dead children. The evening ended with the very sad but uplifting *In diesem Wetter* (In this grim weather).

The Players can be proud of another impressive performance. They have a knack for putting together very interesting and challenging sets of music. Their next series of events is planned for late summer so please get out and support them – you will be well rewarded.

Thanks to the Players and the venue for hosting.