

Peter Roberts - Exhibition Speech 2024

'If as the Bard says, our very own William Shakespeare, 'music be the food of love', then today's music making for our fête champêtre, our Exhibition barbeque, from motet in Abbey to orchestra here in SAC is apt and uplifting for Ampleforth's Exhibition of 2024, as a celebration of the huge amount we have achieved together across this academic year. We are all like an orchestra, each playing our part, sharing the harmony, but interpreting it with an individual and special sense of our own contribution. The sense of togetherness, contributing to the one theme, the one leitmotiv, the one hymn has been very strong.

Marie and I have felt it with the wonderful wave of sounds that surrounds us from the congregation singing at Mass in the Abbey Church, under the encouraging baton of Fr Oswald, the nave's response to the excellence of the polyphony from our superb Schola Cantorum under the passionate and masterful guidance of our very own Kapelle Meister, Edward Seymour, our splendid Director of Music.

That sense in the Abbey that our efforts, our gifts when singing in praise of the Lord are shared and can transport us, both as a means of appropriate worship, but also to educate our senses to develop our emotions, our emotional intelligence is very important at Ampleforth. It is something we wanted to celebrate today, to cheer the heart, to lift the soul, to comfort us if we want to shed a tear and to respond to musical ideas. Music is for all the community and it is a joy that Edward and his Department have enjoyed such an excellent year, the high point being, perhaps, when 600 concert going members of the public paid good money to hear them sing Handel's 'Messiah' accompanied by a professional orchestra, under the baton of our very own and brilliant Charlie Grace at Cadogan Hall in London.

I hope that other activities and Departments will be trumpeted from this lectern in coming years. I am sure, next year Ampleforth sport will be centre stage. Of course, Charlie Hill, our rugby Captain, with his fine half time talks to the lads, or, Melisa Anyim, our netball Captain, orchestrating her superb netball warm-up before our all-conquering 1st VII plays in this hall, reflect the same thing, inspiring harmony amongst a team, creating teamwork and helping Ampleforth move forward and do really well.

The music making from our wonderful Upper Sixth leavers has been memorable. The recently discovered papyrus scrolls in the lava from Vesuvius at the ruins of Herculaneum in Italy, show that the great Greek philosopher, Plato, on his deathbed in 348 BCE was not enchanted by the flautist, or aulos player, as he suffered, not out of misogamy about unruly female musical sensitivity: Plato should have had our very own Lucy Barrett who has been enchanting audiences by the brilliance of her flute playing across her time with us **Lucy's interlude**, and we have had the brassy confidence and good playing of Finn McCarthy on the trombone and the control, delicacy and evocative playing of Alix Hamilton on piano and on organ. I particularly will remember her performance of Janacek, the owl calls resonating in the sound box of the piano, just as we hear them in the Ampleforth woods.

Brilliantly led by Seamus and Josie and their Monitors team, this has been an exceptional Upper Sixth at the College: they have been happy, united, contributing full throttle right across the year, truly responding by their love for our community – they will go far.

One of the reasons for that is the way they understand themselves in relation to others and have developed qualities of equilibrium, self-discipline and empathy which will take them far, building good lives, founding loving families themselves – as you parents have done with them. To say 'goodbye but not farewell' in this frame of mind, it could not be better expressed by **Evie Tempest** by music with words.....'if music be the food of love, play on' Evie.