

Festival's decade celebrated with friends old and new

CLASSICAL

Lammermuir Festival opening weekend

East Lothian

East Lothian's Lammermuir Festival has reached the grand old age of ten and there's a sense of celebrating with old friends across this year's programme. The Dunedin Consort(★★★★★), for example, who have given plenty of memorable (and memorably quirky) concerts down Lammermuir's decade-long history, and who brought joy, passion and precision to Bach and Vivaldi in their concert on the festival's opening Friday evening. With two Brandenburg Concertos, two Bach Suites and two Vivaldi concertos cunningly arranged in a palindrome across the evening, was there nonetheless the chance that it might have been a bit – well, samey? Not a bit of it. Conductor John Butt's crack period players played up the works' distinctive personalities, from the grandeur and expansiveness of their opening Bach First Orchestral Suite to a nervy, dramatic Summer from Vivaldi's Four Seasons, delivered with astonishing clarity and grit by violinist Cecilia Bernardini – seldom can the concerto have sounded more operatic. Most memorable of all, however, was the Dunedin's swaggering, gutsy Brandenburg Concerto No 1, with parping natural horns threatening to overwhelm the modest ensemble, but still adding hugely to the boisterous yet superbly intel-



↑ **Quatuor Mosaïques**
delivered a bracing programme

ligent performance. It was as though Butt and his players were rediscovering this well known music afresh all over again, and taking their listeners with them.

Shining equally fresh light on established classics was the period-instrument Quatuor Mosaïques(★★★★), who delivered a bracing programme of Mozart and Beethoven amid the Arts and Crafts splendour of Chalmers Memorial Church, Port Seton, on Saturday afternoon. From their intense opening Mozart Adagio and Fugue K546, there was a deliciously gritty rawness to their playing, in which every articulation came firmly to the fore, something to be equally admired in their buoyant, relaxed account of Mozart's D major Quartet, K575. They've been recording Beethoven, however, and it showed in a deeply searching account of the E minor Razumovsky Quartet after the interval, from gruff vigour in its open-

ing movement to an otherworldly, almost insubstantial slow movement. Despite the brilliantly accomplished musicianship, however, these felt like resolutely serious-minded performances, with little concern for such trifles as wit and joy.

There was plenty of deep joy, however, in Saturday evening's concert from young Belgian chamber choir Vox Luminis(★★★★★), amid the appropriately splendid gilt interior of Our Lady of Loretto and St Michael Church, Musselburgh. It would probably have been enough simply to immerse yourself in their exceptionally beautiful, superbly balanced, goosebump-inducing sound, sumptuous as velvet yet crystal clear in its text delivery. But it was the almost operatic will to convey meaning that stood out, in the subtly differentiated sections of Palestrina's Missa Papae Marcelli and even more so among the unpredictable harmonic complexities of Victoria's 1605 Requiem. Led by bass Lionel Meunier, who gently coaxed his colleagues from within the group, it was a truly transporting performance, at once deeply spiritual and firmly grounded in meaning and drama. This was only Vox Luminis' second performance in Scotland, Meunier joked, and their third is their follow-up festival performance this evening. New friends to Lammermuir Vox Luminis might be, but we can hope this might turn into a long-term relationship.

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