

An inter-faith, cross-cultural music outreach project at St. Mary's Church, Moseley

Under normal circumstances where on a Saturday morning could one find more than 300 people including 40+ children from diverse faith and cultural backgrounds together with a London-based professional music ensemble in common endeavour in a suburban Birmingham Church?

On Saturday February 8th just such an event took place at St. Mary's Church, Moseley. It was the culmination of a five-week, Arts Council funded, musical outreach project celebrating the work of internationally renowned Moseley-based composer John Joubert (1927-2019).

It involved young people from St. Mary's Treble Choristers and YASMAA youth group together with children from the Moseley and Kings Heath area and pupils from the Eden Girls Leadership Academy in Small Heath. They had been led by members of The Dionysus Ensemble from London working with them in three groups over five weeks to compose their own unique songs based on John Joubert's music.

Although based on the same melodic theme from a Joubert work, each group developed it in an individual way and evolved its own text charting Joubert's journey from his home in South Africa to music college in England and eventually to Moseley, where for most of his life he worked in the Music Department of Birmingham University. His music is internationally renowned and has been recorded and performed by the world's foremost orchestras, choirs and ensembles.

The final concert included a performance of Joubert's large-scale Octet (Op. 33, 1961) by The Dionysus Ensemble followed by the songs from each group in turn, accompanied by diverse members of the Ensemble.

The large and appreciative audience included parents, members of the local community, representatives of the local authority and local enterprises together with a number of musicians and aficionados of Joubert's work. They all received the performances with much enthusiasm.

Members of the Joubert family were also present, including his children Anna and Pierre, professional musicians in their own right, who were presented with copies of the children's compositions as a memento of the occasion.

St, Mary's Church and the Dionysus Ensemble are to be congratulated for this visionary enterprise strengthening community and inter-faith relationships, enhancing the musical experience of the children and providing a fine example of creative inter-generational collaboration.



















