

Authenticity is concerts' key

ARUNDEL is fortunate not only in hosting three concerts by the prestigious Hanover Band as part of the Arundel Festival, but also in becoming the band's new home.

Originally based at the Old Market, Hove, the band will be sharing its Arundel performances in the fine acoustics of St Nicholas' Church with those at Chichester's lofty cathedral.

The Hanover Band specialises in music of the

Baroque era (the Hanoverian period in England), in particular that of J. S. Bach (1685-1750) and his family and contemporaries.

An important part of its performances is the authenticity of the instruments, thus giving a similar sound and timbre to what Bach conceived and heard during his day. In particular, the horns are "natural" horns, without valves or complicated integral tubing (tubes can be attached externally for changes

of key). Gavin Edwards and Richard Bayliss played them with great aplomb.

The first two concerts included all six of Bach's well-loved Brandenburg Concerto. Composed between 1717 and 1720 for the Margrave of Brandenburg, who didn't even deign to look at the scores, each concerto featured different soloists in various combinations, all with continuo (harmonic



backing by cello, bass and harpsichord).

In the first concert, we heard numbers 1, 3 and 2, with dazzling performances on trumpet (Simon Munday), oboe (Joel Raymond), recorder (Catherine Latham) and solo violin (Benjamin Hudson).

Works by other composers provided a fascinating contrast to these concertos, and what made these performances special was the technical wizardry, fine tuning and consummate musicality of each and every

performer, led mainly from the harpsichord by their charismatic and scholarly guest director Mahan Esfahani, (who also played an exuberant harpsichord concerto by C. P. E. Bach). The experience was exciting and utterly beguiling.

Iranian-born Mahan introduced each piece to the audience and even found time afterwards to head a question-and-answer session, alongside the band's inspirational founder and cellist Caroline Brown.

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Littlehampton
Gazette

Hanover Band, part two of Brandenburgs...

THE Hanover Band returned to a packed St Nicholas' Church the day after its opening concert at the Arundel Festival to perform J. S. Bach's Brandenburg Concertos 4, 6 and 5, together with concertos for flute and recorder by two of Bach's contemporaries.

Unlike nos. 1 to 3 played the previous day, Brandenburg nos. 4 to 6 do not feature brass, but the seven string players in no. 6 included two viola da gamba, expertly played by Mark Levy and Joanne Levine. Whereas most of the period strings look, at first sight, similar to those used today, gambas have frets on their finger-boards and are played in an upright position (viola da gamba literally means leg viol). They generally have six strings, rather than four, their bows are convex rather than concave, and the players hold them differently.

Each of the pieces featured a different set of soloists and, in consequence, many changes in our aural experience. Ashley Solomon excelled in the flute concerto in G-major by Quantz, as did Sarah Humphrys in Telemann's recorder suite in A-minor.

The acoustics of St Nicholas' Church are ideally suited to music of this type and we enjoyed some truly wonderful sounds and effects, particularly in Brandenburg no. 6.

Led, from the harpsichord, by Mahan Esfahani, all of the players performed with consummate artistry and we were thus able to concentrate upon the mastery of the composers. Indeed, we could imagine what the listeners might have heard nearly 300 years ago, when these works were first performed.

One looks forward to hearing this magnificent ensemble's future concerts in its new Arundel home.

Jim Hurdwell