

MUSICAL JOURNEYS

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Vienna in Cornwall

Hannah Nepil braves the floods to experience the unique atmosphere of the Music at Tresanton festival in St Mawes

A train, a rail-replacement bus, a train, and one more train: en route from London to Cornwall and hampered by flooding, I realised one thing: those who had braved this journey to Music at Tresanton – an annual chamber music festival in the Cornish village of St Mawes – must have really, really wanted to get there.

On arrival, it wasn't hard to see why. Drenched in the sound of churning waves and the eerie glow of moonlight, St Mawes in

November makes a highly atmospheric venue, on which Noam Greenberg's weekend festival has sensibly capitalised.

The pianist founded Music at Tresanton in 2006 as a one-off event to indulge his love of Schumann. 'It was all a bit accidental – I had no plan to make a festival,' says Greenberg, 'but it was Schumann's 150th anniversary year, so I had the idea to play all of his chamber music with piano.'

Since then, Greenberg's concerts have evolved into an annual fixture, embracing many composers other than Schumann. But the spontaneous approach has stuck, along with a preference for the small-scale and intimate: most of the performers – such as the cellist Alexander Chaushian and clarinettist Chen Halevi – are

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Noam Greenberg, pianist

friends of Greenberg's. The entire festival consists of four concerts held over one weekend, all taking place in the minuscule St Mawes Methodist Chapel, and programmes are constructed organically. 'There is no ethos; no mission statement or purpose behind it all,' says Greenberg. 'There are different focuses behind the programmes every year, but they tend to start with a certain interest – such as a composer – and grow from there.'

This year, the running theme was 'Vienna – City of Song', inspiring a strongly contrasted opening programme: Chen Halevi gave us an effervescent reading of Schubert's Clarinet Sonatina in G minor, while heavier Viennese fare included Greenberg's and Ferenc Rados's extrovert rendition of Schubert's Sonata in C major for piano duet, and soprano Ailish Tynan's haunting account of



Founder of Music at Tresanton, pianist Noam Greenberg, with Chen Halevi

Berg's *Frühe Lieder*. In the next morning's concert, a sensitive, if slightly underpowered, performance of Brahms's Cello Sonata – from Chaushian – sounded rather meek in comparison with Tynan's hot-blooded take on four Mahler songs that ended the programme.

But then, as Tynan tells me afterwards, she is currently in the 'recital zone'. 'Don't get me wrong, I love doing opera,' she says, her breath still steaming in the freezing chapel air. 'But with a recital there's nowhere to hide. It really reveals the heart and soul of the performer – not that of a director or conductor. It's *parfum* as opposed to *eau de toilette*.'

But such intensity comes at a price, she admits, particularly in such a tiny venue: 'Last night, doing the Berg, I thought, "Oh God, I'm probably blowing the heads off them."' **G**

For information about the 2013 festival, visit musicattresanton.co.uk