

John Gough reviews Bromsgrove Concerts 50th Anniversary, Atrium Quartet at Bromsgrove Artrix.

For 50 years now, Bromsgrove Concerts have been organising vibrant and brilliantly-constructed programmes and this magnificent anniversary concert continued its high standards.

I was enormously impressed with the Atrium Quartet. Their ability to combine warmth, colour, and intensity with intellectual rigour, secure rhythm and a firm grasp of a work's architecture made this a very exciting and appropriate event to mark such a celebration.

Walton's rarely played Quartet combined a pervasive and very English melancholy with a propulsive rhythmic drive, the players alive to every change of colour and mood. Their interaction with one another and with the music was spontaneous and intense, especially in the glowing slow movement, (one of Walton's most deeply-personal inspirations).

French pianist Nicolas Stavy joined them for two other extremely personal works, the piano quintets by Shostakovich and Elgar. Controlled passion was the watchword in both performances, with a perfect balance between piano and strings, despite the very different textures of the two pieces.

In the Shostakovich the grandeur of the prelude, and the long, slow fugue, a homage both to Bach and the late works of Beethoven, were clear both in voicing and in balance while maintaining a long-breathed intensity.

Congratulations to Bromsgrove Concerts for a very rewarding evening.

(John Gough, Birmingham Post)