

A night at the Philharmonic Hall

My Grandfather was born on the 8th March 1919, so this weekend we decided to celebrate his 85th birthday by going to a concert at the Philharmonic hall. I tell you this because normally I would not accompany the family to such a concert, now an adolescent, being with the family on a Saturday night is not so cool. However I have the greatest respect for my grandfather and I decided to go.

We began the evening with a visit to the Everyman Bistro. A nice little restaurant opposite the Roman Catholic Cathedral, which is affectionately known as “Paddy’s Wigwam” to most people on Merseyside. There was a strange mixture of people there, from hungry, dishevelled students to business-like theatre goers. The food was wholesome and healthy with plenty of beans and pulses, not my favourite but I stomached it with a smile on my face. I was allowed a glass of wine as well: A Chilean Red, very palatable.

After the meal we walked the short distance along Hope Street to the Philharmonic Hall. I was unsure whether I would enjoy the concert (I prefer the “Darkness” to “De Bussy”), but my Grandad seemed to be enjoying himself, which was the main thing. When we arrived at the hall, my dad went to collect the tickets, where he was greeted by a 70 year old ticket tout (something I would expect at Goodison Park, rather than The Philharmonic Hall). When we had finally got the tickets, we entered the auditorium. The average age of the listeners must have been in the high sixties. It was a good job I was there to counterbalance it. We sat in the middle, about 6 rows from the front, which gave me a great view of all the players in the orchestra as they began to tune their instruments.

There was a sudden burst of applause as the conductor and orchestra leader entered and bowed extravagantly. Then the auditorium fell silent as the conductor signalled his intension to begin the music. The first piece was the overture to Beethoven’s opera, Fidelio. It was a short lively piece, just to warm up the audience. It was quite pleasant but not very exciting. This was followed by a rapid reorganisation of the platform. Half the orchestra disappeared whilst the players on the right of the stage kept seated. Then an enormous black grand piano was wheeled carefully in to the middle of the

stage. What followed was the most exciting part of the evening, when pianist, Loris Voorts, played Beethoven's Emperor Concerto. His skilful hands glided over the keys producing a most magnificent sound. It was so delicate and intricate, yet powerful and mesmerising. The composer was also very animated (his head banging would have gone down well at a Black Sabbath concert). The music itself was in three parts: The first was powerful and really grabbed my attention, the second more delicate with a beautiful melody and the third vigorous leading to a wonderful finale. The audience enjoyed it so much that there was a standing ovation, which enticed the pianist to give an encore.

After Beethoven's Emperor Concerto it was time for the interval. I left the auditorium pleasantly surprised at how much I had liked the concert. During the break I talked to people about what I had just heard and enjoyed the mandatory £2:00 ice cream. We also gave my grandad his presents, which were a nice pen and a spellchecker (which seemed to go down well on account of his passion for crosswords). After a twenty minute break I went back into the hall and took my seat.

The stage had been reorganised again, and there was no piano. I was slightly disappointed at this as the pianist had been the highlight of the first half, in my opinion. I read in the programme that the orchestra would now be playing a piece by a composer called Schumann, who I had never heard of. This piece was split into 4 and it seemed to be extremely hard work for the orchestra, especially the string section. However despite their hard work I did not enjoy this piece nearly as much as the Beethoven. The lady next to me didn't seem too happy about me popping mint imperials into my mouth either. Perhaps she would have liked one. I did wonder whether I should offer her the packet but decided against it, which was probably a wise decision. The music seemed a little disjointed and jerky to me, but most people seemed to like it and at the end of the concert the audience gave another very generous round of applause.

After the concert we walked back along Hope Street to the car. I had enjoyed the concert much more than I expected I would, and was glad I had gone.

