

SHROPSHIRE MUSIC TRUST Birmingham Post Review ****

WILD MEN OF THE BAROQUE

Church Stretton Methodist Church, Fri 18th March

Music at Leasowes Bank, the summer festival John and Frances Williams ran for 33 years at their home in deepest rural Shropshire, ended in 2013. But they have not been idle and a new venture, Music in Quiet Places, devised in association with Shropshire Music Trust, has now taken its place.

Judging from this first concert, and a capacity audience in Church Stretton's well-appointed Methodist Church, it looks like being a great success. The title was certainly intriguing, although anyone familiar with the work of virtuoso recorder player Piers Adams and his super-group Red Priest clearly knew what to expect. Even with just Adams and harpsichordist David Wright the evening bristled with pzazz.

As a Baroque performer Piers Adams is in a class of his own. Instead of regarding early music as sacrosanct, to be recreated as it might have originally sounded, he plays it in a way that will appeal to modern tastes - so pyrotechnics and the unexpected are well to the fore.

In ten works by composers ranging chronologically from Bartolomeo di Selma and Falconieri to Biber and Handel, Adams' phrasing, articulation and ornamentation were well within what most people think of as accepted practice. Pedants, though, might have thought his use of sky-rocketing scales, double-tonguing and 'bebung' effects (and changing instruments within movements) as somewhat excessive and too flashy.

Despite his secondary role as continuo accompanist Wright had much to offer, often matching Adams' embellishments on a like-for-like basis, and providing improvised links between items. He also played a Scarlatti sonata with a brio that totally overcame the few finger slips.

David Hart

