

Issie Barratt's Interchange, Sage, Gateshead

ALTHOUGH I was sorry to miss Guy Barker's star-studded Big Band with Georgie Fame which clashed with this event, I was delighted with this performance by one of the finest and most creative jazz groups I've heard for a long time.

Leader, baritone player and catalyst Issie Barratt had a very busy Festival with workshops, seminars and guest appearances but I suspect this new band is particularly special as she hand-picked the ten musicians and even managed to attract Arts Council funding to commission and rehearse ten new works.

With a line-up of flugelhorn (doubling trumpet and electronics), trombone, three saxophones (doubling on clarinet, flute and violin), voice, accordion, cello, double bass (doubling vocals) and drums there was an enormous range of rich and colourful sounds and each one of the ten composers – many of them members of the band – produced a wealth of different combinations and layers of sound.

From the beginning it was clear that this was a well prepared and carefully rehearsed band, well able to cope with the quickly changing moods, backgrounds and tempos, and solo after solo was enhanced by the brilliant ensemble work.

There was evident pleasure in the performance from all the players and a wonderful group spirit which reached out to the small but very ap-

preciative audience.

When their new CD is out and the band fully launched on the international circuit this could be one of the sensations of the year.

Peter Bevan

Alina Ibragimova & Cédric Tiberghien, St Andrew's Church, South Church

THIS was the opening concert in Bishop Auckland Music Society's 2018 season with two of the most renowned of today's musicians whose performances and recordings of violin sonatas by Beethoven and Mozart have been particularly well received.

They will shortly be recording the three Sonatas by Brahms which they performed here, giving us a marvellous opportunity to hear their approach beforehand.

They began almost tentatively with some of the softest and most sensitive playing I think I've ever heard from a violin/piano duo.

As soon became clear the sound could still swell and become more passionate but the resulting contrast was so much more effective.

As I've previously heard with each of these musicians on separate occasions, there was a feeling that the music had been carefully and deeply considered and I found their approach to the Brahms' Sonatas brought out much more tenderness than usual.

This thoughtfulness did not preclude a dramatic statement where needed but it was the achingly beautiful and lyrical moments which linger in the mind.

It was perhaps a shorter programme than is often the case and I was sorry the musicians didn't introduce the music and describe their approach but in the face of such persuasive music making any criticism would be churlish.

The Society's next recital by young saxophonist Jess Gillam and pianist Jonathan Fisher is on Friday, May 18; full details available from Brian Varley on 01388 606075 or brianvarley@orpheusmail.co.uk.

Peter Bevan