

Music

NIKOLAI DEMIDENKO: WOTTON HOUSE

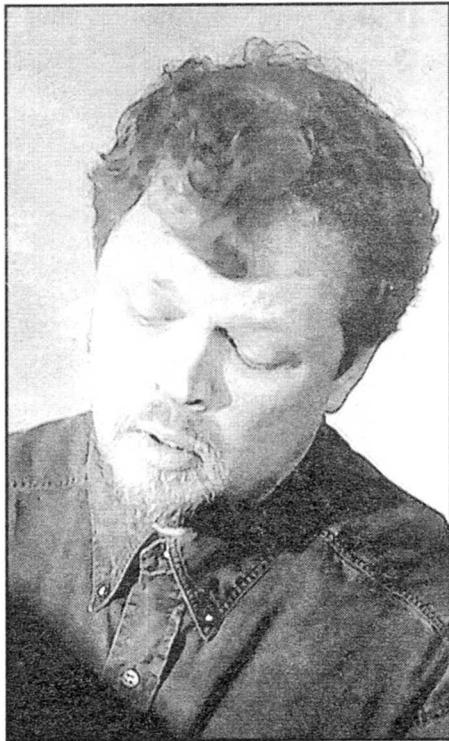
Hidden in the countryside on the border between Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire is the wonderful Wotton House and hidden in the house is a wonderful architectural secret — though not for much longer.

But first, the music. A recital in an 18th-century country house is possibly a rare but very joyful occurrence. Live music, usually a repertoire originally written for just this style of surroundings, often sounds so good. Here it was exceptional. Nikolai Demidenko played a programme of Chopin and Beethoven that was electric in its intensity and passionate in its execution.

The piano, the music and the catalyst, Demidenko, were made for the room. The notes rose to fill all the space, to continue to be present long after they had ceased to be heard. The fabric of the walls imbibed it all and now holds it, in perpetuity, an acoustic reminder of the evening and adding yet more warmth and texture to the fabric of the building.

If Demidenko was a feast for the ears and the soul, then the concurrent opening of an exhibition of oil paintings from the Ukraine was a feast for the eyes. This collection from established artists was vibrant, bright and full of life. The application of large splodges of colour, the seemingly random application of strokes, the peaks and troughs of the textured medium all defy the eye to make something of it. But the eye does. You can smell the freshness as you watch the duck walk down the recently puddled lane. You can hear the ballerinas chatting away in the corner. You can bask in the dappled sunlight under the vine.

And if all this food for the ear, the eye and the soul were not enough, an excellent buffet supper rounded off the evening with an opportunity to take a good look at the house.



Intense . . . Nikolai Demidenko

Built in 1704 it was re-built by John Soane following a fire in 1823. Soane's fine work was completely masked in 1929 in a more conventional Georgian interior which resulted in the loss of the full height atrium or Tribune. There is, alas, no extant example of this Soane trademark feature, but it is the hope of the owners, April and David Gladstone, that funds may eventually be raised to re-instate the Tribune at Wotton.

The concert and exhibition are two of the ways the message about the house is being transmitted. The exhibition continues until Sunday. Viewing is by appointment on 01844 238363.

Richard Hollingum