

Music of the Angels

One Sunday afternoon in July the rafters of St Martin's Church echoed to the sound of music not heard in the church since – well, who knows when? And this is how it happened . . .

It must have been on a particularly bright Sunday morning about a year ago, from my seat in the nave my attention was caught by the ten small 'lights' at the top of the great east window, each with the stained glass image of an angel playing some species of medieval musical instrument. So tiny and high up, it was impossible to make out any detail and I wanted more. Fortunately the solution was quite simple: close-up photos.

I strapped all manner of telephoto lenses and extenders and things to my rather hi-tech camera, took those photos, printed them out, loved them and showed them round. With Tony Piper's help we put up a display which ran through the Christmas period, and I also gave some prints to our organist Chris. He in turn showed them to Sharon Lambert, the convenor of a quite remarkable 'early instruments' ensemble. That's when it all kicked off – Sharon thought: "10 angels = 1 orchestra; let's get them playing again." And so it came to pass, though not without some smart foot-work. Being angels, and only two dimensional they were going to need some help; we'd solved the problem of seeing, but what about hearing?

Easy again! – Sharon wheeled in her remarkable 'Toute Ensemble Wind Band' complete with a variety of rather strange looking but wonderfully sounding renaissance period wind instruments. With the help of some projected images, Sharon very skilfully guided us through an exploration of the windows and treated us to a concert like (I suspect) St Martin's has never experienced before. Of course, the instruments in the windows were a slightly-less-than-perfect match with the instruments in the hands of the band, but Sharon neatly chasséed around that small matter. For a magical hour or so the church echoed to the sounds of music that I dare to think our ten piece angel orchestra might well have chosen for their own enjoyment once the choir had processed out and they were left alone and un-observed.

John Schild, 2016

You can learn more about the Toute Ensemble Wind Band at www.toute.co.uk