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The Editor
The Surrey Advertiser
Guildford

Dear Sir,

As someone who was brought up in Russia and spent most of her life there, may I use your letter facility to express my admiration and gratitude for the concert "A Russian Spectacular" which I had the privilege of attending last Saturday evening.

I have often listened to performances in Moscow at the Bolshoi and other well known theatres in the days when tickets were subsidised by the state, and I had not expected to be so moved by a performance in a fairly small English town quite far from the capital.

Everything seemed to be so beautifully planned, from the choice of venue in that particular cathedral with its relatively simple but noble interior to the content of the programme which contained such different elements of Russian music but combined them so cleverly: pre-revolutionary Borodin, Rachmaninov who died in Beverly Hills and Prokofiev drawn irresistibly back to Russia despite the restraints he was to suffer under Stalin.

The Guildford Philharmonic Choir with its chorus of over 100 singers did marvellous justice to the lyrics, and in Russian(!) and I cannot understand how so much talent and virtuosity could be found in the supporting, largely amateur Forest Philharmonic Orchestra, especially when I have heard frequently about the under-funding of the arts in this country. No wonder they can command the services of conductors so inspiring as Jeremy Backhouse and soloists such as the pianist Jeremy Filsell and Mezzo Soprano Teresa Shaw.

So I do ask you to publish this letter which is a tribute I believe all those in the large audience would also like to make. I shall never forget how, soon after the solo of the young woman mourning the dead of the victorious battle against the Teutonic knights, the performance ended and we all left that lovely building with the rose-tinted evening sun falling on the white stone pillars at the western end of the cathedral. I think God was putting his seal on the evening.

Thank you, Guildford.

Yours sincerely,

Ludmilla Presniakova

'Luda' is married to a friend of ours

Noreen