



BELLS ART International Handbell Festival

Reproduced with thanks from the Scottish Regional newsletter

On a very hot June afternoon the Town Hall Square of Tallinn resounded to the music of handbells played by a selection of invited international ringers.

2011 saw the Estonian capital designated European Capital of Culture. The medieval old town of Tallinn is situated on the north east corner of the Baltic Sea region.

Throughout the week the invited teams performed in a variety of venues large and small in this most beautiful of European cities. The opening event of the festival centred on the premiere of Peeter Vahi's piece 'Bronze Reflections for Handbells and Carillon'. This was performed by 3 teams of ringers directed by Alvar Mae. The senior team involved was the Arsis Handbell Ensemble, remembered by many of us for its stunning performance at the Cirencester Rally. The music was very inventive and the local church bells were cleverly added to the finale of the piece.

Japan was represented by the amazing Kiriku Handbell Ensemble providing a stunning visual presentation as well as musical brilliance. The USA team Sonos from California directed by James Meredith gave a polished performance also. One of their ringers is Michele Sharik who toured the UK a few years ago as a solo ringer playing in Dunblane Cathedral.

Last but by no means least was the team representing HRGB, the Pizzazz Handbell Trio. This was a new name to me and I checked the internet to see who they were. Imagine my surprise and delight to discover Gay and Alan Cooper and Carla Runciman smiling out from the screen. Their 4 in hand performance was well received as the crowd admired their skill. Sadly the sound did not carry well in such a large open space and it was windy too which carried the sound away.

I was on holiday in the area on the day of the open air performance and had time to chat with Pizzazz and Michelle. Unfortunately I could not give Alan any clothes pegs to stop his music flying away. Normally that is something I always carry!!!

Alan and Margaret Hartley and John Pfeiffer (President of The Handbell Musicians of America-formerly AGEHR) were there to support the teams. I thoroughly enjoyed my afternoon's entertainment. Glorious setting, magnificent weather, and marvellous musical entertainment. I was sorry not to hear more of the teams' performances.



Pizzazz on stage



The Youth Team of the Arsis Handbell Ensemble



Tallinn Roof Tops