

Editorial by Andrew Constantine

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Dear Concertgoer,

Once again a splendid season of great classical music is underway at De Montfort Hall. And how thrilling to see such full and enthusiastic audiences, long may it continue! Here at the Bardi Orchestra we are enormously proud of the work we do and the huge support you give us. To this end we have planned a season which is, once more, both inspired and inspiring.

However, at times like this we should perhaps reflect on what is a delicate world for music and the arts in general. Political support and funding in this country is negligible when compared with the rest of Europe and the recognition that a thriving cultural life is an essential part to a progressive and constructed commercial life seems, tragically, to have lost all direction in Leicester. For years many of us here have worked tirelessly to develop the appreciation of the arts. In music we have the residency of the wonderful Philharmonia Orchestra in this superb hall, the envy of so many other venues and cities, but are now being led on a roller-coaster of a ride over the future of the proposed "Cultural Quarter" and a replacement for the Haymarket Theatre. What on Earth is going on?

Until a few months ago what was happening in Leicester was causing great excitement and anticipation. Now I see these emotions being replaced by disillusionment, de-motivation and cynicism. And if, like me, you are cynical of what is being planned for our city you'll be asking these questions; what really is the future for De Montfort Hall, which has been transformed into such a gem in recent years? What really is the future for the Philharmonia residency, which has brought us such fabulous performances and star musicians? And finally, what really is the future for the much vaunted "Cultural Quarter"?

Last week I was fortunate enough to visit the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia - a stunning building, home for the Philadelphia Orchestra and, interestingly, designed by Rafael Vinoly, the world famous architect who has so enthusiastically brought his talents to our hopes for a new theatre in Leicester. There were two highlights, amongst many, to the Kimmel's season of visiting orchestras; the Berlin Philharmonic and, the Philharmonia Orchestra. Perhaps you don't know what you've got until it's gone!

Leicester seems to have gone from being a "happening place", to one which is contemplating the biggest 'closing down sale' ever, almost overnight! Believe me, I would love to be proved wrong. I would love to see 'vision' return to our city. To paraphrase Sir Thomas Beecham; "*why do we insist on having the second rate ideas of other people, when we have so many third rate ones of our own?*" seems to sum up the current limit to Leicester's thinking.

Andrew Constantine - Nov 2003