

“If You Go Down to the Woods Today” – free concert for children and families by the recorder quintet ‘Fontanella’. Worcester Early Music Festival, 1 June 2019.

BMEMF gave £200.00 from our outreach funds to cover the costs of this concert.

Fontanella are an excellent recorder quintet and they clearly have an additional talent for working with children. They quickly established a rapport with their young audience (aged between three and seven) and engaged their attention for fifty minutes of music of quite some complexity. The children sat close up to the players, or wandered about happily nearby.

They were introduced to recorders ranging from a great bass to a Garklein and enjoyed a repertoire centred on birds, animals and woodland. From “The Teddy Bears’ Picnic”, it moved through Saint-Saëns’ “Hens and Roosters”, via Campion’s “Nightingale” and other pieces of early music, to Liadov’s “Dance of the Mosquito” (lots of jumping in the aisles for that one). Just when attention might have started to wander, Fontanella produced pencils and colouring sheets with pictures of frogs, and accompanied the resulting artistic activity with a soothing version of “The Frog Galliard”.

To finish, there were a couple of remarkable pieces involving a set of four Paetzold square basses. Steve Marshall’s depiction of dinosaurs, with an accompanying narrative, was commissioned some years ago by Fontanella. The percussive sounds were very convincing – one or two children looked a little apprehensive! A rousing Elephant Boogie ended the concert on a high note.

When we left, the children were still clustered around the players, looking at the various sorts of recorders. They will have taken away an understanding of the remarkable range and flexibility of the recorder, and the fun that can be had from high quality music of different kinds. Altogether a satisfying hour for all involved.