

From Aix to Montperreux

The Second Music Festival of Montperreux begins as the sixty-second music Festival of Aix-en-Provence draws to a close. It would appear at first sight that the two festivals have little in common. Aix is situated in the beautiful Provence, bathed in brilliant sunshine and warmth, while Montperreux is located in the magnificent hill of the Jura, where the climate is more moderated. Both regions produce wine, which apart from certain exceptions, is poorly known outside the regions, often for obvious reasons.

Nonetheless, the two festivals have had modest origins, thanks to the vision of a number of devoted music lovers and a well know musician living locally, whose energy and organisational talents brought about the creation of the festivals. They had the support of the local authorities and above all of a devoted team of sponsors, who gave freely of their time and talents. The church offered the accommodation for the performances: the courtyard of the Archbishop's Palace in Aix and the Parish Church in Montperreux. Interestingly, it was in the second year of the festivals that they each became events known to the wider public. From the beginning, Gabriel Dussurget in Aix, with his vision for the future, wanted to encourage the development of musical activities in the region and above all to promote young performers, which he discovered. The same visionary approach characterises Stuart Patterson at Montperreux.

Both Stuart Patterson, with his Scottish origins, and the current director at Aix, the Belgian Bernard Focroulle, are well appreciated musicians in their own right. Both have conceived varied musical programmes, with well known and less well known works, encompassing themes on which the public are stimulated to reflect. The role of both festivals is not only to give musical pleasure to the audience, but through master classes to train young performers for the future. In 2011 the two festivals will have a human link through Stuart Patterson who will perform in the new production at Aix of Dmitri Shostakovich's "The Nose".

The two festivals have made reality of the dreams of music lovers who preceded us.

John Haines, a music lover from Divonne les Bains.

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