



# Martin's passion for music is living on...

THE HEADLINE of a *Herald* article – *Inspirational teacher's legacy lives on in Alton* – last month was aptly chosen, given the event it promoted.

The Martin Read Foundation (MRF) hosted its annual Festival of Contemporary Music – its fifth – in the Martin Read Hall at Alton College.

Founded in 2014, the MRF was set up in memory of Martin Read, an outstanding Hampshire-based composer and educator, following his sudden death in 2012.

It is a platform on which his passions for contemporary music and the teaching of composition to young people continue.

He is remembered as director of music at Alton College, and the MRF is very grateful to the college for its continued support of the festival.

The packed day buzzed with musical discoveries. There were in total nine premieres by young composers aged from 15 to 25, each of whom has received support and guidance from the MRF.

Four of the composers had been chosen by the MRF for its support in 2019: Pernille Faye, Domenico Ragozzino, Jack Robinson and Scottie Thompson, who is currently studying at Alton College.

Alex Ling, another of the premiered composers and a past student of Martin Read, was given the special task of setting a new poem by Philip Sealey, Martin's librettist, specifically for the Festival: *Oh Sweet Music*.

In the morning, around 50 people explored and rehearsed pieces for performance in the early evening concert. The festival chorus, joined by singers from the Oxford chamber choir Commotio



Beccy Read (MRF founder), Simon Speare (MRF trustee), Daniel Swani, Howard Skempton (MRF patron), Scottie Thompson, Domenico Ragozzino, Jack Robinson, Joseph Spooner (MRF trustee), Pernille Faye, Alison Willis (MRF trustee), Joe Parks, Tom Armstrong (MRF mentor) and David Gibson (conductor)

and directed by David Gibson, worked on pieces by Gustav Holst, Martin Read and Alison Willis, and gave highly-effective performances of these later in the day.

Instrumental ensembles worked on new pieces by Freddie Hodkin and Owen Russell, both MRF alumni, and by more established composers, such as Steve Reich, Simon Speare and Kurt Weill.

One festival tradition is the composition/performance masterclass, run during the afternoon. This presents a rare opportunity for composers and performers to work together and learn from one another, and is central to the work of the MRF.

The event was led by composer and MRF patron

Howard Skempton, who later congratulated the composers supported this year by the MRF, and cellist and MRF trustee Joseph Spooner.

The ensemble in residence this year, who performed at the masterclass and the evening concert, was the highly-talented duo of Joe Parks (percussion) and Daniel Swani (recorders and flute).

Their playing kept the good-sized audience "spellbound", as one listener observed.

Other performers this year were Alton College ensembles, directed by Pande Shahov, and, new this year, singers from Commotio, who lived up to their reputation as "leading performers of contemporary choral music".

Accolades abounded. All were left wanting more.

For further information on MRF, visit the foundation's website [www.martinreadfoundation.org](http://www.martinreadfoundation.org) or its Facebook page.

