

Company – Trevor Pinnock and the European Brandenburg Ensemble (EBE)
Event – Rehearsal space, classical recording, concert performance and VIP reception
Guests – N/A
Date – December 2006 / January 2007
Venue –Oval Hall, Ballroom and Memorial Hall
Budget - Undisclosed

BACKGROUND

Internationally renowned Classical and Baroque conductor, Trevor Pinnock celebrated his 60th Birthday in 2007 with the creation of the European Brandenburg Ensemble (EBE). To mark this occasion Pinnock wanted to re-record Bach's Brandenburg Concertos which he had originally recorded in the 1980s with the English Concert Orchestra.

Since his first visit to Sheffield in 1985, Trevor has developed a close affinity with the City. As an Honorary graduate of the University of Sheffield and a close collaborator with Sheffield's classical music ensemble - Music in the Round, the decision was made to base the project in Sheffield at the only venue capable of delivering all elements of Trevors' plans – Sheffield City Hall.

As the project was financed largely through business sponsorship and Arts agency grants, the City Hall collaborated and donated a number of different resources to the EBE project, including:

- Free rehearsal space
- The use of the Ballroom for the recording
- A number of complimentary tickets to the 60th birthday concert for VIPs
- Reduced rates for hire of the Millennium Hall for the VIP reception

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Delivering a new recording of the Brandenburg Concertos effectively and professionally presented a number of challenges. In order to record them to Pinnock's standards, it was necessary to create the environment of a purpose built studio. Following an acoustic test, the team at the City Hall worked seamlessly with the sound engineer to locate and minimise all unnecessary sound. This included turning off non-critical mechanical plant in the venue while maintaining environmental conditions for the antique instruments played by the Orchestra.

Dominic Stokes, SIV Conferencing and Events General Manager commented:

“This project pushed the team at the City Hall out of their comfort zones. For the 6 day period that the recording took place, the staff were faced with a number of challenges that have never arisen in the venue before. Thinking creatively, changing their normal working practices and using past experiences to find solutions to problems enabled the project to be fulfilled in Sheffield, in unique surroundings, rather than a faceless studio in London – which was the only alternative. “

Due to conflicting commitments, bringing together the musicians was not easy and the only time this could be achieved was during December -typically an entertainment venues busiest period. This presented a number of challenges for the recording - due to the requirement of absolute quiet. The City Hall and key players within Sheffield were keen to accommodate this unique venture in order to raise awareness of the City and the ability of this venue to host a high

quality cultural event. The entire team at City Hall – from senior management to front of house staff - worked hard as the venue continued to operate its programme of events by minimising ‘traffic’ in the floor space above the Ballroom during recording sessions.

EXECUTION

The recording took place over 6 days in the City Hall’s Ballroom – a 475 square metre space that has traditionally been used for tea dances and dinners. Despite being 60ft below ground level and with only one goods lift, the versatility of this room has often been put to the test with the recording of a number of television programmes – including X-factor, Antiques Roadshow and Channel 4 music programme – Transmission. The flexibility of the space was demonstrated again during this project and was testimony to what can be created in this unique space. With its outstanding acoustics it provided a perfect setting for the recording.

Sarah Barlow, a Director from Soundhouse Media commented:

“Production Manager, Robert and his crew offered lots of help and support in the setting up and de-rigging for each part of recording. Delivery was made much smoother by staff going out of their way to accommodate the very specific needs of Trevor Pinnock, the musicians and his Sound Engineer.”

VERDICT

Sarah from Sound House Media concluded

“Everyone at City Hall, approached the project professionally and flexibly. Making the recording was a completely new experience for the whole team at City Hall who were enormously patient in accommodating our requirements as they emerged. Overall, every element was well executed and the staff were professional and enthusiastic about getting the job done. Everything ran to plan and Sheffield now has a classical recording which is being distributed worldwide - a great team effort and overall a really positive experience.”