

Concert by Charnwood Voices with Musici Praestare:
Saturday, 18th November at Trinity Methodist Church,
Loughborough

Conductor: Nicholas Scott-Burt

Soprano: Judit Felszeghy

Mezzo Soprano: Catherine Griffiths

Solo Trumpet: Libby Foxley

Accompaniment: Musici Praestare

Programme:

Concerto (Voluntary) in D Minor (Op.5, No.8) John Stanley (1712-1786)

Missa Brevis in C (The "Sparrow Mass") KV 220 W.A. Mozart (1756-1791)

Jauchzet Gott in Allen Landen, BWV 51 J.S. Bach (1685-1750)

Gloria in D Major Vivaldi

Review:

It's always good to leave a concert feeling uplifted, having seen not only examples of instrumental and vocal virtuosity but also performances reflecting enormous musical sensitivity. Under the baton of conductor, Nicholas Scott-Burt (and in the presence of the Mayor of Loughborough, Cllr. Margaret Smidowicz) these two elements were consistent throughout this complex choral programme with chamber accompaniment.

Stanley's Concerto Voluntary in D Minor opened the evening. Originally written for organ as part of a collection of ten such Voluntaries to be played in a church setting, this transcription by Nicholas Scott-Burt for harpsichord and strings replicated fully the form and sense of a concerto. The light, flowing Allegro engaged from the outset, interspersed by virtuoso playing by the conductor himself. A reflective Adagio demonstrated a superb ensemble and balance which typified the entire evening, whilst the final Allegro in fugue form lifted the mood and the tempo.

Mozart's "Spatzenmesse" or "Sparrow Mass" was composed when he was around 19 years old and is so called due to the sound of the strings in the

Sanctus and Benedictus movements - and brought out evocatively by the orchestra tonight. Its title of "Short Mass" refers to the composer's musical adaptation of the words rather than its duration.

It could be argued that despite the wonderful clarity of the choir's words in the opening Kyrie, the flowing, legato approach felt a little romantic for some tastes and would have perhaps benefitted from a little more attack. However, such a lyrical performance also provided some wonderful dynamic contrasts from soloists, choir and orchestra. Individual solos rang or blended leading to a well-balanced performance. Charnwood Voices make a surprisingly full-bodied sound for a group of its size (some additional voices also participated on this occasion) which contrasted nicely with the delicate sound of the "sparrows" in the Sanctus. Another special moment followed in the Benedictus as the Soprano melody soared upwards above the contemplative choral line. When the "sparrows" returned at the end of the Benedictus it was to take us into a final fulsome Agnus Dei.

Jauchzet Gott in Allen Landen was composed later than Bach's preceding two hundred plus cantatas. Words in the score suggest it was intended for general use rather than for a specific Sunday of the liturgical year. It is the only cantata to feature solo trumpet (1st/5th movements) showing how the use of an instrument can highlight an emotional aspect of a piece - in this case, the sense of huge joy in its title. Trumpet and solo soprano alternately mirror and blend requiring accuracy of intonation and timing, achieved beautifully by both soloists. Notable too was the purity of sound soaring above the string and continuo in the 2nd and 3rd movements. The cantata concludes with the return of the trumpet (some slight hesitation quickly redeemed!) with the players seeming not only to listen but to sense each other's responses whilst accompanying the virtuosity of the soprano part and bringing the piece to a joyful and triumphant end.

Within its twelve movements, Vivaldi's Gloria reflects the full range of human emotion. The choir gave us a strong and joyful introduction, a rich "Et in Terra" before an exciting duet between soprano and mezzo-soprano in "Laudamus Te". The latter then shone again in her delivery of "Domine Deus, Agnus Dei" and later in "Qui Sedes", displaying a range of dynamics and control of a strong rhythmic thrust. A brisk and enthusiastic "Cum Sancto Spiritu" heralded more athletic work from trumpet and oboe - and very long "Amen" brought the evening to a close.

In conclusion, this was a concert performed by voices and chamber orchestra who welded together perfectly to produce a performance of the highest standard. The after-concert smiles on faces said it all - the borough of Charnwood has musicians to be proud of.