

REVIEW

A Glorious Fanfare, Harrogate Choral Society, Ripon Cathedral

Yes, A Glorious Fanfare indeed, as the nave, and probably other areas also, of Ripon Cathedral reverberated magnificently to the sounds of organ, brass and voices in a concert of mainly English music written mostly in the last 70 years.

The tone of the evening was set by the opening piece - Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man* in which the Amici Brass produced a splendid sound sustaining the long chords effectively. *Eventide* by Andrew Padmore, the concert's conductor, provided a contemplative contrast although the smooth lines were occasionally disrupted by split notes from the second trumpet.

Alan Simmons's *Beuchamp Gloria* provided the highlight of the concert in that Harrogate Choral Society, whose diction was impeccable, as well as Amici Brass, was joined by Gateways School Choir and Thomas Moore, organist, as well as Lucy Morton, a young soprano soloist. The latter, still at school, sang effortlessly above the large adult choir, despite her young voice, in passages of great beauty. The work is reminiscent of the style of Vaughan Williams and sets the *Gloria* to contrast with another text, in English, which questions its content from the 15th century context which influenced the work. Thus the music is more reflective and darker than that of more conventional settings and this mood was projected throughout. The contrasting sections moved seamlessly into each other, the semi-chorus providing yet another dimension, and the composer had used the varied resources so well that balance was never a problem. The school choir, consisting of girls aged mainly 11-14, played their rôle rhythmically and thoughtfully and a persistent repeated note on the timpani built the final section up to a well-produced climax.

The concert's second half was dominated by two works by John Rutter – his *Te Deum* and *Gloria*. Both combined brass, choir and organ, the last-named performing with considerable floridity when required, and, once again, the composer's intentions were well-met especially in the opportunities provided for contrast. The Choral Society, who had earlier sung Leighton's *Fanfare on Newtoun* from memory, sang the unaccompanied passages most movingly although they suffered very slightly from some weaker tuning. They had to be at their most committed in singing over the combination of organ and brass ensemble and were highly successful on most occasions, this writer being seated in different positions in each half to test this fully. The *Gloria*, in particular, showed the Society at its best in its ability to perform in different styles and moods.

The concert also included settings of hymns for brass and voices and so boundlessly enthusiastic is Padmore that even these well-known harmonies were given new life and vigour. The Choral Society will now return to the Royal Hall for its regular concerts and this event provided a most memorable conclusion to five years' usage of excellent acoustics that were employed to full advantage in A Glorious Fanfare indeed.

Paul Dyson