

## CONCERT REVIEW

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This year the Dunbar and District Choral Society spring concert on 20<sup>th</sup> May was an Opera Gala with concert performances of arias, chorus items and orchestral pieces ranging through compositions by Mozart, Massenet and Mascagni, Bizet, Borodin, Delibes, Puccini and Verdi. The Choir were in force, joined by soloists soprano Susan McNaught, alto Katrine Townhill and bass Luis Allan with a thirty six piece orchestra and David Townhill on the piano.

The programme opened with the "Polovtsian Dances" from Borodin's "Prince Igor" its varied tempos and ranges, requiring much from singers and musicians alike but all rose to the occasion and provided a dramatic prelude for the evening. Next two renderings from Mozart operas. Drama and musicianship were to the fore in Luis Allan's rendering of the "Catalogue Aria" from "Don Giovanni" right to the concluding snapping shut of the catalogue. With a change of mood the trio of soloists gave a measured and flowing performance of "O wind gently blowing" from "Cosi fan tutte" which reflected the spirit of the line ' May the winds be gentle and the waves be calm'.

The orchestra had offered sensitive accompaniment to the singers throughout and now came into their own. A moving and intense interpretation of the Meditation from Thais by Massenet featured, in the solo sections, the mellifluous skill on the violin of the orchestra's leader, Robert Dick, and throughout the capacity of all the players to combine with great effect. The rather gentle mood continued with the "Humming Chorus" from Puccini's "Madam Butterfly". This piece is so regularly heard and enjoyed one often forgets just how hard it is to hum as well as the Choir did in doing it full justice.

Before the audience could totally subside into a deep reverie the trumpets blasted all awake with the opening bars of the Grand March which opens the great Triumphal Scene from "Aida". Pomp and majesty, power and glory rang out from choir and orchestra easily conjuring up images of passing processions.

After the interval we were into "The Marriage of Figaro" with the instrumental overture and then fun with interpretive and dramatic renderings from the opening scenes by Susan McNaught and Luis Allan. Another effective mood change was brought about by the Choir's evocative singing of the "Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves" from Verdi's "Nabucco". Hardly had the last note of the chorus died away than Susan McNaught in the guise of Carmen swept us with the music of Bizet into the heated sexualised atmosphere of Seville's smouldering girls and marching toreadors.

"The Flower Duet" from Lakme allowed both alto and soprano soloists to demonstrate the beauty and strength of their voices which were movingly and precisely combined. The closing notes sung from the hidden apse were particularly effective. The conclusion of the Gala was the magnificent Easter Hymn from "Cavalleria Rusticana" by Mascagni. What better ending could there be with ringing Alleluias, choir, soloists and orchestra in full flow and a totally uplifting theme? The whole evening was a credit to all concerned, Vaughan Townhill, for not only putting together such an engaging programme but so effectively bringing together choir and orchestra with only one rehearsal together, the musicians for their essential contribution and the singers both solo and choir for lifting our hearts and minds as we whirled through such musical variety.

John Cairns