

Review: The Academy of St Olave's Orchestra, St Olave's Church, York, Saturday, June 18

11:30am Monday 20th June 2011

At first it was not evident why Nielsen's mellifluous three-minute flute and harp duet *The Fog Is Lifting* opened last Saturday's orchestral concert.

However, the very last cadence then rang out and the opening of Vaughan Williams's *Fantasia on Greensleeves* seemed to follow on almost seamlessly, forming a quirky and interesting start to a concert full of personality.

The Vaughan Williams piece was well paced with a good bass section, and director Alan George's strong leadership allowed their natural musicianship to show with the result that it was confident, projected and rhythmically tight.

The highlight of the evening was Fitzwilliam String Quartet cellist Heather Tuach's rendition of Shostakovich's unusual *Cello Concerto No 2*, performed on a beautiful replica Renaissance instrument made by Roger Hansell, who was in the audience for this performance.

Tuach's tone was rich and engaging, handling the virtuosic passages with ease and great expression. The first movement, with a slightly laboured tempo and introverted orchestra gave way to a confident and expressive *Allegretto*, handling Shostakovich's transcendence from whimsical to manic very well.

In a tight, enthusiastic wind section, the bassoons were an engaging feature. The bizarre third movement communicated well the contradictions of frightening *tutti*s and mock-baroque cadences.

In Prokofiev's challenging "Classical" Symphony, director Alan George was not shy on tempo or dynamic. The result, while glorious, was not without rhythm and tuning issues, but the evident enthusiasm and love for the material by the performers was met with equally enthusiastic and well deserved applause.

- Edward Caine

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