

Review: Academy of St Olave's, St Olave's Church, York

12:01pm Tuesday 24th January 2012

Saturday night's concert seemed to have two themes: nature and Yorkshire.

A celebration of the Bradford-born Frederick Delius (1862-1934), the evening saw the composer's often pastoral music placed in the context of his musical friends and compatriots.

Grieg's Two Elegiac Melodies displayed rich and wholesome writing which showed the orchestra's not insubstantial string section at its best.

Sibelius provided a challenge with the subtle piano sections of a sometimes dark 'Valse Triste', but under Alan George's considered direction, the music remained well-paced throughout.

Peter Warlock's Capriol Suite would have benefited from a little more drive and less space between its short dance movements, nevertheless combined with Percy Grainger's Spoon River, it gave the orchestra material for a rambunctious close to the first half.

The Delius which had opened the concert was rather overshadowed both in duration and quality by this array of composers, but the second half more than redressed the balance.

With a collection of instrumental extracts from Delius' operas, the Yorkshire theme went out of the window as we were transported to new locations, from Baghdad to Louisiana, in each piece.

From accomplished solo playing to a brass- and woodwind-rich tutti, the orchestra and Delius himself shined in this music.

The evening represented some of the best qualities of local music-making: a warm reception, a full house, a well-rehearsed ensemble playing honest music; all wrapped up in a presentation lacking pretension.

You should look forward to their next concert.

Review by Martin Scheuregger

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