

Musicians from The North East of Scotland Music School

NESMS Flute Choir

Kirsty Campbell, Karen Cardy, Francesca De Stefano,
Ellie Ganson, Bethan Taylor, Rachael Watson

Catherine O'Rourke: Director

Lunchbreak Concert
Aberdeen Salvation Army Citadel
Thursday 10th November 2016

Reviewed by Alan Cooper

The last time I heard the NESMS Flute Choir perform was at a special Student Concert in Craigiebuckler Church on the 2nd October, 2016. I was impressed by their performance then and I was again today. I liked the confident and relaxed way in which the various members of the ensemble introduced the different pieces they were about to play. That makes an instant impression on the audience. Perhaps in future though, they could do a short introduction explaining the various different sizes of flutes they were using, demonstrating their range and sound possibilities briefly to help those of us who are not flute players navigate our way through the arrangements we were about to hear.

The programme itself was particularly well chosen with excerpts ranging from the Baroque with Boismortier, the Romantic with Delibes, Greig, Rubenstein and Mendelssohn, the more tuneful side of Contemporary with John Rutter, and ending with a super bit of fun from Leroy Anderson. Some of the pieces were arranged to use all six players, others were for four or five players and at the end, the Choir's excellent director Catherine O'Rourke also played flute while two of the other six players became percussion performers.

The programme opened with the second movement, Andante, from Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4, "The Italian". I liked the steady beat that the lovely plummy tone of the lower flute gave to the music while the others delivered the melody and harmony of Mendelssohn's music. This was an excellent arrangement and it was followed by the first of two exceptionally fine settings by Mel Orriss. The first of these was her arrangement of the Flower Duet from the Opera Lakmé by Delibes. The two upper flutes were intertwined in the melody arranged originally for two soprano voices and in this arrangement, the two lower flutes mirrored that idea in their accompaniment.

Two movements from Greig's Holberg Suite were the Air and Rigaudon in an arrangement for five flutes. The first was smooth and well blended while the outer sections of the Rigaudon had a delightful impish quality.

The Rondeau from John Rutter's Suite Antique was a tuneful blending of the modern and the older style.

There were two movements for flute quartet, three flutes and alto flute by Boismortier. The Largo was properly elegant and had a lightness which propelled the music onward before the playful Allegro.

Rubenstein's Valse Staccato arranged for flutes by Elmer Fetherston was light and zestful with a smooth central section enlivened by arpeggios. Its many changes in tempo were neatly conducted by Catherine O'Rourke and it was great to see her musicians responding instantly to her directions.

The second arrangement by Mel Orriss was of Over the Rainbow by Harold Arlen. The arrangement also used the verse of the song which was cut from the film. Apparently studio head Louis B. Mayer wanted to cut the whole song which he thought was a bit of a dirge – how wrong could he be?

Walaychu, a Peruvian folk melody was played in proper Andean style, the melody floating clearly above the mixed flute accompaniment reminiscent of the most famous of such songs, El Condor Pasa.

All four of the last pieces were in lighter style culminating in a real fun piece, Leroy Anderson's, The Typewriter. Catherine O'Rourke joined the Choir with her flute allowing two of the girls to produce the sounds of the typewriter bell and the zipping sound of the return mechanism as the machine went to a new line. I was reminded of my earliest days hearing this piece on the radio before television came to Aberdeen; it was a regular on Children's Favourites.