

Surrey Mozart Players at Holy Trinity Church

June 13, 2009

As they approach their fortieth anniversary, the Surrey Mozart Players are going from strength to strength, presenting ever more adventurous programmes, and last Saturday at Holy Trinity Church was no exception.

Under their charismatic conductor, Kenneth Woods, they opened their programme with Beethoven's Leonore Overture no. 2

This is considerably bolder than the more frequently played Leonore No 3, and Woods' interpretation bore this out. The dramatic trumpet call was quite elaborate, if, in the splendid Holy Trinity acoustic, not distant enough. The wind and percussion between them bolstered an exciting performance.

Alberto Ginastera's Harp Concerto conveys the atmosphere of the composer's native Argentina.

It is a large scale piece, with a huge orchestra--- too big for Holy Trinity even with the scaling down of the percussion section. This colorful piece found the orchestra on top form, with wonderful interjections from the wind instruments and percussion.

Solo harpist Victoria Davies gave a sensitive performance and shone particularly in the central slow movement and the striking cadenza that follows it.

Significantly these were the places where the orchestra was at its quietest: the composer never got around to re-scoring the concerto before his death.

By the time Schumann revisited the score of his 4th Symphony in 1851, he was already showing signs of his illness.

As Kenneth Woods explained, these disturbances were borne out in the music, in the incessant repetition, the dramatic contrasts and the trombones coming in on a dissonant note at key moments in both the outer movements.

The performance reflected this frenzied mood in many ways, from the imposing opening with its constant return, to the continuous "A" that boomed out in the composer's head, to a crisp, forward moving interpretation of the opening movement.

A strongly archaic feel pervaded the slow movement, with some fine violin playing in the central trio (this music was quoted again in the third movement) and there was a robust mood in the Scherzo.

Woods caught the mood of the link to the finale wonderfully, and the Finale itself was thrilling.

Shelagh Goodwin, Surrey Advertiser, June 26, 2009