

## ***MUSIC IN THE UNIVERSITY: CONCERT SERIES 2017 – 2018***

***DAVID CHILDS: Euphonium***

***CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS: Piano***

***St MACHAR'S CATHEDRAL***

***Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2017***

A brand new season of University Concerts powered off to a sensational start with a mind-blowing performance by euphonium virtuoso David Childs. He was supported by an equally gifted piano accompanist Christopher Williams. As the first sentence in the programme claimed, "David Childs is regarded as one of the finest brass musicians of his generation." He was definitely every bit of that – and then some! We were about to hear a truly dazzling performance.

He was brought to the University on Monday evening by Professor Paul Mealor who has written a Euphonium Concerto for him. It was performed at the Last Night of the Welsh Proms in St David's Hall, Cardiff recently. Although born in Yorkshire, Childs has spent much of his life in Wales and regards himself as Welsh, as is his pianist Christopher Williams. Before the concert, Pauline Black led a discussion with David Childs with enthusiastic questions from members of the audience, many of whom were young brass players. It was great to see so many young people in the audience. They were all very excited at the prospect of hearing Childs play and when he got stuck into his most challenging virtuoso passages I saw their faces light up with pure delight.

The concert began with Christopher Williams attacking the piano keys with real verve and style in the introduction to Zigeunerweisen (Gypsy Airs) by Pablo Sarasate. Composed originally for violin, tonight's transcription for euphonium and piano was a real humdinger. It established both the smooth melodic abilities of the instrument and the exciting virtuosity of the performer.

The second item in the performance did the same although separating those two delights in two movements from a Concerto for euphonium by Sir Karl Jenkins. In the first of the movements, Romance, David Childs provided a broad sweeping melodic landscape for us – I thought of the Yorkshire moors perhaps, and then in Troika, Childs took us on a wild sleigh ride with rapid staccato playing, perfectly clean and clear and with even a little cadenza near the end.

Maurice Ravel's Pièce en forme de habanera was gently seductive with a real Spanish flavour and then in Fantasy by Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Childs playing was smooth and his response to the rhythms of the music seemed to have him almost dancing in an embrace with his instrument.

Due Tramonti by Ludovico Einaudi was a charming essay in melodic playing.

For the rest of his programme, Childs told us that he was going back to his roots in the world of brass band contests.

Simone Mantia was a virtuoso baritone and euphonium player who played in John Philip Sousa's band. Endearing Young Charms began with the lovely melody played smoothly and with deep feeling – that was the Air and then there followed the Variations in which all sorts of virtuoso tricks and effects were brought forth. It was then that I saw the faces of the young brass enthusiasts in the audience really light up.

Macushla, an Irish song composed in 1910 by Dermot McMurrough, was a pure example of how the euphonium could live up to its name which from the Greek means sweet sounding.

The final piece in the official programme was Carnival of Venice which was the result of work from three different composers, Niccolò Paganini, Joseph Arban and finally, a favourite of mine, Salvador "Tutti" Camarata. Here was the most rousing virtuoso playing with leaps to the outer extremities of the instruments range, dazzlingly fast finger work and fabulous lip control.

During the pre concert talk there had been mention of a piece by Paul Mealor but I was disappointed not to find it listed in the programme. No worries however because a well earned encore was Welsh Prayer by Paul Mealor. Caressingly tuneful, it was a perfect ending to a concert in which melody was king throughout.