A large audience turned out to hear Thursday’s lavish concert of Baroque music. The main attraction was a thoroughly enjoyable performance of Vivaldi’s Gloria. Before that however, we were treated to a pair of particularly appealing Baroque favourites: the Concerto in a minor for Recorder and Strings by Vivaldi followed by part of J. S. Bach’s solo Church Cantata, Ich habe genug, originally scored for bass soloist but in today’s performance featuring tenor-baritone Matthew Burns.

The recorder soloist in Vivaldi’s Recorder Concerto was Andrew Chidwick. I was particularly impressed by the intensity of his rhythmic playing in this performance. He made the music come amazingly alive capturing every detail in faster passages and with his attractive almost creamy recorder tone making the central slow movement shine. Perhaps this piece could have done with a conductor up front to control the balance as there were moments when the string players, excellent though they were, threatened to obscure some of the more delicate recorder passages. Nevertheless this was a very pleasing performance.

In the Bach Cantata, Matthew Burns was in a sense twinned with the Baroque oboe played by Lesley Wilson. Her instrument did act up just a little. Water can always be a problem but this too was a delightful performance. We hear quite a lot from Matthew Burns these days, sometimes as a tenor, which I think is his forte but occasionally as in this performance as a baritone. His solo does have some lower voice sections but across the whole range he performed splendidly. His diction was impeccable and his voice suited the Church repertoire very nicely indeed. With further training and study he could make a fine Evangelist.

The large chorus joined the Baroque players for their performance of Vivaldi’s Gloria. The Baroque orchestra was led by Amanda Babington who also played the beautiful violin solo supporting soprano Julia Frazer’s strong singing in the Domine Deus, Rex coelestis while sister Claire played the cello magnificently in continuo passages giving them a real lift. David Smith conducted the choral passages but moved to play harpsichord in support of the soloists. In the choral sections the harpsichord was played by a very young performer, I am told he was just ten years old. This was Henry Jaspars. I was impressed and look forward to hearing a lot more from him in future.

We must remember that the University as well as being a concert promoter providing great value to the musical life of Aberdeen and the North East is principally an educational institution and so it was great that the solo parts in Vivaldi’s Gloria were shared among many of the young student singers, three sopranos, Miranda Evans, Julia Frazer and Eilidh Thomson, and two altos, Lauren Smith and Jennifer Taylor. I was particularly impressed by the well blended vocal duo of Eilidh Thomson and Miranda Evans in Laudamus te. Isn’t it great that the University has such a marvellous wealth of talent at its disposal these days.

The full choral singing was splendid including an unusually fine and strong tenor section and the basses who powered off the concluding Cum sancto Spiritu singing with great vigour. The whole choir seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves singing this music.

It was quite a short concert but I have always believed that quality is far more important than quantity. Always leave the audience wanting more rather than thinking “Ich hatte genug”!