

A day at the movies

Congratulations Susan Grant! Today Grimsby Symphony Orchestra took two well-judged steps forward moving away from a pure classical programme to perform an afternoon concert of film music. This is a great way of show-casing the orchestra and encouraging newcomers to the classical genre. Yet this was no compromise – this music was made for symphony orchestras, and was delivered with effect!

Setting the tone for the event, Andrew Marshall played the *Jaws* motif on double-bass. Then the self-imposed constraints of the past were symbolically shaken off with the opening piece, Morro's *Big Country* with all the sense of space and freedom this music gives when performed by a full orchestra. This music had plenty of contrast from the delicate opening by the strings to nice meaty bits dominated by the trombones, tuba and horns. In Shostakovich's *Waltz*, conductor Susan Grant proved to be of the fairer-sax, playing the saxophone on the podium at the beginning of this piece. A pleasant piece, yet with a subtle sense of unease, very appropriate for its use in *Eyes Wide Shut*, 1999. *Night on a Bald Mountain* by Musssorgsky, used in Disney's *Fantasia*, was an excellent choice for the Orchestra. Definitely not for the timid, the piece was played with good dynamic contrasts. From a quiet opening, a lovely crescendo led to an emphatic entry by the trombones and the piece came alive with the full drama of All Hallows Eve, to resolve into tranquillity at dawn. The final piece of the first half was the music of John Williams for *Jurassic Park* – an impressive well prepared tour-de-force.

However, just before *Jurassic Park*, the audience enjoyed a selection of songs from Mary Poppins, sung by the "Songbirds" of North East Lincolnshire, a youth choir for children 4 to 10 years old. Conducted by Susan Booth, they were enthusiastic and charming. After the interval, Caroline Maasdam-Gooch conducted "Youth Voices", with singers 8 years and above. This choir of older singers did some excellent part singing, and proved themselves real troopers performing *When You Wish Upon a Star*, *Zip-a-dee-do-dah* and *How far I'll Go*.

The Orchestra returned to the stage with *The Blue Danube Waltz* by Strauss that has featured in many films, including *2001: A Space Odyssey*. This tone poem provided a gentle romp down the river. Next, led by Martin Priestley, the string section were at the cutting edge of this innovative programme, excelling as they performed the *Psycho Suite* by Herrmann. The cellos and double basses provided a very effective link from the first movement into the striking murder scene, to close with a short but dramatic finale.

It was good to see retiring conductor Neville Turner supporting the Orchestra on keyboards at this concert. Whilst the Orchestra as a whole performed very well, a number of individuals, not otherwise mentioned, particularly stood out for me: Hugh de la Hoyde and David Harries on timpani and percussion – essential to the drama, Kay Ritchie on piccolo and flute, Peter Humphries on bassoon, Robert Steadman on tuba.

Used in the film *Babe*, Saint-Saens *Organ Symphony* provided a brilliant finish to the concert. From the superb opening chords of the organ, well played by David Williams, to its magnificent ending, the orchestra played with gusto and passion – making sure it would bring home the bacon this day. The audience was left wanting more – the best way to finish. Ian Maxwell