

Music at St Andrew's Concert Review

Bedford Town Band in Concert with Sankofa Mas



On 19 January 2008 a third resoundingly successful year of *Music at St Andrew's* opened with a curtain raiser by a new group - Commpowerment (see photo left) - formed from young Bedford people originating from China, Africa and the Caribbean, encouraging them to research, perform and be proud of their heritage. Exotic feathers, costumes and headdresses abounding, a most addictive performance showed off the best of multicultural Bedford. Having already achieved recognition in 2007, Commpowerment will no doubt be in huge demand for performance, education and inspiration in coming years.

From a new company to a Bedford Town Band - now 112 years old! Four bands exist catering for all levels of expertise from age 10 to an octogenarian. With a huge repertoire and reputation for local and twin town, charitable, themed, educational, and master class performances, tonight the 'top of the league' players were on the bill! Mature musicians alongside, I should think, the cream of local brass playing youngsters. Mark Rutherford Upper School student Craig, age 15, on percussion - a real star - had been in the Band for three years having begun with the Middle Band.

Conductor Kevin Nicholls 'entertained the troops' - an almost 'full house' as most of *Music at St Andrew's* concerts enjoy - with humour and ribald commentaries, introductions to soloists and as some guests were to discover when asked in the second half "What do you think of it so far?" - their traditional reply was to be greeted with "Well come up and see if you can do better!" And so they did - with near disbelief and nervous laughter soon replaced with a new confidence in the potential of a new skill! Something, no doubt, to do with the Conductor's charm and encouragement.



The Band's outstanding expertise made a world tour, skipping with an enormous 1930s swing band sound from the northern and southern states of the USA with Mack the Knife, Peanut Vendor and New York, New York; Switzerland to Portugal - with Berne Patrol and Portuguese Party, traditional brass band tunes, the romance of Rodrigo's Concerto de Aranjuez and Horner's My Heart Will Go On. The unique sound of 1960s modern jazzman Dave Brubeck's Take Five and Blue Rondo a la Turk contrasting with the fiery almost overpowering and now nostalgic TV score of Stingray and the emotive film score of Titanic! Many numbers gave opportunity for superb all age solos and quartets: girls and boys, men and women—all clearly doing something loved passionately. Ronald Binge's Cornet Carillon pierced the atmosphere of St Andrew's - clear, resonant, enchanting; the Bishop of Wakefield's *The Bandsman's Prayer* above echoed with the finale - Edward Gregson's Laudate Dominum commissioned in 1976 - the magnificent 1833 hymn tune by Sir Hubert Parry - O Praise ye the Lord.

Sandra Dudley