

Music at St Andrew's Concert Review

Collegium Regale Saturday 16 January 2010



A very full church was treated to a superb concert by the very talented men of King's College Choir, Cambridge. These young men, all students at Cambridge, perform as a separate choir from the full King's College Choir. Their repertoire is varied and very interesting. On Saturday it was performed with enthusiasm and style. This choir is able to adapt to the range of different styles with consummate ease!

Owing to a recording that they were doing in King's College Chapel for the BBC before coming to Bedford the seven men of Collegium Regale arrived a little later than planned and so had asked to start the concert 15 minutes later than advertised. Although initially this caused a little concern it was well worth the wait! The first half of the programme was mostly sacred music from the Renaissance period. They began with the lively 'Cantate Domino' by Pitoni which immediately set the standard for the rest of the evening. They included (unplanned) in the programme pieces by Tallis, Victoria, Byrd and Purcell – music which spanned a vast range of moods. Particularly memorable were the Purcell anthems 'In God's word will I rejoice' and 'O remember not our offences'. This outstanding master of English music would have been justly proud of the performance. The beautiful blend of sound produced by these seven young men was absolutely magical.

The choral contrasts in this first half were two settings of 'Bogoroditse Devo' (one by Arvo Pärt and one by Rachmaninov) and a magnificent piece by the highly under-rated

composer Rheinberger. The two settings by Pärt and Rachmaninov contrasted in length (the Pärt was very short, fast and furious) and style (the Rachmaninov conversely was slow and very legato).

The other contrast in the first half of the programme was a superb performance by the organist Peter Stevens (organ scholar at King's College) of Bach's 'St Anne Prelude'. This piece is very grand and majestic and was performed with total understanding by Peter. This complicated, and rather difficult piece, tripped effortlessly off his fingers (and feet) to the obvious delight of the audience.

The second half of the programme was a complete contrast. Consisting mostly of spirituals and arrangements of pop songs Collegium Regale proved their versatility. There was some superb solo singing - from tenor Matthew Sandy (in 'Londonderry Air'), from baritone Ed Ballard (in 'The way you look tonight') as well as a most amusing piece in the style of Beethoven played, again superbly, by Peter Stevens (this time on the piano).

The only negative comments were that some of the audience could not hear the announcements by the singers of the pieces that were not in the programme. But everyone agreed that the singing was superb and the whole evening most enjoyable. Thank you to all who helped in any way in the organisation of this superb evening of music-making.

Ian Smith