

Music



Devon Baroque in Plymouth (review)

13th April 2008

Devon Baroque prides itself on its use of period instruments and historically accurate playing practices, which will clearly appeal to the musicologists among us.

Yet whether you're an erudite Baroque scholar or just someone who enjoys the music of the time, Devon Baroque is a truly stunning outfit whose all-Handel programme at St Andrew's Church in Plymouth was simply unsurpassed and immensely enjoyable at whatever level of appraisal.

Much of this reflects the excellent prior coaching from Artistic Director, Margaret Faultless. But Guest Leader, Catherine Manson, proved more than equal to the task on the night, bringing a fresh approach which certainly reflected in the players' inspired performances.

Devon Baroque sensibly invites a number of young, international players at the outset of their career, to play alongside the ensemble's more seasoned professionals, while seriously valuing the essential contribution the continuo makes.

Here harpsichordist, Andrew Wilson-Dickson, so effectively mixed florid and quite audacious playing with simpler chordal work, sensing each moment to sheer perfection.

Welsh tenor, Malcolm Bennett was an absolutely outstanding soloist, combining tonal beauty, phenomenal breath control and uncannily accurate coloratura work, yet given so unassumingly.

Since their previous visit to the city, Devon Baroque has definitely come of age and, given time, this home-grown ensemble will surely be synonymous with all the best-known things to emerge from the county, like cream and cider, but without any of the less-desirable side-effects!

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