



## Concert with a programme from the Baroque era

For its winter concert, held on Saturday, March 24, the Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society, under conductor Matthew Owens, chose a programme of works from the Baroque era.

The first item was Purcell's joyous ode "Come, Ye Sons of Art", written in 1694.

The duet, "Sound the Trumpet", usually sung by two counter tenors, was performed by the soprano Susan Hamilton and counter tenor Stephen Taylor.

The duet for soprano and oboe "But The Virtues Bid The Graces" was a delight, with the soprano's clear voice blending well with the mellow baroque instrument which was beautifully played by Hannah McLaughlin.

The bass soloist, Giles Underwood, sang with warm tone and clear diction in both his numbers.

In J S Bach's cantata for solo soprano "Jauchzet Gott in allen Landen" Susan Hamilton came into her own, negotiating the florid vocal writing with ease, yet delivering a pure lyrical sound in the slower sections.

After the interval it was the choir's turn to take the limelight in Handel's four anthems written for the Coronation of King George II.

In the first and best known piece, "Zadok the Priest", Matthew Owens superbly controlled the gradual crescendo during the orchestral introduction leading to an electrifying entry by the chorus.

"Zadok the Priest" is frequently performed, so it was good to hear the three less well-known anthems, especially in such a satisfying performance.

Outstanding support was given by the Chameleon Arts Baroque Orchestra, led by Sarah Bealby-Wright, playing on period instruments with great polish and commitment.

I did wonder whether, in view of the fact that there was relatively little for the chorus to do in the first half of the programme, a better balance might have been achieved by placing the Bach cantata in the second half and beginning and ending each part with one of the four anthems. Nevertheless, all in all this was a fine evening of music.

**Brendan Sadler**