

27 September 2003

The opening piece, Copland's exuberant *Music for the Theatre* is a glorious pageant of five short movements. Its rhythmic acrobatics and harmonic discords - so beloved of the jazz era in which it was written - presented few problems for this small but highly competent orchestra, which rose splendidly to the challenge, under the decisive guidance of guest conductor Sam Laughton. True, the opening trumpet solo sounded a little fuzzy at the edges, but otherwise there was little to fault in this bright and breezy rendition that successfully resurrected a little of the Roaring Twenties.

After so much dissonance, Stravinsky's *Dances Concertantes* came as a welcome relief. This is a composer, of course, whose mastery of dance music needs little introduction; indeed, this piece came some 30 years after classics such as *Petrouchka* and *The Rite of Spring*, and his witty exploration of different dance rhythms indicates a man totally at ease with the genre. The many opportunities for soloists in different parts of the orchestra revealed the depth of individual talent within the Sinfonia, particularly from the woodwind.

The second half was devoted to a thoughtful interpretation of Beethoven's 4th Symphony. Once again Laughton kept tight control, perhaps occasionally too much so; the adagio passages were appropriately lyrical and tender, but the opportunities to have a bit of fun were not always fully explored