

# EDINBURGH Evening News



## EIF CONCERTS

Usher Hall  
Scottish Chamber Orchestra  
- Edinburgh Festival Chorus  
★★★★  
Rossini - La Donna del Lago  
★★★  
Bruckner - Symphony No 3  
★★★★

**MUSIC** UNDER conductor David Jones, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's concert with the Edinburgh Festival Chorus featured two works by Vaughan Williams - the Serenade to Music and the cantata Dona Nobis Pacem.

The Serenade was an anniversary gift to Sir Henry Wood, to celebrate his 50 years as a conductor. There is not enough room here to name all of the soloists. Strung out over the full width of the Usher Hall platform, the 16 of them looked absolutely splendid before a note was sung. It's hard to imagine a better match than Shakespeare's words, chosen from *The Merchant of Venice*, and RVW's music. A dream of a performance. The Festival Chorus was adequately supported by the SCO with Claire Booth and Garry Magee as soloists.

**Rossini - La Donna del Lago:** The reason why this opera is less suitable for concert performance than many others lies in its long stretches of recitative, which are not always of particularly high musical quality. When acted out in a stage production they carry dramatic impact. The set numbers contain some remarkable vocal music. They were magnificently sung by a cast of seven.

Carmen Giannattasio [Ellen] saved her best for last in *Tanti affetti* - the Act II Finale. Kenneth Tarver [Uberto, otherwise James V of Scotland] delivered a polished *O fiamma soave* at the beginning of that act, and Gregory Kunde as Rodrigo [Roderick Dhu] revelled in the technical challenges of his *Eccomi a voi*. Patricia Bardon [Malcolm] also turned in an extraordinarily fine overall performance.

The Scottish Chamber orchestra gave crisp support and the Edinburgh Festival Chorus took obvious pleasure from their weighty contribution.

**Bruckner - Symphony No 3:** String writing in the second theme of the first movement and again at the first change of tempo in the second shows emerging originality of thought. There and elsewhere the strings of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra produced a convincing warmth of musical tone.

Indeed, Günther Herbig achieved a general standard of performance that bore very favourable comparison with what has been heard over recent years from distinguished visiting outfits.

SANDY SCOTT



# THE SCOTSMAN

nostalgic mood was palpable. This setting – a fragment of Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* which celebrates the essence of the art of music and was composed for 16 specific voices associated with its dedicatee, Sir Henry Wood – was thrillingly interpreted by one of the 16 key singers of today's generation, notably the soprano Ha Young Lee.

Its shimmering textures set the mood for Williams's six-part *Cantata*. The balance between the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, the two soloists and a quite magnificent Festival Chorus fiercely invoking the pathos of war through three Walt Whitman poems and biblical texts was scintillating.

Baritone Gerry Magee brought out the mysticism of Whitman's *Reconciliation* and Bright's *Angel of Death* while soprano Claire Booth shaded the punctuating calls for peace that thread the parts together, from nightingale to anguished call to the tragic radiance of a re-birth.

In the light of the world at this moment, one felt like weeping as much as clapping at the final optimistic reiteration of Peace, Peace, Peace.

JAN FAIRLEY

MUSIC  
**VAUGHAN WILLIAMS**  
★★★★  
USHER HALL

VAUGHAN Williams at his most ethereal and politically real, from the sweet harmony of his 1938 *Serenade to Music* to his profoundly moving 1936 *Dona Nobis Pacem* made for an immensely satisfying programme.

From the first frisson of harp, the *Serenade's* exquisite and