

## St. Michael's at Six

### Finlay Hetherington and Stuart Montgomery

9<sup>th</sup> December 2007

The 40<sup>th</sup> St *Michael's at Six* concert took the form of a recital by a young trumpeter, Finlay Hetherington, accompanied on piano and organ by Stuart Montgomery. The programme promised an evening of stimulating and diverse music, but unfortunately the standard of performance was rather inconsistent. Stuart was, as ever, well prepared, but the soloist was visibly nervous and seemed to struggle with his instrument.

The opening Torelli was let down by messy trumpet entries, and Finlay's tone lacked confidence. Nevertheless, the piece admirably retained much in the way of character. Stuart played particularly elegantly in the third movement (*Grave*), and made good use of contrasting colours in his registration of the organ.

The *Andante* from Hummel's Trumpet Concerto was altogether a more effective performance. Although the problems from the Torelli remained, the trumpet phrases were generally well tapered and the execution was cleaner.

The highlights of the concert, for me, were *Blue Window* and *Green Window* by the recently deceased composer, Petr Eben – two pieces that were a complete contrast to the preceding items. The first of the pair opened with a wonderfully rasping pedal line and squiggly flourishes on the manuals. This dramatic introduction led into conflict and angry discourse between the trumpet and organ, which eventually resolved into a bright and brilliant homophony.

The second of the pair was equally exciting, and by this time the togetherness of the players seemed vastly improved. Isolated fragments gradually built into a trembling, tension-filled wall of sound.

Stuart's organ solo – Henri Mulet's *Carillon Sortie* – was highly accomplished and thrilling. Stuart, like the audience, obviously enjoyed the spiky, bouncing music, and he injected a lot of fun into the dance-like rhythms.

The concert concluded with arrangements, for trumpet and piano, of three Gershwin

preludes. The sound of the trumpet did much to augment these well-known pieces and evoke atmosphere – particularly through the sleazy wah-wah (or harmon) mute. Stuart's piano was laid-back but had a definite groove as he played in styles such as soulful blues or lazy ragtime. These pieces were full of energy, but unfortunately suffered from some poor execution and misjudged rhythms by the trumpet.

Lewis Forbes.