

St. Michael's at Six
The Scottish Bassoon Ensemble
Review by Lewis Forbes



On 18 March, *St. Michael's at Six* welcomed the Scottish Bassoon Ensemble – Veronica Briggs, Heather Kent-Scambler and Simon Rennard. The audience enjoyed a selection of diverse pieces, including some by lesser-known composers, which really demonstrated the versatility of a trio of bassoons.

First on the programme were *Three Bagatelles* by Michael Norris, which were full of jazzy influences – ranging from mournful blues to upbeat Dixieland – and the ensemble managed admirably to produce a great range of dynamics and character, particularly in styles not usually associated with the bassoon.

Next came the *Divertissements pour trois bassons* by Eugene Bozza, which were particularly notable for some striking timbres such as a spiky, almost percussive texture, as well as some distinctive techniques – for example, passing glissandi between the three instruments.

An elegant arrangement of a *Chacon* from Purcell's *Dioclesian* preceded Mozart's *Sonata K292*, played by Simon and Heather. Although originally written for bassoon and cello, Heather took the cello part on the contrabassoon thus creating quite a different feel and adding a whole new dimension. Their playing was gracious and sensitive throughout.

After another jazzy number – an arrangement of *Take Five* (containing a cheeky quotation or two (!)) and the concert concluded with two dances, welcoming back Michael Norris, the spicy *Tango* and pompous *Gallop* exploited both the technical capabilities and the natural humour of the bassoon.

Overall, this was one of the most unique *Six* concerts yet – a fun, engaging and musically accomplished performance by an uncommon ensemble – which definitely deserved a much larger audience!

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