

Concert Reviews

Bach Cantata Series
2012
Royal Academy of
Music soloists &
Baroque Orchestra

January 22nd
Royal Academy of
Music

This was the first concert in the Royal Academy of Music's 2012 Bach Cantata Series (as outlined by Jonathan Freeman-Attwood, RAM principal, in our last issue). This concert was sold out, with people waiting at the ticket office in a vain hope of returns, and, as the concert began, it was not hard to see why this series is so popular. Indeed, this project is unique, not only for the opportunity and invaluable experience it offers its current RAM students (how many UK music conservatoires can rival this?), but also what it offers to the residents

of London. Even today, regular performances of the Bach Cantatas are fairly commonplace in churches in and around Germany, but London? This is quite a unique offering, and not one to be missed, if you are hoping to become more closely acquainted with J.S.Bach's prolific output of Cantatas. The programme notes for the entire series come in one programme, and are informative, clear and concise, and with detailed comments about each Cantata, its text, and the various biographies of the students performing. The first cantata (BWV 12) began with an oboe solo in the sinfonia, which unfortunately made me feel rather uncomfortable, as it was apparent just how nervous the player was.

However, this soon passed when the strong conviction of the chorus entered. For the first cantata, the show was stolen by bass, Andri Björn Róbertsson, who sang with authority, wonderfully clear German diction and pronunciation, and a beautifully warm tone. For the second cantata (BWV 54), the voicing was for alto, continuo and five part strings. This was sensitively yet strongly led by Madeleine Easton, who, along with her co-string

players, beautifully performed this bold five-part texture of dissonant suspensions and diminished sevenths. I could not think of a better way to spend a Sunday, and would highly recommend a visit to a future RAM Bach Cantata concert. However, if you want to be sure of getting a ticket, my advice is to book early so as not to be disappointed on the day.

Julia Phillips

