

Rousing climax by the Guildford Philharmonic

THE Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra gave its last Civic Hall performance of the season on Saturday. The music ranged from Bach to Hindemith. The concert, and the Civic Hall season, were brought to a great climax by Holst's "Two Psalms."

The 4th Brandenburg Concerto opened the concert, and it was played very stylishly; it was good to hear the first movement played at the right speed throughout.

This is a concerto for three solo instruments: violin and two flutes. The soloists proved to be a formidable trio. William Armon, the leader of the G.P.O., we have heard as soloist before, but never so convincingly as this. His delivery is very clear and always musical.

The two flautists were Henry Messent and Anthony Walker, both ex-pupils of Gareth Morris at the Royal Academy of Music. Their tone blended very well, and at no time did the orchestra drown the soloists.

The other purely orchestral work was the theme and variations ("The Four Temperaments") for piano and strings, by Hindemith.

There is a chamber music element in the work, and the string quartet, played by the principal of each department, brought the music up to a very high standard indeed.

The two choral works were performed by combining together two choirs — the Philharmonic and the youth choir — the Proteus.

Holst's "Two Psalms" is a marvellously effective piece when well done, and the very refined sounds from the choir resulted in a very beautiful performance. The tremendous climax was superbly achieved.

I am not sure whether the combined strength of 88 singers was enough for Holst's purposes. He scored the music for strings and a brass band, each of which has to keep the tone down. But the choir frequently got swallowed up more or less completely by the brass band.

The two vocal solos were sung by Virginia Miskin (soprano) and Roy France (tenor). Miss Miskin sang very prettily; Mr. France sang with real concentration—he has just the right kind of voice that this piece demands, a clear, penetrating voice that nevertheless keeps its quality, even in the louder passages.

The other choral work was Constant Lambert's "Rio Grande," at one time the best-known piece of his entire output.

Joaquin Achucarro was the pianist, both in this work and in the Hindemith. Achucarro is no stranger to Guildford audiences, and his style exactly suits the demands of this piece.

The jazz influence is very strong, and though it is extremely reminiscent of the period between the two wars, it has dated less than almost any other jazz-influenced piece of the period. Walton's "Facade," perhaps, is the other period piece still to be heard today.

Rhythm is the main ingredient in the score and the combined choirs achieved the tricky timing well. Yet this choir needs to develop another sort of tone for this kind of piece, a little rougher and less pure than that, which was so good in their performance of the Holst Psalms.

Again the choir was sometimes quite obliterated by the brass section of the orchestra. And the brass was by no means faultless. The "chording" balance was not there all the time, nor was the ensemble perfect.

The strings made light of their difficult syncopations, and the battery of percussion players are to be congratulated on their successful completion of a difficult stretch of road. Elizabeth Castle was the contralto soloist, and the orchestra, led by William Armon, was conducted by Vernon Handley.

Mr. Handley was given a very well-deserved ovation at the end of the concert. The most successful season in the history of Guildford municipal music had been brought to a rousing climax.

—C. C.