

# GPO provide sound and fury

GUILDFORD Philharmonic's sell-out concert at the Civic on Saturday night was a jolly affair, full of wit, humour, sound and fury.

The programme started with Constance Lambert's *Rio Grande*, moving to Saint-Saens' *Carnival of the Animals* and ending with Carl Orff's rumbustuous celebration of wine women and song, *Carmina Burana*.

*Rio Grande* is an exciting and inventive work employing most unusual juxtapositions of instruments, and happily exploring the potential of a choir, soloist, percussion, brass and a piano in his jazz-influenced setting of Sitwell's poem.

The Philharmonic responded well to conductor Jeremy Backhouse, and the jazz rhythms gave a welcome breadth to the orchestra's repertoire.

It is hard to recognise in *The Carnival of the Animals*, the same composer who created the great piano and organ works. Saint-Saens is wonderfully funny, with highly selective and elegantly minimalist scoring and the orchestra communicated its enjoyment.

*The Pianists* was a tour de force from Jeremy Filsell and Les Pearson, strings made great donkeys, and the lead cellist was a particularly poignant swan.

*Carmina Burana* is not for the squeamish. The problem for Surrey choirs is often that they are too polite and restrained, and on Saturday there was a tendency for the delivery to become tame as the volume receded.

A ferocity of articulation is required and a confident accuracy of intonation for the isolated chords. Neither were impressive, until the work demanded full throttle. Then the choir rose to the occasion quite magnificently.

Jane Garrett