

Choir's enjoyment was infectious

HAYDN was not above the odd musical joke, waking up dozy audiences or dropping heavy musical hints to his employer, and his magnificent choral work the *Creation* shows the amazing versatility of the composer.

It is theatrical, operatic, serious, frivolous and triumphant in turn, innovative in its descriptiveness.

And the duet between

Adam and Eve would make splendid wedding music, according to the lovely Australian soprano, Joanna Cole, who performed with Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra and Choir at the Civic Hall on Saturday night.

Inspired by her background in opera, she responded to the romance of the duet, singing opposite bass Andrew Foster, clearly enjoying its theatrical potential.

Cole's unforced but strong lyrical soprano stood out among the soloists. Foster's voice, more a baritone than bass in timbre, occasionally showed sonority and gravitas, but Foster seemed happier bringing out the humour of the animal kingdom, playing for laughs with his roaring lion and bleating lambs.

Tenor Matthew Beale was also light and a little

brittle, though his intonation and articulation were excellent.

The orchestra under conductor En Shao showed ominous signs at times of under-rehearsal. The introduction was a bit ragged but the orchestra achieved a nicely smoky evocation of chaos and there were some fine solo spots by flute, cello and horn among others.

Really good to hear was the improvement in the choir, which sang with confidence and accuracy despite a tendency to have heads buried in scores. The parts were well balanced and entries and intonation were secure. Tone was solid and people sang out with enthusiasm and enjoyment. It was infectious.

Jane Garrett