



**A Review by
Ian Milnes**

**Northop Silver
Band**

Saturday 19th September 2009, 7.30pm

Northop Silver Band made their third visit to Hamilton Street Methodist Church on Saturday evening, 19th September 2009. During the evening, their superb, highly experienced conductor, Thomas Wyss, introduced the items and the soloists in an interesting and entertaining manner, including the splendid news of their competition successes, the latest of which has qualified them to take part in the National Brass Band finals at the Royal Albert Hall in London next month (excerpts from which will be included later in the Radio 2 Friday evening programme, 9.30pm to 10.00pm, "Listen to the Band"). They are, therefore, among the finest brass bands in the British Isles, and it was a privilege and a joy to hear their exceptionally magnificent playing in this concert. Thomas also spoke about their two youth bands, the senior of the two (the Northop Youth Band) having won the North Wales Rally in November 2007, so the future is bright for top quality performances! More news was included in the informative programme.

Philip Sparke's "Concert Prelude", followed by Eric Ball's march "Torchbearers", made a thrilling start to the concert, being striking works by two of the finest brass band composers, here given outstanding performances, full of rhythmic vitality and well controlled dynamic contrasts. Geraint Jones, the band's principal cornet player, gave a wonderfully moving performance of Lovland's "You Raise Me Up", with superb playing from the rest of the band, including the effective chime bars at the start, and much warm, sonorous tone in the harmonies. John Miles' "Music" made a fine contrast in this well-balanced programme, with lovely lyrical playing leading into vigorous dance-like sections; then there was a wonderful effect with muted cornets in a sudden quieter interlude and the excitement built up again, with precise syncopations, strong percussion work and a glorious final statement of the main theme.

More excitement came in Carlos Moya's "The Flash", a really fast piece, here notable for amazing tonguing and brilliant florid playing from all sections, with memorable sudden crescendos – thrilling! Another great contrast came in Goff Richards' lovely arrangement of "I'll Walk With God", in which the band produced a wonderfully sonorous, beautiful tone and the use of muted cornets in part of it was most effective. Part One ended with Gareth Wood's "Sosban Fach", opening with fine playing in the gentle first section, contrasting so well with the main fast section – a fantastic, exciting performance – brilliant!

James Curnow's "Fanfare and Flourishes" (based on the famous Prelude from Charpentier's Te Deum) made a rousing start to Part Two with more brilliant playing! During Thomas' introduction for the next soloist, Aled Williams, he remarked that the euphonium being played was a brand new instrument, and Aled demonstrated his outstanding technique and musicianship in his memorable reading of "Myfanwy", with absolutely beautiful, mellow, singing tone, wonderfully accompanied by the rest of the band in some lovely, sonorous playing. Film music followed, in A Fernie's band version of John Barry's "Out of Africa", the chime bars adding magical effects at the start and later on, with some notable playing by muted cornets as well as in a fine solo trombone passage, and the whole band showed great control of dynamics, there being much sonorous full tone in the uplifting powerful sections. Ron Sebregts chose four contrasted songs in his "Abba Gold", the band catching their different moods to full effect, with some striking side drum playing adding to the thrilling rhythmic vitality in the louder parts. Thomas made some very humorous comments about various members of the band supporting opposing football teams (actually Liverpool and Everton!) when he introduced Rodgers and Hammerstein's "You'll Never Walk Alone", and all the players were certainly united in music! – giving another sonorous performance with well-controlled dynamics and rhythmic precision, along with a fine trombone solo near the end, then a gloriously rousing conclusion! The final item in the printed programme was Frank Bernaerts' superb arrangement of well-contrasted songs in "Tom Jones in Concert", giving all sections of the band opportunities to shine, including another memorable cornet solo by Geraint Jones, culminating in a glorious, rousing finish!

The Church's organist and concert organiser, John Evans, gave a splendid, well deserved vote of thanks, followed by another big ovation from the small (only 31 there!) but very enthusiastic audience, rewarded by more music! Thomas announced an encore: Sousa's March: "El Capitan", in an outstanding, rousing, uplifting performance during which the audience joined in by clapping rhythmically, making a specially joyful ending to one of the most memorable concerts to have been given in this Church, and all wish the band well for the Royal Albert Hall competition next month; they certainly deserve to win it!

The next concert is on Saturday 31st October at 7.30pm, to be given by John Evans along with his wife, Angela (contralto).

Reviewed by **Ian Milnes – 23/09/09**