

RAF Association President's Band at Bexhill on Sea

Bold move produces dramatic result for RAFA

A BOLD move has produced a spectacular musical result for Bexhill branch of the Royal Air Forces Association.

The branch can usually be depended on to provide lovers of military band music a treat in the form of its annual fund-raising concert for Wings Appeal.

The decision to take the concert from its customary venue at the De La Warr Pavilion and hold it at St Augustine's Church gave the audience an unusual intimacy with the Royal Air Force's Association President's Band.

The public found itself up close and personal with some exuberant performers.

A joint initiative between RAF Uxbridge and Hillingdon Music Services in 1992, the RAFA President's Band includes many ex-RAF musicians.

Saturday's appreciative audience quickly noted that under musical director Peter Stockdale the band are a highly skilled ensemble, well versed in producing dramatic musical effect.

The branch standard was paraded into church to the RAFA March.

But this gave no warning of the fireworks to come as the band launched into Ron Goodwin's theme music from 633 Squadron then fired a broadside with Pirates Of The Caribbean.

The mood switched with the quietly reflective and deeply moving Elegy On The RAF March Past, erupted into action with the Lawrence Of Arabia theme then became softly melodic with Cavatina.

A programme tailored to devotees' taste inevitably included William Walton's Spitfire Prelude and Eric Coates' Dambusters' March but also introduced a Russian feel with Morozov's Glory To The Heroes.

Ron Goodwin's contribution to British film music was immense, as the President's band graphically illustrated, ranging from the heroic Battle Of Britain March and Aces High to a humorous selection international entrants from Those Magnificent Men In Their Flying Machines.

Peter Stockdale had promised a "special feature."

From behind the audience marched piper Steve McGuinness, an acoustic combination in church which sent a thrill through the audience which was reflected in the later applause.

The band was building to its big finale.

Lovers of Last Night Of The Proms responded to such essential ingredients as Jerusalem, Fantasia on British Sea Songs, Rule Britannia and Land Of Hope And Glory in time-honoured fashion,

The result was a musical victory roll which sent lovers of band music winging their way home on a high note.

JD

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