

TAYSIDE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

February Festival - Saturday 2nd February 2019

Reid Hall - Forfar

Tayside Symphony Orchestra has hit on a winning formula with the first concert of the year showcasing lighter music. Ditching the time-honoured but predictable overture-concerto-symphony structure, the line-up had music for all tastes, from shows to films and popular hits from the 1960s, 70s and 80s.

The first half was devoted to the orchestra - the well known overture from Brock's *Fiddler on the Roof*, set the tone for the evening. Mancini's theme for the *Pink Panther* was followed by a selection from Lionel Bart's *Oliver*, bringing to life some of the most memorable characters and songs ever to hit the stage.

The *Beatlecracker Suite* brought back many memories of the 1960s in Liverpool as Lennon/McCartney hits such as *Help* and *Can't Buy Me Love* merged in a unique fashion with Tchaikovsky's famous *Nutcracker Suite*. Songs from the musical *Chorus Line*, composed by Martin Hamlisch, was the penultimate item of the first half. The musical tragedy, inspired by Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* - *West Side Story* - with musical numbers *I Feel Pretty*, *Maria* and *America*, rounded off a superb first half.

Medleys of hits from The Bee Gees and The Eagles opened the second half with rousing numbers, and the Disco Medley, which included *Y.M.C.A.* and *Funkytown*, received rapturous applause.

The orchestra was joined on stage for the second half of the concert by the 'Friends' Group of singers from Arbroath. The group originally came together to perform in 2004 to raise funds to help the small village Sierra Leone of Foindu which was totally destroyed during the civil war. Since then, the Group has continued to perform and over the last 15 years has helped to raise funds for many worthwhile causes and charities, both national and in the Angus area.

The reason for their continuing success was clearly obvious from the outset. The performance by both singers and orchestra of John Rutter's *Distant Land* was deeply moving. The singers' versatility was clearly in evidence throughout the night as they performed a variety of genres with ease – hits from the blockbuster film *The Greatest Showman* were clearly enjoyed by singers, orchestra members and audience alike as were the closing numbers by the rock band Queen - *Bohemian Rhapsody* and *We are the Champions*.

Richard Allan was clearly at ease conducting both singers and orchestra and the evening was a tremendous success, with high quality performances delivered by all sections. The five strong percussion team played a key role throughout the evening and their enthusiasm and energy throughout the night was infectious. The evening required an encore and what a fitting ending it proved to be - ABBA's *Waterloo*.

The June concert by TSO will feature Dance Music and the September concert will be structured along more traditional lines. Judging by Saturday's performance, both will certainly be dates not to be missed.