

from Peter Pan, and the vibrant, enthusiastic huge choir which is the Daniel Mahoney-trained University of Birmingham Voices in 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue's surely Gilbert and Sullivan-inspired "The President Jefferson Sunday Luncheon Party March".

This was an evening relished by all, crowned by the perfect encore with Criswell and Strallen battling it out in "America", UBV in animated support. Just a little grump from me, but who's going to listen? The vocal miking throughout the concert was a little aggressive.

Christopher Morley

Rite of Spring

Friends of Kimichi Orchestra at
Elgar Hall, University of Birmingham

★★★★★

In nearly 50 years of reviewing I don't think I've ever enjoyed an experience quite like this event promoted by Friends of Kimichi School in support of the Pulmonary Fibrosis Trust.

Based in Acocks Green, Kimichi is a small independent school under the direction of Sally Alexander which emphasises the importance of music in the education of all children, and on the evidence of last Saturday evening it has a

vast network of goodwill operating on its behalf.

A huge orchestra including among its complement members of some of the area's most enterprising amateur ensembles (not least concertmaster Charlotte Moseley) had volunteered its services and attendance at just a handful of rehearsals under conductor Keith Slade, and immediately revealed a tight, refugent and buoyant sound in the Shostakovich Festival Overture which opened the concert.

Richard Jenkinson was soloist in an infinitely moving account of the Elgar Cello Concerto. His bowing technique is a role-model, fleet in the brief scherzo, and almost supernaturally controlled in long-breathed subdued dynamics which reach into the soul of this regretful farewell to a lost world. He and Slade shared a heartwarming rapport, and right from the violas' announcement of the dazedly swaying opening theme we could confidently predict a very special orchestral collaboration.

But if that was special, what followed in the second half was truly remarkable. This scratch group of players gave us a Stravinsky Rite of Spring of a confidence, precision, colour and visceral excitement with an adrenaline which many fulltime professional outfits would find hard to match.

Slade's rehearsal technique is undoubtedly persuasive, and his beat here

was clear, unhistrionic and totally effectual.

And there was more, with Attiye Partridge's brilliant reconstruction of aspects of Nijinsky's original choreography for the work's notorious premiere in 1913 conveyed by 11 young dancers totally attuned to every note of this teeming score.

They skipped, they shuffled flat-footedly, they created fascinating group-patterns (the geometry of nature), and from the group emerged Philippa Ashworth as the sacrificial victim, standing at the centre in frozen terror before leaping into paroxysms of shivering frenzy as she danced herself to death.

Christopher Morley

Celebrating Carter

Birmingham Contemporary Music
Group at Birmingham Town Hall

★★★★☆

Elliott Carter's music is like everything and nothing; an abstract escape, but not necessarily a safe place to retreat, at times so varied that it's difficult to characterize.

Conductor Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla's direction was precisely controlled but dynamic and playful – much like Carter's music. She compared his work to "mini-operas", seeing in its drastic and relent-