

# Strolling along the Prom, Prom, Prom

**Summer Prom**  
Symphony Hall

Funny old language, English. There's probably a technical term for it, but our language shifts and clatters around as much as pebbles washed up on a beach by conflicting tides.

We've become used to living with everyday words meaning something very different from their standard dictionary definition. Wicked, for instance, nowadays seldom carries its original meaning associated with evil. It means great, terrific, cool, tremendous or at its simplest, wow!

Bear with me, for this (honestly) really is, as it says up there, a review of Birmingham Foundation's first and wonderful sell-out Summer Prom event at Symphony Hall last night. It's just that the sheer fun and exuberance of the Promenaders reached its peak at a point when I simply had to laugh out loud.

For there on programme it stated boldly "Elgar: Pomp and Circumstance March No 1".

A lot of circumstance, but the pomp had floated off somewhere down the Birmingham to Wolverhampton canal just outside the building. The non-existent rafters were raised by the massed efforts of Walsall Choral Society, the choir of St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton but chiefly, as chairman Leonard Sachs almost used to say on the City Varieties television show from Leeds, **OURSELVES!**

Which, let's be honest, was what the whole evening was about - having a great time. The fact that the proceeds, totalling £25,000, went to further the work of the Birmingham Foundation in helping the city disadvantaged was just the icing on the cake.

Come on, put all the heavyweight musical stuff on one side just for a minute. Pop it in that cupboard marked "out of date prejudices". Who doesn't enjoy giving *Jerusalem* a bit of welly in Parry's legendary setting?

Yes, you can debate the mawkish tendencies. Yes, the gung-ho cadences and rhythm dragging as badly as a lame hippo's gammy leg clash horribly with the real intent of Blake's mystical words (another example of meanings changing through common usage).

But if you were in Symphony Hall last night and didn't feel some major stirrings, I suggest you consult your GP this



Conductor Michael Lloyd at the Summer Prom event at Symphony Hall

morning. Either that or an undertaker.

For, as is entirely appropriate for a Prom, we're not talking the outer reaches of minimalist serialism here, but good old fashioned, no-nonsense tunes.

A beautifully-turned helping of Rachmaninov (the Second Piano Concerto) from Jonathan French followed a tasty starter in the shape of the ever-popular Roman Carnival from Berlioz with the reliable Birmingham Philharmonic Orchestra under Michael Lloyd's baton acquitting themselves splendidly.

Jonathan French was passionate without being too sentimental in the Rachmaninov (the famous *Brief Encounter* theme) and the Orchestra exhibited some nicely-contrasting dynamics.

We bounded along with the war-like pounding of percussion and resounding

horns of Mars from Holst's *Planets Suite*. His brother Jupiter popped in later just before Elgar's big *Land of Hope and Glory* number. The oh-so-stiff upper lip of The Dambusters March had us bouncing along just like those Barnes-Wallis bombs - another great English anthem lapped up by the flag-waving Promenaders (eat your heart out, Albert Hall).

But we couldn't get further away from England with the other two items - another piece associated with a film in the theme from *Spartacus* by Khachaturian, and Borodin's Polovtsian Dances.

We waved those flags, we stamped our feet, we clapped, sang, laughed and had a thoroughly Promenadish time after a fairly restrained first half. On behalf of a delighted audience I'd like to offer thanks to all the performers, the Foundation and chief sponsors Hyder Consulting.

It was, as we've got used to saying, totally wicked.

**Sid Langley**



birmingham  
**FOUNDATION**

