

**Welsh Brewers Concert, St David's Hall**

# A musical tribute to composer

By IFAN PAYNE

**REVIEWS**

MANSEL Thomas, the former head of music with BBC Wales, died earlier this year and the inaugural Welsh Brewers Concert on Saturday evening included an extended musical tribute to this notable administrator, composer and arranger.

Once you get a couple of choirs together on the same programme, it often seems as though you really need to bring a packed dinner to these marathon concerts at St David's Hall.

On Saturday evening each half was a complete concert in itself, although the interest centred on that second-half tribute to Mansel Thomas.

It was here that conductor Alun John injected some life into the moribund proceedings as he got the Cor Meibion de Cymru out of the andante rut into which the first half of the concert had settled.

With *Fantasia on Welsh Airs* he revved the chorus up to at least a moderato marcato.

However, it was pianists Ginnette Massochi and Geoffrey Buckley who finally brought this con-

cert to life with their sparkling playing of a selection of Mansel Thomas's orchestral dance arrangements transcribed for two pianos. This attractive music was played with all the brio it required.

Alun Williams presented the second half of the concert and the other highlight was his well-articulated impromptu rendition of R Williams Parry's hauntingly beautiful *Y Bardd*, whose words Mansel Thomas set as a song for soprano. This was sung by Leah Marian Jones with more focused tone and securer pitch than had been the case in the solos sung earlier by John Elfed Phillips.

**SMOOTH**

The other choir which shared the evening was Cantorion Ardwyn, conducted by Helena Braithwaite, who throughout the evening produced a stream of smooth tones but featureless singing.

Mansel Thomas was a well-loved figure in Welsh music and surely deserved an evening in which we could concentrate upon his music alone.