

Soundbites concerts celebrate 20 years

Rose Pullum

A spectacular lunchtime concert was the only way to mark the 20th anniversary of the creation of the Soundbites concert series. Over 250 people filled All Saints Church, Hertford to hear four of the most talented young musicians encouraged and supported by the popular concert series and All Saints' Music Development Fund.

Michael Stephens-Jones – *Organ*, Eleanor Lovegrove – *Trumpet*, Adrian Oldland- *Piano* and Natasha Page – *Soprano*, impressed an audience delighted to see them progress so rapidly to the professional stage.

Michael Stephens-Jones' confident playing of the first movement of the Sonata in G major by Elgar, demonstrated the magnificence of the Father Willis organ, renovated as the initial reason for the concert series 20 years ago. It was hard to believe that this gifted young man is still at St Edmunds College but, fittingly, he will shortly become an organ scholar in Cambridge.

On trumpet, Eleanor Lovegrove chose the technically challenging Intrada H.193 by Honegger, with piano accompaniment by Christopher Benham. Equally at home playing jazz or classical works, Eleanor has a busy freelance career.

In 2004 Soundbites' fundraising secured a Yamaha concert grand piano. Concert pianist Adrian Oldland showed the full range and quality of this instrument with his dramatic performance of Liszt's *Après une Lecture de Dante*. Back in 2005 he was a chorister at All Saints' and clearly his studies at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and success in many piano competitions bode well for his international career.

Soprano Natasha Page, another star with All Saints' roots, gave a beautiful performance of *Three Songs* by William Walton. The range, clarity and control in her voice was outstanding. She was accompanied by Chris Benham on piano and paid tribute to

his encouragement and support to so many young musicians at the Church. Just as vital has been his tireless work to organise and grow the Soundbites series over the last two decades.

Tributes were also paid to the catering team that produces lunch each week and to Pearces the Bakers – the first sponsors of the Soundbites concerts.

Appropriately, the finale had us all on our feet – the Hallelujah Chorus by Handel This was performed by a chorus of some of the singers in the Soundbites team, accompanied by All Saint's Director of Music Martin Penny (Organ) with Eleanor Lovegrove's trumpet adding further sparkle to the piece.

Soundbites is going from strength to strength!