

# A Burns Night Celebration

26 JANUARY 2019  
COCKERMOUTH

At the end of January the anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns is traditionally celebrated with songs, poetry readings and haggis suppers. How better to mark the occasion than in the company of Cockermouth Harmonic Society who with their Musical Director Ian Wright put on a concert to mark the occasion at the United Reformed Church on Saturday.

The evening was a happy one, full of variety. The women of the choir sported tartan scarves, the men tartan handkerchiefs, and all appeared to thoroughly enjoy themselves.

The concert began with Anne Marie Kerr's solo in a lovely arrangement of 'Ae fond kiss', accompanied with soft and gentle singing from the choir. This was followed by settings by Beethoven of four of Burns' poems. The choir was joined in these by violinist, Ruta Labutyte, cellist, Peter Phelan, and pianist Amanda Wright, adding colour and interest to the interludes between verses. The choir sang with a full confident and rich sound, and with rhythmic vitality in 'Duncan Gray' and 'Auld lang syne'.

Vaughan Williams' setting of 'Ca'the Yowes' featured Anne Marie Kerr as soloist accompanied with sustained and expressive singing by the choir.

It is a privilege to hear performances of music by local composers. Carolyn Sparey grew up in Keswick. Her settings of Burns' poems which were performed on this occasion were most attractive. In 'A Man's a Man', the lilting verses were sung with freshness of voice from the women and full rich tone from the men. The effective part writing in 'O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast' was well sung, and the piano interludes in this and in 'Craigieburn Wood' were expressively played by Amanda Wright. The sorrowful ending of the latter song was very moving.

Fain, local folk duo Ian Wright and Anne Marie Kerr, performed arrangements of traditional Scottish and Irish music in great style. The long violin solo lament was movingly played and the reels were exhilarating. As always, Anne Marie sang with heart rending poignancy.

Schumann's five settings of Burns' poems are full of colour and contrasts. The agony of 'Toothache', 'Auld lang syne', conversational in style and 'Highland Lad' features a split choir in answering phrases with the whole chorus joining together in the final phrase to provide a triumphant ending.

Ian Wright's versatility was again evident in the next item. His setting of Three Songs of Loss, here given its first performance, provided a challenge to the choir with its interesting twisting harmonies between major and minor, contrasting emotions of pain and loss. The three laments overlap - for romantic yearning, loss of homeland and loss of love.

Two well-known songs followed - 'My love is like a red, red rose' and 'Auld lang syne'. The



men sang their verse lustily in the former, and the double chorus in the latter was very effective.

After such a stimulating evening, performers and audience trooped downstairs to enjoy a well-earned haggis supper.

Sue Johnson

Cockermouth Harmonic Society

## A Burns Night Celebration

Traditional songs including settings by Beethoven, Schuman, Carolyn Sparey and Ian Wright

Followed by a Haggis Supper

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2019  
United Reformed Church, Cockermouth  
7.00pm

Musical Director - Ian Wright

Anne-Marie Kerr - Mezzo Soprano  
Amanda Wright - Accompanist

Tickets £18 incl. supper, under 18s £7, from:  
Billy Bowman's Music Shop  
or Choir members.

Please pre-book, tickets  
not available at the door.

