

# 107 Originality, style and high standards

**Birmingham Symphonic  
Winds**

**CBSO Centre**

★★★★★

Billed as *It's a Mystery*, once more an ingeniously themed concert drew a capacity audience into a creative programme by this highly-skilled wind orchestra.

It is a brave bunch of musicians who dare deliver a mass of unfamiliar music, but, as ever, Keith Allen and his troops did just that, with flair and skill. Interest was maintained with imaginative works such as Sparke's *Sierra Nevada*, a rich depiction of Californian grandeur, which needed, however, a more whisper-quiet introduction to counterbalance the lovely solo bassoon.

Hollywood vistas were ever present, but somewhat predictable after the first flush of sunrise: more a plateau than mountain peaks.

The teasing *Cryptogram* featured mesmerising interweaving clarinets, fast and furious trumpets, then on to *The TV Detectives*, a brass band suite by Nigel Hess.

Champers was the prize for recognising the 90s TV characters. Smiles all round lead to... *oodunnit...* featuring the Veya Saxophone Quartet.

Their spiky repetitive fragments depicted a train journey murder mystery, with detection for the listeners being fired by suitable clanking and steamy eruptions from lively percussion.

The latter somewhat distracting in their far too many busy perambulations back and forth however. Better organisation must surely have been possible.

Every section shone and at last there were welcome contrasting pianissimos, particularly in single connecting clarinet threads during Whitacre's *Lux Aurumque*.

Veya Saxophones revelled in a fine arrangement of Glen Miller classics; juicy harmonies underpinned by Jenny Couch (string bass), and Ash Ward's fantastic drum kit pyrotechnics.

A delighted audience needed no encouragement for suitable reactions to Sakai's *Applause* – a whizz bang final flourish, high-lighting sparky xylophone and piccolo solos.

High standards, originality and style... splendid entertainment.

**Maggie Cotton**