

The Herald – 27.08.09

**EUROPEAN UNION BAROQUE ORCHESTRA,
BACH AT GREYFRIARS**

CONRAD WILSON

★★★★

YET another sort of Bach performance was unfurled at Greyfriars Kirk last night, one which was preceded – a trifle subversively, it could have seemed – by a spot of Handel, but which generated ample energy of its own in the performance of the D major Harpsichord Concerto that formed the programme's centrepiece.

But it was the exuberance of Handel's solo soprano motet *Silete Venti* (Be Silent, Winds) that set the tone of the concert, presented by members of the dazzling young European Union Baroque Orchestra, with the smiling Swedish soprano Maria Keohane as the sweetest of soloists.

Entering, already singing, through the audience, while Lars Ulrik Mortensen was directing the motet's orchestral prelude from the harpsichord, she caused him to turn round in mock shock, which changed to delight as she reached the platform and stilled the threatening winds in readiness for the beauty of the succeeding aria.

The performance was a small baroque tour de force, enhanced by some of the most joyously shining singing of the festival so far.

But what she did for Handel, she also did for Bach's gentle little Wedding Cantata at the end of the programme.

By then she was wearing white, and entered with maximum charm into the spirit of a work founded, like so much of Bach, on the art of dance rhythm. Fleet solo violin tone and a plangent solo oboe added to the effect.

As for the concerto, this turned out to be an old friend, the E major Violin Concerto, in harpsichord guise, performed with sparkle and finesse, the solo part shimmering from Mortensen's fingers, the slow movement a soft pool of darkness amid the thrumming exuberance of the rest of the work.