

The Scotsman – 28.08.09

MUSIC  
MARIA KEOHANE/  
EUROPEAN UNION  
BAROQUE ORCHESTRA  
GREYFRIARS KIRK  
★★★★★

WHO is Maria Keohane? Many were asking the same question prior to the Swedish soprano's appearance in Wednesday's Greyfriars Bach series with the European Union Baroque Orchestra. None will forget her now. She was the shining light in a programme that concentrated on Bach's secular side, throwing in a Handel cantata for good measure and useful comparison.

It was clear from the start – Handel's operatically-charged *Silte Venti* – that Keohane's contribution was going to lift the rafters. With a voice capable of juxtaposing the most extreme emotions – thrilling at the effusive end of the scale, breathtakingly beautiful where reflection is called for – she unleashed performances of enormous character and power. She is a singer to watch.

Hers wasn't the only big personality. Danish harpsichordist Lars Ulrik Mortensen exerted his own flamboyant influence on the young instrumentalists of the EUBO, both as animated support to Keohane in the Handel and in Bach's wedding cantata, and in support of his own exuberant solo role in Bach's harpsichord concerto in D.

Most of all, the occasion was marked by fun and enjoyment. To see young players on period instruments, smiling and swaying as they go about what is, traditionally, a rather stuffy business, was a truly refreshing sight.

KENNETH WALTON