

## Music

### European Union Baroque Orchestra Sheldonian Theatre

‘**W**hat fascinates me about baroque orchestras is the rhythmic and sensual character, as well as the tonal colours of the instruments,’ wrote EUBO music director Lars Ulrik Mortensen in the programme. Mortensen has taken over since the Woodstock-based EUBO last played in Oxford two years ago, and it soon became apparent from his conducting style that ‘rhythmic and sensual’ is what he is all about — his elastic hand gestures were a fascination in themselves. He drew expressive playing from the orchestra, allowing individual groups of instruments plenty of room to breathe — I suspect that vivid expression and phrasing might be more important to Mortensen than securing regimented precision for every entry.

EUBO is a top-flight training orchestra, whose revolving roster of members is selected from all over the EU — this year two players, Camilla Scarlett (*pictured*) and Aliye Cornish, were educated in Oxford. The current orchestra proved well up to the demands made on it, with the players transmitting the feeling that they were enjoying their work. A strong sense of rhythm was in evidence too, as much of



the repertoire was dance based. J. E. Galliard’s *Suite from Pan and Syrinx*, for example, was played in crisp, light, and melodic fashion, with a gloriously cheeky *Gigue*. There was plenty of light and air in Rameau’s *Zoroastre Suite* too, while J. H. Roman’s unfamiliar *Sinfonia for strings in E minor* sprung several harmonic and melodic surprises.

After the interval, EUBO concertmaster Lidewij van der Voort was the unflashy soloist in Bach’s *A minor Concerto for violin and strings*. The final work, Bach’s *Orchestral Suite no 1*, was revelatory — I must have heard this music literally hundreds of times, but I have never heard the counter melodies so clearly expressed before.

**Giles Woodforde**

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