

St Cecilia's miracle continues

ONE of the miracles of music in St Albans is the fact that the city's biennial **St Cecilia Festival Society** concert ever works.

For the concert is performed by an amalgam of four separate musical organisations – the **St Albans Symphony Orchestra**, the **St Albans Chamber Choir**, the **Radlett Choral Society** and the Harpenden-based **Hardynge Choir**.

But as usual Saturday's concert in **St Albans Abbey**, a performance of **Mendelssohn's** great oratorio, *Elijah*, conducted by the Hardynge Choir's musical director, **Rufus Frowde**, was a huge success.

The massive work, first performed just a

year before the composer's death in 1847, makes huge demands on all those taking part but in Saturday's concert all showed themselves equal to the task.

All three choirs had clearly worked extremely hard in the run up to the event and the result was some extremely pleasing music, although like so many choirs it has a distinct lack of tenors.

Particularly pleasing was the performance of the wonderful unaccompanied trio *Lift thine eyes* in the second part.

For the orchestra the oratorio is something of a tour de force with more than two hours of constant playing but they accomplished the task with great

style and their performance was extremely pleasing.

Once more the **St Cecilia Society** chose a group of young soloists all at the beginning of their careers. And all four, soprano **Katy Crompton**, mezzo **Angharad Lyddon**, tenor **John Pierce** and bass **Marcus Farnsworth** all gave first class performances.

Marcus Farnsworth, who sang the role of Elijah, proved just why he was this year's song prize winner in the Kathleen Ferrier Competition with his fine performance throughout.

Angharad Lyddon and John Pierce both have very fine voices and gave excellent performances throughout but it was Katy

Crompton who was, for me, the star of the evening.

Not only does she possess an outstanding voice but she added a real touch of drama to her performance which lifted it far above the norm. It would not surprise me to hear a lot more of her in the future.

St Albans Cathedral Choir treble **Alec Newton** gave an excellent performance as the child in the first half of the oratorio.

Rufus Frowde must also be congratulated for his excellent work as conductor of such a huge event. The Hardynge Choir is truly fortunate to have such an outstanding director.

JOHN MANNING