

# Live: 2007 European - Saturday Own Choice



Live coverage of the own choice selections from Birmingham's Symphony Hall.

Saturday 5 May 2007

Music: Own choice test piece

Venue: Symphony Hall, Birmingham

Start time: 1230hrs

## What do we think?

What a fantastic day of playing we have had here. Not one poor show, and a real clutch of performances of the highest class.

It's Stavanger for us though by the narrowest of margins from Fodens then Cory and Oberoesterreich. Then a toss up for Treize Etoiles and Willebroek, but it could go anyway of the top four and there would be no complaints. The Austrians were the treat of the day though – ask anyone who heard them.

4BR Prediction:

1. Stavanger
2. Fodens Richardson
3. Cory
4. Oberoesterreich
5. Treize Etoiles
6. Willebroek

Overall though we are having to have a discussion before we put our necks on the block.

After plenty of discussion, arguments and general disagreement the 4BR team has gone for an overall result that may just see Stavanger take the title by the narrowest of margins from Cory and Fodens. If anyone of these three win then no complaints from anyone, whilst Willebroek could also justifiably retain their title too. The Swiss may be up there and the Swedes may just make it into the top six ahead of those fantastic Austrians.

4BR Overall Prediction:

1. Stavanger
2. Cory
3. Fodens Richardson
4. Willebroek
5. Treize Etoiles
6. Gothenburg

Dark horse: Oberoesterreich

## Live:

**Brass Band Willebroek, Frans Violet, 12  
Music of the Spheres, Philip Sparke**

Horn slip just spoils an excellent opening section which really is thrill a minute stuff. The lyrical playing is also of the highest class also. It is a very musical reading. Asteroids really sparkle and the quality of playing is self evident. Fabulous ensemble – detail and control. Final section just has the odd blip but it doesn't detract. So broad warm and balanced. Full of majesty and then – what a ripper of an ending. Fantastic – Dan Dare stuff!

Overall: A real top class Spheres. Just the odd nasty moment may cost but right up there with the best

today.

**Stavanger, Allan Withington, 11**  
**Vienna Nights, Philip Wilby**

Superb opening leads to brilliant Wilby and subtle Mozartian episodes. Great sense of style in Café Scene and great individual work enhances the quality of ensemble. Sop is sheer class. It's the style that is so appealing. Little blips do not spoil. Lovely duets and ensemble features. What a build to a Turkish end. Heck -what a speed but what playing! An absolute stonker to end!

Overall: A truly fantastic performance. Nothing more to say.

**Brass Band Lyngby Taarbaek, Christian Schmiedescamp, 10**  
**Journey to the Centre of the Earth, Peter Graham**

A good start and the musical picture is set very quickly with purpose and effect. It's all well played as we head for the depths. Fine effects and sense of drive. Day of Rest is just about handled well but the love interest is a bit of a damp squib. The big beastly fight is a touch handbags and the squirt up the volcano just about works to a big bold end.

Overall: A well managed account on a piece that no longer quite thrills as it once did.

**Brass Band De Waldsang, Rieks van der Velde, 9**

A good start leads into a decent if unspectacular opening third to the piece. It just lacks that sharp edged precision that would really make this sparkle. Lyrical interludes are as cold as ice – no emotion at all for us. Asteroids are a bit hit and miss and don't quite fizz. It becomes all effects and little musical purpose. The final section is played but doesn't have the thrill factor we are looking for.

Overall: A space sized void of musical content this. It was all played like a technical exercise – it was ok but didn't quite reach orbit for us.

**Oberoesterreich Brass Band, Hans Buchegger, 8**  
**Titan's Progress, John P Alliston**

What an interesting piece! Full of orchestral nods and winks to Mahler. Very orchestral brass and stylish and clearly thought out. Lots of lovely moments with wit in different musical styles. Great delivery from all concerned. There is some fantastic playing on display – especially sop! Great euph and cornet duet and a brilliant canon. Oh what a piece and oh what a performance! This has been a treat of the highest quality.

Overall: All about the mastery of all the different orchestral style of Mahler this. From wit to pathos and beyond. A brilliant gem! Awesome stuff – emotionally draining.

**Brass Band Aeolus, Bastien Stil, 7**  
**Music of the Spheres, Philip Sparke**

Unfortunate blip spoils the opening – it's all a little flat earth than bouncy spheres at times – even if it does all fit into place. The scrappy edges do detract. Asteroids fizz and pop but don't quite light up the sky. Some excellent moments but the overall picture always convince. Final section just sounds a touch tired and harsh although it did rip along nicely.

Overall: A pretty good effort on a difficult piece this but it did failed to reach for the stars.

**Göteborg, Dr Nicholas Childs, 6**  
**Music of the Spheres, Philip Sparke**

Atmospheric opening leads to all the pyrotechnic effects required. Lots of quality playing on display here, especially in the ensemble. Asteroids fizz and sparkle and there is a lightness to the approach with allows the music to speak. Little blips detract at times in the lyrical playing but it is high class. The final section has the feel of noble majesty and then blasts off to end!

Overall: Very good Spheres this – perhaps not completely out of this world but one to be more than proud of!

**Kortrijk Brass Band, Lieven Maertens, 5**  
**Tristan Encounters, Martin Ellerby**

Subdued start but it picks up pace and stle and we hear the Tristan chords. It's all a bit hectic and scrappy in places with too many nasty little clips. The cadenzas are well handled and there is quality on

show for extended periods. Starts to lose focus towards the end and sounds harsh and brittle. Underwhelming conclusion.

Overall: OK but against this standard it will struggle to make an impression.

**Cory, Dr. Robert Childs, 4**  
**Of Men and Mountains, Edward Gregson**

Atmospheric start does have some intonation problems but it soon recovers. Full of drama and colour this if a little edgy in places. Some lovely solo work backed by excellent ensemble. Central slow section contains fabulous individual and ensemble work. So broad and lyrical this. Little clips do not detract but are noticeable. The train ride home is full of fantastic playing. Brilliant end section and huge finish. Another top drawer show.

Overall: A performance full of the required majestic feel – so broad in scope and execution

**Brass Band Treize Etoiles, Geo-Pierre Moren, 3**  
**Beyond the Horizon, Paul H Kelly**

Wow! Certainly different – a real storming tour de force of pyrotechnical brilliance. Absolutely fantastic soloists – immense technique and sounds. Not a lot of quiet playing in this piece and it does go on a bit but by heck what stamina and execution. If it has some music in it then it would be unbeatable! At times it seems a kaleidoscope of technical brilliance. Can't fault the execution and the excitement but musically it may be another matter.

Overall: Wow again though!

**Fodens Richardson, Garry Cutt, 2**  
**Contest Music, Wilfred Heaton**

Not a great start? Soon recovers though and all the austere compactness is on show. Great ensemble work – just has the odd slip but no worries. Huge Climax leads to a classy end.

Great top quality playing this – so much time and space. Fine soloists. Solo cornet superb – top c sharp 5 seconds. Retains character to the end.

Top stuff. Great ensemble work all the way through. Huge climax and a fabulous finish.

Overall: A performance of real stature. Reeked of quality and style. A cracker.

**Scottish Co-op, Allan Ramsay, 1**  
**Vienna Nights, Philip Wilby**

Takes a bit of time to get into gear, but thereafter there is quality in the Mozart and Wilby episodes. It's a bit scrappy at times and there are a few wobbles in the exposed parts. Did something go amiss before the duets? Recovers through and it's back in its stride in time for the Turkish finish. A fine ending.

Overall: A bit of a mixed bag but one that had real quality at times. Not a scorcher but pretty good nonetheless.