

Vocal colour like a ray of sunshine

By MALCOLM TAPSCOTT

The Llewellyn Choir with the Canberra Chamber Orchestra. Conductor Richard McIntyre. Llewellyn Hall. September 4.

WITH soloists drawn from students at the Canberra School of Music, the Llewellyn Choir, accompanied by the Canberra Chamber Orchestra and conducted by musical director Richard McIntyre, adopted a reverse chronological order for its program.

Four settings of the *Magnificat* were presented, ranging from Franz Schubert's relatively short and arresting work of 1816,

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through J. S. Bach's essentially Protestant response to the text of 1723 to Antonio Vivaldi's engaging setting of 1710 and finally to Claudio Monteverdi's seminal and theatrical version of 1610.

Despite some lapses in ensemble, both within the choir and between choir and orchestra, members of the soloists' ensemble, such as soprano soloist Erika Tolano, a late replacement for an ill Elizabeth Tierney, and baritone Jeremy Tatchell, distinguished themselves. Members of the or-

chestra, too, such as David Nuttall, whose obligato solo oboe playing was notable for its seamless melodic line and the three trumpets, led by Kelly Parkes, made strong, supportive contributions to the overall texture.

In Vivaldi's setting, the choir showed better ensemble singing than in the first half of the concert. Alto soloist Katrina Waters and tenor soloist Adrian Strooper attracted attention here, while the furioso string playing in the orchestra helped to galvanise the performance into a tight, focused whole.

Tenor soloist Carl Cooper's long, plainchant solo at the start

of the Monteverdi work and the similarly set *Gloria* at the end were exceptional in their degree of focus and intensity.

The off-stage echo, sung by tenor Kent McIntosh, reminded us of the effectiveness of such vocal effects when presented in the Italian chapels and cathedrals.

The Llewellyn Choir also delivered a better, brighter, full-sound with its entry in the work. The vocal colour here was like a ray of sunshine bursting into the auditorium. It was only in more contrapuntally complex sections that ensemble and cohesion were not quite as secure as they might have been.