



Margaret Afford



Feasts of music, food and good fellowship at Apothecaries' Hall in the spring, courtesy of the Livery Club: Jack Liebeck, Charles Owen and Jamie Walton "tamed the beast" and provided a lunchtime of musical delights, with superbly played works by Schumann and Beethoven

Trio of delights at Apothecaries'

Assistant Leslie East writes The piano trio is a difficult beast to tame. Most 20th-century composers steered away from it, with the notable exceptions of Fauré, Debussy and Shostakovich.

The contest between piano and two stringed instruments is desperately uneven when the modern grand piano is involved. But with Beethoven and Schumann, the balance was quite different. Beethoven's Broadwood and Schumann's Viennese grands were startlingly quieter compared even with the softer-toned grands of today, as we know from the many recordings of original pianos and reproductions now available.

So, for those who tackle this repertoire with a modern grand, the challenge is to make the balance work. And what was immediately striking about the Liebeck-Owen-Walton Trio who played at Apothecaries' Hall on Wednesday 28 March was that pianist Charles Owen instinctively knew how delicate he had to be.

Since Owen is a pianist to whom delicacy and lightness of touch seems second nature, the challenge was met with enormous success. It helped that Apothecaries' Hall provided a sympathetic acoustic – wood panelling always does – but, even so, Owen made sure that the violin of Jack Liebeck and the cello of Jamie Walton [a former Maisie Lewis award-winner] were nearly always equal partners. Only in the more energetic and fiery passages of Schumann's D minor trio, Opus

63, did the piano seem too prominent. Beethoven's E flat trio, his Opus 1, looks back to the composer's immediate predecessors. But there is already an idiosyncratic sense of form and intercourse in the composition. The performers here revelled in the interplay of lines and rhythms, stressing

Spirits lifted after US terror

Music: "an agreeable harmony for the honour of God and the permissible delights of the soul" – J S Bach

Liveryman Paul Champion writes For some years the Livery Club has been invited annually to a special performance of a Bach cantata in the Wren church of St Mary-at-Hill, followed by lunch in the hall of one of the City livery companies.

This tradition was begun during Assistant Jonathan Rennert's presidency of the Club, and it was he who again directed the music for this year's performance. The venue, however, was not as usual, for restoration work on the organ at St Mary-at-Hill has not yet been completed. Instead, we were invited to St Michael, Cornhill, whose Rector, the Rev Dr Peter Mullen, kindly took us in at short notice.

Cantata No 99 – *Was Gott tut, das ist*

the dramatic potential of Beethoven's writing without neglecting classical clarity when appropriate.

In Schumann, the warmth and richness of Walton's cello playing came into its own, balanced by Liebeck's more astringent violin tone so that the three partners were always distinct.

This is a trio of talents who clearly find the exploration of this repertoire a delight that they are well able to communicate to others. It brings great credit to the Livery Club and its President, Assistant Peter Fowler, that artists of such calibre are given this opportunity, not to mention the pleasure given to those of us fortunate enough to attend.

wohlgetan – is scored for four singers, baroque flute, oboe d'amore, two violins, viola and continuo. The delights of the soul, as Bach's quotation might imply, were many; even if it is invidious to single out one soloist for comment, Mark Baigent on the oboe d'amore must be mentioned for his phrasing and plangent tone.

But all the performers were superb, and they lifted the spirits of their audience on a damp and sombre day: the terrorist outrages in the US exactly a week before were still very much on our minds. An excellent lunch was served afterwards in Tallow Chandlers' Hall, with much good fellowship enjoyed and new friendships made.

Such inspiring musical and sociable occasions are vital to the vigorous life of our Company, and Jonathan Rennert and the Livery Club president, Assistant Peter Fowler, are to be warmly thanked for organising the event.