



*The Palace Band in rehearsal*

## **PALACE BAND** Caroline Franklyn, conductor

United Reformed Church, Highgate,  
London, 28th November 2004

Among the many amateur ensembles that enrich the cultural life of London, the Palace Band must surely be unique. An open-access woodwind ensemble of about fifty players (within it three or four chamber groups – always a sign of vitality), the Palace Band came into being eleven years ago. Its creator and conductor, Caroline Franklyn, believes in welcoming all who can play and are prepared to

make an effort. Sharing the joy of music with the wider community is important to the band and a number of the band's performances are given in community centres, in parks, or at local festivals. Caroline's dynamism and enthusiasm are one source of the band's continuing success, but equally remarkable is the commissioning every year of several new works. This influx of original music and new ideas is stimulating for the players, gratifying for the composers, and thrilling for the audience: to find oneself attending a world première with the composer in person sitting three seats away, is a rare pleasure.

The programme was a balance of contrasts between traditional and modern, the full band and small chamber ensembles. It was notable for three first performances: *From The Somerset Levels* by Colin Cowles, *Two Cinematographic Impressions* by James Rae (which BASBWE helped to fund), and *In Black and White* by Christopher Norton. The first was by turns solemn, dreamy, irresistibly rhythmic and cheerful, and boisterously funny (when depicting

yokels getting drunk on Somerset cider); the second a skilful evocation of the days when the cinema organ miraculously appeared rising up through the floor; and the third a series of atmosphere pieces evoking different film genre scenarios, swooning romantic themes, heavy footsteps, music of foreboding, and a concluding lively jazzy dance.

Corelli's *Christmas Concerto* and Telemann's *La Caccia*, both arranged by Caroline, gave the band the opportunity to show their grasp of baroque style and the final two pieces - Gershwin's *Walking the Dog*, and Cecilia MacDowall's *On Track Blue*, both conducted by the Assistant Conductor, Stephanie Reeve - gave them a chance to let rip. Among the pieces played by smaller ensembles perhaps the most memorable was Alan Danson's *Three Winds in a Boat* for oboe, clarinet and bassoon. Alan Danson, Cecilia MacDowall and James Rae were all present in the capacity audience, whose enjoyment and appreciation were palpable.

*Jean Caws*