

Pontnewydd Male Choir

THE CONGRESS Theatre, Cwmbran was filled to capacity on the evening of Friday, September 10, for the audience to enjoy a musical feast that surely was worth double the cost of admission.

Sixteen years of partnership between Pontnewydd Male Choir and MGV Harmonie Buchenau have resulted in a bond, not only of close and abiding friendship but also of close harmony.

The warm atmosphere that prevailed throughout the concert was certainly due in no small measure to this friendship - but a decent air conditioning system would have been appreciated by both the audience and choirs.

The German choir is based in the village of Buchenau, which forms part of Bruchsal, Cwmbran's twin town. Their third visit to the area came after many months of planning by members of both choirs.

The musical directors Stefan Kistner and Walford Hutchings, have kept in touch ever since the choirs first met in 1988.

As a result both choirs now have repertoires that have been enriched and enlarged by their close contact.

Combined items in Welsh, German,

English and Latin were sung as if there was only one choir on stage, each conductor demonstrating their ability to use the talents of both choirs.

The sensible format of the concert gave each choir an opportunity to demonstrate their separate skills as well as combining the last seven items. That last combined item was a trilogy of three pieces in German that made the audience enthusiastically call for an encore.

Pontnewydd Male Choir's chairman Lionel Boughay, had opened the concert by warmly welcoming visitors in German and English. Clive Parton, with panache and humour kept things moving smoothly during the programme.

He had the privilege of introducing the two very talented young men David Williams and Matthias Bohringer, who thrilled both audience and choirs with their musical skills.

David Williams is a baritone currently studying at the University of California, Los Angeles and in addition to many appearances in opera productions, is currently the baritone soloist for the Welsh Choir of Southern California's Concert Series.

Jon Styler accompanied him with sympathy and skill.

Matthias Bohringer

was the accompanist of MGV Harmonie Buchenau for this concert. He has three times won the national award for German pianists. His solo item in the first half of the programme was a demonstration of amazing dexterity that left the audience wanting more.

The German choir again proved that Welsh Male choirs have no monopoly on fine singing and were especially effective in their frequent unaccompanied singing.

Rudi Katz and Leonhard Geissler were delightful soloists in a number of their pieces. At the start of the final group of songs the audience were treated to an example of singing 'in the round' when they were completely surrounded by both choirs.

Members of the audience who were seated centrally probably best appreciated the stereophonic effect, but this was yet another demonstration of the close understanding that exists between these two choirs.

Town partnerships are often criticised on the grounds of simply providing 'jollies' for small groups. The friendship that exists between these two choirs from Buchenau and Pontnewydd are a practical demonstration of the real worth of such partnerships.