

Say My Name, on drum machine. "He's never late for sound check, he's never hung-over," joked Johns of the device.

On standouts like *Among the Silver Pines*, *Black Heart* and *The Sun Hardly Rises* (and a version of *Corrina Corrina*, a song made famous by Dylan), Johns' playing was measured and precise, his voice pleasingly delicate. He's enjoyed this debut solo tour, so much so that "I'm going to do it all over again." Hopefully word spreads by next time.

DAVID POLLOCK

MUSIC
**RED NOTE ENSEMBLE/
JAM**

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL,
GLASGOW

★★★★

WITH their crisp, incisive performances and remarkable attention to detail, the Red Note Ensemble made it feel like the most natural thing in the world to mix Pergolesi's heartbreaking *Stabat Mater* of 1736 with a pair of bright and bang-up-to-date pieces by Nottingham-born Judith Bingham.

This was a concert organised by JAM, otherwise known as the John Armitage Memorial Trust, established in 2000 to commission and promote contemporary music – often, as

here, combining old and new so as not to scare listeners. In this case, though, they needn't have worried. Both Bingham pieces were thoroughly approachable, with music of great economy and power, yet surprising in their brevity.

The Hythe, a JAM commission from just last year, is a vivid sea portrait shot through with dark lyricism, complete with gently lapping tides, stormy surges and the wailing cries of sea birds. Evocative it certainly was, but each effect and texture also found a sound structural role. Red Note's playing was compelling, with sensuous solos from violinist Mieko Kanno and violist Jane Atkins.

Bingham's four-movement organ concerto *Jacob's Ladder* crammed a lot into its 12 or so minutes – including some notes so deep they made the whole cathedral shudder. Despite some flagging tempos, soloist Thomas Wilkinson proved as nimble as Red Note's 11-strong string ensemble under a coolly precise Michael Bawtree.

In between, the players transformed themselves into a convincing period band for an achingly beautiful Pergolesi *Stabat Mater*, elegant and poignant, with fine soloists in soprano Claire Seaton and countertenor Andrew Radley.

DAVID KETTLE