

Worcestershire's Early Music returns to Festival

EARLY MUSIC WEEKEND

ST SWITHUN'S CHURCH

AN EARLY keyboard masterclass with Micaela Schmitz? That could well be most harpsichord enthusiasts' idea of an experience worth cherishing.

Part of the Worcester Festival, Schmitz's workshop was only the beginning of weekend devoted to Early music. Saturday afternoon had an early music band for Grade 5 plus or students aged 11.

Schmitz, a specialist in early keyboard instruments, explained the working of not only harpsichords but clavichords as well, getting the students to try the actions out in one workshop before discussing ways of playing works from the relevant period. The beautiful part-writing of a French Sarabande and an Allemande from a Partita played on a harpsichord was particularly memorable.

Although the attendance for this (and other events in the weekend) was not huge, the participants were attentive and audacious enough to play in the recital that came during the last hour of the afternoon.

Saturday night's early music at St. Swithun's comprised music earlier than the Baroque era. The players of *Piva*, a group who perform popular dance and ballad music of the Elizabethan era, read out various references to music that appear in Shakespeare plays, in between playing period instruments like the bagpipes, sackbut and cornet. To give this event a further authentic edge, Eric Moulder, Anne Wride, Jane Moulder, Jim Parr and Tony Millyard were, of course, in period dress.

LUCAS BALL