

Acoustics enhance choral concert

Mozart and Haydn - Cirencester Choral Society – 1st May 2010

CIRENCESTER Choral Society's welcome return to Cirencester Parish Church for their concert on May 1 gave us, apart from anything else, the opportunity to hear how the acoustics of the church had been improved by the glorious new stone flooring and the removal of so much wood in the form of outdated pews that would stifle the resonance of the largest building. The result was quite staggering.

The church now has a noticeable resonance (even with Saturday night's capacity audience of around 400) This was the first time that the choir would have been fully aware of the 'new' acoustics, and one can understand that diction in Mozart's *Solemn Vespers* which opened the programme was at times a little indistinct. The work itself is quite short, But, nevertheless is one of Mozart's finest choral works.

By the end the choir were in full command and gave a convincing and thrilling performance of the *Magnificat*. The first half of the concert ended with an exhilarating account of Mozart's *Serenade* for strings and timpani played by the Corinium Camerata led by Andrew Court. They are a fine ensemble and Carleton Etherington effortlessly coaxed from them a most pleasing performance. The second half of the programme comprised Haydn's *Nelson Mass*. This was not in fact Haydn's own title but was affixed later, possibly coinciding with Nelson's visit to the Esterhazy palace in 1800, by which Haydn was employed.

The choir, now fully aware of the acoustic, sang with great clarity and conviction and it was clear that notes had been well learned and every member was fully aware of the conductor's intentions. The soloists in both the *Solemn Vespers* and the Haydn Mass were all drawn from the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. Charlotte Beaumont (soprano), who had the lion's share of solos in both works, performed effortlessly with the purest sound, precise intonation and diction, engaging with the audience all the time.

Here is a performer who is destined for greatness. Katherine Grosset (mezzo soprano) sang with great charm and a rich quality that blended perfectly in the ensemble sections.

Alberta Sousa (tenor) has a rich, but light voice with a pleasing resonance that is perfectly suited to the baroque

and classical periods and Ashley Riches (bass) who has an incredibly resonant voice showed great command in his solo, *Qui tollis*. Cirencester Choral Society goes from strength to strength under its conductor, Carleton Etherington. It is always a great joy to hear Cirencester Choral Society through the course of the year and we eagerly await the next concert on Tuesday, December 14, in the parish church.

RICHARD LESTER