

WIGTON CHORAL SOCIETY

ST MARY'S CHURCH, WIGTON, 16TH DECEMBER 2017

CHRISTMAS CONCERT

This year's Christmas concert by Wigton choral society set us off in the Christmas spirit with a rousing rendition by choir and audience of "Hark! The herald angels sing".

The first choir item was an unaccompanied arrangement by David Blackwell of the traditional German carol "Lo, how a rose e'er blooming". The beautiful ending made up for a slightly shaky start with the exposed female voices not showing the lovely blend they had in the rest of the concert, especially when singing quietly as in "Voices in the mist" by the Finnish composer Jussi Chydenius

Throughout the concert, the relationship between choir and Musical Director was in evidence. Ian Wright, despite struggling with a foot injury and needing to conduct from a chair, did not lose any of his touch. The choir responded to his direction and throughout the concert there was an impressive dynamic range.

After the choir, we were treated to a duet by Fiona Weakley, soprano, and Anne-Marie Kerr, alto. "Mary and the Angel" was written especially for them by Andrew Seivewright and their sensitive delivery of the words brought to life the story of the annunciation. Anne-Marie and Fiona sing together regularly and this familiarity with each other enhanced all their singing during the evening.

The unaccompanied verse in the audience carol, Silent Night, arranged by Chilcott, showed how well the choir held their tuning. On this and several other occasions, they were spot on at the feared moment when the organ (played by John Cooper Green) joined in again.

The start of Vivaldi's Gloria, with the exciting instrumental introduction, did not disappoint. The choir was superbly accompanied by the "Throstle Sinfonia", a small group of (mostly) young musicians who were a pleasure to watch and hear. I particularly enjoyed the "conversation" between the oboe and the soprano solo.

The movement "Domine fili", with its dotted rhythms was sung lightly by the choir, but with great energy. The tenors, few in number, came through very strongly, but at times the basses were quieter in comparison, possibly because they were more spread out.

The second half of the concert was mostly taken up by "A Child's Christmas in Wales", by Dylan Thomas, set to music by Ian Wright. This was an absolute delight! Ian introduced the work, explaining that some of it had been composed and performed 3 years ago to celebrate 100 years since the author's birth. Other movements had now been added, notably a soprano/alto duet, (fresh off the page!) and were interspersed with recordings of Dylan Thomas himself reading his own words.

Melodies of traditional Welsh tunes could be heard, overlaid with Thomas's text, quasi improvised, in the style of Welsh "penillion" The words were often sung at speed, but the audience having a copy of the text meant we didn't miss out on any of the humour. Atmospheric instrumental accompaniment, including percussion played by the organist, added to the enjoyment of the work.

A totally enjoyable concert, and as my companion said, "Now Christmas has started"

