

Bakewell Choral Society Summer Concert

The Summer concert always has a very interesting programme, departing from the tradition of the other two concerts which are usually centred on one or two substantial choral pieces. This year we began with a group of part songs by Stanford, in many ways the founder of a new tradition in English music at the end of the 19th century. He writes well for voices and these unaccompanied pieces showed off the choir very well indeed. Then Gabrielle Bricka, accompanied by Richard Barnes, sang three songs for soprano by Benjamin Britten. She has a wonderful voice and its hard to realise she is just this summer leaving Lady Manners, but already with a maturity of voice and a growing reputation. She is a very promising young singer. Finally, in the first part, the choir sang another piece by Britten, his Hymn to St Cecilia written in 1942.

After the interval the choir was joined by Gabrielle, Andrew Parker and Andrew Lockwood both the men also quite well known locally too, but with singing careers which take them to many far away places too. The work this time was "Spring" from Haydn's "The Seasons". A lesser piece perhaps than The Creation, but full of his inimitable writing. It is also a demanding work and it was accompanied in the piano reduction of the full score by the choir's regular accompanist, Amanda Kornas. I am tempted to record her as the star of the whole performance, because she made such a splendid job of this difficult score. But the soloists and the choir entered into the spirit of this rather rustic text, which expands at the end into a more substantial work. Musically like much of Haydn and Mozart the writing is wonderfully lively and descriptive, but it is demanding and so different in style from the earlier performance of the Britten and Stanford.

Bakewell Methodist Church was a lovely setting for this summer's evening event and it was good to see the choir in excellent form, even in the unusual warmth of this Derbyshire summer. Richard Barnes was in charge and clearly very comfortable with the this range of music spanning from around 1800 to the Second World War.

John Tarn