

## Bakewell Choral Society – 19 November 2011

**Parry: *Anthems, Fugue & Fantasia in G* (organ);  
Mendelssohn: *Hymn of Praise***

Mendelssohn and Parry both knew how to write for the human voice. More or less half a century separated them in time, the one in Germany and the other in England, but they both had a common interest and admiration for Bach. The Choral Society did justice to both of them in their autumn concert.

The first half of the programme was devoted to Parry, who lived from 1848 to 1918, and was central to the musical revival in this country at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>. Century and the pre war years of the 20<sup>th</sup>. He could also write good tunes, several of which became much loved hymn tunes. In the programme they were given their rightful context and their original settings. We heard the great coronation anthem *I was glad*, in its extended version, and the sumptuous setting of word by Milton in *Blest pair of Sirens*. Andrew Kirk accompanied all evening and gave a solo performance on the organ of Parry's *Fantasia and Fugue in G*. We all helped to lift the roof at the end of the evening with a full-blooded rendering of *Jerusalem!* This was all very English and, when necessary, very robust. But there were some lovely more intimate moments, especially the two-part setting for upper voices of a rarely heard scene from the oratorio *Judith*. Andrew Parker sang the bass solo in *Hear my words, ye people*, his contributions are always welcome and enjoyable. The choir, which is presently very well supplied in all parts, were comfortably at home, confident, expressive and on top form. There were many splendid moments both grand and quiet. From my perch at the back of the church the ensemble singing was first rate.

Then, after the interval, the choir was joined by Jennifer Rust, soprano, and Thomas Morss, tenor, both rising soloists from the Royal Northern College of Music. In addition two young Bakewell sopranos, Brydie Adams and Corinne Hope, who sang *I waited for the Lord* in Mendelssohn's *Hymn of Praise*. This quasi cantata is the concluding movement from his second symphony, written in 1840, but often performed as a separate piece. It reminds us that this brilliant young man, who was only 38 when he died in 1847, not only started the revival of Bach's great oratorios in a period when they were rarely performed, but imitated many of his ideas, not for the lack of his own, but in a way as a homage to the great master. Mendelssohn's other oratorios are perhaps better known, but this is a worthwhile rather shorter piece, as befitted its context. The writing is very different from Parry's and the structure of the work perhaps more complex. There are some memorable moments and again some good tunes in the score, and there were equally some lovely interpretations, creating the right light and shade, from all the forces, both separately and in combination.

Praise too for Andrew Kirk and his varied and rich accompaniments on the Bakewell organ; to Richard Barnes for assembling such a rich evening of music making, and for his direction of the choir. But a special word of commendation for the choir themselves who were in vigorous form and particularly responsive. We come to expect that now, but it should never be taken for granted.

John Tarn