

Critique: Gazette July 1986

The Tyndale Choral Society opened its twenty-sixth season with a splendid Summer Concert at Wotton Parish Church last Saturday evening.

David Knight, the Society's new Conductor, can be justly proud of his efforts; he produced from the singers some extremely sensitive singing, and his very precise and helpful beat was rewarded by good unanimous attack and release.

The opening work was Brahms 'A Song of Destiny', a poem by Friederich Holderlin, which was set to music by Brahms around 1870. After 28 bars of organ, the contraltos had the unenviable task of starting the singing. They did this in a superb style, which set the mood for the rest of the work, as some of the best singing of the evening occurred during this piece, with only the occasional tenor voice breaking through to spoil the effect.

The second choral item was Britten's Cantata 'Rejoice in the Lamb', taken from the eighteenth century poet Christopher Smart's poem of the same name. Again, some beautiful singing, which helped to lift the oppressive heat of the evening and was marred only by a few uncertain leads and a lack of really soft tone required in certain sections. The soloists coped splendidly with the difficult rhythms and intonation of their passages. Anne Shipton (Soprano) and Delyth Mayhew (Contralto) gave outstanding performances, but unfortunately Michael Norman's lovely tenor tone was all but drowned by the organ. David Austin, the bass soloist, coped admirably with the near two-octave range demanded of his part.

Parry's 'Blest Pair of Sirens' was the last choral item. The words are from an Ode by Milton; the sirens in question being the harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse.

This was a fitting finale to a thoroughly enjoyable Concert, the singers coping strongly with 8-part harmonies, and only the odd obtrusive tenor voice and tired soprano high notes to warrant criticism. John Winter, the organist, is to be congratulated on his marathon task of accompanying such a demanding programme. Very rarely does one encounter a solo organist who is also an accomplished accompanist. His technique was perfect, although his choice of registration in the quieter passages was questionable. His two solo items, Franck's Prelude, Fugue and Variation, and Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D minor, were played with precision and feeling, but again, lack of thoughtful registration made the Bach especially rather dull and ponderous, and overall did not show off the true versatility of the Wotton organ.

Despite these minor criticisms, the Concert was more than value for money. We heard some excellent singing from a well-balanced choir that appears to go from strength to strength. Congratulations to Mr. Knight and the Tyndale Choral Society!

D.E.C.