

Celebration of nature and life

THE audience at Tyndale Choral Society's winter concert at Dursley Parish Church had the good fortune to hear a sparkling performance of a new work by Howard Blake, The Song of St Francis.

Blake is best known for his haunting song, Walking in the Air, for the film, The Snowman. St Francis, sung in Italian, is a poem which celebrates the beauties of nature and life, and the forces of nature — wind, water, fire and air — are all depicted through the music.

Tyndale Concert Orchestra, with conductor Michael Power, was in superb form in this very demanding work, which calls for both excellent musicianship and also for sensitivity and expression. These were heard in abundance from both orchestra and choir and the audience was able to follow the unfolding of the poem with both the text and English translation.

Mediaeval Italian held no terrors for Tyndale, although the height of the dais for the soloists and the conductor's stand might well have given them a touch of vertigo in the second work, Mendelssohn's Hymn of Praise. The orchestra was well warmed up by now and, with outstanding brass and string sections, it launched into it with great verve.

Michael Power's baton brought warmth and lyrical beauty from the orchestra, the string section watching his every movement like hawks. Soloists Tina Power (soprano), Delyth Mayhew (contralto) and Patrick Briddon (tenor) were all in excellent voice, as were the choir, particularly so as the work reaches its climax with the sopranos soaring in full flight.

Congratulations to Michael Power and to the orchestra (leader, Claire Piper) and chorus for introducing this exciting new choral work into the repertoire. It may become a standard work in future but it will need a choir and orchestra of the standard of Tyndale to show it off at its best. DH

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