A SEASONAL FEAST FROM THAMES PHILHARMONIC CHOIR

The Church of All Saints, Kingston was packed and excited last Saturday evening – 9th December. The beauty and warmth of the surroundings were matched by the concert to follow, containing Purcell, Pergolesi, Bennett and Handel.

The Thames Philharmonic Choir was accompanied by the Thames Festival Orchestra and Stephen Disley, organist; the whole directed by John Bate, making a memorable and delightful introduction to our Christmas season.

The evening began with Purcell's setting of Psalm 96 *O sing unto the Lord a new song*. Immediately we were gripped by the outstanding quality of the bass soloist, Dan D'Souza, as he confidently joined the choir in the movements in which bass featured alternating with chorus. He was soon joined in the solo quartet by Charlotte Hoather, soprano, Beth Moxon, mezzo and Steve Mills, tenor.

The *Magnificat* of Pergolesi followed. The choir quite evidently really enjoyed this, producing an assertive and full-bodied sound. They especially nailed the fugal Deposuit, and in the final movement, notes poured down in a joyous waterfall of sounds. The tenor and bass duet was sensitive and moving.

After a most convivial interval, the choir launched into a series of unaccompanied *5 Carols* by Richard Rodney Bennett. As John Bate moved to conduct closer to the choir, the more intimate connection between him and his singers produced some moving and prayerful moments, in particular the second and third carols. The last carol "A little child" had a delightful light touch with sprightly dialogue.

The last item in the evening was Handel's *Laudate pueri Dominum*. This was the splendid opportunity to showcase the talents of Charlotte Hoather, as she joined the choir and augmented orchestra for this setting of Psalm 112. Particularly notable was the heart-rending "Sit nomen Domini", the "Qui habitare" and the final triumph of the "Gloria Patri". Thank you again, musicians of Thames Philharmonic Choir, for another intoxicating run-up to Christmas.

MNWoodroffe