

## **E.C.S. Concert - Mainly Mozart: and a Mystery**

Eastbourne Choral Society's concert at All Saints Church on November 30<sup>th</sup> was remarkable in that it mixed choral items with purely orchestral show-pieces. The church was full; the printed programme was informative and attractive. As usual the venue was well-heated; and conductor John Hancorn drew playing and singing of an exceptionally high quality. Mozart was the star of the evening; but Haydn and Britten featured memorably as well.

Haydn was born 24 years before Mozart, but outlived him by 18 years. His *Te Deum* is a ten-minute masterwork, effectively in three movements. Choir and Orchestra gave notice that we were in for an evening of fine music-making.

While the choir sat listening, it was the turn of the Eastbourne Classical Players. But just who *are* the twenty-five or so musicians who play so well together under that title? (Leader Chris Phipps makes a brief appearance on Google, but as a body - nothing!) Their performance of Mozart's very-familiar *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* made it clear that this was no "scratch" collection of talented players. String-tone of that quality is rare; and their ability to respond to every nuance of John Hancorn's unfussy beat suggests that we should have the opportunity to hear them far more often.

Ten minutes of perfect peace followed. First, the choir sang Mozart's *Ave Verum*, expertly accompanied by Nancy Cooley on her Yamaha. Then soprano Andrea Tweedale sang his *Laudate Dominum*. This is Mozart at his gentle best; and Andrea's legato did him justice, soaring effortlessly into the rafters, never changing her intonation from the highest note to the lowest.

After the interval we were briefly in the twentieth century, with three movements of Britten's *Simple Symphony*. This was a welcome reminder, in his centenary year, that Britten's talent emerged young, if not quite as young as Mozart's. Impeccable playing again from the strings of Eastbourne Classical Players.

Mozart's *C Major Mass*, often called the *Coronation*, is in six movements. The four soloists, soprano Andrea Tweedale, mezzo Clara Kanter, tenor Nick Pritchard and Bass Stephen Charlesworth, wove seamlessly in and out of the choral passages, and opened the *Benedictus* as a quartet in fine style. Andrea had the one stand-alone solo: in the final *Agnus Dei*. John Hancorn was in full command of this complex tapestry, and rightly showed his pleasure at the quality of singing and playing that everyone demonstrated. Choral concerts don't come much better than this.

**ROBIN GREGORY**

