



## Well-crafted night of Mozart

Wells Cathedral was full for an all Mozart programme of choral and orchestral music.

The concert was given by the Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society and the Music For Awhile orchestra with Lesley Jane Rogers and Ali Darragh (sopranos), Mark Hounsell (tenor) and Laurence Whitehead (bass). The conductor was Matthew Owens.

Two short choral pieces opened the programme: Mozart's setting of *Laudate Dominum*, from Psalm 116, and *Ave Verum Corpus*.

The first introduced us to the warm, lyric voice of Lesley Jane Rogers in a deceptively simple composition – a gentle soaring tune later underpinned by the chorus.

Soloist and chorus here showed expressive, sustained singing in the rise and fall of the long arching tune with well shaped phrasing and tuning. *Ave Verum Corpus* demonstrated for both chorus and orchestra well-tuned and controlled pianissimo singing.

Directed by leader, Maggie Faultless, the string section of Music For Awhile gave a well-crafted performance of *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, capturing all the magic of the music with lightness of touch.

Part one ended with *Exsultate Jubilate* for soprano and orchestra. This virtuoso piece provided a challenge for the soprano voice, but Lesley Jane Rogers effortlessly surmounted the demands of the composer with agility and artistry it would be difficult to match.

The culmination of the evening was the *Mass in C Minor*. Written with Mozart's wife, Constanza, in mind – she was a talented soprano – it was conceived on a grand scale but never completed, and makes considerable demands on the chorus as well as the four soloists. From the opening soprano entry in the *Kyrie* the chorus produced vibrant, confident vocals. Particularly noteworthy was the *Qui Tollis* section of the *Gloria* for double choir, the *Cum Sancto Spiritu* chorus and the opening five-part chorus of the *Creed* which was executed with great precision and style.

Lesley Jane Rogers produced a glowing account of the of the beautiful second movement of the *Creed: Et Incarnatus Est* with its haunting cadenza for voice and woodwind. Ali Darragh gave an equally thrilling account of the *Laudamus Te* in the *Gloria* and the two came together in the *Domine Deus* duet, with its huge vocal leaps, singing with ease and style. Mark Hounsell demonstrated a vocal agility the equal of the two sopranos in the *Quoniam Tu Solus* trio and Laurence Whitehead was the excellent bass completing the quartet in the *Benedictus*.

The chorus rounded off the Mass with the *Osanna* double fugue to great acclaim.

**David Nichols**