

## Handel to Hammerstein

There should be more concerts like this one – an hour of delightful and varied music performed by the Sheldon Singers under the direction of Julie De'Ath Lancaster, in the elegant surroundings of the Music Room at Sidholme. The choir took us on a magical musical tour from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, beginning with 'Pastime with good company'. This song is attributed to Henry VIII and set the mood for the afternoon. It was followed by 'Dindirin', a lively Catalan song in the troubadour tradition, requiring the choir to sing in three languages. This first part of the programme finished with Orlando Gibbons' lovely madrigal, 'The Silver Swan'.

The ladies' group Viva performed Weelkes 'The Nightingale' which confusingly features cuckoo calls, and 'You are the New Day' by the contemporary rock musician John David. The men of the choir, with soloist Peter Smith, followed with Joseph Kosma's 'Autumn Leaves', complemented by the autumnal colours of the Sidholme garden visible through the windows.

Moving on to the eighteenth century the choir delighted us with three well-known pieces, Handel's 'Silent Worship', a vocal arrangement of Bach's 'Air on the G String' and Handel's 'Where'er You Walk'. There followed a complete contrast with a lively medley from 'South Pacific' that had many members of the audience singing along.

The final section of the concert had a contemplative tone. The choir's excellent accompanist Paul Hockey performed Sinding's 'The Rustle of Spring' on Sidholme's splendid new piano. This was followed by Fauré's 'Cantique de Jean Racine', César Franck's 'Panis Angelicus' and Mozart's 'Ave Verum Corpus'. The concert closed with Rheinberger's 'Abendlied (Evening Song)'. The audience was left both entertained and uplifted, and many left the room humming one of the melodies. There was something for everyone - pastime with good company indeed.

The programme displayed the versatility and musicianship for which the Sheldon Singers are known. There can be few choirs able in the course of an hour to sing their way through five centuries of music in six different languages, all performed to the highest standard.

The retiring collection supported the restoration of the Sidholme Music Room, especially the superb chandeliers. The room is a fine example of Regency Sidmouth's art and architecture, well worth a visit in its own right and a perfect setting for musical events. Elizabeth Twining  
- 9 October 2017