

On Christmas Night

On Saturday 20th December Honiton's Sheldon Singers performed their Christmas Concert at The Beehive Centre for the first time. The format was rather different from their usual Christmas offering in that appropriate readings were inserted into the programme, which made the evening even more enjoyable.

The choir entered singing the Gloria from a piece called "Angels", written specially for the Sheldon Singers by David Ogden. The first half of the concert consisted of a medley of familiar and less well-known carols, interspersed with poetry and extracts from books. The choir demonstrated once again how beautiful their diction is in "God Incarnate", by Humphrey Clucas, a work of four pieces meditating on the story of the birth of Christ. A highlight of this first part of the evening was Ann Boakes' reading of Clive Sansom's poem "The Innkeeper's Wife". The audience was enrapt – you could have heard the proverbial pin drop! Then, by way of Jingle Bells and three carols from the Far East (which included a most lovely lullaby from Korea, sung very poignantly by the unaccompanied choir) we rounded off the first part of the evening with the whole audience joining in for "It Came Upon the Midnight Clear".

The second half of the concert was very different. We started with the audience joining the choir to sing "Ding Dong Merrily on High" before going on to enjoy "On Christmas Night", a musical celebration of the Christmas Story by Bob Chilcott., written for choir, audience, and musicians. This meant that the audience joined with the choir from time to time, singing the traditional carol tune and words, whilst the choir sang a different melody and words. Again, the musical elements of this work were linked by short readings from the Bible, telling the whole story from the Garden of Eden to the arrival of the Magi. The musicians came into their own again in this piece, with a particularly enchanting flute solo accompanying "A Spotless Rose". A solo from soprano Catherine Early, with the audience singing "Silent Night" in counterpoint is also worthy of mention. And back to tradition for the end of the evening – what else but "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" sung by the choir and audience, rousingly accompanied by our talented musicians on flute, harp, oboe, percussion and keyboard.

The Sheldon Singers return to St Pauls, Honiton on Good Friday for an Easter concert – not to be missed!

Val Moran