

Voices of Exmoor
A Summer Concert of Songs We Love to Sing
Saturday 6th July 2019

For any successful musical performance the one thing that is vital is the rapport between performers and conductor. From the very beginning of this concert, what was abundantly clear to see and hear was choir, accompanist and conductor working as one.

Amanda Taylor's extremely clear conducting style, to which the choir were always very attentive, and Joke Routledge's expert and highly sensitive accompaniment, all added to the confidence that exuded from the choir as they entertained a full-capacity town hall in Dulverton on Saturday evening.

The programme contained a number of different musical styles, all of which the choir tackled with great enthusiasm and aplomb. They sang not just with their voices, but with every ounce of their being, adding facial expression, body language, gesture and movement to a kaleidoscope of aural delight. There were some quite difficult moments to master in the music, and some challenging key changes presented in certain scores, such as the Selection from Showboat and the arrangement of Tea for Two. These clearly stretched the choir, but they took everything confidently in their stride and the result was sheer delight for the audience. Indeed, several audience members could be heard humming along in some of the more well-known numbers!

The ladies on their own gave a beautifully lyrical rendition of Somewhere, from West Side Story, and the gentlemen were extremely theatrical and energetic in Offenbach's duet for Two Gendarmes. Complete with helmets and truncheons, they didn't run the audience in, but judging by the applause they received they certainly carried them away!

In Karl Jenkins' Adiemus, the choir were joined by the subtle and gentle sound of Arwen Leaver's expressive recorder playing. The choir also sang this song from memory (quite a feat since the words don't actually mean anything!) and it was a good choice to repeat this number as an encore at the end of the evening.

With Amanda Taylor's humorous commentary, putting the audience even more at their ease if that were possible, and with some excellent interval refreshments, the evening was thoroughly enjoyed by all concerned. If there was any disappointment to be had, it was that the evening finished too soon! We could have listened to them all night! The whole performance was certainly an excellent illustration of the title of the concert, *Songs We Love to Sing*, and we look forward to hearing a lot more from Voices of Exmoor in the future.

Tom Bayliss