

## Marvelous Moments with Lymington Choral Society

### **'Requiem': Lymington Choral Society, The Nova Foresta Classical Players, St. Thomas Church Lymington**

Musical memories are often made up of marvelous moments experienced communally. This was certainly the case last Saturday night (13<sup>th</sup> November), in a concert packed with a mixture of moments sometimes thrilling, sometimes spine-tingling, sometimes warming, but always committed. All the performers were committed to their roles, be it soloist, instrumentalist or choir member, and this togetherness really added to the sense of poignancy of the occasion: a concert of remembrance, perhaps made even more moving by the sights and sounds of massed musicians coming together to make music after a forced international disruption to this most human and communicative of activities.

The packed church (almost standing-room only!) enjoyed a selection of popular musical favourites, all performed with a sense of excitement and care, not least from newly-appointed conductor Phil Daish-Handy, whose deft and subtle nuanced direction helped elicit keenly-felt interpretation all round. Beginning with John Rutter's now-classic choral anthems *The Lord Bless You and Keep You* (assuring and strong) and *A Clare Benediction* (peaceful and meditative), we knew we were in safe hands with a well-balanced, well-pitched choir and first class band and organist. Thomas Tallis's *a capella If Ye Love Me* followed, with solid part-singing lending itself encouragingly to the 'spirit of truth' of the famous Gospel verse.

The Nova Foresta Classical Players came in to their own for Jules Massenet's 'Meditation' from his opera *Thaïs*, with a captivating solo from Oxana Tahmasaby. At times sweet and plaintive, at other times deep and soulful, we heard a huge range of expressive and emotive phrases – simply beautiful. The 'meatiest' part of the concert (as Mr Daish-Handy put it) came with Faure's *Requiem*. Assured and sympathetic accompaniment was provided by Timothy Rice on a Chamber Organ, with the string quartet adding further depth throughout. Baritone soloist James Atkinson gave a simply magnificent performance in his solo movements – his rich tone lending dignity and class. Emily Garland's soprano in the 'Pie Jesu' was similarly rich, and matched perfectly with the accompaniment – a smooth, sumptuous performance. The choir sounded fabulous; with well-supported singing and careful management of some of the trickier parts of the piece, we were left with a true opportunity for reflection at this most difficult of times.

Now to those moments: from a pick of many (some of which are noted above), I'll plump for three: firstly some 'thrilling' dynamics in Faure's 'Requiem Aeternam' movement; secondly, the heavenly, sunlight-strewn 'Amen' at the end of his 'Offertorium', and finally, the opportunity to hear people coming together to sing and play – the most wonderful moment of all! Congratulations to all involved.

Rob Dishington

November 14<sup>th</sup> 2021