

Press release November 2015

Concert 21st November 2015 Handel's "Judas Maccabeus"

LOCAL CHORAL SOCIETY'S CHORAL SPLENDOUR.

Handel's oratorio "Judas Maccabeus", performed by the South Somerset Choral Society under the direction of Tim Donaldson at South Petherton's Church of St.Peter and St.Paul on Saturday November 21st "did justice to Handel and provided the audience with great enjoyment" said critic Harold W. Mead.

He went on to say...."Overall the choral sound was solid and sonorous - magnificent...real hair on the back of the neck stuff....with moments of sheer magic."

He added "The 20 piece orchestra acquitted themselves very well with thrilling sound, and the chorus of 80 singers had to go all out (successfully) to keep the balance right. All five of the young soloist singers gave us huge enjoyment. Well done all five!"

"Tim Donaldson is to be congratulated in welding choral and orchestral sound together so successfully and it was encouraging to see the Church satisfyingly full with the audience most appreciative of an evening of fine music. The sheer hard work that must have gone into this performance of Handel's second most popular oratorio was evident."

Edited from a review by Harold W Mead

Press release: 8 April 2015

GOLDEN BAROQUE FROM LOCAL CHOIR

Under the baton of Musical Director Tim Donaldson, and accompanied by six outstanding soloists and an orchestra led by Jane Margeson, the church resounded to the beautiful sounds of Gabrieli, Monteverdi, Scarlatti and Vivaldi from Italy; Buxtehude and Schutz from Germany and Rameau from France.

Critic John Patrick Mingay said of the performance that the combined effect of the choir, soloists and orchestra was "grand and sumptuous". He went on to say that "This challenging programme of music not in the usual repertoire of a choral society gave us the opportunity to experience some of the fine works of the period and was much enjoyed and appreciated by all"

Concert 15th November 2014 St Mary's Church, Chard

South Somerset Choral Society, not known for their lack of ambition, tackled one of the big beasts of French choral music - Gounod's Messe Solennelle de Sainte Cécile. The choir of nearly a hundred voices packed themselves into the chancel whilst a small chamber orchestra were located in front with the soloists in front of them.

The (Fauré) Requiem is on a completely different scale and the sound of the choir and the modestly proportioned orchestra were more evenly matched. The cello playing in the *Angus Dei* was ravishingly good as were the tempi chosen by Music Director and conductor, Tim Donaldson. The choir gave their very best in the *In Paradisum* - it was utterly beautiful singing.

Edited from a review by Wayne Bennett

St John Passion (J S Bach) performed 22nd March 2014 at the Church of St Peter and St Paul, South Petherton

The recent performance of J.S. Bach's St John Passion given in South Petherton Church was another excellent offering from the South Somerset Choral Society. A strong team of soloists, supported by an orchestra of 18 members led by Jane Margeson and under the baton of Tim Donaldson gave a convincing account of this wonderful work. Although on a smaller scale than the better known St. Matthew Passion this is, none the less, a great work, first performed in 1724 and the well researched and copious programme notes by Tim Donaldson gave much interesting background information on the development of the genre.

The major role of Evangelist (narrator) is a taxing one in which Nick Pritchard excelled, Bach had no mercy with his vocal demands and we were amply rewarded. Much the same can be said of all the other soloists, Timothy Dickinson, Alison Hill, Carris Jones and Graham Neal, plus a dignified contribution as Pilate from Arwel Huw Morgan, a member of the choir.

John Young (organ) and Miriam Wakeling (cello) deserve special praise for providing first class continuo playing that accompanies the Evangelist and other soloists as the story unfolds. This is a special and vitally important art.

The full audience certainly appreciated the hard work and dedication from all those concerned with the performance, they should be well pleased with the results.

Edited from a review by John Patrick Mingay

"War and Peace" performed 16th November 2013 at St Mary's Church, Chard.

At first sight the combination of Haydn's '**Mass In Time of War**' and '**Dona Nobis Pacem**' (*Give us peace*) by Vaughan-Williams promises a harrowing or at least introspective evening. Within a few days of Remembrance-tide that's to be expected. However, nothing could have been further from that particular assumption in the South Somerset Choral Society's most recent concert.

The SSCS is a thing of wonder – it looks good in its red and black, it sings with energy and commitment, it's well managed by enthusiastic volunteers, has a massive following (the church was packed) and a waiting list to join. There are, apparently, no auditions and probably the majority of its members are without a singing pedigree. So the greatest challenge must be to find, consistently, new repertoire which is appropriately challenging but achievable for this keenly aspirant group. The programme for this concert was cleverly constructed having clear audience appeal and which was duly rewarded with an enthusiastic response at the end. The only disappointment was the lack of a brass section which would have brought an entirely different feel to the performance and maybe even given the first violins the incentive to play a little more accurately. It may also have given the more distant singers a little more support. But this is mere nit-picking – it was a terrific effort by all concerned and a very pleasurable evening out. With thanks and congratulations,

Edited from a review by John Broad.

"Mozart & Salieri" performed 23rd March 2013 at The Minster, Ilminster

The 'Amen' at the end of the Gloria (*in the Salieri Mass*) was particularly fine, the choir obviously relished it's demands and one wanted to applaud at that inappropriate point.

The organ soloist on this occasion was Philip Scriven, currently Organist-in-Residence at Cranleigh School and formerly Director of Music at Lichfield Cathedral. An international organist of distinction Philip brought the work alive, it's two movements being dispatched with elegance, wit and panache.

..... the performers gave of their utmost with Tim Donaldson holding all the threads together in a fine manner. The four soloists, Penelope Appleyard, Olivia Barry, Mitesh Khatri and James Davies each had an individual role to play with the highlight being the 'Benedictus' movement, most beautifully sung by Penelope.

Edited from a review by John Patrick Mingay

"A Celebration of Christmas" 17th December 2012. Press release as follows:

A capacity audience at The Minster in Ilminster on Monday evening (17th Dec.) responded enthusiastically to a programme of Carols and Readings by South Somerset Choral Society under Musical Director **Tim Donaldson**. The readings were given by broadcasting legends **Valerie Singleton** and **Malcolm Young**. All tickets for the concert, proceeds of which will be presented to the Alzheimer's Society, were sold almost as soon as they went on sale. The Choral Society's Christmas concert is rapidly becoming a regular fixture in Ilminster's seasonal festivities.

This year's selection of music was taken from the Novello Book of Carols, with influences from other European countries, one of which was Finland - the choir singing in Finnish to music by Sibelius. The audience joined in with more conventional favourite carols and enjoyed virtuoso performances on the organ by guest organist **Philip Scriven**.

A retiring collection was taken for the Alzheimer's Society whose representative had provided an outline of the Society's work earlier in the programme.

In addition, this contribution from Peter Saunders, SSCS Chairman:

"Once again we managed to achieve a "special event" last night, an occasion thoroughly enjoyed by our audience. This reflected the big effort put in by all of you, in so many different ways. The expression "well oiled machine" springs to mind, a cliché I know, but it reflects the enthusiasm and commitment of all of you to produce something worthwhile"

Concert 17th November 2012 (The Armed Man)

A Concert of Shared Experience

South Somerset Choral Society once again demonstrated their ambition and courage in undertaking big projects in a concert presented at the Church of Sts Peter and Paul, South Petherton. The themes of remembrance, peace and shared experience were woven together across the programme. With the choir and orchestra occupying half of the nave, the concert was a complete sell-out - perhaps due to the inclusion of The Armed Man by Karl Jenkins.

Tim Donaldson did a sterling job keeping orchestral and vocal forces together.....

.....full marks must be given for ambition and commitment to all concerned.

Wayne Bennett

Concert 24th March 2012 (Dvorak's Stabat Mater)

The Choral Society, under its new conductor Tim Donaldson, rose to the challenge with good attack and phrasing. (John Broad)

It was a good performance and the extended applause at the end was well justified. (John Broad)

Concerts 14th and 15th April 2011 (Mozart Requiem, Zadok the Priest-Handel, Vivaldi's Gloria and Wings of the Morning-Barrell)

.....a stunning performance of Mozart's *Requiem* (Christopher Redwood)

.....the excellent (soloists) Penelope Appleyard, Olivia Barry, Mitesh Khatri and Chi Hoe-Mak – added both sophistication and musicality to the work. (Christopher Redwood)

The choir really rose to the challenge of Mozart's Requiem, determined to make this a truly memorable occasion for retiring conductor Richard Barrell... (Jenny Broom)