



Handel's Messiah.

The Minster Church was filled to capacity on a wet and windy Saturday evening when the Axminster & District Choral Society performed a complete version of the ever-popular *Messiah*. And what a performance it turned out to be: authentic, sensitive and wondrously musical. Under the professional baton of Judy Martin, orchestra, soloists and choir united as one body to produce a nigh-perfect and memorable presentation. It is often remarked that, apart from the Hallelujah Chorus, the soloists have all the best tunes: not true. The choir put great expression into the three consecutive choruses, *Surely He hath borne our griefs, And with His stripes, and All we like sheep*, at the beginning of Part Two; and the slow quiet phrase of *Since by man came death*, completely under control, had the audience holding their breath. The soloists, of course, shared the limelight.

Many of the well-known airs such as *I know that my redeemer liveth* and *He was despised* gave them opportunities to demonstrate their individual talents, but we were also captivated by the blend of voices in *He shall feed His flock* (soprano and alto) and *O death where is thy sting* (alto and bass).

The Choral society is fortunate in having soloists of such quality happy to come and sing with them. The *Messiah* is essentially a musical unity, with the orchestra playing an equal part in the work, not purely acting as accompaniment to the singers. With Lindsay Braga as Leader, the 18-strong orchestra was outstanding in its responses to the conductor's baton – leading, supporting, sighing and rejoicing. Orchestral soloists shone in their individual roles: harpsichord and organ featured throughout and the superb trumpet did indeed sound, as instructed.

In all, a wonderful evening of music and an inspiring performance much enjoyed by everyone who had turned out on a cold winter night to listen. Well done, all of you.

Soloists: Harriet Mountfield (soprano); Katie Schofield(alto); James Atherton(tenor); Simeon Royle(bass)

Instrumental soloists: Peter Parshall(organ); Peter Lea-Cox(Harpsichord); Steve Williams(trumpet)

Written by Sydie Bones December 2013