

TRADITIONAL CAROL CONCERT 2016

Also performing, the children's Orchestra and Choir of St Mary's Primary School

What makes an ideal carol concert? A Minster with a crib scene, a choir, children, musicians, traditional carols, a sense of joy and an opportunity for the congregation to join in with some lusty singing – all of these were on the programme of the Traditional Carol Concert held in the Minster on Saturday, 17th December. The whole space between the pews and the altar was needed to accommodate the children from St Mary's Primary School, rightly recorded as 'musicians', and behind them the ranks of the choral society in their festive red and green scarves.

The programme opened with a chorus from Handel's Messiah 'And the Glory of the Lord' which set the mood for the evening. Much of the first half of the programme featured the children. Their singers, all eyes on the baton of their music teacher, Rachel Burrough, gave a magical rendering of three carols including Away in a Manger. Orchestral players from the school provided two instrumental interludes - a delightful Christmas medley performed by a string group and an arrangement of The First Nowell by a budding ensemble of wind instrumentalists.

The concentration and discipline of these young players, from a primary school, won much admiration from the congregation – and loud applause. Before they left for home, the school singers joined the choir and the audience for an all-inclusive Silent Night.

Music Director Peter Parshall made sure that there were magical moments too from the choir and organ. In between audience participation in God Rest You Merry Gentlemen and Good King Wenceslas, Peter-Lea Cox, fine musician and nimble mover from organ to piano and back throughout the evening, exhibited the full beauty of the organ with Bach's Fugue in G. Traditional and innovative settings added to the joy of the concert – Harold Darke and Walford Davies on the one hand, and a jazzy setting of Jingle Bells arranged by David Willcocks on the other. The concert ended as it had begun, with a chorus from Handel's Messiah. With 'For Unto Us a Child is Born' ringing in our ears, and fortified by wine and mince pies, we rejoiced in the knowledge that we don't have to go to The Albert Hall for an ideal carol concert – it's all here in Axminster.

Sydie Bones