

Programme performed:

'From the Psalms of David'

I was glad - Henry Purcell

Sicut cervus - Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina

Like as the hart - Herbert Howells

Wash me thoroughly - Samuel Sebastian Wesley

Miserere mei - Gregorio Allegri

Hear my prayer - Felix Mendelssohn

Jauchzet dem Herrn - Heinrich Schütz

Lord, let me know mine end - Maurice Greene

Psalm 114 - Zoltan Kodaly

Chichester Psalms - Leonard Bernstein

Review by Ian Dobson:

This chamber choir of 22 voices gave their spring concert; a setting of Psalms by nine eminent composers of the 16th to 20th centuries directed by their M D, Paul Provost. Purcell's setting of Psalm 122 I was glad when they said unto me was an appropriate opening piece; nine other songs followed. It is difficult to pick out any one; each had their appeal although the audience were somewhat tentative in their earlier applause. For the writer, perhaps three had the most appeal; Wesley's Wash me thoroughly, Mendelssohn's Hear my prayer and Maurice Greene's Lord, let me know my end. Six of the Consort took solos and it would be invidious to make comparisons; all were excellent. The quartet in Allegri's Miserere mei with the young treble Steila Buhalis of Guildford Cathedral taking the part with the famous high Cs had the main and very creditable task in the piece.

As is usually the case in the Consort's concerts two organ solos were included. Jonathan Hope was the organist who played pieces by Wesley and Mendelssohn a precursor to the challenge of the Chichester Psalms score. The concert had the unusual pleasure of five professional musicians; director, organist, countertenor harpist and percussion. All received their well deserved applause at the end of the concert.

Chichester Psalms was top of the bill; a choral work by Leonard Bernstein for countertenor, solo quartet, and choir and, with the composer's permission, a reduced band of just organ, harp, and percussion. The first movement is often considered one of the hardest passages for choral tenors ever written. But not a bit of it, the band and singers including the tenors rose to the occasion brilliantly. And so did the audience who may have preconceived difficulty in the contrast with the rest of the programme. The Hebrew text was well articulated and the audience was helped by the words in the programme book, which it was observed many were using. The countertenor's solos by Oliver Sullivan were beautiful and very moving.

Whether all those performers and audience had heard it or sung it before, this performance was memorable. The work and concert ended with the words of Psalm 133:1 sung pianississimo 'Hineh mah tov, Umah na'im, Shevet aḥim Gam yah ad' (Behold how good, and how pleasant it is, for brethren to dwell together in unity)