

ANGMERING CHORALE EXCELS in spite of weather

February 15th 2020 saw an excited coachload of Angmering Chorale choristers on their way up to London to perform once more at the prestigious annual Brandenburg Choral Festival, now celebrating its eleventh year.

Undaunted by dire forecasts of storm “Dennis”, with the threat of heavy rain and ferocious floods, they were on their determined way to Holborn, London, where one of the oldest and largest of London’s surviving churches, the Holy Sepulchre, was to provide a uniquely atmospheric venue for a programme dedicated to “The Best of British”. This was represented by Sir Karl Jenkins’ “Requiem” and John Rutter’s “Feel the Spirit”. These supplied the mainstay, while Angmering’s energetic and ambitious conductor and musical director, George Jones, hinted at a small unexpected treat to be added to the already well stocked programme.

The performance began with the Jenkins “Requiem” - a surprisingly cheerful mass for the souls of the dead (Incorporating some influences from Japan) - when the appreciative audience were thrilled by the variety of the pieces, ranging from the lively “Rex tremendae”, the relentless and hip-hop style (Jenkins’ words!) “Dies irae”, to the thoughtful and ethereal ‘Introit’ and “In paradisum” – featuring solo performances of the highest standard. All were ably accompanied by the hugely versatile Alison Manton, piano accompanist to the Angmering Chorale since 2005.

Unusually, the whole performance lacked an orchestra, a choice which perhaps reduced the drama, while allowing for more subtlety and sensitivity for the singers. An interesting trade off.

The acoustics in the church are excellent and allowed the Chorale to amply demonstrate their abilities and the rich variety of the Requiem.

After the interval, John Rutter’s piece presented a total change of mood, with the lively cycle of spirituals giving the group the opportunity to really let its hair down, especially the soloists who performed magnificently. This was fun, augmented about halfway through by George’s lively rendition of the Dam Busters March! on the Church’s impressive backup organ, (the original ancient pipe organ being reputedly the oldest in the country, and, we were told, “Broken” and in desperate need of restoration).

Back to the Rutter, when, after a selection of colourful and mostly jolly pieces, George persuaded the audience to join in, singing with great enthusiasm the joyous final piece, “When the Saints go marching in”.

No matter what next year’s weather forecast may throw at them, we are left with the certain knowledge that this highly talented group will be there, sharing once more, an experience not to be missed.