

If variety be the spice of life, the latest offerings of the Angmering Chorale must surely rate as a vindaloo amongst choral performances.

Saturday 3rd February 2018 saw two coachloads of excited Chorale enthusiasts whisked painlessly up to the imposing "St Katharine Cree" Church in central London, to perform their contribution towards the annual "Brandenburg Choral Festival of London".

The first half was devoted to choruses from that good old favourite, Handel's Messiah, but from the opening bars it was evidently going to be an unusually exciting performance.

Aided, no doubt, by the excellent acoustics in this impressive 17th century venue, the choir sang with punch, precision, clarity, and I must say, judging by the expressions on many of the faces, sheer joy.

The audience loved it – they relished the music - they heard every word.

The second half took us bang into the twenty-first century with a beautiful and lively rendering of Will Todd's amazing "Jazz Missa Brevis". This wonderful piece is full of surprises. It brilliantly contrasts a strong jazz feel with the traditional Latin mass texts, giving the Chorale an opportunity to display their amazing versatility and their delight in the challenging rhythms, moods and harmonies of modern compositions.

They did not disappoint.

The opening, highly rhythmic, Jazz Kyrie was delivered with panache, followed by a lively Gloria, a gloriously melodic, poignant and touching Sanctus, and a Benedictus in surprising and energetic 7/8 time, reminiscent of Dave Brubeck's 'Take Five'. The beautifully expressive and moving Agnus Dei was rounded off with control and stunning precision, aided by a typically polished performance from Alison Manton's brilliant piano accompaniment.

The leadup to the finale began with Sir Henry Wood's "Fantasia on British Sea Songs" - a master stroke, bringing a thrilling feel of "The Last Night of the Proms" to the proceedings.

Cunningly arranged to rise to a crescendo of patriotism via "The Saucy Arethusa", "Tom Bowling", "Spanish Ladies", "Home Sweet Home", and Handel's "See the Conquering Hero Comes", to a rousing, patriotic "Rule Britannia", in which the audience was encouraged to participate (An invitation it grasped with obvious enthusiasm), and ending with a powerful, thoughtful "Jerusalem" – the audience was sent home inspired, with a much needed feeling that roast beef and Yorkshire still has a lot going for it.

Angmering Chorale's music, like its cuisine, no doubt, welcomes fresh new input, while celebrating the best of the rest.

Brian North February 2018