

A Choral Christmas

Angmering Chorale at The Angmering School, Saturday 15th December

Wassail is a beverage of hot mulled cider, drunk traditionally as an integral part of wassailing, a Medieval Christmastide English ritual of singing carols and celebrating. Well, last Saturday 15th December, amidst a backdrop of, cold, driving rain outside and a freezing cold school hall on the inside, we needed some wassail warmth. We were not disappointed, Angmering Chorale alongside The Angmering School choir, Swiss Gardens Primary School, St Philip Howard High School choir and Patcham Silver Band provided warmth in the way of Christmas music and readings.

The first half of the evening was a mix of traditional carols accompanied by the band, interspersed with seasonal readings. The adults and children especially enjoyed swaying to the beat of the music when Patcham were playing their solo spots.

The second half was devoted to Wassail!, Carols of Comfort and Joy, a selection of choral arrangements of uplifting traditional carols, both sacred and secular, compiled by Alexander L'Estrange. It was a joyous time hearing children and adults singing together in one work. Songs including the 16th Century song Gaudete, brought back memories of the folk group Steeleye Span who made this song popular in the 1970s, the choir sang this with great gusto which was especially enjoyable by audience and choir alike. L'Estrange's version of While Shepherds Watched their Flocks was a fusion of the traditional 19th Century hymn tune, Lyngham, much loved by Charles Wesley and folk tunes such as Ilkley Moor Baht 'at which added a lively zest to this much sung carol.

The children, some as young as 7 years were trained by their teachers in their schools and only came together as one big choir on the day. It is a credit to their teachers, Michelle Woodward of Swiss Gardens and Dan Godsmark of Angmering School that their children and young people were so well prepared. A special mention must go to Emma Hattersley a Sixth former at St Philip Howard School and also a member of Angmering Chorale who trained the choir at her school. Emma explained 'Since the age of 6 years I have dreamed of having my own choir and now I'm starting to live that dream' How heart warming to hear such ambitions in one so young. Emma you can be proud of your choir, they along with all the other singers made for a lovely Christmas evening.

Of course no Christmas concert would be complete without an audience participation rendering of The Twelve Days of Christmas and Saturday was no exception. Oliver Martin oversaw the chaos of Swimming swans and Laying Geese etc and everyone was smiling, a fitting finale to a warm concert.

Thanks go to Patcham Silver Band and their conductor, James Benka-Coker, George Jones, Musical Director of Angmering Chorale for his inimitable musical leadership and to accompanist Alison Manton for her incredible skill and dexterity.

Angmering Chorale will be at Arundel Cathedral in March 2019 for a Glory of Venice evening of music by Vivaldi, with Sinfonia of Arun playing two works by Albinoni.

Diane Kearsey December 16th 2018