

A Very Musical Christmas

Dunbar marks the Christmas season in some style each year not only with the quite remarkable Christmas lights in the High Street but also with the annual Dunbar Choral concert of Christmas music. The large gathering in Belhaven Church on Wednesday 13th December was treated to a varied, balanced programme of songs and carols that showed their range of repertoire and voices.

The opening selection of Vaughan Williams "The Truth from Above" merging seamlessly into a striking arrangement of the 6th Century hymn "Vox clara ecce intonat" accompanied, as were a number of other items, by Shelley Hunter on the soprano saxophone, was well executed and set a high standard that was maintained throughout the evening. The majestic "O magnum mysterium" was followed by the catchy traditional Czech carol "The Birds" and then a foot-tapping combination of "Here we come a-wassailing" arranged by Martin Shaw and the night's conductor, Vaughan Townhill, "Tomorrow shall be my dancing day" and the popular "The very best time of the year". The audience were quite caught up with the rhythms almost dancing in the aisles but were taken back to a more gentle Christmas theme by "Do you hear what I hear" popularised by the American singer Carrie Underwood and "For him all the stars have shone" composed by the prolific Bob Chilcott which was new to many. The choral items were rounded off with Tchaikovsky's "Crown of Roses" and the traditional Austrian Carol "Still, still, still". A comprehensive and well performed repertoire which truly engaged and entranced the audience. The various sections of the choir showed admirable control, clarity of diction and panache in tackling the various pieces and as required the strong solo voice of soprano Diane Kerr added an extra dimension.

The choral items were interspersed with enthusiastic audience participation in traditional carols and a varied selection of Christmas readings selected and read by Gordon Roberts. The readings varied from the 15th Century to the present day and from the moving to the hilarious and added much to the enjoyment of the evening.

No report on this could leave out the contribution of the Townhills father and son, Vaughan and David, who respectively conducted and provided the piano accompaniment, they were the guiding lights of the evening displaying their musicality and enjoyment of performance. It was an evening of which they and all involved should be proud.

John Cairns