

A Right Royal Musical Feast! Saturday 3rd December 2011

Bude Choral Society's Christmas offering was an eclectic selection of works written for royal occasions, performed at St. Michael's Church, Bude on December 3rd.

The first half was devoted to J. S. Bach's secular 'Peasant's Cantata', a bawdy, comic romp through a village's celebrations for a new Lord. The libretto had been written for the Crown Prince of Saxony and the score, originally accompanied by just 2 violins, viola, basso continuo, flute and horn, contains many jolly dances and simple light-hearted dialogue. The solo parts of the farmer and his wife, Mieke (Kitty) were taken by baritone David Fouracre from Colyton and Swedish soprano Tina Gladwin.

The choir had a lively time with many bouncy choruses based on folk dances. Conductor John Hobbs brought out a delightful range of dynamics from the choir. David Robinson accompanied on the organ with panache, despite having to deal majestically with the organist's nightmare, a cipher.

The second half was a celebration of royal coronations and weddings, with several well-loved choruses. 'Zadok the Priest' provided a superbly rousing opening to Handel's four Coronation Anthems. Originally written for the coronation of George II in 1727, these have been widely performed at royal occasions ever since, including the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The choir sang with power and commitment, and it was good to see the soloists joining in.

The tour-de-force rendition of William Walton's 'Crown Imperial' on the organ was a highlight of the concert. David Robinson is an exceptional organist, pulling out all the stops to make St. Michael's church reverberate with this magnificent work.

The final chorus, Charles Parry's 'I Was Glad', is most recently remembered from Prince William and Catherine Middleton's wedding in April. It was also performed at Charles and Diana's wedding and at several coronations since first being performed for Edward VII's coronation in 1902. This was a magnificent way to end, with the choir soaring over the powerful organ.