



Pic: Paul Jennings

Vivaldi and Puccini are ‘a real treat’ in the Minster

More than 200 people packed into Newport Minster to hear a choral concert consisting of just two works, Vivaldi’s *Gloria* and a later work by Puccini, his *Messa Di Gloria* – and they were in for a real treat.

Musical director, Jurgita Leistrumaite, manages all the participating choirs, Ave Vita, Salutaris and Ryde Chorus, but this was the first time all three have performed together, supplemented by guest musicians to create the orchestral accompaniment.

The Vivaldi proved to be a real showcase for the combined choirs, who brought some quite beautiful harmonic depth and range to this much-loved composition. Some performances stood out, particularly the *Laudamus Te*, in which Tressa Lambert, Ali Farthing and Esther Harvey all combined well. Tressa sang the *Gratias* with confidence,

By Nicholas Finney

accompanied by a stunningly beautiful oboe performance and an equally sensitive harpsichord render.

Sue Devine sang with real power in the *Domini Deus* and the *Qui Tollis*. The entire performance of the Vivaldi was an outstanding success, with elements of rare top-notch professionalism.

The Puccini was quite a different style, and the mystery lay in the apparent lack of liturgical worship emanating from the piece. Admittedly Puccini was only 18 when he wrote it, but this was a prelude to the wonderful operas which followed. An obvious element of youthful imbalance made it quite a difficult work to perform, while at one point I was sure I could hear elements of the *Grand March* from *Aida*, but then the young Puccini adored Verdi.

In terms of performance, I felt the grandeur of the combined chorus, orchestra and timpani slightly overawed the performers, such that the audience were not quite sure if they were listening to an opera or a cantata. However, Sam Leggett and Aaron Briggs both gave very fine solo contributions and the *Credo* had some beautiful lyrical passages, with the interplay between the woodwind and brass standing out.

No mildly critical observations can detract from the wonderful, combined musical experience of the three choirs and their orchestral supporters. The evening of high-quality musical performance was clearly loved by the audience, who showed their appreciation with lengthy applause.

I am surely not alone in hoping that Jurgita brings these three choirs together again for more concerts in the not-too-distant future