

# Enthusiastic choir celebrates its 20 years

By RICHARD WINDEYER

The Llewellyn Choir, *A Feast of Favourites* — Llewellyn Hall, December 2.

**T**HE LLEWELLYN Choir celebrated 20 years of existence on Saturday night, though it had a different name for the first 15.

In this concert it performed extracts from works it has performed over the 20 years.

The repertoire includes extracts from a large swag of the famous oratorios most suited to large choral groups. It was music that must have tempted any ex-chorister in the audience to join in.

Four requiems were featured: those of Mozart, Faure, Brahms and Verdi.

Then there were the wonderful *How Lovely is Thy Dwelling Place* of Brahms and the *Agnus Dei* from Faure, the great *Vespers* from Rachmaninov, extracts from Haydn's *The Creation*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, Charpentier's *Messe de Minuit* and Berlioz's *L'Enfance du Christ*.

Finally there were three traditional Christmas carols for

## Music

which audience participation was encouraged.

As the list of music shows, this was an ambitious concert, and a long one. This music demands much of the choir.

First there were six languages — English, German, Russian, German, French and Latin.

Then there was the breadth of musical style, from the operatic Verdi, to the unaccompanied dense Rachmaninov, the glorious Handel, and the heavenly beauty of the Faure.

The choir tackled the music with enthusiasm, and constant encouragement from its conductor, Richard McIntyre. However, as might be expected with a large amateur group performing such a range of complex music, some pieces were better than others.

The extracts from the Rachmaninov *Vespers* were among the most difficult music on the program, but received one of the most convincing performances.

A *capella* singing is difficult, but does allow a choir the freedom to drift slightly out of tune

together rather than against an orchestra which will only serve to emphasise any intonation problems.

So in the *Vespers* the choir's tuning might have slipped, but the performance retained its strength and focus. Most impressive was the pianissimo singing, in which the choir showed it could sing softly without losing energy.

Dynamics were a problem in

some other works. On occasion, such as the end of the *Sanctus* of the Verdi, the choir was completely overpowered by the orchestra. Here, as is appropriate, the brass sounded irrepressible, leaving the choir in its wake.

In other works the choir was disappointing in the quiet sections, losing all energy to the sound. This was noticeable in the opening of the Brahms and the *Domine Jesu* of Mozart.

Further disappointment was added in the Faure where the choir, almost from its first entry, dragged down the tempo, resulting in a ponderous performance with intonation difficulties.

By contrast, as already mentioned, the *Vespers* extracts were very evocatively performed, the Christmas carols were sung with a festive spirit, as was the *Hallelujah Chorus* from Handel's *Messiah*.