

Choir delivers highly-charged feeling of Christmas



Llewellyn Choir performing “Allelujah!”.

*Music / “Allelujah!” The Llewellyn Choir, conducted by Rowan Harvey-Martin. At Holy Cross Anglican Church, Hackett, December 17. Reviewed by **LEN POWER**.*

SUBTITLED “Christmas with Benjamin Britten (and others)”, this “Allelujah!” concert featured two works by Britten – “A Ceremony of Carols” and “The Company of Heaven”. Other pieces included Corelli’s “Concerto Grosso In G Minor, No. 8”, “Angel’s Carol” by John Rutter and “O Holy Night” by Adolphe Charles Adam.

The choir entered at the start of the concert with lanterns singing “Procession”, the first part of “A Ceremony of Carols”. This set the atmosphere of Christmas immediately and the choir was particularly effective singing the rousing “Welcome Yole!” as well as “In Freezing Winter Night”, “Deo Gracias” and the finale, “Recession”.

There were also pleasing soprano solos by Charlotte Walker and Emily Ezaki-Swain. The orchestra, conducted by Rowan Harvey-Smith, really excelled with the delicate “Interlude” in the middle of the work.

Next on the program was the Corelli “Concerto Grosso”. In the intimate space of the church, this familiar work was given a beautiful performance of great clarity.

After a short break, Britten’s “The Company of Heaven” was performed by the orchestra, choir and soloists. Written originally for radio in 1937, this work depicts St. Michael and the angels, along with Old Testament figures. The musical numbers are interspersed with spoken text from various authors such as Milton, Rossetti and Bunyan. This challenging work with moments of great sensitivity as well as fury was given an accurate and confident performance by the choir.

Sonia Anfiloff (soprano) and Andrew Barrow (tenor) were featured during this work and both sang very well. The clearly read text readings were given by Rohan Thatcher and Jennifer Pickard. This dramatic work even woke the possums in the ceiling, to the amusement of everyone!

John Rutter’s “Angels Carol” was a nicely melodic contrast after the Britten and was very well sung by the choir.

The final work presented was Adam’s well-known “O Holy Night”. With the resonant baritone of Thatcher and soprano Anfiloff, rising above the choir, this proved to be a very moving performance.

This Llewellyn Choir concert was a triumph and produced a highly-charged feeling of Christmas.