

Exmouth choral success

ON SATURDAY, January 23, I was fortunate enough to be in the audience for what was a truly wonderful performance of Monteverdi's *1610 Vespers*. As a relatively regular attendee at Exmouth Choral Society concerts, it was wonderful to note how everyone rose to the occasion, responding to the enthusiasm of conductor Brian Northcott, to deliver an exciting account of what is not an easy piece.

The choir looked to be enjoying themselves enormously. One feels, with a work such as this, that it is not until the day of the concert, when all the forces combine, that the true sense of the music is realised. This came across to the audience and the choir looked on with delight at the wonderful instrumentalists playing with a fantastically extrovert sense of style. I enjoyed all of the playing, but particular mention must be made of the cornet players, who soared to seemingly impossible heights flawlessly. One of the highlights of the evening was their stunning improvisation during *Ave Maris Stella* – great stuff. Mention must also be made of the continuo team, who provided rock solid, yet unfailingly sensitive support throughout. We were blessed with a highly distinguished line-up of soloists. Sopranos Evelyn Tubb and Alison Burnett combined delightfully in the duet *Pulchra es* and their beautiful sense of style carried to their other moments of involvement. Baritone Julian Rippon was assured and warm of tone, with commendable command of the upper register. In this work, however, it is the tenors who command the lion's share of the solo passages. Young tenors Thomas Hobbs and Greg Tassel were both in fine voice and the audience was treated to a wonderful array of vocal colours. The highlight of the solo contributions was, for me, the achingly beautiful *Duo seraphim* in which the tenors combined marvellously, receiving powerful support from Julian Rippon. Exmouth Choral Society themselves responded to all of this and delivered some wonderfully exciting choral singing. They tackled the hugely difficult rhythmic passages with relish and produced some glorious sounds, filling Holy Trinity church with their efforts. The whole performance really was a step above anything I have witnessed in Exmouth before, and this is not a criticism of past concerts, but as an indication of just how enjoyable this performance was. Congratulations to all who were involved, but particularly to Brian Northcott who directed the event passionately and with wonderful sense of style. He was, I'm sure, very proud of Exmouth Choral Society, who were in fine form.

Fanny Langrishe