

**BY THE EDITOR OF COMMUNITY (WOODSTOCK AND BLADON NEWS)**

**The likes of Puccini & Rossini to be enjoyed right here in Woodstock!**

Wow! What a wonderful event it was...I went to my first ever Woodstock Music Society Choir and Chamber Orchestra Concert in the Church of St Mary Magdalene, right here on our doorstep!

I really didn't know what to expect. I had seen the rather old fashioned and sedate poster around, and the small ad in the March issue of this magazine and had bought my tickets in advance from the good people at the bookshop. I was only sad that I had failed to find someone to go with despite having asked all my friends, it seemed. However, I got into a nice conversation with the woman sitting next to me, who had come from Chipping Norton to see her friend perform. The church was completely packed out, and the anticipatory atmosphere exciting....

It was reading the informative write up in the March issue on p.28 by Evelyn Hendy that had really swung it for me, and persuaded me. I became intrigued to go and listen to the music of these two famous Italians: the *Messa di Gloria*, written at the height of his spirited youth, at 18, by Giacomo Puccini, who only later became such a Bon viveur and master of the Opera and to the *Stabat Mater* by Gioacchino Rossini, although written at the end of his career, who seemed an equally interesting character having written a composition widely considered 'too worldly' and 'too sensuous' for such a sacred subject.

While waiting for the concert to begin, and whilst watching the large choir of locals in evening dress climb tentatively up the towering staging that filled the centre of the church, I read the programme that I had bought rather dutifully on the way in...but again I found it full of genuinely fascinating further information about these two characters, along with a long list of Patrons, a translation of the words, and information about the two main singers: a tenor and a baritone; the names of the rest of the large choir and chamber orchestra and information about the rather dashing conductor, Paul Ingram - presumably the force Majeur behind what was to be such an impressive and memorable evening.

To be honest, I am rather late in life only beginning to really appreciate classical music. I wouldn't know the difference between a baritone and tenor...that is until I hear them sing. And wow what a way to learn...by hearing these two splendid fellows, who could have stepped out of the nineteenth century in their dinner suits, and noting the difference in their rich and deep voices.

Peter Harris, the tenor, I learnt had read Music at Oxford before winning many major awards and completing an MA in Vocal Performance. Quentin Hayes, the baritone, had won a Dutch Radio prize in 1993 at a singing competition in Vienna and had sung roles with all the leading UK Opera companies including Glyndebourne, Welsh National Opera, the ENO and on contract at Covent Garden for five years 2000-5.

I was simply bowled over at the quality of the performers singing here for us in Woodstock! I would much rather hear wonderful music here in our own packed Church buzzing with excitement than trek up to London for the Royal Albert Hall any day!

Their next concert is on Friday 7th and Saturday 8th of July at 7.30pm, again here at the Church in Woodstock: Handel, choruses and arias from the oratorios *Theodora* and *Jephtha* with a soprano and a tenor. Tickets available in June from the bookshop and from [concerts@woodstockmusic.info](mailto:concerts@woodstockmusic.info).

I will definitely be going again! Highly recommended!

Sian Godwin