

A festival feast of beautiful words

PRESENTED as part of the Thatcham Festival, regular contributors Watership Cantabile presented their concert of music with beautiful words.

The choir began with Vivaldi's stirring *Nulla in mundo, pax sincera*, with the choir settling in fairly quickly, even if their rhythm was a little stiff at first.

Musical director Michael Howell arranged the music for the choir and he played the instrumental parts on the church organ. This is a popular piece from Vivaldi's vast output and always enjoyable to hear from a good choir.

The choir sounded bright and vibrant on *My soul there is a country*, music by Hubert Parry with words by Henry Vaughan. There was an even better blend of voices on *Afton Water*, with John Rutter providing the music for Robert Burns' poems. Two members of the choir then read a serious piece by Ian McMillan and a more frivolous one by Pam Ayres in which she compared her husband to Robbie Burns.

Music by Charles Villiers Moore followed in similar fashion and then came a departure with the Michael Howard arrangement of *Bohemian Rhapsody*. The choir tackled this rock favourite with a low-key beginning that heated up considerably by the time they got to the Galileos. It was a spirited performance, done as a group

Theatre

Watership Cantabile: Echoes, a musical tribute to British Poets, at St Mary's Church, Thatcham, on Thursday October 13

choir reading and not with a male singer strutting around the stage and belting out the lyrics. Music by Sir George Dyson and Sir Arthur Sullivan followed before we heard a reading of the latter's partner, WS Gilbert's *A Nightmare*.

Michael Howard added a selection not on our programmes with an organ performance of *March on a Theme of Handel* by Alexander Guilmant. This gave us a French connection, and the concert ended with a touch of Broadway in *Memory*, music by Andrew Lloyd Webber, two Hungarian folk songs with music by Matyas Seiber and, finally, back to Britain, Brexitland with *(Everything I Do) I Do it for You* by Bryan Adams.

The choir were animated and in good voice throughout and once again presented a varied programme of music from many different sources and countries.

DEREK ANSELL