

Review – The Handful, An Evening of Festive Music

In all its grandeur, St. Mary the Virgin Bathwick resonated the warm and balanced voices of The Handful chamber choir as they presented an exceptional and articulate programme of music. Tomos Watkins demonstrated the choir's ability to sing a challenging and diverse repertoire of music from a wide range of styles and languages, enabling the audience to reflect upon how music portrays text. This was conveyed with a retrospective performance of the *Magnificat*, *Exultate Deo* and *Cantate Domino* as we heard settings by Swayne, Cui, *Palestrina*, *Poulenc*, *Monteverdi* and *Rutter*.

The Handful embraced the selection of music, performing with proportioned dynamic contrast, clear diction and eloquent phrasing. This concert provided not only an opportunity to hear the ability of an established chamber choir but to hear intricate solo performances from members of the choir. Highlighting what was a wonderfully festive evening of music was the unified and wholesome tone of *Bach's Der Geist hilft* and a delicate and ethereal solo performance of *Cesar Cui's Magnificat*, by Philippa Parfrey. A delightful evening of music led by the brilliantly expressive and creative mind of Tomos Watkins.

David Roberts

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