

The Music of War

This was the theme of a recital given in Holy Trinity church Witney, on Saturday 18th April 2015, by its resident organist Paul Francis. It was truly a magnificent *tour de force*, covering a wide range of composers, across three centuries, and many genres, well-known patriotic tunes, film and television themes, and songs from World Wars one and two which encouraged audience participation. Each piece was introduced by Mr Francis, giving the audience a little of its background, and demonstrating the depth of research he had carried out, when compiling his concert choices.

A subtle opening, given the ecclesiastical venue, was Mendelssohn's '*War March of Priests*'. Twentieth century composers were well represented in Eric Coates ('*Dam Busters' March*'), Edward Elgar ('*Nimrod*' & '*Land of Hope and Glory*'), William Walton ('*Wartime Sketchbook Prologue*' & '*Spitfire Prelude*') and John Williams' film scores ('*Hymn to the Fallen*' from '*Saving Private Ryan*' & '*The Theme from Schindler's List*'). These two pieces by Williams, further demonstrated Mr Francis' musicality in his own splendid arrangements.

The audience struggled with the verses of one or two of the songs, but rallied in patriotic fervour during the choruses, one man actually rose to his feet, even an occasional "Bravo" was heard, and there was half-hearted waving of serviettes.

The finale demonstrated a further subtle touch, as soprano, Charlotte Tremain, sang the verses of Thomas Arne's "*Rule Britannia*", which stirred the audience to a crescendo. Arne, regarded as the most important English composer of the eighteenth century, was a Catholic, and never wrote a note for the Church of England. So this was an act of Christian unity and peaceful cooperation!

The whole memorable evening was realised through Ms Tremain's organisation, with the generous support of a team of willing volunteers. The evening was gloriously sunny. The atmosphere friendly and cheerful. The drinks alcoholic. The 'step-and-fetch' buffet satisfying and filling. And the donated raffle and auction prizes generous and varied.

If the success of the event is to be judged financially, then it was resounding! Thanks to Ms Tremain's prestigious organising, and Mr Francis' thoughtful programming and sensitive playing, the three hour extravaganza raised a staggering £1001-50 for Witney Team Parish Funds.

Particular thanks go to John and Joy at The Three Pigeons for generously donating the beer for the event. It was very much appreciated.

Howard Brayton