

ORIANA SINGERS' CHRISTMAS CONCERTS AT NORTH NIBLEY AND ULEY

REVIEW BY DONALD HOLLINS

The lovely church of St Martin at North Nibley and the 18th century mansion of Stouts Hill were the two venues for the Oriana Singers' two Christmas concerts under conductor/arranger David Moss.

For the most part the two programmes were similar in content but at St Martin's we heard two pieces by Monteverdi and Schubert. The former's moving Ave Maris Stella from the 1610 vespers was beautifully sung and included a notable tenor contribution from Peter Kirvan. Schubert's Magnificat, composed at the tender age of 17 was new to me and was a valuable retrieval by David Moss. It is quite demanding to sing but the choir of about 20 voices met the challenges successfully as did pianist Ian Higginson. The quality of sound is ever improving and the quartet did well with Mary Moss's soprano soaring to great effect.

The concert had opened with the lovely Ecce Concipies by Jacob Handl . " Behold you shall Conceive" was an appropriate beginning. Otherwise the two concerts were similar even down to the delicious hot mulled wine and mince pies. There was also a raffle at Stouts Hill as that concert was in aid of the excellent Cotswold Vale Talking Newspaper. At both concerts the audiences were invited to sing a few carols to which they responded enthusiastically. But it was good to hear the choir singing less well known (and better) accompaniments to Away in a Manger and While Shepherds Watched..." Among a number of shorter pieces I particularly enjoyed was the softly sung Sing Lullaby, the sublime In Dulci Jubilo, the joyful May Blossom and The Christmas Tree by Cornelius. Interspersed in both concerts were extremely well delivered seasonal readings . Finally, the Oriana Singers wished us happiness and joy in the New Year with the Wassail Song and for good measure they Wished us a Merry Christmas and (again) a Happy New Year.