

THE BSO STRINGS FROM THE BOURNEMOUTH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

27TH JANUARY 2017

What a wonderful evening of music which we all know and love! A concert was given to a full house in the Regal Theatre on Friday evening last week by the Strings of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, as part of the current season of the Minehead Arts Society.

This group of players from the well-loved Orchestra was led by Aryn Merchant from the first desk, not an easy thing to do. They started with Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, a piece which would have been played during the evening whilst the Court assembly ate, drank, chatted and danced. Such a tuneful piece would surely have caught their attention. This performance brought out the light hearted element of the music, and was well paced throughout the four movements.

Then the harpist, Eluned Price joined the orchestra to give a performance of Vaughan Williams' *Five variants of Dives and Lazarus*, based on a folk song which the composer used in several other works, and which is also the tune to which the hymn 'I heard the voice of Jesus say' is sung. This piece featured the principal cellist, Tom Beer particularly in the final section when the cello has a grand restatement of the theme, accompanied by harp obligato, before the work draws to a peaceful close.

The last piece before the interval was the *Introduction and Allegro* by Elgar, unusually scored for string quartet and strings. The quartet was made up of the principals of each section, and the contrast between the quartet and the full orchestra was brought out well. I did feel here, as in some other places, the performance would have benefited from having a conductor rather than the tempi being indicated by the leader with his bow. But the grand restatement of the theme at the end was exciting.

After the break we were treated to Barber's *Adagio for Strings*, which the composer arranged for string orchestra from the second movement of his String Quartet Op 11. He also set the same tune to the words of the Agnus Dei, and this vocal arrangement is also often performed. It was easy to see from this performance how well suited the tune is to these varied treatments, and the climax towards the end, fading away to nothing, was beautifully managed.

Finally, we had a performance of a more substantial work, Dvořák's *Serenade for Strings in E major*. This was composed at a happy time for the composer and the light hearted movements gave evidence of this. The whole piece is full of glorious tunes, treated in different ways in each of the four movements, with a restatement of the first movement theme being heard towards the end of the last movement, before the piece finishes with a brilliant coda.

I could feel the audience listening closely to the whole concert, entranced by what they heard, and the applause at the end must have gratified the players and made them feel their journey had been worth it.

The last concert of the Arts Society's season will be given in Minehead Methodist Church on Thursday 16th March by the Dante Quartet, who will play works by Haydn, Beethoven and Bartok. This should prove to be an interesting and pleasurable evening.

JML