



Last Night of the Proms
East Bridge Chorale and Sandwich Concert Band
Saturday June 4th at 7.30.

This first joint venture between East Bridge Chorale and the Sandwich Concert Band, under the direction of Benedict Preece, was a triumph on Saturday evening at St Mary's Arts Centre in Sandwich. Tickets were sold out and the audience were treated to a feast of musical gems ranging from Irving Berlin to Handel.

The first half was a mixture of items for band and choir both separately, and together. The evening started with Aaron Copland's Fanfare for the Common Man which set the mood for the evening with a wake-up call from the percussion section, and rhythmic playing throughout the band. The particular highlight for me was the arrangement of "I was Glad" by Parry, where the wonderful climaxes made the building ring with the joint sound of choir and band. The voices soared over the band. The band's rendition of Irving Berlin's From Rags to Ritz set the toes tapping. The two items by choir alone – I vow to thee my country and Abide with Me were sung with great sensitivity under Benedict Preece's direction, and the diction was crystal clear.

The second half started with the opportunity to showcase members of the Sandwich training band. This is for less experienced players under the direction of Kate Robinson and included players young and not so young. They entertained with a range of numbers, including a fun item – Triangle Tarantella by Oliver Mann. What a wonderful opportunity for these musicians to grow in confidence by performing to a large audience.

After a resounding performance of Handel's Zadok the Priest, by choir and concert Band the evening culminated with the traditional Fantasia on British Seas songs by Henry Wood, with lusty audience participation and much flag waving. There were opportunities for solos within the band and the saxophone solo was particularly moving. Parry's Jerusalem followed and it was refreshing to finish the evening with the National Anthem – something which I remember always being part of a performance, but now something of the past.

This was a real “feel good” evening, and there were many smiles on faces whilst enjoying the generous refreshments and wine which completed the evening. Congratulations to all who took part in this joyful evening of music making and in particular to Benedict Preece for enabling these two groups to come together to perform. Community music making is certainly alive and kicking in East Kent.

Article by Mo Wickham.