

## MIGHTY CHORAL CONCERT AT ST SAVIOUR'S

ROBIN GREGORY REVIEWS: Eastbourne Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, Eastbourne College Choral Society and singers from the Phoenix Choir on April 21 2013.

Conductor Graham Jones becomes ever more adventurous in his programming. With nearly 100 singers from the ESO Chorus, Eastbourne College Choral Society and the Phoenix Choir, an orchestra of some sixty players and a fine tenor soloist he was able to celebrate the Queen's birthday in fine style, beginning with a rousing performance of the National Anthem.

In what proved to be a very European occasion, Belgium was represented by Joseph Jongen's Allelujah for Organ and Orchestra, composed in 1940. It was good to know that in that dark year *something* good was happening in Brussels. Aptly-named David Force gave a rousing performance of this rarity: a sort of fanfare which immediately grabs an audience's attention.

England's contribution was the ravishing Dies Natalis by Gerald Finzi. The beautiful words are by 17th-century mystic Thomas Traherne, and they were set by Finzi at his very best. A fine singer is essential: Andrew Mackenzie-Wicks brought intelligence and vocal mastery of a high order. The strings of the orchestra responded well throughout, missing only the blaze of shimmering light that should end The Rapture.

Handel's Zadok the Priest is forever associated with coronations, and given the sort of committed singing and playing that Graham drew from his singers and orchestra it never fails.

After the interval it was all France: Berlioz's huge Te Deum. This religious work is complex and difficult. Andrew's fine tenor was again evident in the Te Ergo section; and to say that I was immediately reminded of the recording by Sir Colin Davis (who died a few days ago) is perhaps the best way I have of saying that we had a stunning performance. In the majestic setting of Street's great St Saviour's Church, and with a printed programme that was a model of information and clarity, it is no surprise that the applause was loud and long.

Indeed, the whole evening should make Eastbourne proud to have such committed and successful music-making. And we can look forward to the ESO's summer concert on Sunday 23 June at 7pm again in St Saviour's Church. Violin soloist Indira Grier, a finalist in the ESO's competition this year, will play Elgar's Cello Concerto in E minor. The programme will also include Glinka's Ruslan and Ludmilla Overture and Schumann's Spring Symphony. More details from [www.eso.org.uk](http://www.eso.org.uk) or 07780 993801.