

SURRY AD. 13/3/15

# Meticulous music-making on a theme inspired by the sea

**Vivace Chorus and Tasmin Little G Live**  
**Rating: ★★★★★**

FROM the first notes of Mendelssohn's *Hebrides*, it became apparent that we were in for an evening of meticulously crafted music-making on Saturday, the Brandenburg Sinfonia responding with elegance to Jeremy Backhouse's expert conducting.

This was followed by a scintillating performance of Mendelssohn's *Violin Concerto* by the star of the evening, Tasmin Little, whose sparkling musical rapport with the orchestra shone out from the stage.

*Hear My Prayer* formed the

first contribution of Guildford's Vivace Chorus, here sounding dramatic and disciplined in the choral interjections of this famous anthem.

The use of Mendelssohn's own orchestration served to reinforce the work's power, although this occasionally threatened to drown out the treble soloist - a problem not helped by G Live's particularly dry and distant acoustic, which provided very little support for voices whilst boosting the middle register of the orchestra.

Despite this, Thomas Delgado-Little gave a solid account, singing with exemplary intonation and tone, especially in the higher register.

After the interval, the maritime theme resumed with pieces by Stanford and Delius.

While it was refreshing to hear these lesser-known works presented as well as this, the risk was always that they would suffer in comparison with Mendelssohn at his very best.

Delius' *Sea Drift* is a setting of part of Walt Whitman's effusive poem *Out of the Cradle, Endlessly Rocking*. It's an intriguing work, in which the narrator's soul becomes entwined with those of a pair of sea birds.

For me, Delius' music relies too heavily on constantly shifting chromaticism and his trademark 'unending melody', which can leave the

music sounding rather aimless. However, there were pleasures to be had in this performance, not least from the singing of the young baritone, Henry Neill, whose consistent beauty of tone and clarity of diction more than made up for his curiously immobile posture as a singer.

We were back to familiar territory for the finale with Stanford's *Songs from the Fleet*, which alternated faster, sea shanty-inspired songs (some fine singing from the chorus men here) with some wonderfully atmospheric slow movements, most beautiful of which was the serene evocation of a starlit sea that was presented in *The Middle Watch*.

**Roy Rashbrook**