

SURRY AD 5/6/15

Concert for Rowan a happy occasion, raising money for Rainbow Trust

**A Concert for Rowan
Guildford Cathedral
Rating: ★★★★★**

ON Saturday May 23 Guildford Cathedral was privileged to host a quite outstanding concert.

Jeremy Backhouse conducted a choir of more than 300 and Southern Pro Musica orchestra in a charity concert in aid of the Rainbow Trust, which provides support for children with a life threatening illness.

The figurehead for the evening was Rowan Todd, from Guildford, whose father,

Will, composed *The City Garden*, one of the two works performed, the other work being *Salisbury Vespers* by Bob Chilcott.

A great deal of effort was put into rehearsing this concert by all involved and Jeremy Backhouse did extremely well in keeping such a large number of performers together.

The choir was made up of Guildford's Vivace Chorus, The Salisbury Community Choir and The Vasari Singers from London.

A vital contribution came from Rowan's Choir, made up

of pupils from George Abbot, Tormead and Queen Eleanor's Junior schools, whose music teachers are to be congratulated.

Will Todd's *The City Garden* was sung very movingly. The words by Ben Dunwell describe a romantic journey through the seasons. Particularly effective was the singing in the quiet, sensitive passages. It was very moving to hear so many voices singing so magnificently together.

In *Autumn*, Vasari sang the plainsong beautifully and as everyone joined in at *There*

was a Garden, the fine singing was sustained until *It was our Eden* reached a very convincing crescendo.

The obvious excellence of Vasari throughout the concert in no way diminished the quality of the other choirs. Here the outstanding leadership and encouragement of the conductor was quite clear.

The Todd piece needs an appreciation of a jazz-like swinging style and while this was sometimes lacking, on the whole it could be felt - particularly by the young ones in *Inside my Heart* at the

opening of *Spring*.

The *Salisbury Vespers* was more conventional in style and made great demands on the performers.

All voices were stretched in the higher registers and there was some fine playing from the brass, although occasionally the voices were rather swamped by this.

Throughout both pieces, Southern Pro Musica was excellent and added greatly to the enjoyment.

This was a most happy occasion and the sell-out audience greatly appreciated it.

Neil Martin