

# Theatre arts review



## A passion for music

**Chantez! A Night of French Music**  
**Vivace Chorus and**  
**Brandenburg Sinfonia**  
**G Live**  
**Rating: ★★★★★**

SATURDAY saw G Live transported across the Channel for a night immersed in the elegance of French classical music.

Conductor Jeremy Backhouse opened the concert with Jules Massenet's *Chansons des bois d'Amaranthe* and after a shaky start, Vivace Chorus's confidence blossomed and they settled into the lively pace of *Oiseau des bois*. Some of the songs were slightly lost in bitty contrapuntal lines but Backhouse brought it back with a joyful *Chantez!*

Gabriel Fauré's *Madrigal* followed, with beautiful breadth of tone from the basses and altos. The Brandenburg Sinfonia shone

in the pavane, drawing out the famous melody with exquisite musicality.

The professional ensemble's solo piece, Ravel's *Pavane pour une infante déjantée*, was heart-wrenching. The music felt like it was in flight, soaring over the heads of the audience.

It was matched only by Vivace Chorus's stunning rendition of Fauré's *Cantique de Jean Racine*. Choir and ensemble were in perfect harmony, showing off their impressive dynamic control while giving the music space to breathe.

The chorus pulled off César Franck's *Panis Angelicus* with aplomb. Their enjoyment of the music was obvious and the solo cello added melodious depth.

From the opening Kyrie of Fauré's *Requiem* the choir outdid the orchestra. They were more delicate and more precise, with a beautifully



**Performance of Chantez! A Night of French Music by Vivace Chorus and Brandenburg Sinfonia at G Live, Guildford.**  
**Photo by Matt Pereira.**

sustained sound. The climax of the *Sanctus* was jubilant, although the quieter sections were marred by the solo violin, whose exaggerated rubato and thin tone was off-putting.

Soprano

Jocelyn

Somerville's pure, lyrical voice was perfect for the *Pie Jesu* and provided contrast to the menacing choral intensity of the *Agnus Dei*. Baritone Matthew Wood's warm, effortless tone enveloped the audience in *Libera Me* and

the work finished on a reverent *In Paradisum*.

Despite all the ups and downs that accompany an amateur performance, the concert was a true expression of musical maturity.

The performers executed

their repertoire with an intelligence that brought the music to life. Vivace Chorus has the most important ingredient for music-making: passion, and on Saturday they shared that with us all.

**Charlotte Perkins**