

CHORAL SOCIETY GIVES A SUMMER TREAT

A splendidly swash-buckling account of Charles Villiers Stanford's song *Sailing at Dawn* made an appropriate start to Thurrock Choral Society's Summer Concert, given at Thameside Primary School in Grays on Sunday 28th June. The Society has held an annual summer soir e for some years now, but this early-evening Sunday concert was something of a new departure – and what an enjoyable event it was! The school hall provided a perhaps surprisingly suitable venue: an airy, sunny space, it also had excellent acoustics, and allowed facilities for audience refreshments.

Throughout a well-chosen programme, ranging widely from church music by Mozart, Hummel and Faur e to Matyas Seiber's delightful Hungarian Folk Songs, a secular song by Dvořak and the final movement of Leonard Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* (sung in Hebrew), the Society's chorus were at their very best, displaying excellent discipline, with pleasing attention to phrasing and dynamics.

Despite the preponderance of sopranos and altos over tenors and basses, conductor Crispin Lewis succeeded in creating a very effective choral balance.

The Society's professional accompanist, Elspeth Wilkes, is also the pianist of the London-based Bridgetower Trio, who were welcome guests at the concert. How often do we hear chamber music played in public concerts in Thurrock – and played to this level of excellence? Their performance of Faur e's late Piano Trio was superb, whilst, in the second half, I was particularly taken with Schubert's *Notturmo* and Suk's *Elegie*, pieces which I had not previously encountered.

The violinist and cellist were also able to contribute to some of the accompaniments, whilst the Bernstein piece made an apt finale, bringing all of the performers together. The concert audience was relatively small, but very enthusiastic. Those who missed it missed a treat.

Richard Wade