

## **Mozart Masterpieces Winchester Music Club Choir and Orchestra**

A first and a last! This was the first time that Winchester Music Club had performed in Winchester College's New Hall since its refurbishment, the new entrance foyer providing a warm welcome for the capacity audience who had turned out in force for the last appearance of Nicholas Wilks as Musical Director of the Music Club. After twelve years of inspirational work with the choir and orchestra Nicholas is standing down, following his appointment as Second Master at Winchester College.

He chose Mozart's C minor Mass K427, a work which Mozart left unfinished due to tragic family circumstances, but which contains some wonderful music, including some quasi-operatic solo work. The young soprano soloist, Mary Bevan, took on the challenging part that Mozart intended for his wife, Constanze. Her star moment was undoubtedly the *Et incarnatus* portion of the *Credo*. Her radiant tone filled the hall as her vocal line intertwined with some excellent playing from the flute, oboe and bassoon – these three players deservedly had their own applause at the end.

Paired with the soprano was another young singer, the mezzo Kitty Whately, who conveyed absolute joy in her singing of the *Laudamus te*, her rich lower notes and vocal agility very much on display. The duet *Deus, Rex caelestis* demonstrated how well matched were the two female voices. Tenor soloist Daniel Auchincloss had a lovely bright sound on his top notes but did not quite cut through enough in his trio with the two sopranos. He fared better in the *Benedictus* quartet, where he was joined by the rich, powerful tone of bass Božidar Smiljanić who, unfortunately has only this one ensemble to sing, thus preventing him from revealing his full potential.

The Music Club chorus was, as always, very well trained and sang with enthusiasm and commitment, producing a full and bold sound – they always look as though they are enjoying themselves! The concert opened with a fine performance of Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* for violin and viola. Violinist Brian Howells (leader of the Music Club orchestra) and violist Dale Chambers matched each other musically in their phrasing and melodic interplay. Neat ensemble was a feature of the slow movement and the finale conveyed joy and exuberance. All in all, a splendid way for Nick Wilks to leave his Directorship. His contribution to the local amateur music scene is considerable and he leaves the Music Club in excellent form.

*Duncan Eves*