

St. Mary's Hemel Hempstead

Lunchtime Concert

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2010

Simon Pusey's impact on the musical life of our community cannot be overstated. This multi-talented musician enriches choral singing via his work with St. Mary's Church Choir, his directorships of the Hemel Hempstead Singers and the Crofton Singers, and his rehearsal support of the Potters Bar Choral Society. As an instrumentalist Simon performs with panache on the organ, the piano and the violin. And on top of this he makes music accessible locally through the series, which he arranges, of monthly lunchtime concerts at St. Mary's Church. This, of course, not only gives people the opportunity to hear fine music, but affords gifted musicians who may, because e.g. of teaching commitments, have few chances to perform publicly, to do exactly that. In short, he is a promoter of the best musical talent, both in our area and further afield.

On 11<sup>th</sup> May, at St. Mary's, Simon delighted us with a sung recital delivered in a tenor voice of great purity and sensitivity. And his selection perfectly suited this voice, there being a lyrical quality common to all items. The music of Delius is probably more familiar to most in its orchestral form, in which the composer paints with a ravishing, sensual musical brush, so one had to listen with a finely attuned ear to the group of songs selected to catch those falling, Delian cadences. But they are there, and Simon and his accompanist Anna Le Hair picked them out for us with unfailing artistry.

The second group of songs – settings of poems by Christina Rossetti – were composed by Raymond Warren, a distinguished academic with whom Simon has close personal and musical connections. His expressive rendering well conveyed the rather sombre mood of both the poems and the settings.

As a break in the song recital Anna Le Hair played John Ireland's 'Amberley Wild Brooks'. Somewhat belying this title the village of Amberley lies peacefully near the River Arun as it flows serenely through the Sussex Weald on its way to the Channel at Littlehampton. This was Ireland's home and the quietly rippling river is expressed in the music and rendered perfectly on the piano by Anna with her usual sureness of touch.

Altogether a polished and satisfying programme by both tenor and accompanist.

On 8<sup>th</sup> June the Breakspear Trio will be featured at the lunchtime concert at St. Mary's. Members of the Trio are Anita Catterick (Soprano), Tony Catterick (Horn) and Anna Le Hair (Piano). During their recital they will be joined by Suzannah Hart (Clarinet) and Tina Gibbons (Soprano).