

Exceptional concert of deliciously played Fauré



Rowan Harvey-Martin conducting. Photo: Peter Hislop.

*Music / "Fauré by Candlelight", The Llewellyn Choir and The Llewellyn Sinfonia, Holy Cross Anglican Church, Hackett, Sunday, July 25. Reviewed by **ROB KENNEDY**.*

SPONSORED by the Embassy of France, this concert titled "Fauré by Candlelight" was *magnifique*.

Conducted by Rowan Harvey-Martin, the singers were The Llewellyn Choir and in The Llewellyn Sinfonia, Tim Wickham, violin, Lauren Davis, violin, Michelle Higgs, viola, Charlotte Winslade, cello, David Flynn, double bass and Anthony Smith, piano and organ.

Opening with a deliciously played "Pavane" by Fauré, the string quintet performed a beautiful arrangement of this seminal dance.

"Calme des Nuits" by Camille Saint-Saëns came next. This gorgeous yet tricky work sounded strong and also whispered with a textured beauty. The 60-strong choir created a heavenly sound in this small church.

Fauré's setting of a poem by Armand Silvestre, "Madrigal" came next. For Fauré's "Piano Trio in D Minor", Op. 120, with Smith on piano, the conductor Harvey-Martin on violin and Winslade on cello, magnificently performed this deeply sensual work.

This trio created a glorious and professional sound. Smith is a consummate pianist and closely watches every note. Winslade's playing on cello stood out with a sublime tone and Harvey-Martin created a striking sound. This was some of the finest playing heard anywhere in Australia. Very impressive.

Next came three songs by Fauré. "Après un Rêve", "Nocturne" and "En Prière", for choir and piano. These poetic and plaintive works, all light and playful, sang of dreams, love and the devotional. The choir sounded as one and created a yielding and serene performance for all three pieces.



Fauré performance. Photo: Peter Hislop.

Before the interval, a work of immense beauty, Fauré's "Élégie", for cello and piano. This music drips with a profound lament. The sound Winslade made on her cello, without sheet music, like a human sobbing, expressed the deepest grief. It was just superb from both players.

Fauré's "Requiem in D Minor", with Smith on organ, the string quintet and choir penetrated deeply in this small church. This is a special work in the cannon of requiems. Its gentleness and the sensual writing have kept it separate and perhaps above other requiems. They used it at Fauré's funeral.

This work is scored for baritone and soprano soloists. Baritone Rohan Thatcher has a fine voice; he added much distinctive character to the quality of this performance.

Harvey-Martin conducting created a pinpoint accuracy with her gestures, and she did it all with a light-hearted manner. She clearly gets her message across.

Boy soprano Antonio de la Torre was a sublime inclusion. This young, confident man knew his part well. Singing without sheet music, he had a balance and sensitivity that defied his age. This concert had it all, even an encore. Very well

This concert was the second requiem attended by this reviewer in two days. The day before, I saw the Canberra Choral Society and the National Capital Orchestra performance of [“Ein Deutsches Requiem”](#) by Brahms. Both concerts showed the depth and talent of local singers and musicians. It was wonderful to be able to experience live such well-crafted music during times of lockdown for so many in Australia.

And for all music lovers, “Fauré by Candlelight” will be repeated on August 15; do not miss this exceptional concert.