

## Choir's warm evening of nicely sung 'bits and pieces'



Members of Llewellyn Choir

*Music / Swing into Spring, Llewellyn Choir. At the Polish White Eagle Club, Turner. September 27. Reviewed by ALANNA MACLEAN.*

**Swing into Spring was a gently spritely concert by the Llewellyn Choir under the brisk baton of conductor Rowan Harvey-Martin.**

Slightly tentative in a couple of the early pieces, the choir soon picked up a focused energy that carried the program through to a very satisfying conclusion.

And the little hall at the Polish White Eagle Club in Turner, a venue new to me, turns out to have a great theatrical ambience with deep-red stage curtains, a mirror ball in working order, an eccentric collection of stage lighting and a pair of chandeliers.

It was a good, warm setting for a program that explored feelings, from those of the Hebrew slaves in Verdi's Nabucco to the songs of Cole Porter and the music of Samuel Barber. Old-fashioned songs such as Porter's Begin the Beguine sat alongside more old-fashioned numbers such as Night and Day, Ain't She Sweet and Ain't Misbehaving, as well as the moodier Summertime, with a quiet solo line from soprano Elsa Huber, the darker Autumn Leaves and the totally sharp Mack the Knife.



Anthony Smith underpinning the program on piano.

It all sounds a bit of a mixture but, with Harvey-Martin's briskly good-humoured introductions and firm conducting, and Anthony Smith quietly underpinning the program on piano and organ, this all worked very well. Somehow it also allowed for two pieces from American composer Rebecca Clark (lovely settings of two Shelley poems that try to describe the effects of music) and a Barber setting of Gerard Manley Hopkins' ethereal Heaven-Haven: A Nun Takes the Veil. All of this seemed logical juxtaposition as did the choice of the slightly eerie Scottish The Parting Glass to finish the evening. It was like a good ABC Classic FM evening of bits and pieces, nicely sung and conducted, not without pleasing moments of melancholy and aided by an old-fashioned venue with considerable ambience.