

Review of
Taunton Choral Society
Advent Concert 'Carols by candlelight' Saturday 26th November 2016

Edward Goater is Taunton Choral Society's new Musical Director and his first event was an Advent Concert of Carols by Candlelight. This was to be followed three weeks later by a performance of *Messiah*, so under Edward's direction an energetic pace continues to be set for this much loved local group.

St John's proved an atmospheric venue for music representing the Advent move from darkness towards the light. Great work had been done to fill the church with candles which flickered from every crevice as the audience entered, and the entire concert was delivered without the aid of mains electric lighting!

Organist Matthew Redman was a splendid accompanist and responded sensitively to the music, admirably fulfilling his task of supporting the choir on the fine Willis organ at St John's. Highlights of the singing included a pleasing sense of phrasing and some particularly lovely blended sounds from the large soprano section. Other parts also took their turns to shine out in the darkness. Impressively, the choir provided soloists from within its ranks, and managed to present the whole concert without any breaks or interludes, and indeed without sitting down at all.

There was an enterprising blend of traditional, familiar and newer works - and some intrepid spatial separation in Jan Sandström's intriguing take on Praetorius's *Es ist ein Ros Entsprungen*. Sometimes the intensity dropped and perhaps the choir needed some breaks in the programme - and indeed there might have been an opportunity to hear a solo or two from the excellent organist. Overall, however, this was an enjoyable and committed performance, supported admirably by a well-oiled machine of helpers providing candles, refreshments, and a very warm welcome. In the best spirit of Advent we look forward to further concerts under Edward's leadership with eager anticipation!

Miles Quick