

## **LHMF Youth Choirs Day 2019**

As usual on the Youth Choirs day there were parents, siblings and grandparents queueing outside the Dorking Halls by 8.30am waiting in eager anticipation to hear their children's choirs give a great performance. Volunteers from the Festival adult choirs were out in force to guide the audience members and the young singers to the right place. The buzz of excitement did, as usual, fill the Halls with anticipation.

This year's adjudicator was Amy Bebbington. Amy is the conductor of one of the Festival adult choirs. She also conducts at the Royal Academy of Music and with many other choirs. Amy teaches conducting and is a Doctor of Musical Arts. To find out more please look on her website. Before each Class began Amy led a 'warm-up' with some fun actions and lots of movement. The adult audience did join in despite feeling a little self-conscious at times.

The youngest singers, those who are seven or under were the first to perform. Three choirs sang in the first group and two in the second. The energy these young people put in to their singing is a joy to watch. There were songs from films, a specially written one for one school, story songs and one cynical one called 'Be kind to your parents' it went on to say that you may become one, one day! There was an audible snigger from the audience. We heard beautiful solos, singing in different parts at the same time and witnessed lots of actions including flying some kites.

After a short break a further five choirs made their way into the Halls. These singers were under eleven years. Songs now ranged from Benjamin Britten to Ralph McTell. There was lots of 'part' singing and one choir managed some amazing whistling. Some of the songs had lots of words to be learnt as well as to be fitted into the music but every word was audible. Once more there were soloists who sang with confidence and pride. There was a very moving version of Calan Lan partly sung in Welsh. Amy said that she had found it very difficult to have to choose winners from among these choirs as they were all so very good.

The afternoon session brought two choirs for the under thirteen year groups and three for the under eighteens. The variety of songs was very wide it included Chilcott, Beethoven, Lennon and McCartney and Tim Minchin. One choir was recognised for the purity of the sound they made but again all the young singers put their hearts and souls into their performances. Only one choir this year was not from a school. This choir had come all the way from Fulham and included singers between the ages of six and fifteen. A soloist sang the Beatles' 'Blackbird' so clearly that you would have been able to hear a pin drop in the hall.

It was wonderful to see so many schools returning again this year but also particularly good to be able to welcome a few newcomers. Not only was Surrey well represented but so was Fulham and Bromley. It is an honour for me to be able to introduce each choir to the audience during this special day. The audience members always show such support for the young singers and there is real pride in the room. What we must always remember to do is to thank the music teachers in our schools for all that they do. Sadly not every school has a music specialist these days but still non-specialist teachers continue to ensure that their pupils can enjoy making music in any way they can. Thank you to all those teachers who brought their choirs to this special day. I am already looking forward to next year's Youth Choirs Day.

**Barbara Christopher**

**March 2019**