

# **Tayside Organists' Society**

## **President's Evening**

with

## **The Cecilian Choir, Kevin Veal, Mary Veal and Colette Ruddy, soprano**

Andrew Macintosh, accompanist

**St Andrew's Cathedral, Dundee**

**29<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

*Review by Peter Thornton*

Kevin Veal's term as Society President was extended to three years because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and his President's Evening consequently had been postponed until now. The evident appreciation of the sizeable audience at this concert of sacred music by the Cecilian Choir, with soprano soloist Colette Ruddy, proved that it had been well worth the wait!

Over the years the Cecilian Choir has developed and maintained an enviable reputation in and around Dundee, touring in Europe, singing in major cathedrals and even in the distinguished surroundings of St Peter's Basilica in Rome. Their high musical standards are in large part due to the talent and dedication of their long-time director, Kevin Veal. With his daughter Mary as co-director and co-accompanist, the choir now continues the tradition.

For the President's Evening Kevin and Mary had put together a concert programme of sacred music ranging from J S Bach and Beethoven to John Rutter and local composer Michael Revey. This must have been an immensely challenging task, given the impact of Covid-19 restrictions on rehearsals. The intention had been for items to be conducted and accompanied by Kevin and Mary in turn, but Kevin had experienced problems with vision following a recent unfortunate bout of shingles. At literally the last minute Andrew Macintosh stepped into the breach and accompanied some items on the organ – full marks for expert sight-reading! He rose magnificently to the challenge and provided sympathetic support, on an unfamiliar digital organ with a challenging console for viewing the conductor. Kevin and Mary directed the singers and changed places to accompany other items.

The choir's diction was exemplary throughout, giving meaningful interpretation of the texts. Phrasing was smooth except in only a very few places. Entries were accurate, although those on the upbeat sometimes lacked confidence. Pitching of notes was generally good, although it sagged occasionally, especially in rising intervals. The balance of the parts was problematic in some areas; it was fine when the sopranos had the tune, but the tenors and basses particularly, being significantly outnumbered, did not come through firmly where their parts were important. One wondered whether it would have been an advantage to have placed them in the centre of the choir between sopranos and altos, rather than in a single row along the back. These were only very tiny details; overall the choir and its directors deserve great credit for their achievement in a such a demanding programme.

Soprano soloist, Colette Ruddy, brought a welcome ray of sunshine to what was a cold, dreich evening outdoors, her clear tones soaring round the fine acoustic of the cathedral. Her interpretation of the *Pie Jesu* from Fauré's Requiem was quite magical and when she joined the choir in Franck's *Panis Angelicus* her voice balanced perfectly.

At the conclusion of the concert, the Very Rev. Canon Kevin Golden VG, Administrator of the Cathedral, spoke for us all in appreciation of the achievement of the choir and its leaders, and led the audience (congregation) in prayer, concluding with the Lord's Prayer. A hearty vote of thanks was given by Society Vice President, Ron Oliver, following which refreshments were provided in the Cathedral Hall.

Kevin, Mary and the choir – and Andrew – must be congratulated on having provided such a high quality presentation, which was a fine conclusion to Kevin's Presidential term. Thanks are due to Rev. Canon Golden and St Andrew's R C Cathedral for hosting the event.

#### Programme:

- Choir:            Creation's Hymn (Ludwig van Beethoven)  
                      Hosanna (Michael Revey)  
                      Ave verum corpus (Edward Elgar)  
                      I will sing with the spirit (John Rutter)
- Soloist:            Litany (Franz Schubert)
- Choir:            Ave Maria (Friedrich Heinrich Himmel)  
                      Make me a channel of your peace (Sebastian Temple, arr. Mark Hayes)  
                      Ave verum corpus (Richard Runciman Terry)  
                      The Lord's my Shepherd (Michael Revey)
- Soloist & choir    Panis Angelicus (César Franck)
- Choir            Jesu, joy of man's desiring (Johann Sebastian Bach)  
                      Prayer of St Patrick (John Rutter)  
                      Ave Maria (Edward Elgar)  
                      Teach me, O Lord (Philip Stopford)
- Soloist            Pie Jesu Domine (Gabriel Fauré)
- Choir            A Clare Benediction (John Rutter)  
                      Eternal God, we give you thanks for music (John Rutter)