

CORO STELLANTE

FROM DUSK TILL DAWN

DOWNHAM MARKET METHODIST CHURCH SUNDAY FEBRUARY 3RD 2013

After disappearing onto the continent last year, it was wonderful to once again to find myself sitting in the Downham Market Methodist Church on a tolerably warm Sunday evening looking forward breathlessly to another Coro Stellante extravaganza.

What can I say (that I haven't already said before) as usual, I was not disappointed as the good ladies belted out another quality mixed bag of classics European and classics North American. The first half high points were numerous as ever, with Larysa Kuzmenko's "Night" causing me to hold my breath for so long I couldn't remember when I had last breathed. "Sure On This Shining Night" by Morten Lauridsen has been on offer previously but on this particular shining night, it was the stand out piece of the performance. Aside from jotting down my thoughts on the quality of the singing, I always score the various musical offerings on my "Walt Disney" scale which in simple terms measures how animated conductor, raconteur and genius Michael Kibblewhite is and first half finale "Fairy Dawn" by Charles Stanford came in with a large majority.

The second half began dramatically with the crowd pleasing Ave Maria in true stereo as the choir split between the front performing area and the rear balcony giving an amazing 360 degree musical experience. After the opening it was mostly American titles with a lot of my favourites included. A beautiful rendition of Al Shlosha d'Varim by Allan Naplan that has that long last note that you just never want to end and in "The Storm Is Passing Over and "Call Him Up" I noted with interest that the "forced" dancing (I am led to believe it leads the good ladies to feelings of self-consciousness) was particularly tidy with greater than usual enthusiasm in the clapping. I was told that my personal favourite "Shenandoah" was back on the menu after a leave of absence and although it was there due to "Popular demand" I told everyone who would listen that they had put it back on just for me ... They sang, I blubbed .. what can I say.

My congratulations to Musical Director Michael Kibblewhite for his warm inclusive style that makes this type of choral singing so accessible, and to the outstanding John Byron on piano accompaniment. A beautiful selection even if they shuffled the published program just to make sure I was paying attention and offered up a first half that came with a request not to clap between pieces as they intertwined and the magic would have been broken. We didn't clap, and it was indeed a magical half.

More dates available this year from the website www.corostellante.org.uk.

Stephen Hayter