

Salisbury Musical Society Concert
Salisbury Cathedral 23.6.18

The summer concert by Salisbury Musical Society was a winner. Rossini's *Petite Messe Solenne* may be a setting of the mass but it isn't small and not all of it's solemn – one indication of the composer's playful irony when he composed it thirty years after his last opera. Originally scored for twelve singers, two pianos and harmonium, he later orchestrated and expanded it in the version we heard.

The Salisbury Symphony Orchestra began with a sprightly account of Rossini's Overture: *The Italian Girl of Algiers*, reminding us of his skill in creating witty music that fizzes. Yet he also composed serious dramatic operas, and in the *Petite Messe Solenne* he fused the joys of human fun and the dignity of religious celebration.

After a tentative start, SMS found their form in the *Gloria* and remained on top, with a particularly moving *Sanctus*. Tenor Thomas Elwin flourished with the comic-heroic *Domine Deus* (God must surely have smiled) and Henry Waddington's bass was consistently warm and effective. Laura Mitchell (soprano) and Victoria Simmons (mezzo) were less impressive earlier but gave their best in the final lyrical movements. John Challenger conducted in a most successful SMS debut.

John Cox