

## **St Matthew Passion: “A wonderful start to this year’s festival”**

The 2017 Season of the Leith Hill Musical Festival opened on Sunday night with the staging of St Matthew Passion, one of the greatest masterpieces ever scored by Johann Sebastian Bach.

The event saw the coming together of over 250 singers and instrumentalists including the Ripieno Choir, the Canzona orchestra, singers from Festival Choirs and many independent singers, together led by our new Festival Conductor, Jonathan Willcocks, on his maiden conducting of the Festival Season. It was a splendid presentation.

Dorking Hall was packed full and the audience were treated to great theatrical performances by soloists, James Oxley (Evangelist), Marcus Farnsworth (Baritone), Richard Walshe (Bass), Milly Forrest (Soprano) and Marvic Monreal (Contralto). The dramatic narration by the ‘Evangelist’ and his fellow soloists were pristine and became the talk of the night [by the audience].

After the concert, many in the audience expressed their delight at a wonderful piece with a befitting performance. An audience member, Carol Law said it was a “great concert. We thoroughly enjoyed it and thought the choir were excellent.” Another added, “It was brilliant. A wonderful start to this year’s festival.”

On his maiden appearance, Festival Conductor, Jonathan Willcocks said, “My first concert as Festival Conductor was a truly memorable and satisfying experience for me, with the choir rising magnificently to meet the high professional standards of our soloists and orchestra.”

Benjamin Castello, our Chorus Master added, “The choir responded so well to Jonathan's inspiring direction, the soloists, and Canzona's vibrant playing, and gave a performance that will be happily remembered. I look forward to seeing you again at some of the forthcoming April divisions, and at January's rehearsals.”

The next events of the Festival are as follows;

March 18 - Youth Competition

April 6 - Division 3 Festival

April 7 - Division 1 Festival

April 8 - Division 2 Festival

October 14 - Come & Sing