

Bromsgrove Arts News, October 2013
by Jim Page

Inspired Leadership from Richard Jenkinson

The miracle, that is the Orchestra of St John, continued on 28th September when a very ambitious 'Night at the Opera' concluded with the *Prelude and Liebstod* from Wagner's mighty *Tristan and Isolde*! This is the ultimate challenge for any orchestra and singer, yet in the Parish Church we had in Claire Prewer a soprano who was able to mount that challenge with singing of incredible power and, supported by playing of the utmost passion from the orchestra and inspired leadership from Richard Jenkinson, the tragic intensity of the music, its pathos and sheer sensuous beauty overwhelmed the audience. Before that we had been shattered by the powerful playing of the large orchestra (which even included Wagner tubas) in Siegfried's *Funeral March* from *Gotterdammerung*.

The first half had been in lighter mode with a delightful selection of 'pop' operatic arias with such favourites as Papageno's *Aria* from *The Magic Flute*, Puccini's *O my beloved Father* and Dvorak's *Song to the Moon*, all sung by Claire Prewer in appropriate style and accompanied with great understanding and sympathy by Richard Jenkinson and the orchestra. Ian Bell's steady baritone featured in solos of his own, and his partnership with Claire Prewer in the excerpt from Massenet's *Thais* was most rewarding. Shulah Oliver's burnished tone set the scene in the *Meditation*, but in the rarely heard duet that follows, the tone changes and we are confronted by a tragic scene full of real operatic melodrama. All in all, an amazing concert that Bromsgrove concertgoers were incredibly lucky to have on their doorstep.

Book Saturday 1st March in your diary now when the St John Chorus will join the orchestra for two English classics (VW's *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas* and Britten's *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings* and Haydn's *Nelson Mass*).