

Music Review

Summer Pudding at the New Beaconsfield Hall

Bubbly Evening

Patrons who recently filled the New Beaconsfield Hall to enjoy *Summer Pudding* were treated to a wonderfully varied musical event but also had their taste-buds fired in concert by lashings of *bubbly* and generous bowls of fine strawberries.

The musical programme centred around a local choir, *Voice Box*, whose members were brought together eighteen months ago under the tutorship of Lesley Morris and Keith Harris. While Lesley performed as both conductor and soloist, Keith was in the background as the accompanying pianist and as a boost to the bass section. *Voice Box* consists of twenty- three voices ranging from soprano to bass. They describe themselves as 'willing amateurs'. A quick scan of the audience revealed many smiling faces, vigorous foot-tapping and clapping with great gusto- all evidence to this antipodean listener that 'willing amateurs' was clearly an example of English understatement!

Transported

The Choir opened with a selection of traditional spirituals most commonly heard on Sunday mornings in the deep south and then deftly transported the audience north to New York City with a fulsome rendition of *Lullaby on Broadway*.

The audience was then introduced to guest soloist, Michael Powell, who delighted all by opening with Verdi's *La*



Donna è mobile. Michael has a long and distinguished career in concert and on stage both in Great Britain and overseas.

During the evening, Michael also gave solo performances of Bizet's *The Flower Song*; Rossini's *Largo al factorem* and with Lesley, Mozart's *La ci darum*, *Papageno-Papagena* and then for

something entirely different, sang *Bess, you is my woman now* from Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*.

Texan Tears

Lesley, with choir member Carole Bates, further entranced the audience with Irving Berlin's *Sisters* before all singers returned to draw the audience near with a joyous performance *Down to the River to Pray* and *The Wide Missouri*. At this point this listener's Texan spouse was misting up with homesickness. The first section finished in dramatic style with Karl Jenkins' *Adiemus*. Lesley was able to switch seamlessly from a memorable performance of *Non, Je ne Regrette Rien* in the evocative style of Edith Piaf to *The Warthog* made famous by the wit of Flanders and Swann. The evening concluded with Michael singing Puccini's *Nessum Dorma* twice, in response to the enthusiastic calls of the audience for an 'encore'!

Profits of the evening will be donated to the **Lady Reade Foundation** supporting local youngsters with their studies. (See page 57).

Tom Shannon