

***Let There be Light*** . St Francis Church – 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2025

By Martyn Parfect

\*\*\*\*\*



A professional clarinetist from 1978 Martyn attended the Birmingham School of Music in 1974 (now renamed the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire). He previously studied with John Fuest of the RLPO and was 2<sup>nd</sup> clarinet in the Melachrino Strings & Orchestra as well as soloist in concertos by Mozart, Weber and Copland. He also performed in many chamber and solo recitals around the UK with pianist John Gough

Book ended by two John Rutter works the concert opened with his *Hymn to the creator of Light* for two choirs. Unlike his usual works which audiences are more familiar with, one could have been taken aback by the dissonance early on. This can be difficult to pull off but in Paul Spicer's very capable hands the performance was both fresh and alert with musical feeling. The first choir's choral melody in the central section *Schmücke dich* by Johann Crüger was then heard again when in the very capable hands of Martyn Rawles performing the gentle, restrained eloquence of Bach's Chorale Prelude on Crüger's *Schmücke dich*.

The singing in Kodály's *Laudes Organi* was given a fresh, direct performance by the excellent Birmingham Bach Choir.

Ending with Rutter's *Requiem* which is well suited for a small choir, this performance was positively sublime helped along by three excellent soloists – Joseph Roberts' cello playing in "*Out of the deep*" and Tommy Hill's oboe accompaniment in "*The Lord is my shepherd*". Spicer has a knack of finding soloists of the highest calibre as in Ciará Preston Myakicheff's whose singing in *Pie Jesu* and *Lux Aeterna* was not only intensely moving but also quite brilliant as her voice soared high above the choir. On a cold, wet night the packed church in Bournville is testament to how much Birmingham audiences embrace this local choir.

Martyn Parfect