

Elijah returns to Epsom before the end of times

22 September 2023



On Wednesday 20th September, **Epsom Choral Society** held an open rehearsal at **St Martin's Church, Epsom**, their usual concert venue. An 'open rehearsal' served a double purpose. It was part of the preparation for their concert, performing **Felix Mendelssohn's *Elijah* on 18th November**. It was also a bid to attract some new singing members by offering a chance to come and try it out.

I went along. I enjoy Mendelssohn's music and it is easier to appreciate after an attempt at performing it. As Wednesday's weather approached biblical proportions, it was a good night for singing about whirlwinds droughts and floods.

After a welcome from choir chairman **Isobel Squire**, conductor **Julian Collings** began the rehearsal. The whole work has about 40 songs. The choir sings in about half of them. Usually, a rehearsal would entail concentrating on a few items, looking to correct some mistakes, find the music among the notes and then sing each piece all the way through. Wednesday was more of a taster. We sang fairly quickly through almost all the choral numbers, saving the detailed work for Julian's favourite movement, 'He, watching over Israel'. The conductor's role is to know the music inside-out (he does!), warning which notes are likely to go wrong and suggesting ways to make them sound better. Once the notes are correct, the next stage is suggesting how to shape them to bring out the musical effects.

No-one has to sing alone. Epsom Choral Society has room for some new members but they do have all parts covered. There are confident singers among sopranos, altos, tenors and basses. Any newcomer will be adding to the overall sound, not sticking out while searching for the notes. They also have an expert pianist, **Marion Lea**, who can highlight the choir parts while learning or pretend to be an orchestra when everyone is singing something through.

Although the open rehearsal has passed, there are still plenty of Wednesdays before the concert. If you fancy a chance to discover *Elijah* from within an able and welcoming choir, I'm sure Epsom Choral Society's membership secretary (membership@epsomchoralsociety.org.uk) will be very happy to hear from you.

Nigel Williams.