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Epsom Chamber Choir’s stirring debut under new conductor

10 November 2026



Concert review by Lynfa Landauer – 9th November 2026

The stirring opening chords of Epsom Chamber Choir’s concert at St Martin’s, Epsom, set the bar firmly for a wonderful evening under new conductor Patrick Allies. The a cappella programme, *My Heart’s Desire*, was based on the theme of love, with sacred pieces taking their inspiration from poetry of love and longing, including the Old Testament’s Song of Solomon.

Taverner’s Mass *The Western Wynde*, based on a 16th-century song, was the central work, its movements interspersed with music across the centuries, from Taverner’s near contemporaries Tallis, Victoria and Clemens non Papa through to living composers, including the choir’s own published composer, Helen Williams.

Allies commented that he had programmed *The Western Wynde* for his first concert because it was his favourite setting of the Mass, but added that it was also possibly the most difficult setting (a few wry smiles amongst the choir seemed to confirm this). I wondered whether he had chosen it partly to test his new choir, but if so, they passed with flying colours. The full choir, quartet, octet and soloists seamlessly negotiated any technical difficulties to give us an assured performance of this intriguing work.

A full and impressive sound

The choir has an impressive, full sound which we heard to great effect, most especially in the later anthems. Bairstow’s well-loved *I Sat Down Under His Shadow*, Kerensa Briggs’ *Ubi Caritas*, Howard Skempton’s *Rise Up My Love*, and settings of *Set Me As a Seal Upon Thine Heart* by both William Walton and Eleanor Daley were all performed with great warmth and commitment. Helen Williams’ composition *Beloved*, a setting of *Rise Up and Come Away* from the Song of Solomon, enthralled both the audience and choir.

Perhaps my favourite part of the concert, though, was, ironically, the closing piece, Clemens non Papa’s *Ego Flos Campi* (I Am the Flower of the Field). With the choir gathered more closely together around the conductor, they gave a wonderfully ethereal performance.

The musical programme was nicely punctuated with a couple of poetry readings on the theme of love, also reaching across the centuries. Sir Philip Sidney’s *My True Love Hath My Heart*, written in 1593, was accompanied by the less familiar *Not Love Perhaps* by A. S. J. Tessimond (1902–1962).

Looking ahead to Christmas and spring

We can look forward to more inspiring concerts from the choir, with its Christmas concert, *Peace on Earth*, on Saturday 12th December, and its spring concert on 13th March, both at St Martin’s Church, Epsom. I, for one, will be keeping an eye on their website for more details!

Lynfa Landauer

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