

## Pegasus soars to provide a treasured night

The Tilford Bach Society was host to the accomplished chamber choir, Pegasus, when they performed Monteverdi's *Vespers of 1610* at St Andrew's Church on May 14. That bald statement concealed a very exciting occasion which marked Pegasus's 21st birthday and one of the greatest of all choral works.

The first work ever given by Pegasus was the *Vespers*, and they were delighted to have the opportunity to present this great piece again in their 21st anniversary year.

They were accompanied by an orchestra of strings, cornets, trombones and organ with a magnificent theorbo taking centre stage with the double bass.

The leader was Adrian Butterfield, music director of the Tilford Bach Society and the conductor Matthew Altham, director of the Pegasus Choir.

Monteverdi's *Vespers* is a majestic work containing settings of psalms contrasted with other passages of scripture and hymns, concluding with a setting of the *Magnificat*; and the music contrasts full, exciting sounds with lighter, dance-like movements for single voices either as solos or in small combinations.

All the soloists came from the choir itself: in fact, over half the singers took a soloist role. Pegasus

are fortunate indeed to be able to call upon so many members to take on solos.

There were many, many moments of pure delight – too many to be mentioned here – but the entry of the brass instruments at the beginning of the *Laudate Pueri* was particularly dramatic, as was the largely instrumental *Sonata*, with soloists singing *Sancta Maria*. So, indeed, were the echo effects such as those in the *Audi Caelum* where the echo picks up the last syllables of the Latin words of each verse to make a new word as a response to or a commentary on it. In verse 3 of the *Magnificat*, two of the cornett players put down their instruments and took up recorders to accompany "for he hath regarded the lowliness of his handmaiden". There were also notable occasions where a soloist was accompanied by the Gregorian plainchant setting of the same words (a device later used by Bach in his setting of the *Magnificat* and elsewhere).

All in all it was an evening to treasure.

The society's next event is its annual Tilford Bach Festival from June 10 to 12, in Tilford Church, culminating in a performance of Bach's *Mass in B Minor* with internationally famous soloists. Full details are on [www.tilbach.org.uk](http://www.tilbach.org.uk).

**John Mansfield**