

'Messiah' rose above hall's poor acoustics

THE sheer dynamism of conductor Sir David Willcocks made Guildford Philharmonic's performance of such a familiar work as Handel's *Messiah* into an exciting event.

His experience of extracting the musical best from choirs stretches back to the Second World War and, on Saturday, in the less-than-favourable venue of Guildford Civic Hall where choral acoustics are poor, he achieved an excellent result.

The choice of the *Messiah* proved just how popular familiar works are with the concert-going public. It is probably performed several times a year in Surrey, yet the philharmonic was in the position of turning people away from the doors on Saturday night.

The lucky ones with tickets, however, were inhibited with their response. Applause was polite, though enjoyment was obvious.

There was a good line-up of soloists in soprano Tracey Chadwell, counter tenor Nigel Short, tenor Andrew Murgatroyd and bass Alastair Miles.

The counter tenor is a definite personal taste — you like the tone or you don't.

Nigel Short's voice is very good and his performance of *And Who May Abide* was particularly impressive.

Bass Alastair Miles was on great form, returning to Guildford Philharmonic after his 1988 performance of the *Mozart Requiem*. He was outstanding, producing a very big sound.

Tracey Chadwell also sang well, especially as a cold earlier in the week had put a question mark over her appearance. The sound was slightly nasal, but she rose magnificently to a rather quick performance of the piece de resistance — *I Know That My Redeemer Liveth*.

Tenor Andrew Murgatroyd's golden moments came in *Behold And See* and *Every Valley*. . . Few works can have such a wealth of opportunities for every singer, be they soloist or choir member.

The orchestra could have been a little bigger to counter the strength of the philharmonic choir, but overall it was a convincing performance.

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