

Power and vitality of Verdi 'Requiem'

IT was a compelling performance full of power and vitality that confronted the audience at Guildford Civic Hall last Saturday night.

Verdi's *Requiem*, an ever-popular romantic work, was performed by Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra under the expert guidance of its principal conductor, Sir Charles Groves.

Moods alternated between powerful vivacity and sombre contemplated. Chorus and orchestra combined to bring the dramatic work to life, making the most of the vast range of tonal opportunities.

The *Dies Irae* exemplified the balance between the delicate and the muscular. Silences were perfect and all notes were precise.

The effective moment when the trumpets call to each other across the wasteland of life was brilliantly done with two trumpets positioned in each back corner, behind the audience, making those listening feel even more a part of the requiem mass.

Patricia Bardon (alto), Christine Teare (soprano) and Gordon Wilson (tenor) were all strong and clear, but bass-baritone Stephen Gadd was disappointing in his rather indistinct delivery, not to mention his total lack of emotion.

The *Dies Irae* ended with the tranquil beats of the bass drum, death march, leaving

the audience with a haunting feeling of peace.

The more jubilant *Sanctus* successfully drew the audience back to the celebrity nature of the mass. Brisk and precise trumpet fanfares burst through the preceding silence with light animation.

Verdi incorporates a great variation of styles which, with Sir Charles at the fore, came off beautifully on Saturday. Unaccompanied choral singing, stylised chanting, opera aria, ecclesiastical, dramatic and theatrical — all were there.

After the delicate tones of the flute in *Lux Aeterna* the final movement, *Libera Me*, built up to a resounding climax, and the audience became engulfed in the passion

and drama of the section.

At a reception following the performances the Mayor of Guildford, Mrs. Mary Lloyd-Jones, congratulated the orchestra and choir on their "splendid performance." She presented Sir Charles with a silver salver engraved with the Guildford crest.

Mr. Dennis Card, senior secretary of the Musicians' Union, said how much Sir Charles was respected among musicians and, especially, the GPO. He presented him with a cheque for £5,000 for the music trust to help finance the engagements outside Guildford.

Lisa Raynsford