

Verdi *Requiem* at Guildford Cathedral

THE Verdi *Requiem* can well be considered his supreme masterpiece. It draws together his deepest emotions and all the musical knowledge attained through composing 26 operas.

It was first performed in St Marks Basilica, Venice and the performance in Guildford Cathedral was a worthy successor.

The combined choirs of Vivace Chorus, the Freiburg Bachchor, and Romsey Choral Society, four excellent soloists and the Brandenburg Sinfonia under the baton of Jeremy Backhouse ensured that, from the breathtaking pianissimo of the opening, through the vast ranges of dynamic and emotional intensity which culminate in the utter stillness of the

final "Libera me", we had forces capable of providing all that Verdi could have required.

Jeremy Backhouse melded these forces together into a seamless whole. Every musical nuance was at his fingertips and the way he held Verdi's pauses to allow the echo to die and to hold the emotional moment was beautifully crafted.

Although a requiem mass, this is not a work to be contained within church worship. It is operatic in concept and needs soloists who can live their music in a way not usually found or needed in the performance of most sacred works. Soprano Claire Seaton, mezzo-soprano Susanna Spicer, tenor Andrew Mackenzie-Wicks and bass Michael Bundy were an exceptionally well balanced quartet, with well blended ensemble singing.

The Brandenburg Sinfonia, except for two momentary lapses in violin intonation, played with verve and with sympathy.

The three choirs sounded as if they always sang together. Their choral discipline was excellent and they rose to every challenge of dynamic, range and emotion.

This was a performance which transported the listener and as the soprano soloist soared up to her final double forte top C then almost imperceptibly joined the orchestra four bars later to gently crescendo into C major, we were left, performers and audience alike, after all the sorrow and the yearning and the switchback of emotions with the breath of hope.

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