

Monmouth Choral Society Review [12th November 2011]

Wyastone Concert Hall provided a wonderful setting for the performance of the Verdi Requiem on Saturday 12th November 2011

Monmouth Choral Society, already one of the largest choirs in Wales, was, on this occasion, joined by singers from Cardiff's Cantemus Chamber Choir, the Regency Sinfonia (Leader: George Ewart) and four world-class vocal soloists to mark the twentieth anniversary of its rebirth.

From the outset, Conductor Huw Williams established a good balance between the choir and orchestra, used well judged tempos and drew a kaleidoscope of colour from his very large forces.

Although Verdi writes in a truly theatrical style, the work's devotional character cannot be ignored.

The opening "*Requiem Aeternam*", (Rest and peace eternal) and the closing "*Libera Me*" (Lord, deliver me), could have benefitted from more hushed tones, but in the full-throated "*Dies Irae*" (Day of Anger), intensified by fortissimo orchestral chords and syncopated beats on the bass drum and the use of effective off-stage trumpets, together with the feisty double fugue in the "*Sanctus*" (Holy), the chorus was always authoritative and both thrilled and terrified the capacity audience with its range of emotion.

The quartet of international soloists brought an intensity to the plea for mercy in the sorrowful "*Lacrymosa*" (Day of bitter lamentation) and were commanding in "*Domine Jesu*" (Lord of Lords).

Mezzo Soprano Deborah Miles-Johnson produced rich tones in the *Liber scriptus*, and when joined by Soprano Claire Seaton, provided a perceptive insight into the tender aria *Recordare* (Ah, remember), and a beautiful prayer-like account of the "*Agnus Dei*" (Lamb of God).

Bass-Baritone Stuart Young was reflective in "*Salva me*" (Save me), and Tenor Andrew Mackenzie-Wicks brought sensitivity to the "*Ingemisco*" (I lament).

The "*Lux Aeterna*" (Light for ever) was operatic and well supported by the dark orchestral shade. The superb Soprano soloist led the collective plea for final deliverance in the "*Libera me*".

The choir's diction was first class and its intonation faultless throughout. A most profound performance of which Monmouth Choral Society can be proud, not only to launch its special anniversary season but also to mark the Remembrance weekend.

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