

Perth Choral Society Perth Concert Hall December 2007

Perthshire Advertiser

FOLLOWING on from their huge successes with Handel's *Messiah* and Orff's *Carmina Burana* in Perth Concert Hall, Perth Choral Society and their Director of Music Peter Rutterford capped this with a thrilling performance of Verdi's *Requiem*. They are sure to have been delighted by the massive turnout on Sunday evening, and the audience were clearly delighted by what they heard.

The evening started with a *Requiem et Kyrie*. The chorus impressed with their a cappella singing in the *Te decet hymnus* section, and the soloists were first heard to effect in the *Kyrie*.

The almost theatrically dramatic, long *Sequentia* came next, split up into its various parts. On splendid form, the chorus started what is the best known section of the work — *Dies irae*, Day of wrath. Peter Rutterford here directed a most exciting reading, and it was a renewed pleasure as this chorus crops up three times in the work! The next chorus, *Tuba mirum*, went even further in excitement, with the extra trumpets set up in the gallery upstairs, the second pair muted at the start to give the impression of distance and movement. Next Donald Maxwell gave the *Mors stupebit* a reading of dark intensity. Verdi's instructions with the soft bass drum strokes were menacingly realized.

The beautiful mezzo voice of Anne Lewis was the star of the next three sections. She gave a memorable downward plunge to one phrase of *Nil inultum* in *Judex ergo*. Orchestrally, the bassoons gave a notable start to the *Trio Quid sum miser*, where soprano, tenor and baritone blended well. Perth Choral Society were again on mighty form in *Rex tremendae*, with solo quartet interjections of *Salva me* joining to make a suitably tremendous climax. The duetting of soprano, Rebecca Rudge, and mezzo, Anne Lewis, was particularly well matched in the *Quarens me* section of the *Recordare*.

Tenor Shaun Dixon started his solo, *Ingemisco*, with a tight vibrato, yet soon warmed up to produce glorious golden tone. Donald Maxwell was again the demon of the piece in *Confutatis maledictis*, promising bitter flames to all the accursed. A milder side of his character was heard in the *Lacrymosa* where, duetting with Anne Lewis and with the chorus, they built up an impressive momentum before the final *Amen* ended the first half.

The quartet of soloists were to the fore in the *Offertorio*, with soprano Rebecca Rudge producing beautifully ethereal tone. The *Quam olim Abrahae* fugue was firmly launched by Donald Maxwell and tenor Shaun Dixon was excellent in the *Hostias*.

The *Sanctus* is a very testing piece for the choir and they acquitted themselves well. The strengthened Angus Chamber Orchestra contributed nice filigree work from the strings and a nimble arpeggio run from the bass, adding to the fun of this movement. The flute and viola gave beautiful shading to the following *Agnus Dei* duet for soprano and mezzo.

The final section, *Libera me*, was again graced by Rebecca Rudge's floating tone and fine a cappella singing from the choir, who responded equally well when the *Libera me* turned into a fugue.

This Verdi *Requiem* was supremely well presented and evoked a correspondingly enthusiastic response from the packed Perth Concert Hall.

Ian Stuart-Hunter