

## Verdi's 'Requiem'

WHETHER or not the Verdi "Requiem" is a work which, because of its very nature should be reserved for the special occasion, when exactly the right soloists, chorus and orchestra can be brought together in the most advantageous circumstances, it is a score which every choral society feels the need to tackle at some time or another.

In Monday night's Festival Hall performance, conducted by Brian Wright, the singing of the combined Goldsmiths Choral Union and Guildford Philharmonic Choir brought to the music both a worthy, mostly assured, carefully prepared respect, and an uninhibited, rather raw but nevertheless well disciplined enthusiasm. It rose as confidently to the fiery images of the "Dies Irae" as to the hushed supplications of the more reverential passages, while remaining in spirit dutiful and earth-bound.

For all its good intentions, its care for the general as well as the particular, it was a performance that neither produced many physical thrills, nor induced any compelling

transcendental awe or spiritual affirmation.

With the supporting playing of the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra sometimes awkwardly phrased and balanced, and rarely going beyond the straightforwardly acceptable, its strengths and weaknesses were neatly crystallised in the variable quality of the four soloists.

The American bass-baritone Donnie Ray Albert, in his British debut, gave a solid foundation to the quartet with singing that was firm, true and securely shaped, if perhaps not quite having sufficient resonance. Even more authentic in its expressive richness and supple Verdian style was the mezzo of Jean Rigby. Constantly threatening to undermine their surely laid foundations, however, was the inelegantly toned and often poorly controlled line of the tenor Stuart Kale, while the singing of the soprano Jo Ann Pickens, though possessing all the necessary vocal resources, suggested as yet rather more promise than fulfilment.

**Robert Henderson**