

# Choir's polish in 'Requiem'

LESS obviously ethereal than Faure's *Requiem*? Combining beauty with a large measure of refinement and sophistication of the type that seems so natural to the French creative mind (whether in music, literature or painting) of the first half of this century?

Whatever the reason — and precious little has been written about it — Durufle's *Requiem* is a work which is gaining in

popularity and recognition among performers and audiences alike.

On Saturday it received a most attractively sung performance in Guildford Cathedral by Guildford Philharmonic Choir, supported excellently by Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra; all under the sympathetic baton of Sir David Willcocks.

The training of the choir by Neville Creed was reflected in a performance on Saturday of assurance and polish together with an excellent sense of empathy with Durufle's *Requiem*.

The ability to encompass

within a performance both the sonority and shimmering grandeur of the *Sanctus*, as well as the simplicity and mellowness of *Lux Aeterna*, speaks volumes for the high quality of both singing and playing on this occasion.

Willcocks's conducting contributed a great deal to the excellent balance and blend of sound. In particular, he drew from the women's voices a beguiling purity of sound in, for instance, the latter part of *Libera Me*, just as he had already achieved from the men at the start of the same section.

Looking for other positive

aspects of this performance, the small but sensitively written mezzo solo by Anne-Margaret Cameron and baritone cameo by Gerald Finley were both interpreted strongly rather than just sung.

In all, as fine a sound as I have heard from the choir for a long time; it was one which they also produced in Holst's *Hymn of Jesus*. Quite a few bars of this sound like a P.S. or continuation of *Neptune the Mystic* from the composer's *Planets Suite* written three years previously.

From the light and plaintive opening Willcocks and the choir established an almost mesmeric quality, with an admirable purity of tone from sopranos and tenors. The performance was also notable for the richness of choral tonal colours.

Andrew Millington was admirable in the organ part in both these works, bringing a particularly effective blend of sound to the *Agnus Dei* in the Durufle work.

Between the choral delights was a somewhat ill-fitting Mozart Clarinet Concerto. Jack Brymer evidently knows this work backwards, which is how he might just as well have played it for all the rapport there was between him and the Guildford Philharmonic.