

Surey Adcock

NOVEMBER 3, 2000

Theatre Arts re

Magnificent Mozart

ONE could speculate endlessly over why Mozart never finished the great *C Minor Mass*, written to introduce his new wife Constanze (and her voice) to the parental home in Salzburg. But what remains is indeed magnificent.

Its performance by the Guildford Philharmonic Choir was the climax of a memorable evening at the Cathedral, last Saturday.

The quality of the choir was apparent from the outset, in a suitably dramatic performance of

Haydn's motet *Insanae et vanae curae*, which alternates between the stormy and the soothing.

Mozart pulled no punches in writing the *Mass*. It is Mozart at his most fervent, and at his most demanding. The soloists, particularly the two sopranos, swoop and soar through a vast range, while the choir has to negotiate long runs of notes, which twist and turn quirkishly and leave the minimum opportunity to take a breath.

Under Jeremy Backhouse, the choir sang with a conviction that would have warmed the composer's heart. In the complex runs of the *Cum Sancto Spiritu* fugue they were well drilled and flexible in tone and dynamic.

The *Qui Tollis* contains a wonderful passage of sinking, chromatic harmonies where a sudden hushing of the tones sounded chillingly effective.

Soprano Helen Neeves interacted beautifully with the exquisite solo woodwind in the *Et Incarnatus*, and was complemented by soprano Ghislaine Morgan and tenor Jon English in the *Quoniam*, a stunning virtuosic trio. The soloists, including bass Colin Campbell, formed an excellently blended quartet in the *Benedictus*.

The Brandenburg Sinfonia played superbly, with dashing strings, radiant woodwind, skilful trombones, which added a unique colour to the music, and

clean cutting trumpets and horns.

Such qualities also permeated the performance of Mozart's great *G minor* symphony, with the exception of the (absent) trombones and trumpets.

A remarkable piece, moving through key after key, with a new exciting melody or striking sonority or dissonant harmony over every page, this plunges again and again into sombre melancholy, before picking itself up again.

The slow movement, with its combination of long sinuous tunes and dainty flourishes was particularly entrancing.

Shelagh Godwin