

Stephen Jepson

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Subject: Brahms

Dear All,

If you haven't already seen it, the crit is below:-

Choir sang with incisive accuracy

BRAHMS'S Requiem is not a straightforward setting of the Latin liturgical text, rather, the composer chose biblical texts which reflected his own view of the human predicament, coloured as it was by the deaths of his mentor, Schumann, and of his own mother.

The texts are set in a colourful and varied manner, but are never allowed to obscure Brahms's essentially classical approach heightened by a deliberate use of academic techniques such as the fugue and the canon.

The work therefore calls for a straightforward, unfussy interpretation, which is what it received at the hands of the Guildford Philharmonic Choir and Orchestra last Saturday. Under the outstanding direction of David Hill, the choir sang with incisive accuracy, and was responsive to every dynamic nuance.

That every word of the German text came across was not merely the effect of the dry acoustic of Guildford's Civic hall. The orchestral contribution might have been strengthened by such superb playing as that of oboist Neil Black, but the strings tackled the tricky divisi of the opening movement with sheer professionalism.

Lynda Russell lent a wonderfully rich tone to her soprano solo, beautifully echoed by the chorus. Stephen Varcoe was a sensitive interpreter, if a little light in vocal quality for a hefty bass role.

Shelagh Godwin