

Cathedral rings out to Verdi's *Requiem*

THE audience witnessed a fantastic performance of Verdi's *Requiem* by the Guildford Philharmonic Orchestra in Guildford Cathedral.

The young British conductor Edward Gardner, who is currently assistant conductor of the Hallé Orchestra in Manchester, directed the performance with tremendous enthusiasm, drawing an extremely wide spectrum of dynamics and emotions from the full compliment of the orchestra.

The line-up of soloists was dominated (in the best possible way) by the rich and sensuous

tone of the mezzo-soprano, Jean Rigby. Her freedom throughout the entire register to deliver the music with clarity while still maintaining its dramatic impact was superb.

Young bass-baritone D'Arcy Bleiker has a sonorous voice with some fine middle register colour and it was he who battled to keep the quartet in tune against the wavering intonation of soprano Claire Watson.

Stepping in at less than a day's notice was William Kendall who, while not really being a Verdi tenor, did hold his own against

the other three more resonant singers.

The joint forces of the Guildford Philharmonic Choir and the Wokingham Choral Society, numbering some 250, towered above the orchestra and the audience alike on the choir staging. Their sheer volume during the fortissimos of the *Dies irae* was exhilarating, while the sorrow that was portrayed in the *Lacrymosa* made the music weep like I have never experienced before and the final *Libera me fugue* was truly uplifting.

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