

Todd's *Te Deum* was the highpoint of programme

A FULL-HOUSE was treated to a compelling performance of contemporary vocal music on Saturday night at Guildford Cathedral.

The ambitious Vivace Chorus commissioned a brand new large-scale work for the occasion – Will Todd's *Te Deum* for chorus, children's choir, soprano soloist and ensemble.

The rest of this refreshingly imaginative programme was made up of music by other living composers from America and Britain.

While it was good to hear fine performances of some familiar modern classics by John Tavener and John Rutter and to be introduced to works by Morton Lauridsen and Eric Whitacre, Todd's brilliant new piece was the highpoint of the evening.

Todd is very much on home territory in writing large-scale vocal works.

His Mass in Blue (2003) is much performed and has recently been recorded on Signum Classics to great critical acclaim. Indeed, it was Vivace's recent performance of the *Mass in Blue* that led to this commission.

From the bold virtuosic timpani writing in the opening bars of the *Te Deum* it was clear that the audience was in for a treat. Todd's musical language is drawn from a variety of sources which are integrated into a compelling musical cocktail.

If there were echoes of Walton and Britten in one movement, there were traces of Sondheim and Duke Ellington in another. Pupils from Holy

Trinity School, Tormead School and Holy Trinity Church Choir joined forces in a touching performance of the 4th movement; a beautiful setting of the *Lord is my Shepherd*.

Elsewhere, soprano Bethany Halliday and saxophonist Paul Fawcus impressed with gripping solo turns.

The Vivace Chorus was excellent throughout the concert, making light work of a challenging programme. Conductor Jeremy Backhouse had the chorus's undivided attention; his hard work on detail in rehearsals paying dividends in a slick, professional performance.

Vivace's bold programming transformed this concert into an event. I eagerly await their next commission.

Stephen Goss