

# Inspired performance

"I BELIEVE this work to be a reflection of my untiring diligence in the composition of church music."

With these words J S Bach sent a handsomely engraved copy of a *Kyrie* and *Gloria* to the Elector of Saxony from whom he hoped for an appointment.

The music tailor-made for the brilliant musicians of the Dresden court, was never performed during his lifetime. Last Saturday these movements, together with those later compiled by Bach to form his Mass in B Minor, enthralled a capacity audience at Guildford Cathedral.

It must be said that the cathedral is not an ideal venue for such music. Depending on where you sat, you could hear every note twice. The resulting muffled, unco-ordinated effect was not a true reflection of the compelling, incisive performance given by the

Guildford Chamber choir, the Guildford Camerata, and the Guildford Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra.

Nicholas Kramer's tempi were nicely judged if sometimes delightfully surprising: a rivetting *Credo* of considerable speed, a passionate, full voiced *Crucifixus* and a stunningly athletic *Et resurrexit* spring to mind among the choral items.

Where the acoustic permitted it, details in the orchestral parts were clearly defined, and there was superb solo playing from flute (*Benedictus*), oboe (*Qui sedes*), violin (*Laudamus te*), horn (*Quoniam*), and high trumpets cutting through the texture at climaxes.

Bach's vocal writing is as elaborate as that for instruments but all five soloists rose magnificently to the technical challenge and were well matched in the duets. Sopranos Julia Gooding and Jeni Bern sang eloquently and

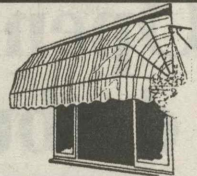
effortlessly; Robin Blaze's pure counter tenor voice rang out to wonderful effect.

Tenor John Bowen sang sensitively, if occasionally forced on his highest notes, but Mark Stone's baritone was better suited to the beautifully phrased *Et in Spiritum Sanctum* than to the *Quoniam* which requires a richer, deeper vocal colour.

Among the many high points were the duets *Domine Deus* and *Et in unum* in which the singers copied each other's tunes and were in turn copied by the instrumental soloists.

Acoustic notwithstanding, this performance was inspired.

*Shelagh Godwin*



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