



The choir delivered a joyous rendition of the piece

Last Saturday evening the Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society, under the baton of Matthew Owens, performed a programme of works by Mozart and Haydn before a near capacity audience.

The concert opened with a spirited account of Haydn's short *Te Deum*. The accompaniment was provided by the Chameleon Arts Classical Orchestra, a modest sized body playing on period instruments. They set the mood with a stirring introduction and the choir delivered a joyous rendition of the piece.

The choir took a back seat during the second item which was Mozart's *Symphony No.40 in G minor*, one of his last three written in the space of a few weeks in 1788. This was what might be termed a lean account of the score. The small number of "period" strings were occasionally masked by the winds. Tempi in the faster movements were brisker than many of us were accustomed to but that for the andante was nicely judged. One occasionally felt that a little more rehearsal would have tightened up the ensemble.

The main work of the evening was Mozart's *Requiem*, left unfinished at his death and completed by one of his pupils, Süssmayer. This was given a highly satisfying performance. Tempi were generally broader than in the symphony and the music gained in stature thereby.

The choir produced great warmth of tone throughout and were most expressive, particularly in the opening *Introitus* and *Lacrimosa* sections - the phrasing in the latter was particularly sensitive. There was plenty of power when required and there were many thrilling moments - notably the attack at the start of the *Dies Irae* and *Rex Tremendae*. The great climax of the final movement (*Communio*) was quite overwhelming. At times one felt that articulation in some of the florid fugal passages left a little to be desired.

For this work the choir was joined by a quartet of young but already experienced singers. Louise Walsh was the warm toned soprano whose diction was not as clear as one would wish but who produced some thrilling sound at the top of her range. The tenor, Ed Lyon, was much more than adequate. However it was Madeleine Shaw, the mezzo-soprano and Darren Jeffrey, the bass who made the greatest impression, she with her vibrant, ringing tone and he with his rich lower register. One of the highlights of the evening was the *Recordare* in which all four combined to thrilling effect.

The orchestra accompanied with sensitivity throughout. One did occasionally feel that, due to the size of the choir in relation to the orchestra, balance rather favoured the former.

Once again Matthew Owens demonstrated his skill at steering his forces through such a monumental work and we look forward to their concert in November.

Brendan Sadler