

Review of Sussex Chorus' November 12th Remembrance concert.

'The annual Remembrance concert is a significant event in the calendar of choral groups and Sussex Chorus' contribution, held in St Andrew's, Burgess Hill, on Saturday November 12th, was greatly enjoyed by an appreciative audience. Their energetic, purposeful and confident start to Haydn's Nelson Mass, a work for which they were evidently well prepared, with the excellent Rosenau Orchestra, Jeremy Weaver on the organ and maestro Stephen Anthony Brown at the helm, augured well for an affirmative, reverential evening's music-making. The choir has grown in number and self-assurance over this last year with improved balance of voices and intonation, becoming more sensitive to the shades and colours within the music. They relished Haydn's ingenious small-scale contrapuntal writing in the 'Quoniam tu solus' and opening of the 'Credo' sections in particular and, in the 'Gloria', answering the excellent soloists' affirmative declarations. Each soloist had their moment in the sun, Peter Grevatt's fine bass voice in the 'Qui tollis', Zita Syme's beautifully agile, melismatic opening 'Christe' and Tabitha Reynolds' mellow, mezzo voice in the 'Et incarnatus'.

The second part of the concert featured Timothy Hamilton's 'Requiem'. Commissioned for the 2014 Centenary Remembrance events, this work is modelled on the Faure in structure and written in an accessible, communicative style which the choir warmed to. With an extensive, pensive Prelude and various points of reflection, it gives opportunity to showcase the orchestra, with evocative horn sections, lyrical oboe passages and effective use of the side drum in more rousing moments. Zita Syme relished the romantic, eloquent writing in the Introit and the admirable operatic tenor, James Schouten, had his highlight in the Agnus Dei and all the singers savoured the rich, mellifluous writing in the Hostias and Hosana sections and the nod to Verdi in the 'Libera me.' The same orchestra, conducted by the composer, had recorded the work in 2014.

Congratulations to Sussex Chorus and Stephen Anthony Brown for an uplifting and stimulating evening, confirming that the choir, through their own evident commitment to, and love of singing, is moving from strength to strength.

Their retiring collection was in aid of St Peter and St James' Hospice.'

Simon Austin