

REVIEW

An expressive and impressive interpretation of Bronte Mass

Bronte Mass

Halifax Choral Society

Victoria Theatre, Halifax

By Julia Anderson

SHEFFIELD Philharmonic Chorus and Black Dyke Band joined Halifax Choral Society for a concert to showcase Pontefract-born Philip Wilby's Bronte Mass.

Conducted with great commitment by John Pryce-Jones, the work was commissioned by Leeds Philharmonic Choir as a memorial tribute to that choir's former chairman, John Brodwell, receiving its premiere in 2007.

It unpredictably interweaves four Bronte poems with excerpts from the Latin mass. Whether this unusual combination works conceptually or musically will probably be a matter of opinion, pleasing some people, puzzling others. It certainly had its moments.

Baritone William Robert Allenby sang eloquently, particularly the last verse of Emily's fearless No Coward Soul Is Mine. The choir, unfazed by the formidable technical difficulties, was expressive, particularly in the concluding Gloria, which John Pryce-Jones insisted on playing twice.



Combination: choir and band share the Victoria Theatre stage

The band was superb, evoking every contrasting mood with its distinctive and unrivalled musicianship and artistry.

Conducted by director Nicholas Childs, it accompanied an impressive David Houlder in the final movement from Saint-Saens' Organ Symphony. They shone in Richard Strauss's showy Festmusik der Stadt Wien, written in 1943,

Eric Ball's arrangement of Elgar's exuberant EDU Enigma Variation and in Philip Wilby's energetic Greek Dance from 1995, with euphonium soloist Gary Curtin playing with breathtaking panache.

The choir sang John Cameron's arrangement of Elgar's Nimrod Variation with quiet authority and did full justice to Bruckner's richly textured Three Motets.



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