

Review of
Taunton Choral Society
Brahms *Requiem*
Saturday 30th June 2018
St Mary Magdalene Church, Taunton

Remarkable energy on a hot evening

Taunton Choral Society's summer concert was a triumph of commitment from this enterprising group. The concert featured 'Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands' by Elgar, and Brahms's 'German Requiem'. These two works provided great contrast, the Elgar being a series of predominantly light-hearted holiday reminiscences - with the composer setting to music poems written by his wife, Alice. The Brahms however is a life and death work with massive implications.

The conductor Ed Goater's careful consideration of the music was reflected in the expressive presentation of the singers. Elegant poise and varied vocal colour were the keynotes in the Elgar pieces, finishing appropriately with 'The Marksmen' evoking soldiers marching through the mountains, just as troops from 40 Commando had marched through Taunton earlier in the day.

The Brahms was given a remarkable performance. The choir rose to the challenge of singing in German to provide a majestic performance of real intensity. This was enhanced by the clarity and dexterity of the piano playing – providing a focussed accompaniment much clearer, if not so grandiose, as the orchestral version. Occasionally we missed the brass in the big moments such as the terrifying 'steam-roller' build-up in 'all flesh is as grass'. But generally the impressive co-ordination and dexterity of pianists Lydia Scadding and Aaron Burrows supported the singers admirably. Soloists Honey Rouhani and James Schouten communicated powerfully with a relatively small amount of material. There were some wonderful endings – leaving the audience with the delicious aftertaste of a vintage port. The appreciative silence before the prolonged applause at the end of the concert was thus a moment to savour.

Miles Quick

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