

The Angmering Chorale has been celebrating its 40th Anniversary Year in 2016 and, as a grand culmination of their festivities, chose a packed Arundel Cathedral to perform one of Choral singing's mega-works, Verdi's spectacular Requiem.

Even though the Chorale is one of the largest in this area, they also enlisted the help of some 30 members of Arun Choral Society, the Sinfonia of Arun (Leader: Robin Morrish) and four professional singers under the baton of their accomplished Conductor, George Jones – over 150 performers combined for this musical tour de force! Amongst the assembled ranks (and still singing!) were three ladies who were founder-members of the Chorale and, before proceedings commenced, John Bawler (Chairman) presented them with certificates to commemorate their outstanding service and dedication.

Notwithstanding the scale of Verdi's mighty work, there were many areas for quiet contemplation to counter the awesome Dies Irae which recurred several times during the performance. The Requiem commenced and ended with sublime pianissimo singing and playing but, during the louder sections, we were left in very little doubt as to the coming of the day of wrath with scintillating percussion and brass effects. This was particularly effective in Tuba Mirum when, in addition to the Orchestra's large brass section, four fanfare trumpeters sounded from high above us in the Cathedral's organ gallery. The Orchestra was also blessed with a magnificent quartet of (female) bassoonists whose sonorous tones were delightful.

Giuseppe Verdi is, of course, best known for his many operas and the Requiem draws much from that genre. Consequently all of the four excellent soloists were experienced opera singers who coped admirably in making themselves heard whilst singing in front of the vast massed forces assembled behind them. Soprano, Anita Watson hails from Down Under whilst Kathleen Wilkinson (mezzo), Mark Wilde (tenor) and James Oldfield (bass-baritone) are from these shores. Watson's delightful sounds were particularly memorable in the closing section, Libera Me and the quartet blended well both with each other and with the whole.

The Chorale coped excellently with the demands of this work and its operatic style especially since, during their 40 years, their forte has generally embraced more traditional choral standards and lighter fare including, of course, the recently composed works of their Patron, the popular composer, Sir Karl Jenkins CBE.

Despite this magnificent culmination of their first 40 years and the work's sentiments, the Chorale will not be resting in Peace! Far from it as they have a very full, exciting and adventurous programme lined up for the coming months and years starting with their popular Annual Christmas Concert in Angmering School on Saturday 10th December. Full details of future events can be found on their website at <http://www.theangmeringchorale.org.uk/>

Jim Hurdwell, 30 November 2016