

**MUSIC**  
**EDINBURGH BACH**  
**CHOIR & JUBILO:**  
**VERDI'S REQUIEM AND**  
**TE DEUM**

USHER HALL, EDINBURGH

★★★

IT SEEMED almost cruel of conductor Neil Mantle to have programmed a second piece to accompany Verdi's monumental *Requiem*. That demanding work was the main attraction in his engaging concert bringing together the combined voices of the Edinburgh Bach Choir, Jubilo and Broughton High School Senior Chamber Choir, along with the Scottish Sinfonia.

And his brief opener was no walk in the park, either. The *Te Deum* from Verdi's *Four Sacred Pieces* demands subtlety in its exposed choral writing, and although the choir's male voices sounded thin at first, they blossomed when the female singers and orchestra joined in.

The same was occasionally true in *Requiem* itself – the four vocal soloists sometimes seemed to need a little more flexibility to convey the emotions of their soaring lines. Of them, mezzo Catherine King stood out for the unforced richness of her voice, and although tenor Joshua Ellicott sounded strained at times, there was no mistaking the ardour of his performance. And there was no doubting the grandeur of Mantle's account – singers and instrumentalists rose to the occasion with passion. The *Dies irae* raised the roof just as it should, with percussionist Gordon McCreath pounding his bass drum as if his life depended on it. Although there was a certain rawness to the performance, it was still thoroughly creditable.

**DAVID KETTLE**