

**Muse #163**  
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## Music

### Verdi Requiem

*Llewellyn Choir, Llewellyn Hall,  
21 June.*

**Reviewed by Richard Windeyer**

A choir of over 100, a young orchestra and four of Canberra's leading soloists were directed by Richard McIntyre in a strong performance of one of the grandest settings of a religious text ever composed — Verdi's *Requiem*. Although written to remember the death of one of his idols, Verdi did not intend this work to be performed in a church as a religious service: it is operatic not liturgical. The operatic nature of this work calls for careful direction to produce a performance which never loses sight of the spiritual significance of the text, whilst recognising the dramatic features of the composition. This production handled the operatic/religious juxtaposition well.

The massed choir rose to the huge dynamic and emotional challenges of the music. Singers and orchestra alike plunged recklessly into the cataclysmic *Dies Irae* (*Day of anger, day of terror ...*) but they never faltered. The only criticism I have of this section was the sheer volume of sound for those seated in the front rows. This was the result of the four extra trumpets which were located in the gallery. With these four trumpets behind me, and the orchestra and choir in front I felt the term *fortissimo* was being redefined for my ears — for those slightly further back in the hall the results must have been wonderful. Equally impressive were the piano *pianissimos* that Richard McIntyre managed to extract from his forces. In fact the handling of the vast dynamic contrasts was a notable feature of the evening.

Terence den Dulk, Tupe Tam Yam, Anthea Moller and Sarah Hills formed the quartet of soloists, and it was the two female soloists who were most impressive. Anthea Moller by her vast experience and reverent approach to the text, and Sarah Hills with her effortless soprano. On occasion Hills slid between notes and I was left wishing for crisper, sharper, movement. However any minor flaws can be overlooked for her ability to absorb all the anguish of the text and reproduce it in the wonderful rich, dark tone to the voice. Tupe Tam Yam's voice in my view sounded tight, and constricted. Terence den Dulk made some lovely sounds, but I was left wishing for a bigger voice in many parts of this work. All handled the divine *Lacrymosa* with reverential beauty.

Consider the following features of this performance: the choir is an amateur community choir with limited rehearsal time, the orchestra consisted of students, the soloists, with the exception of Anthea Moller, were also students. Yet the resultant performance was much more than an amateur and student performance. Although there were some individual moments which lacked polish, they never detracted from a performance which went to the heart of this magnificent work. For dramatic musicality, the opening shimmered, the *Dies Irae* terrorised, and the ending left one awaiting a response to the pleading cries, *Libera me, Domine, de morte aeterna* (*Deliver me, O Lord, from everlasting death.*) ■