

BIRMINGHAM BACH CHOIR CENTENARY GALA CONCERT

Review – Martyn Parfect

Celebrating their centenary the Birmingham Bach Choir opened what was to prove to be a most memorable concert at Lichfield Cathedral with their namesake's 1727 three- movement motet "Sing unto the Lord a New Song". The freshness of interpretation, whilst retaining complete authenticity, of such a Bach performance could scarcely have been more successful than here, under the majestic direction of Paul Spicer. Although possibly intended to be performed by eight voices in two four-part choirs, traditionalists would not have been disappointed by the ability of this choir of over 80 singers to bring something fresh and exhilaratingly vibrant to a work composed nearly 300 years ago.

Handel's Dixit Dominus, composed some 20 years before the opening Bach work, showed signs of Handel's developing mature style reflecting the baroque tradition, with excellent contrasts evident. All four soloists sounded quite wonderful, never more than in the sixth section, *Dominus a dextris tuis*, benefiting from Spicer's direction of a crisp accompaniment from The Musical and Amicable Society who produced some truly sparkling orchestral playing.

The concluding Nelson Mass was breathtaking, with all performers maintaining a remarkable tension throughout. This was singing of the utmost highest standard from all, both soloists and choir, helped throughout by an orchestral ensemble that injected tremendous vigour into a work that is arguably amongst Haydn's greatest.

Martyn Parfect



After studying at the Birmingham School of Music Martyn taught and performed as a professional clarinetist. For the past 40yrs he has been involved in engaging and promoting National and International soloists for Midlands performances.