

Benjamin Britten - in memoriam

Bedford Choral Society

16 November 2013

Benjamin Britten tends to draw a 'marmite' reaction - love him/hate him but I think those that were in the audience were given a real treat at the latest BCS concert. Four works, three written by the man himself and one more modern work written after his death were selected for this concert to honour the 100th anniversary of his birth 22 November 1913.

Arvo Part: Cantus in memoriam Benjamin Britten

Our introduction to the evening, beautifully played by Bedford Sinfonia, created an emotive prelude to what was to come.

Britten: Rejoice in the Lamb

A work not heard so often- BCS managed to capture the 'mysterioso' of the first movement and caught the audience's attention. The four amateur soloists excelled themselves and they and the choir were sensitively accompanied by Justin Waters at the organ.

Britten: Simple Symphony

The name belies its complexity- the Sinfonia were in fine form- expertly conducted by Michael Rose- the 'playful pizzicato' movement was especially well executed.

Britten: St Nicolas

This is a work performed more regularly in the choral repertoire. BCS were joined by Bedford School Chapel choir singing impressively in the balcony of the Corn Exchange. Peter Hoare, having stepped in during the last week, sang with real conviction as St Nicolas and young Kamran Awran showed no nerves as the young Nicolas.

The choir looked a bit apprehensive but needn't have worried - the balance between parts could have been better with the sopranos underpowered but I believe they had lost 7 singers since the previous Monday rehearsal so, understandable. Once on their way, the choir seemed to relax and start to enjoy it (smile!) and their concentration held under Michael Rose's vigilant baton. Yes, a few entries were not as strong as composed by BB, and the diction began to fade (especially ends of words became ragged). But, well done! A fitting tribute to BB.

Julia Lockwood

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