



Demanding work no issue in Wells

Last Saturday evening a capacity audience filled Wells Cathedral for a performance of J S Bach's *Mass in B minor* given by Wells Cathedral Oratorio Society with the Chameleon Baroque Orchestra and five soloists. The soloists were Susan Hamilton and Ali Darragh, sopranos; Robert Isaacs, counter tenor; Mark Dobell, tenor and David Stout, bass. The conductor was Matthew Owens, Organist and Master of the Choristers, Wells Cathedral.

This Mass setting evolved over a number of years and, almost certainly, was never performed in its complete form in Bach's lifetime.

In the choral numbers and solo arias Bach seemed to sum up the whole gamut of Baroque musical style – a style soon to be superseded by the Classical style.

From the opening Kyrie the chorus produced a fine, well-balanced sound with the individual lines of the five-part harmony emerging confidently and with a good sense of forward momentum.

This was not a performance to raise quibbles over occasional lapses of intonation or security of entries, rather it was the feeling of a well-trained choir performing some of the most challenging choral writing well and with style - particularly given the size of the chorus.

In the brighter movements we had some electrifying entries in the performance – especially in the opening of the Gloria, and the second movement and Et resurrexit in the Credo.

The monumental Sanctus produced thrilling sustained singing also evident in the final “Dona nobis pacem”.

Matthew Owens is to be congratulated on producing such a fine performance of what is arguably one of the most demanding works in the choral repertoire.

Richard Morrison