

Nijmegen.

It was truly a shame that the Nijmegen Association hall was not completely full on this Wednesday evening. The top-class concert given by eighty members of the famous London Bach Choir deserved better.

This was an obvious conclusion after hearing the first half of the programme. In the *O nata lux* of Tallis (with its tricky dissonances) and the *Ave verum corpus* of Byrd we could hear that so-called 'Old Music' is in good hands with this choir. Conductor David Hill took care that the transparency was never lost, and conscientiously built a sensitive interpretation well-fitted to the style of the music. Both motets offered a sound that was both light and above all expressive. In the second piece the refined rendition of the 'Amen' was particularly striking.

After that, with a leap forward in time, the choir demonstrated its versatility. Rachmaninov's *Vespers opus 37* opened prayerfully. There was no shortage of rhythm and firmness in the later parts of the work. The Bach Choir presented a convincing and moving performance, the jubilant 'Alleluias' as well.

The choir's discipline was evident even in their manner of standing and sitting. Before the two pieces by Howells the group sat down for a few moments and then rose to their feet again in a perfectly synchronised movement. After the dynamic singing, with chilling crescendi, came the first well-deserved applause. In the *Nunc dimittis* of Pärt, the immaculate timing and the long drawn-out vocal lines stood out. It was lovely, the way in which David Hill inspired his choir with a subtle but firm touch here and there.

After the intermission the pleasure continued unabated with the five spirituals from *A Child of our Time* by Tippett. The "My Lord" in *Steal away* was wonderfully arresting. How lush the choral sound was in *Deep River*. And there were beautiful solos in this song cycle, from tenor, soprano and bass.

In the follow-up to the *Vespers opus 37* the choir displayed again their technical range (the closing bars of 'To thee' had a striking combination of steadily slower and then softer singing, without any loss of tension). After two more pieces by Howells we were treated to an encore (alas, not the encore listed in the programme, the *Ave Maria* by the Nijmegen composer Andriessen). In *Komm, süsßer Tod* (I couldn't make out the name of the composer) the singing continued to impress, intense and in perfect legato.

In short, a choral concert to remember with pleasure for a long time!