

Repeat of first concert celebrates 25th anniversary

IT WAS FITTING that the Tyndale Choral Society should have chosen Handel's Messiah for its twenty fifth anniversary concert.

Not only because it is the best loved of all the major choral works, and undoubtedly one of the greatest but also because it was a performance of the Messiah in North Nibley parish church, under Mollie Neale, which led to her founding the society twenty five years ago.

Today's conductor was Stephen Pedlar, and it was a mark of his youthful exuberance and enthusiasm that the complete work was heard — none of the usual cuts.

Thus the audience had the pleasure of hearing the less well known numbers, while the Society was faced with the biggest challenge of its twenty five years.

Further Stephen adopted the current fashion of fast tempi, and though it came off most of the time, and I am sure he was right to aim for that style of performance, there were moments when we were near to chaos.

Nonetheless the chorus rose splendidly to the challenge and, in particular in "All We Like Sheep" were stunningly exciting and effective.

All four parts did well, and kept going to the end of what must have been a very arduous day. If an admirer might make a point of criticism, it is that if singers cut notes short on words like "us", "hosts" and "Christ", the music is disfigured by excessive hissing and spluttering.

How often do we go to a concert, such as this, and come away with feelings of dissatisfaction concerning at least one of the soloists?

This was not such an occasion, all the soloists sang with style and musicianship,

The feel was right from the start, with John Wilman's sensitive singing of "Comfort Ye My People" and then Stephen Richardson's splendid articulation in "I Will Shake All Nations." He had replaced the indisposed Robert Poulton, and sang "Why Do the Nations" with great verve, though "The Trumpet Shall Sound" was a little muted.

Both the contralto, Yvonne Howard, and soprano, Linda Kitchen were excellent. One thinks of them both in "He Shall Feed His Flock" and then of course, Handel's glorious soprano setting of those marvellous words from Job, "I Know That My Redeemer Liveth."

The small orchestra, led by Edward Burns, had to work very hard, and while, unlike last time I heard Tyndale, there was no danger of them overwhelming the singers, and most of the playing come over very well, there were some anxious moments. Also the sound in the senza ripieno sections was not always satisfying.

However all the big moments came off and all the performers are to be congratulated on a most successful concert.

It showed that if you aim high, and are determined, you can pull it off.

Does this mean that Tyndale should now think

about some of the great works they have not yet done: Bach's Mass Solenneis, Verdi's Requiem, The Dream of Gerontius? Why not! at twenty five surely they have more than come of age; and are these works more of a

challenge than the uncut Messiah?

With Stephen Pedlar's imminent departure Tyndale are going to need another conductor. They will indeed be fortunate to find someone as talented and enthusiastic. H.L.

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