

Review / Choir makes 'Light' work of musical challenge

LLEWELLYN Choir's latest concert, entitled "Ikön of Light", presented an evening of varied contemporary works that offered the light of hope and understanding in a troubled world.

The program commenced with the Canberra Girls Grammar School Gabriel Singers with Australian Don Walker's "Non Nobis Domine", a setting of the 1916 poem by Charles Bean. It was nicely sung, but the quieter passages were hard to hear clearly against the piano accompaniment.

Next, the Llewellyn Choir presented Sir John Tavener's 1984 work, "Ikön Of Light", which is centred around a poem by a 10th century Byzantine monk. This work presents quite a challenge for singers with very high notes for sopranos and very low notes for basses to be sustained. The choir sang it very well indeed, creating a haunting and ethereal sound that was at times quite startling. The accompaniment by a small string orchestra was beautifully played and nicely balanced with the singers.

Two poems set to music by American Jenni Brandon were next on the program. The first one, "The Peace of Wild Things" was sung with great feeling as was the second, "The Giver of Stars", which also displayed fine harmony singing by the choir and exquisite solo moments by soprano, Greta Claringbould. Again, the string players added much to the atmosphere of these works.

The final work presented was Morten Lauridsen's 1997 requiem "Lux Aeterna". This is a melodic work with great passages of beautiful harmonies. The choir and the Gabriel Singers sang it extremely well, especially the third movement, "O Nata Lux", which was especially moving. Anthony Smith provided the fine piano accompaniment.

Rowan Harvey-Martin conducted the whole concert with great assurance. The items presented were challenging as well as enjoyable and the choir showed with the Taverner piece that they can handle even technically difficult works with great confidence.