

Review / Choir enjoyably masters two different masses

Music / “Mass in Blue” and “Misa Criolla”, Llewellyn Choir, conducted by Rowan Harvey-Martin. At Hughes Baptist Church, September 2.

Reviewed by LEN POWER



The Llewellyn Choir... at Hughes Baptist Church, September 2.

IT was an inspired choice by the Llewellyn Choir to pair two masses, “Misa Criolla” and “Mass In Blue”, in a concert. Using the same text, they could not be more different musically and both enjoyable to listen to.

“Misa Criolla” by Argentinian Ariel Ramirez was written in 1964. Based on folk material, particularly dance music, it’s a very easy piece to connect with. From a brooding, atmospheric opening, through driving Latin rhythms to its inspirational finish, it’s colourful and dramatic.

The Llewellyn Choir, under the baton of Rowan Harvey-Martin, sang it very well with the addition of fine singing from soloists Michael Martin (tenor) and Ben Connor (baritone). The Llewellyn Sinfonia gave the music a strong Latin flavour.

As an added treat, five songs from Manuel de Falla’s “Suite Populaire

Espagnole for Violin and Guitar” were played by Rowan Harvey-Martin on violin and Mark Norton on guitar.

These Spanish folk songs are hauntingly beautiful and were superbly played.

“Mass in Blue” by Will Todd is a 2003 work set in a jazz idiom. It’s a challenging work for singers but a delight for audiences to listen to. The combination of choral music and driving jazz and blues rhythms created an extraordinary atmosphere. Sonia Anfiloff’s beautifully clear and strong soprano voice soared above the choir, adding another dimension to this fascinating and enjoyable work.

The score makes huge demands on the accompanying pianist and Hugh Barrett played brilliantly. John Mackey’s solo on the alto saxophone was hauntingly beautiful and there was also fine playing by James Luke on bass and Derrick Brassington on drums.