

Music

Four Magnificats

The Llewellyn Choir, Llewellyn Hall,
4 September.

Reviewed by Richard Windeyer

Although an excellent programme, some poor singing marred this concert presented by the Llewellyn Choir, conducted by Richard McIntyre. In my view the quality of singing from this amateur, community choir, was made more disappointing when I recollect this same choir's performance of Verdi's *Requiem* earlier this year.

Four Magnificats made up the programme beginning with Schubert and working in reverse chronological order through Bach, Vivaldi and finally Monteverdi. Only the Vivaldi, and occasionally the Monteverdi, approached magnificence. Whilst not a great work the Vivaldi *Magnificat* is effective and simple, demanding little exposed singing from any of the sections of the choir. The Llewellyn Choir handled these choral sections of the work very well, displaying none of the nervous, unconfident characteristics that were a feature of the first half of the concert.

The Monteverdi *Magnificat* included some lovely passages, with the choir singing the triumphal passages for full chorus with gusto. In fact the Monteverdi included the highlight of the evening, the tenor Carl Cooper. In an evening which utilised many of the voice students of the Canberra School of Music, Carl Cooper was the only one who was really convincing in this type of repertoire. His opening cantor section to the Monteverdi was excellent as was the duet with Kent McIntosh. Kent McIntosh had sung in the Bach, and to me sounded nervous. In the duet with Carl Cooper, McIntosh sang off stage, as a echo, and without the distraction of an audience, his singing was relaxed and confident.

MUSE REVIEWS

The first half of the concert was not so good. The Schubert was laboured and sounded under-rehearsed. Of the soloists Jeremy Tatchell was the best, singing confidently and thoughtfully. The Bach *Magnificat* was the most ambitious work on the programme, placing demands on chorus, soloists and orchestra that were never met. From the opening bars this performance showed signs of impending trouble. At certain stages it was remarkable that Richard McIntyre did not have to halt the performance, with orchestra and chorus, or orchestra and soloists, working to separate tempi. The choir never sounded confident, with many of the entries catching them by surprise. Unfortunately the result was a performance that lurched from one insecure moment to the next.

Having said this, to judge the Llewellyn Choir by this performance alone would be unreasonable. I must add my congratulations to the soloists who stepped in at the final moment for Elizabeth Tierney who was, unfortunately, very ill at the time of this performance. ■