

Big Beethoven work gets a big audience reaction



Conductor Louis Sharpe. Photo: Peter Hislop



Soloists, from left, Sarah Darley-Stuart, Emma Mauch, Ryan O'Donnell and Sitiveni Talei.
Photo: Peter Hislop



Violinist Thayer Preece Parker.
Photo: Peter Hislop



The National Capital Orchestra, Canberra Choral Society, The Llewellyn Choir and soloists perform Beethoven's Missa Solemnis at Llewellyn Hall. Photo: Peter Hislop

*Music / Beethoven's Missa Solemnis, National Capital Orchestra, Canberra Choral Society, The Llewellyn Choir and soloists. At Llewellyn Hall, July 6. Reviewed by **LEN POWER**.*

Although his Missa Solemnis is less well-known than his 9th Symphony, Beethoven composed both in 1824.

Completed just three years before his death, his achievement with both works is astounding, given that by this time he was profoundly deaf.

A reflection of Beethoven's own spiritual beliefs, the Missa Solemnis pushed the boundaries of what a mass setting usually encompasses.

The work is rarely performed because it is one of the most demanding pieces in both choral and orchestral repertoire.

Exactly 200 years since it was first heard, it was a challenge readily taken on by the National Capital Orchestra, Canberra Choral Society and members of the Llewellyn Choir with Louis Sharpe courageously conducting.

Also performing were soloists Sarah Darnley-Stuart, soprano; Emma Mauch, soprano; Ryan O'Donnell, tenor, and Sitiveni Talei, bass. Dan Walker was the chorus master.

From the opening kyrie, the performers sang and played confidently, giving an engaging and energetic performance that continued at a high standard throughout this lengthy work.

The gloria that followed was especially dynamic and the many voices blended with the orchestra to produce a moving and often quite thrilling sound. They excelled themselves with Et vitam venturi, the famously difficult end of the credo.

After interval, the playing and singing of the sanctus was sensitively done and, in the benedictus, first violinist Thayer Preece Parker played the high solo part so movingly, it was one of the highlights of the performance.

Although they sang very well throughout the work, the Agnus Dei gave the soloists their main opportunity to shine. Their voices rang out superbly, blending well with each other. The performance of this final section of the work was particularly moving with its plea for peace very clear.

This was a performance that everyone involved should be proud of. They were given well-deserved, lengthy applause at the conclusion of this outstanding concert.