

Reviews St Luke Passion: ICC, The Geldart Ensemble and Amici Voices 16 March 2024

Susanna Spall Secretary Bury Bach Choir

That concert on Saturday was just amazing! So glad to have been there! Really lovely music – no wonder Bach approved. There is a certain intimacy in the space at St Mary-le-Tower which just suited the piece, the instruments provided gentleness & yet fierceness when needed. All the instruments combined in that lovely sound, of course, but the winds were so warm and rich in their sound, I loved that. The talk beforehand was fascinating and drew together elements which one might be aware of but not ever put together independently, stemming from the Lutheran ‘people of the word’ reforms, of course, but had not made that connection. The faithful being enabled to ‘experience’ true remorse during an extended musical exploration of Christ’s passion might be easier for listeners than performers – I kept thinking of all the German text singers had had to be totally familiar with ... expertly led rehearsals of course! That final chorale of this performance was just as ‘wrenching’ as the close of the Matthew or John Passions. The chorus had ticked all the right boxes for me, for sound, for responsiveness, for just the right intensity of participation but with nothing ‘histrionic’ going on. I was reminded of how that final stage, the final 2 or 3 numbers, solo, chorus, chorale all feels when part of a performance – your mind has had to concentrate on so many things to deliver that performance but unfailingly, in the closing numbers, the meaning of the whole work really becomes almost overwhelmingly clear.

Thank you, thank you for a wonderful evening! I loved how concert goers were greeted, that refreshments could be enjoyed, that people made room for others so that no-one was left with just a pillar to gaze at.

Joanne Rogers, alto, Ipswich Choral Society

An unknown work to me. I had intended to study it before the performance but time, as it does with all of us ran away. So there I was in the audience listening to it as if it was newly performed. This in its way was a privilege for me as a Bach fan. And I really don’t care if he actually wrote it, or part wrote it - he had something to do with it in a collaborative effort so that’s good enough for me. It’s great piece of music!

The performance by Ipswich Chamber Choir was astounding due to the passionate and nuanced conducting by their conductor Benedict Collins Rice. It was quite a sing as we fellow choir singers would attest. I loved the complete difference made of chorus versus chorale - sometimes one followed the other immediately so quick switch mentality and form needed by the choir which they did without hesitation. The dynamics throughout were excellent but drew you to the story not just for effect.

Choir members that performed in the “minor” parts were all spot on. I single out Tom Darling-Fernley as Pilate - stately presence - but then he did have the longest stay on the stage...

All the soloists were committed to their arias - heartfelt and engaged singing. I was merely a few feet away from Oscar Golden Lee as Evangelist in the midst of the audience and was captured by his interpretation and oh so mellifluous voice. His last aria ""Laßt mich ihn nur noch einmal küssen" was heartbreaking especially as there is constant repetition each one of which he sung subtly differently and heightened the grief each time was impressive especially as he had by this time been "on stage" for almost two + hours. Alto Rebecca Leggett "Du gibst mir Blut" was firm and gloriously struck home the point. Soprano Charlotte Bowden with her rich sound was thought provoking in "her grief".

The Geldart Ensemble led by Rachel Stroud was perfection. I loved the flutes and the oboe d'amore.. sigh. Please thank them for their expertise and love of this genre.

I was enthralled by the story as if I'd never heard it before. Taken on the route from The Last Supper to the Crucifixion. Well done all.

I enjoyed the talk before hand which was informative especially the latest scientific research on music and taste!!