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# Voices carry as conductor and choir shine in Mozart

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# Voices carry as conductor and choir shine in Mozart

Date May 4, 2012

Reviewed by David Vance



David Zinman conducts the Sydney Symphony.

## **SYDNEY SYMPHONY Opera House, May 2**

AS A PREPARATION for the afterlife (heaven, hell or, worse, the infernal spirals of the Opera House car park), Mozart's *Requiem* is a good choice. Full of thrilling apocalyptic episodes where the terrors of the Day of Judgment exceed anything devised by Hollywood, the work nonetheless offers passages of great consolation, expressed in music of exceptional beauty and poise. Balancing these contrasting sections requires a clear view of the whole if the work is to maintain its sense of classical proportion.

Conductor David Zinman brought a strong understanding of musical architecture to his direction of this and Poulenc's *Gloria*. Each work was shaped within their clearly delineated movements by an overarching sense of cohesion and musical logic. His no-fuss conducting yielded rhythmically taut playing, precision of attack, and tempos that recognised the gravitas of both works without either becoming ponderous, while avoiding the potential for the flippant in the occasionally rollicking *Gloria*.

The Sydney Philharmonia Choirs were impressive in both pieces, maintaining sprightly tempos and avoiding any tendency to drag. Diction was always clear, consonants voiced simultaneously, and nicely realised Germanic Latin for the Mozart.

The quartet of vocal soloists was the only disappointment in the Mozart, not so much individually but as a collective. The voices did not blend as well as one might wish, so that both the *Tuba mirum* and the *Recordare* lacked harmonic definition. The most pleasing voice,

and the one most engaged with style and the performance, was mezzo Fiona Campbell. Her gloriously toned contributions made me regret that Poulenc had not allotted his solos to a mezzo, or that the distinguished soprano Jennifer Welch-Babidge, who sang the part, had recognised that this music was not really operatic.

Read more: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/music/voices-carry-as-conductor-and-choir-shine-in-mozart-20120503-1y1kx.html#ixzz2JtkRKf1E>