

Getting a Handel on things

4:32pm Thursday 18th December 2008

By [Mike Marsh](#) »

The options for authenticity in Handel's Messiah are wide ranging and David Hill's reading, directed from the harpsichord, a modest string orchestra with two trumpets, two oboes, bassoon and timpani plus continuo organ revealed a flawless performance.

Crucial to success are the soloists and here I think we had one of the finest teams, their excellent diction benefiting from the lighter orchestral forces and Hill's elegantly balanced dynamics.

Tenor Benjamin Hulett, impressed for his fine ornamentation and power in Every Valley. I also appreciated soprano Elin Manahan Thomas; I've never heard, or seen, quite such a smouldering account of Rejoice greatly, but rejoice I did.

Replacing indisposed counter-tenor Iestyn Davies at short notice, mezzo-soprano Yvonne Howard included a tremendously emotive performance of He was despised. Neither was there any weakness in baritone Andrew Foster Williams output, so I will simply applaud a supremely smooth The Trumpet Shall Sound.

The Bournemouth Symphony Chorus lends itself to any given approach with wholehearted enthusiasm. Hill's lively rhythm in Let Us Break Their Bonds Asunder fazed them not, and whilst Hallelujah and Amen packed the power, their clarity and sparkling blend of lucidly mellifluous voices gave cause for unreserved acclaim.