

Crucifixion reprised

Newbury Chamber Choir and Orchestra, at St Nicolas' Church, Newbury, on Friday, April 2

FIRST performed in Marylebone Church on February 24, 1887, *Stainer's Crucifixion* has received countless performances over the years.

The text was selected and written by the Rev J. Sparrow-Simpson. Although composer Ernest Walker dismissed it in 1924, saying that "musicians today have no use for *The Crucifixion*" and even the composer, Sir John Stainer, was said to have referred to it with Eric Morcambe-style nonchalance as "rubbish", the work continues to be heard at concerts and in many new recordings to this day.

Church Thatcham and the Newbury Chamber Choir, musical director Edward Lambert conducted a straight, no frills interpretation of this solemn work.

The soloists fitted in well with the choir's reading, with Paul Robinson proving to be a robust tenor with a vibrant voice, although perhaps with a shade more vibrato than was necessary. Ian Caddy possesses a dark, resonant bass voice, ideally suited to Stainer's oratorio.

Tim Cooke provided the organ accompaniment and it is arguable that some of the best passages of this piece are played on

that instrument as the choirs take a brief rest. His use of light and shade and general dynamics was certainly ideal as a contrast to the fairly heavy choral parts.

The complete performance, taking in all the constituent parts, was certainly given with just the right amount of gravitas to sustain this examination of the Easter story. Edward Lambert conducted the combined choirs with a steady, relevant approach and they responded with clear, resonant voices. At the conclusion, prayers were said and a collection was made towards the costs of the presentation.

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