

Re:Creation**Kenneth Carter | Friday, June 22, 2007****Perkins**

Re:Creation – oratorio for soloists, chorus and orchestra to texts assembled by Derek Wensley
[First performance]

Voice of God – Leon Berger (baritone)

Rebecca Van Orden (soprano)

Vanessa Wheeler (mezzo-soprano)

Tim Dale (tenor)

Peter Barber (baritone)

Ghosts

Orchestra

Timothy Ball

Holy Trinity Church, High Street, Guildford, Surrey

“Re:Creation”, written and performed in a spirit of devout, lively dedication has five parts and lasts well over an hour and a half. David Perkins renders the biblical text in “an accessible language and beautiful music”, in the spirit of the great sacred choral masterpieces of Bach, Handel and Haydn – and, one might add, Scott Joplin (Perkins regularly performs a tribute to Joplin at the National Theatre). The style sometimes suggest that of the ‘musical’ and ‘pop song’ without quite being either.

Time and again in the programme notes, performers attest to their pleasure and enthusiasm for “Re:Creation”. Leon Berger, for example, writes that he finds Perkins’s music “tuneful, exciting, dramatic and a joy to work on”. During the interval, I overheard members of the audience say how much they were enjoying the performance. There is clearly a hunger for music that is a lively ‘re-creation’ of past harmonies – a peal of beautiful, ear-ingratiating sound that eschews an idiom of dissonance and unfamiliar intervals, yet has a contemporary ring. (Consider, too, the popularity of music by Sir John Tavener and Karl Jenkins.) The church was packed. The music is certainly individual and often imaginative, if not exactly original.

In another respect, David Perkins was a star of the evening. He was the vigorous, busy pianist in the 10-person chamber ensemble (consisting of piano, organ, two violins, cello, double bass, flute/clarinet, flute/clarinet/bass clarinet, oboe/cor anglais and percussion). Perkins’s contribution provided a running accompaniment and commentary, ranging from a tinkling, stellar serenity – ably assisted by percussion – to occasional darker moments underpinned by the organ and brighter, more sinewy expressions in juncture with flute, clarinet, cor anglais and occasionally, but strikingly, bass clarinet.

Ghosts is a choral group drawing on local talent. Life began in 1983 with “HMS Pinafore”, continued with further Gilbert & Sullivan, and flowered recently, under Timothy Ball’s able direction, in Haydn’s “Nelson Mass” and Britten’s “Saint Nicolas”. “Re:Creation” makes various demands on the singers’ capabilities – strong, emphatic moments during the process of creation, the frequent, whispered distance of the sublime heavens ... passages for women alone and for men alone. Their articulation was exemplary; their projection was heart-warming and pleasurable.

The soloists’ contribution was most satisfying, too. I took particular pleasure in Vanessa Wheeler’s mezzo and Peter Barber’s baritone. Tim Dale sang rather thinly at first, but warmed into a rounder resonance later. Rebecca van Orden had a pleasing purity of tone – her duets with Vanessa Wheeler were a delight. Leon Berger sounded rather muffled. As the Voice of God, he very properly stood obscurely. He sounded remote, but not commanding.

Throughout the performance, one was aware of the broad, hard-working back of Timothy Ball. He held the disparate elements of the music-making together firmly and authoritatively, often with both arms outstretched, in control of and giving to these experienced but for the most part non-professional musicians a constant certainty. In his hands the music was held in control, too. It flowed and surged with persistent, engaging continuity, rising naturally to the swell of climaxes of varied intensity and then quietening down into the hush of more intimate moments between singers, instruments or both.

Ultimately – much due to Ball’s drive, stimulation and handling – the performance held inspiration,

dedication and unity. It conveyed, with pulsation, a shining sense of the beauty of man's spirit, divinely inspired.

- Second performance on 23 June
- Re:Creation
- Ghosts

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