

**Concert Review - Harrogate Choral Society, 14 March 2009**  
**Karl Jenkins – Requiem & Andrew Carter – Benedicite**

On the basis of record sales, Karl Jenkins is one of the most successful of contemporary classical composers and his Requiem, performed on Saturday 14 March at Ripon Cathedral by the Harrogate Choral Society, provided some clues as to why. Certainly the choir were in good voice and, under the expert direction of Andrew Padmore, exerted their usual fine control over the melodies given to them and to the strong driving rhythms. There were some fetching moments for solo soprano and treble, excellently sung by Lucy Morton and James Micklethwaite. The piece also crosses cultures, having some quieter sections set to Japanese texts very well sung by a group of female voices and an ancient instrument, the shakuhachi, beautifully played by one of its few British exponents, Clive Bell. In an affecting section, the Asian and European visions of death came together as the Japanese ladies sang against a plainsong melody given to the men. However, it has to be said that the writing for the orchestra in this Requiem tends towards the minimalist and was in places tediously repetitive. Perhaps understandably the string players appeared not to be entirely comfortable with the score; and there was also some uncertainty with the contributions from the percussion.

After the interval everyone appeared to be more relaxed in Andrew Carter's rollicking Benedicite, which calls on all the living world to bless the Lord. And bless the Lord the choir did with great precision, as well as gusto. Admirable in the work was the characterisation of the different worldly elements: the horns and cellos evoked in sonorous tones the whales; the violins fluttered with the butterflies; and we could feel the cold as the chorus crisply sang of the ice and snow, and the organ and harp combined in strange harmonies to tell us about the darkness of winter. The girls from the Harrogate Ladies College took us tunefully and engagedly through the animals from badgers and hedgehogs through to weasels, warthogs and wallabies; and when, towards the end, they asked the fathers and mothers and grannies and grandads also to bless the Lord, there must have been many in the audience who did exactly that.

Anthony Ogus