

**Edinburgh International Festival Scotsman review (music): Bach's Mass in B minor at Usher Hall.  
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**Reviewer: Carol Main**

One of the many benefits of a choir and orchestra working together under the same roof, as it were, is that there is a unity of purpose which is harder to achieve than when two separate components come together on an ad hoc basis.

And so it was for Bach's B minor mass on Saturday evening at the Usher Hall for Collegium Vocale Gent Choir and Orchestra under the baton of their founder, Philippe Herreweghe.

Also taking a similarly holistic approach to the musical architecture of the piece itself, Herreweghe's flawlessly authoritative conducting brought a new depth of understanding and presence to what is widely regarded as Bach's finest choral work.

Verging on reverential understatement in the opening Kyrie, whether in the legato chorus lines or the pure solo voices of sopranos Dorothee Miels and Hana Blazikova, and growing to the joy of the Et resurrexit and the glorious proclamation of the Sanctus, the music was an entity that drew to its close with an Agnus Dei from countertenor Damien Guillon which could well be the most movingly beautiful singing heard in this year's Festival.

Completely integrated with what is a relatively small group of only 18 singers, including the soloists who come from within the ranks, the baroque instrumentalists were supportive while also light on their feet, with crisp rhythms, especially the triple time of the Osanna, used to maximum effect to word-paint the meaning of the texts.

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