

STANFORD Requiem.¹ *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan: Excerpts.*² • Adrian Leaper, cond;¹ Colman Pearce, cond;² Frances Lucey (sop);¹ Virginia Kerr (sop);² Colette McGahon (mez);¹ Peter Kerr (ten);¹ Nigel Leeson-Williams (bs);¹ RTÉ P Ch; Natl SO of Ireland • NAXOS 8.555201-02 (2 CDs: 104:27 fl)

This recording was made in 1994 and originally issued on Naxos's sister label Marco Polo. Martin Anderson reviewed it in *Fanfare* 21:2, giving it what I would call a moderately warm reception. Anderson rightly noted that the Requiem lacks the power and impact of Stanford's *Stabat Mater*, released around the same time by Chandos. At the same time, he does observe the many beautiful passages in the Requiem. Sir Charles Stanford (1852–1924) wrote the Requiem in 1896.

While I would agree that there are many attractive passages here, some of genuinely deep inspiration, the overall impression is best described as workman-like. This music lacks the harmonic variety or rhythmic impetus of even good second level choral works—and this generally limp and occasionally sloppy performance doesn't make a very good case for it either. This sounds like a sight-reading at times, with whatever power that might exist in the score being vitiated by plodding conducting and less than precise execution. Moments of authentic beauty, such as the Sanctus, reward the patient listener—but where you expect real power the music just kind of goes along. Dies Irae is supposed to inspire a fear of Hell—but this music at worst will threaten sending you to Heck. The Hosanna hardly seems exultant.

The music from Stanford's opera *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan* is more inspired—at least in the 25 minutes of excerpts heard here. They include two ballet numbers, the overture, and a soprano aria. The excerpts make me interested to hear the whole opera, but they are not so overwhelming as to lead me to recommend this disc to anyone except the collector who must have every late Romantic choral work ever penned.

The recorded sound is rather congested, with the orchestra being rather too far in the background, but the accompanying notes are excellent.

Henry Fogel