

Music



Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment with Ian Bostridge in Dartington (review)

25th September 2009

Most of us would probably be happy to settle for an Oxford doctorate, and a subsequent career as an eminent university history don.

Thankfully tenor, Ian Bostridge, *pictured top left*, decided to exchange academic dress for that of the concert hall and opera house, and his performance with the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment couldn't fail to have mesmerised every single person in the audience.

His doctoral thesis had involved the subject of Witchcraft, but it was the sheer purity of tone, faultless diction, breathtaking dynamic range and control, delivered with such heartfelt expression, that really provided the pure magic.

In an all-Handel programme the singing was utterly superb, and made so much more telling by the absolute minimum of unnecessary gesture and posturing, just letting the voice and facial expression do all the talking.

The OAE, *pictured top right*, was on truly outstanding form too, under the inspired co-leadership of harpsichordist, Steven Devine, and Matthew Truscott (violin), whether in finely-judged and impeccably well-balanced accompaniments to the vocal numbers or simply on their own in two of the composer's concerti grossi and his Suite from Terpsichore.

The glorious surroundings and winning acoustic of the venue supplied the final icing on the cake of a concert which must surely rank among the very best in terms of pure musical quality and audience enjoyment, and something to be cherished by all those present.

PHILIP R BUTTALL

