

## Bournemouth Bach Choir, Christchurch Priory

10:54am Sunday 22nd June 2014 in [Reviews By Mike Marsh](#)



THE 'fire and brimstone' quality of Mendelssohn's dramatic oratorio *Elijah* inspired the Bournemouth Bach Choir to new heights of choral singing under Tim Hooper's infectiously charismatic approach.

It was exceedingly courageous to take on the full version of some 140 minutes duration, yet this ensemble of some 50 voices sang like 100, rising magnificently to every forte (and there were many), and enriching every piece with glorious tone. The orchestra too, were fully attuned to making musical wrath underpinned by the Priory's organ.

The prime role of *Elijah* was given with commanding humanity by bass-baritone James Oldfield, movingly accompanied in two pieces on cello (Will Routledge) and oboe (Nick Williams). Tenor Iain Milne's *Obadiah* was lustrously conveyed with good, strong delivery.

The early duet from soprano Rachel Nicholls and mezzo-soprano Jeanette Ager, "Lord, Bow Thine Ear", came as a bit of a shock even after the powerful opening chorus. Their voices were a mismatch and that was entirely down to Nicholls' dominating presence. She has the power all right, and that was verified when in the role of the Widow - a voice for Wagner venues and slaying dragons - but alas unsuited both for this work and its setting.

However Ager's mezzo satisfied both the Angelic and the angered with wonderful characterization as Queen Jezebel.

Of angels, Highcliffe Junior Choir sprang the delightful, unseen surprise in "Lift Up Thine Eyes" and contributed superbly elsewhere. And treble Toby Gadd completed the hat-trick following his two brothers' achievements by providing a beautiful solo.