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THE Arts

With a Tribute to an Esteemed Organist, Simon Rattle Settles Into New York



Simon Rattle conducting the Saint Thomas Choir of Men and Boys and the Orchestra of St. Luke's at St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue. Credit Julieta Cervantes for The New York Times

The English conductor [Simon Rattle](#) will cut a monumental profile in New York this fall. He opens the Metropolitan Opera's season with Wagner's "[Tristan und Isolde](#)" (Monday through Oct. 17), leads the [Philadelphia Orchestra](#) at Carnegie Hall (Oct. 10), accompanies the tenor Mark Padmore with Ensemble Connect in Hans Zender's orchestration of [Schubert's "Winterreise"](#) at Zankel Hall (Oct. 16) and conducts the [Berlin Philharmonic](#) at Carnegie (Nov. 9 and 10).

But he began this commanding residency in understated fashion on Sunday evening, [conducting](#) the St. Thomas Choir of Men and Boys and the Orchestra of St. Luke's at St. Thomas Church Fifth Avenue in the last of its series of tributes to [John Scott](#), its former organist and director of music, who died unexpectedly last year. Mr. Rattle's main connection to the St. Thomas boys evidently came when [they took part](#) in his presentation of Peter Sellars's dramatization of Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" with the Berlin Philharmonic and the Berlin Radio Choir at the Park Avenue Armory in 2014. As always, Mr. Scott had his group meticulously prepared.

Sunday's concert was a benefit for a scholarship at the choir school in Mr. Scott's name. And the program effectively evoked his essential modesty and reserve, which were all the more remarkable given his consummate skills and exquisite taste as both organist and choirmaster.

[Krista Bennion Feeney](#), the orchestra's concertmaster, proved a superb violin soloist in Vaughan Williams's romance "The Lark Ascending." Mr. Scott's successor, [Daniel Hyde](#), played Bach's terse Prelude and Fugue in G deftly on the [Loening-Hancock organ](#) in the loft and later took a bow with the choir, which he had prepared to fine early-season form. Mr. Rattle led the orchestral strings in Elgar's Serenade in E minor and all hands in Fauré's Requiem.

This Requiem is prevailingly gentle and meditative, more Brahmsian than Verdian in mood, but by no means toothless or lacking in drama. There is no Dies Irae section (though a reference remains in the Libera Me) and thus little pictorialization of hellfire.

Daniel Moore was an excellent baritone soloist in two numbers. The Pie Jesu, written for soprano or treble soloist, was sung here by the massed boys: a nice tribute to their fallen leader, whether or not so intended.

There were no particular challenges for Mr. Rattle here, but his participation during a busy time was moving, and he clearly inspired not only the choir but also the orchestra, which was at its formidable best. A tribute — and, with the prospective scholarship, a cause — worthy of Mr. Scott's many achievements.

By JAMES R. OESTREICH ,SEPT. 19, 2016