

# 'Requiem' gently moving

By IFAN PAYNE  
Music Critic

Gabriel Urbain Faure was born in Pamiers, France, in May of 1845. His musical training had fairy-tale beginnings. His father was a schoolmaster, but his first four years were spent away from home with a foster mother. Somehow he learned to improvise on the keyboard and one day a blind old lady heard him play on the village harmonium. She arranged for young Gabriel to receive formal musical training at the prestigious Ecole Niedermeyer in Paris.

Clearly the experience of living in a foster home had not soured the composer, where his feelings for his father were concerned; for when the elder Faure died in 1885, Gabriel composed the work for which he is probably best known today, the *Requiem*, Opus 48.

Although the *Requiem* apparently did not make a great impression in its day — one commentator has written that it "may have appeared too audacious in technique, yet too mild in effect" — the work seems to have gained in popularity during this century.

This is indeed a gentle work...a soft-grained requiem, as though it were singing a kindly blessing

on the dead...and this is very much the feeling that was communicated during the performance given by the Kansas Bach Choir, directed by Rod Walker, at the First Methodist Church on Monday evening.

J.V. Heffel was the calm and evenly voiced soloist during the *Offeratorium*, and soprano Susan Graber sang with an equally, and aptly, simple and effective delivery for *Pie Jesu*. Baritone Glen Hughes has a promising, if an as yet untutored, voice and his singing of the solo during *Libera Me* was direct and telling.

Mary Ellen Sutton was the excellent organist throughout.

The choir sang attractively, and in that most placid *Sanctus*, harpist Mary Wicklander spun a halo of undulating sound as a harmonic backdrop.

Even the *Dies Irae* in this *Requiem* eschews ostentation, and yet the work, to my ears is not without substance nor backbone, though one could not, any longer, call it an audacious work.

Rod Walker conducted a satisfying performance of a quietly moving work that concludes with a tender landscape of a peaceful Paradise.

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