

Salisbury International Arts Festival

Towards Silence: John Tavener – Salisbury Cathedral

Zara Gillick

Towards Silence, composed by Sir John Tavener is 'a meditation on the four states of being by four string quartets and a singing bowl: the waking state, the dream state, the condition of deep sleep and that which is beyond'. It's safe to say I didn't really understand what this meant. I entered Salisbury Cathedral, was greeted by the stewards and took my seat in the nave. A soft voice then came through the speakers, introducing what was to come. We were told that it was going to be a 'different' experience, and that it was a 'meditation' rather than a concert.

The quartets then started and everyone sat in silence. It started quiet, getting deeper and then becoming quieter again at the end. Some people were closing their eyes, really getting in to it. It's clear that these people knew of Tavener's work, and knew what to expect. As I didn't, it left me confused.

After thinking about it, I realised that it has a deeper, more profound meaning than most other music and you need to have an understanding of the composition to fully appreciate it.

However, the Cathedral was a great place to hear a piece such as this performed because of the good acoustics and the echoes.

This was certainly a different experience. I feel you have to listen expecting to think about it in another way, and you have to know about the composer and the background of the piece. It is an Installation in the Cathedral cloisters, so if you wish, you can go and hear it for the duration of the Festival.