By Andrew Arganbright

The Chamber Choir and members of the Omaha Symphony presented the Midwest premiere of John Rutter's "Requiem" on Sunday in St. John's Church.

The "Requiem" celebrates man's ultimate victory in Christ over death, using a combination of texts selected from both the Catholic liturgy and the 1662 Book of Common Prayer.

"I am very pleased with the choir," said Carole Bean, associate professor of performing arts. "They and the orchestra performed perfectly together."

Bean said she had heard a recording of the work last July and wanted to perform it in the spring but was unable to locate a score until last fall while traveling in New Mexico.

"My decision then hinged upon soprano Lisa Balkovec because the work contained two difficult solos," Bean said. "I had her sing the solos last fall and she sailed right through them with a crystal clear sound."

Bean said the orchestra had practiced the work only a couple of times but played flawlessly.

"The choir rehearsed 'Requiem' for an entire semester and never grew tired of it," soprano Amy Arouni said. "This attests to Rutter's ability as a composer. It is a remarkable piece."

Sophomore soprano Patricia Kusek said the first time she heard "Requiem" was after she learned of a death in the family.

"The words 'reliqua aeternam...lux perpetua luceat eis' (Grant them rest eternal and perpetual light shine upon them forever) were a great comfort to me," she said.

The four-part choir included 27 members.