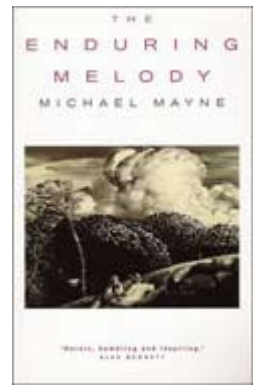


## The Enduring Melody

Michael Mayne, DLT 2006 £10.95

Michael Mayne began this book as a reflection on his faith and experience during his retirement as a Priest. I encountered him when he was Vicar of The University Church in Cambridge, and again during his time as Dean of Westminster Abbey. We talked, at length, two years when we were both delegates at a conference on ageing. This book begins with an insightful and wise reflection on age and retirement; offering comfort and challenge as Mayne never takes life at “face value”. There is always something more to be uncovered and discovered.



Whilst writing, Mayne discovers he has cancer, and so the book becomes an autobiography of dying. The text is difficult to read and we are not spared the hard questions or indeed the searing pain. The sadness and tears are never very far away, but the courage, and self effacing humour recover and expand the “enduring melody” of faith. This faith finds a deeper and more convincing expression through the paradoxes and uncertainties that pain bring.

Around the feast of the Ascension this year, Mayne knew that further surgery was impossible, radio therapy could not be repeated and that chemo therapy could only buy a few more months. He wrote this : “To die with gratitude for all that has been, without resentment for what you are going through and with openness towards the future, is the greatest gift we can leave those who love us and who are left behind”.

Mayne is the kind of Priest I pray for grace to be and become; humane, reflective, wise, ready to take risks, always wanting to dig deeper and a preparedness always to be vulnerable. This is a book that has enlarged my horizon and challenged me to make music and listen more attentively to the complexity of lifes experience. It certainly may not be an obvious Christmas present, but it will be of more use than most others wrapped and unwrapped and eaten.

James Woodward