

SENTINEL ARTS

CLASSICAL NOTES

Eric Snape

A rare chance to hear Great C minor

MOZART'S last work, the Requiem Mass, is performed often; his Great Mass in C minor, very rarely.

Which is a pity: they are equally sublime and equally mysterious. So we must be grateful to Nantwich Choral Society, who are to sing the Great C minor at St Mary's parish church tomorrow (7.30pm).

Since "Amadeus," everybody knows that Mozart thought he was composing the Requiem for his own death. He had received a commission for it

from an enigmatic stranger whom he believed to be a messenger from the other world.

Tradition

The Great Mass in C minor has a much happier inspiration — a solemn vow by the composer that he would write a mass when he had led his bride to the altar. The bride, of course, was the later-to-be-much-maligned Constanze Weber, and tradition has it that she sang one or more of the soprano solos when the work was first rehearsed. Beyond

doubt, the Christe Eleison and the Laudamus Te were written for her.

Both the Requiem and the Great C Minor were left unfinished — the former because Mozart died and the latter for reasons unknown. Perhaps Wolfie already had his Constanze, or, more likely, involvement with the Freemasons was taking up too much of his time. But that's another story.

So the work remains . . . emotionally inspired — not written to pay the rent, as

often was the case with Mozart — a herald of both "The Marriage of Figaro" and the "The Magic Flute," perfect in its incomplete imperfection. Don't miss it.

The other work on the programme, the Coronation Mass, marks the path by which Mozart reached the pinnacle of the Great C minor. It is a more conventional work, though there are passages of astounding beauty — especially the Credo, famed for its complexity and profundity.

Soloists with the society will be sopranos Catrin Ley and Sarah Wright, contralto Alice Wakefield, tenor Peter Smith and bass Kieron McNiff. Stephen Buckman is to conduct.

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NEWCASTLE String Orchestra are to feature three students as soloists in their concert at St John Fisher High School, Ashfields New Road, Newcastle, on Wednesday (7.30pm) — cellist Karen Stephenson and flautists Rachel Guy and Julia Seddon.

Karen, born at Newcastle and a former pupil of Newcastle-under-Lyme School, is leader of cellos in the National Youth Orchestra. Rachel is studying at the royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow and Julia at Cambridge University. Both come from Alsager

The programme includes concertos by Vivaldi and Festing and works by Couperin, Purcell, Holst, Vaughan Williams and Gordon Jacob.

A treat for Mozart lovers

MOZART lovers in and around Nantwich are in for a treat over the next few weeks.

The Nantwich Choral Society will be performing Mozart's masses in Latin in St Mary's Church, Acton, on Saturday (March 3).

Following that they will be singing two of Mozart's mass settings in Nantwich Parish Church on April 7.

This is the third occasion in recent years in which a high mass has been

celebrated at Acton with music provided by full choral and orchestral forces.

On this occasion the mass setting is the Credo Mass which Mozart wrote for his patron, the Archbishop of Salzburg, in 1776.

The Tudor Consort of Nantwich and Acton Sinfonia will be directed by Anthony Metcalfe.

As a service, there is no charge for admission, though there will be a collection at the end.

Choral feast

NANTWICH Choral Society are to perform some of Mozart's greatest works on Saturday, April 7 in St Mary's Church, Nantwich.

The programme will include Mozart's Coronation Mass K317 and Great Mass in C Minor K427. The orchestra will be the Nantwich Sinfonia with Ralph Chadwick as their leader, and soloists will be Catrin Ley and Sarah Wright (Soprano), Alice Wakefield (Contralto), Peter Smith (Tenor) and Kieron McNiff (Bass). Conductor will be Stephen Bickman.

The concert will begin at 7.30pm. Tickets priced £4 and £2.50 for pensioners and students are available from Information Office and Church Shop.

Choral concert

A TREAT for music lovers is lined up for this Saturday (April 7) when Nantwich Choral Society are in concert at Nantwich's St Mary's Church at 7.30pm.

The programme includes Mozart's Coronation Mass K317 and Great Mass in C Minor, K427. Nantwich

Sinfonia, led by Ralph Chadwick, provide the orchestra.

Soloists will be Catrin Ley and Sarah Wright (sopranos), Alice Wakefield (contralto), Peter Smith (tenor) and Kieron McNiff (bass). The conductor is Stephen Buckman.

Tickets priced at £4 (£2.50 for pensioners and students) are available from Nantwich Information Office and the Church Shop.

REVIEW

Memorable masterpiece

MOZART'S Great Mass in C Minor is a musical miracle, and Nantwich Choral Society captured its airy beauty to an extraordinary degree at St Mary's parish church on Saturday night.

The web of alternate homophonic and contrapuntal writing held no terror for the choristers, who responded to the intense and vital conducting of Stephen Buckman with grace and assurance. They obviously enjoyed having an orchestral accompaniment, and

blended harmoniously with the Nantwich Sinfonia.

One of the soloists, soprano Catrin Ley, was superb. She introduced the sublime work with a glowing "Kyrie", wove voices sweetly with Sarah Wright in the "Dominus Deus", and touched perfection in the long and thrilling "Et incarnatus est."

Sarah, the second soprano, was inevitably shaded by singing of this quality, but she possessed admirable

tone control and demonstrated fine coloratura in the "Laudamus te." The tenor, Peter Smith, and bass, Kieron McNiff, were never less than adequate.

The capacity audience had been primed for this masterpiece with an impressive performance of the Coronation Mass — Mozart in more unbuttoned mood. Alice Wakefield sang the contralto solo, with the second soprano not required.

Eric Snape

"Evening Sentinel"