

Genuine sound ensured

TWO countertenors should ensure a genuine sound when Nantwich Choral Society salutes England's greatest composer, Henry Purcell, at St Mary's Parish Church tomorrow night (7pm).

They will also be celebrating St Cecilia, through the day of the patron saint of music doesn't fall until next Thursday.

"Come ye sons of art, away" has magnificent, swinging tunes and an artfully contrapuntal chorus. There is a song on a ground bass that should suit Phillip Ravenscroft perfectly; "Sound the trumpet", a famous duet for the countertenors (Stephen Carter and Duncan Saunderson); and "Bid the virtues", a long, elaborate soprano solo to be sung by Catrin Ley.

Incredible

The other Purcell offering, "Hail Bright Cecilia" is a masterpiece in which, according to the "Gentleman's Journal" of the day, the composer himself once sang the declamatory countertenor solo "with incredible graces".

by Eric Snape

Be that as it may (and you can't believe all the music criticism you read), the work demands a high degree of competence. The choral composition is particularly formidable, including six-part writing in the final chorus, but the conductor, Stephen Buckman, is sure to have drilled his forces adequately.

Ceremonial

The second part of the programme will be given over entirely to a performance of Handel's magnificent "Dettingen Te Deum", a work that constantly brings reminders of the "Messiah," written the year before.

It is so well known that it needs no introduction, being often used on ceremonial occasions of thanksgiving.

But to decide to play it immediately after the two Purcell pieces was an inspiration: Handel used the Englishman as his model for this kind of music.

Saint celebrated

NANTWICH Choral Society will celebrate the feast of St. Cecilia, patron saint of music, which traditionally falls on November 22, with a concert at Nantwich Parish Church on Saturday, November 21.

In the performance the choral society, con-

ducted by Stephen Buchman, will be accompanied by Nantwich Sinfonia (leader, Harold Beech) with Joy Roberts on the harpsichord. Soloists are Catrin Ley (soprano), James Watson (tenor) and Philip Ravenscroft (bass).

The concert is sponsored by Mornflake Oats and advance tickets, with concessions for pensioners and students, are available from Nantwich Information Centre, or on Nantwich 625752. They can also be obtained at the door.

REVIEW

Airy, exuberant music

NANTWICH Choral Society dared greatly with its programme for Saturday night's concert at St Mary's parish church: neither Purcell nor Handel brooks much in the way of inaccuracy.

Yet the music of both composers was performed with an airy exuberance that was infectious; the singing was never less than competent and occasionally achieved distinction.

The quality of the two countertenors, Stephen Carter and Duncan

By Eric Snape

Saunderson, soon became apparent in Purcell's "Come ye sons of art," and they kept an enviable, rare balance in the "Sound the Trumpet" duet.

Phillip Ravenscroft was an impressive as ever in the bass airs, notably "The day that such a blessing gave," and soprano Catrin Ley sang "Bid the virtues" with a pure, luminous tone and some lovely modulation. The conductor, Stephen

Buckman, controlled the choir's natural enthusiasm adeptly, and its response was crisp and strong.

There were more Purcellian delights in the "Ode for St Cecilia's Day," and the same sense of ceremony and grandeur was carried over into Handel's magnificent "Dettingen Te Deum."

The orchestra, composed largely of students from the Royal Northern College of Music, played with a zest that made it easy to overlook the occasional false entrance.

Evening of fine music

THE alternative title to the poem "Alexander's Feast" by John Dryden is "The power of music": this power was certainly present on Saturday in concert given by Nantwich Choral Society and Nantwich Sinfonia.

Singers, instrumentalists and audience gathered into this engaging music programme: Handel's first Oratorio.

As one would expect from this composer we led through a variety of emotions; melting air rich choruses, moving between praise to the ancients, victories over the foe, dancing measures celebrating Bacchus and the thundering drums; sounding brass when the call goes out for revenge all good theatre and most enjoyable.

The society's conductor Stephen Buckman rehearsed the choir to peak at the performance: there was much to applaud as the music progressed.

The Nantwich Sinfonia leader Harold Beech: Joy Roberts, harpsichord, supported well and soloists Catrin Ley (soprano), James Watson (tenor) and Philip Ravenscroft (bass) enhanced evening with stylish singing.

The concert was sponsored by Mornflake O and I can truthfully say they were well justified making financial input in this fine evening. E.

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