

Choiristers show a passion for Bach oratorio

By ERIC SNAPE

BACH'S St John Passion seems to have replaced the St Matthew Passion in the affections of local choral societies.

Certainly it has wider-ranging emotions and a greater dramatic intensity. Indeed, certain conductors who shall remain nameless have not scrupled to interpret it as a religious opera.

But there is no more reverent work, and Nantwich Choral Society are to be commended for choosing it as their Easter offering at St Mary's parish church tomorrow, the eve of Palm Sunday.

The soloists look good. Robin Green and Philip Ravenscroft have the contrasting roles of the Evangelist and Jesus, with the fresh-voiced Catrin Ley singing soprano.

Counter-tenor Stephen Carter is the alto, and tenor Jeffrey Cresswell and bass Kieron McNiff complete the line-up.

Stephen Buckman conducts, with Christopher Pratt leading the

Nantwich Sinfonia. Quite properly there is a harpsichord continuo, to be played by Joy Roberts. The performance starts at 7.30 pm.

REVIEW

Dramatic 'St John Passion'

BACH'S highly dramatic treatment of the Crucifixion story, the St John Passion, was given a fresh, even exciting, performance by Nantwich Choral Society at St Mary's parish church on Saturday night.

There were three main reasons for this: admirably clear diction by everybody, but especially the nar-

rator, Robin Green; urgent, intense conducting by Stephen Buckman; and finely balanced choral singing that set tranquility against violence very effectively.

Robin Green's warm, expressive tone as Evangelist complemented the rich gravity of Philip Ravenscroft's Christ. The tenor, Jeffrey Cresswell, and bass, Kieron McNiff,

sounded clear if a trifle studied, and Catrin Ley sang the soprano arias with airy radiance.

Counter tenor Stephen Carter took the exquisitely difficult alto solos, and the harpsichord continuo of Joy Roberts added point to the competent playing of the Nantwich Sinfonia.

Eric Snape

"Evening Sentinel"